



43 PCT OF TAXIS FAIL ROADSIDE EMISSION TESTS

Only 57 percent of the taxis that took part in random roadside emission tests in 2014 met the emission standard

P4



NEW MACAU FORUM SLAMS 'COLLECTIVE IRRESPONSIBILITY'

P6



TRANSASIA TESTED FOLLOWING CRASH

Preliminary investigations indicate the pilots of Wednesday's doomed flight shut off a running engine of the ATR 72 after its other engine went idle

P11

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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'"

WORLD BRIEFS

AP PHOTO



USA-ASIA The U.S. has invited Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and China's President Xi Jinping for state visits. President Barack Obama will also welcome South Korean President Park Geun-hye and Indonesian President Joko Widodo to the White House this year. National Security Adviser Susan Rice (pictured) made the announcement during a speech Friday on a new national security strategy. Rice did not give dates for the visits. The new strategy cautions against American overreach abroad but maintains a strong focus on Asia.

INDONESIA Divers have recovered several more bodies from December's AirAsia crash, including one from the jet's cockpit, bringing the total number of victims retrieved to 100, an official said Saturday.

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FINANCIAL TIMES

Business Education: Western schools' expansion plans lead to China

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Beijing hits the global gaming industry

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AP PHOTO



China's imports drop sharply in January, exports also down

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3 hospitalized after apartment fire

The authorities are still trying to identify a woman who was sent to hospital after being found standing outside a burning residential apartment in Fai Chi Kei in the early morning yesterday. Information from the Judiciary Police (PJ) suggested that the authorities were alerted to a fire in Van Sion Son Chun at 3.18 a.m. yesterday. After arriving at the scene, firefighters found the woman standing outside the shuttered wooden door of the apartment. The firefighters repeatedly questioned her before she eventually said that one of the rooms in the apartment was on fire. The woman, together with another two female residents of the building – one elderly woman and a pregnant woman – were sent to the hospital.

Officer assaulted with flashlight

The Public Security Police (PSP) has taken a 50-year-old man into custody after he was alleged to have caused a police officer to faint by pointing a mobile phone flashlight at him. Information suggests that the man was involved in a traffic accident that took place at midnight on Saturday night. When the police officer was called to handle the dispute, it is said that the man became emotional and suddenly switched on his mobile phone's flashlight, before pointing it at the officer. The officer then fainted. The man was immediately apprehended by the other officers at the scene, and was taken back to the PSP traffic commission headquarters. The officer who fainted was sent to hospital for treatment.

Authorities explain new noise control law

The Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) has been promoting the Prevention and Control of Environmental Noise Legislation, which will come into effect on February 22. In a promotional event yesterday, the authorities specially reminded residents of the noise generated by pets. DSPA staff members handed out leaflets and posters to businesses and locals throughout yesterday's event. The Bureau said that homeowners should pay more attention to the condition of their pets and refrain from locking them out on the balcony. They also organized a session yesterday to explain to residents the contents and implementation of the legislation. A police representative also asked residents to collaborate with PSP officers when they are handling noise-related complaints.

THE meetings of the 1st Legislative Assembly Standing Committee will continue to be held behind closed doors. Macau Conscience, led by political activist Jason Chao, had requested for the committee's meetings to be opened to the public, but lawmakers voted against the proposal, Radio Macau reported.

"There isn't a specific need to open the meetings to the public. The importance that society is putting on this bill cannot be used as an argument. So the majority of the committee members do not agree [with the proposal to open the meetings to the public]," said Kwan Tsui Hang, president of the AL's 1st Standing Committee.

The lawmaker acknowledged that transparency is key in debating the domestic violence legislation. Still, she stressed that such reasoning cannot be used to justify a different handling of a particular law.

She revealed that lawmakers will be meeting with associations to debate the Domestic Violence Bill in March.

Closed-door meetings on domestic violence



The Domestic Violence Bill passed its first reading in the AL last month and it is now being discussed in detail by the 1st Standing Committee lawmakers. Last Friday, they questioned the Social Welfare

Bureau again on one of the bill's most controversial items: cases of mild violence which are not to be considered domestic violence.

A slap or pushing someone may not be recognized as do-

mestic violence and therefore could be treated as a semi-public crime, whereas violent acts among family members resulting in serious consequences will be listed as public crimes, according to the new law. **CP**

Portuguese researcher re-launches 'Timeline of Macau History'

Catarina Pinto

HISTORY professor and researcher Beatriz Basto da Silva has launched a new edition of her book "Timeline of Macau History," comprising the history of Macau from the 16th century up until 1999.

"I worked on this latest edition because I still had things to say. The reason behind this edition is that I've put all my effort, yet again, into writing [about the last years before the handover] because this never really stops. There's always something more that we can do, and researching is a passion I have," she said on the sidelines of a ceremony, held at Clube Militar recently, to launch the book's new edition.

The author said that the previous edition was already sold out. And now the extended version of "Timeline of Macau History" is available again in five volumes.

For Professor Beatriz, her books show how the Portuguese and Chinese communities did not live as far apart as they sometimes may appear: "The two communities were closer than history sometimes tells us."

She added that data shows these two cultures were trying to come as close to each other as possible, and that even Macau's neighborhoods come to prove such an idea, as we can see both Chinese and Portuguese heritage almost side by side. "This means that the two communities lived close to one another, and that there weren't 'barriers'

between them," she said.

Professor Beatriz acknowledges that the two communities have had their issues, but they have been able to resolve them throughout time. "Of course, issues take time to be resolved. But we overcome them."

The five volumes go through Macau's major events between the 16th century and 1999. Professor Beatriz acknowledges that she would be interested to see her books translated into English, but that it should be done by an academic institution with the suitable ability and knowledge to translate such a timeline.

Professor Beatriz stressed that someone should also continue her work – perhaps one of her students.

INVESTMENT

A good time to bet on Macau's gaming stocks?

MACAU'S gaming revenue slumped for the eighth consecutive month in January. However, as experts say a rebound is due in the second half of the year, some analysts have made assurances that this might be the right momentum that people need to invest in Macau's gaming stocks, American business news TV channel CNBC reported.

According to Grant Govertsen,

principal analyst at Union Gaming, a slowdown in the decline of monthly gross gaming revenue beckons a period of stabilization, with the decline in gaming revenue due to be "less onerous" in the coming months.

Shares of casino operators plunged over 30 percent last year, but prices are due to rebound. "The government has taken various actions to 'reset' Macau. It seems they

are back into making Macau the preferred entertainment destination of China," said Mr Govertsen.

However, other analysts tend to be more cautious. CIMB maintains a neutral rating. "Unless you see another major shock in terms of policy, we think current valuations are quite supportive," CIMB analyst Michael Ting said, as quoted by CNBC. "On the other hand, we don't see many positive catalys-

ts in the near term," he added.

Credit Suisse is also more prudent, with analysts writing in a report that "even if gross gaming revenue recovers gradually into the second half [of the year], the sector would still be trading at a price-earnings ratio of about 18.4 times expected 2015 earnings, versus the historical average of 17.6 times, leaving limited upside."

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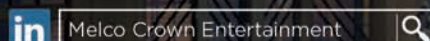
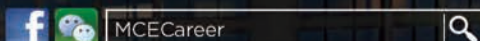
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43 pct of taxis fail roadside emission tests

THE Transport Bureau (DSAT) has revealed that only 57 percent of the taxis that took part in random roadside emission tests in 2014 met the standard. The Bureau has been conducting roadside emission tests on diesel vehicles in collaboration with the Public Security Police since 2010. The authorities conducted roadside emission tests on 625 diesel vehicles in 2014, with 497 of them passing the test.



The bureau revealed that in 2014, the authorities conducted the test on 51 taxis and found that 22 of them fell below the emission standard, with an overall passing rate of 57 percent. However, the result was said to be better than in 2013, which saw a pass rate of only 43 percent. The situation is better for light trucks, with 153 out of 239 light trucks passing the test. Other types of diesel vehicles, including heavy trucks, shuttle buses and regular buses, all achieved pass rates of above 80 percent.

The authorities claimed that they will strengthen the mo-

nitoring on exhaust emissions by light trucks, taxis and shuttle buses in 2015. They also called on residents to report to the authorities any vehicles that they find to be emitting excessive exhaust fumes.

Separately, the Public Security Police (PSP) announced it fined 810 taxis in January for breaching regulations. According to a TDM report, thirty-seven percent were fined for overcharging and rejecting customers. Data shows that

157 cases (19 percent) relate to overcharging, while rejection of customers accounted for 129 cases (16 percent).

Other fines were related to illegal parking, or stopping on yellow lines. Furthermore, 296 violations relate to taxi drivers breaching their obligations.

Authorities have called on taxi drivers to abide by the law, and have urged residents and tourists to report any taxi driver misbehavior to the Transport Bureau or the PSP.

Alexis Tam joins global tourism meeting in Cambodia

THE Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Alexis Tam, has taken part in the first ever World Conference on Tourism and Culture.

The meeting, organized by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), took place in Siem Reap last week. Around 1,100 guests from across 99 countries and regions attended the event, including more than 40 tourism and culture ministers, as well as officials, tourism enterprise representatives, scholars and reporters from all over the world.

Participants shared their opinions and experience on the sustainable collaboration between culture and tourism, as well as the opportunities and risks generated from such cooperation. They also discussed the elimination of poverty through utilizing culture and tourism to create jobs, as well as how to protect natural environments and cultural heritage.

During the three-hour-long ministerial dialogue on Wednesday afternoon, Alexis Tam gave a speech expressing the MSAR government's concern about the protection of cultural heritage, as well as its wishes

to foster the collaborative partnership of culture and tourism.

He said that while Macau may be famous for its gaming tourism, it is the territory's combination of culture and tourism that is the most attractive. He said that he appreciated the meeting organizer's emphasis on establishing cooperation between culture and tourism, and said that Macau will be looking to learn from other countries.

Edmund Ho, the former MSAR Chief Executive and current vice president of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, was also invited to attend the event. Alexis Tam accompanied Edmund Ho in meetings with the Cambodian Prime Minister, Hun Sen, the Assistant Director-General for Culture at the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Alfredo Pérez de Armiñán, and the UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai.

Alexis Tam and Macau Government Tourist Office director Helena de Senna Fernandes also visited the Cambodian Minister of Tourism, Dr Thong Khon.

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China clamps down on foreign casinos wooing Chinese gamblers

Stephanie Wong and Billy Chan

CHINA is starting a crackdown to stop foreign casinos from luring its citizens to gamble overseas, as the government extends its campaign against corruption that's already prompted high-stakes gamblers to avoid Macau.

The authorities will focus its assault on casino operators from neighboring countries that have set up offices "to attract and recruit Chinese citizens" to gamble abroad, Hua Jingfeng, a deputy director at China's Ministry of Public Security, said at a briefing held in Beijing on Friday.

Galaxy Entertainment Group Ltd. led gains among Macau casino shares after news of the crackdown, jumping 7.1 percent by the close of trading in Hong Kong for its biggest rise since April 2014. While shares reacted positively on the anticipation players would return to Macau from overseas casinos, the overall tone is still negative, Credit Suisse Group AG analysts said.

While marketing of gambling activities has generally not been allowed in China, "re-iteration of this anti-gambling by the official means we don't see little room near term for China to relax visa trends to Macau soon," Credit Suisse analysts led by Kenneth Fong wrote in a note.

Chinese President Xi Jinping's two-year battle against corruption and Macau's stricter travel rules have deterred high-stakes gamblers from entering Macau, the world's biggest gaming hub that relies on so-called VIPs for a majority of the city's revenue. Some Chinese gamblers have instead opted for casinos in countries inclu-



ding the Philippines, South Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Australia and Singapore.

"Some foreign countries think of us as a big market,

Some foreign countries think of us as a big market, and we have already investigated a series of related cases

HUA JINGFENG

and we have already investigated a series of related cases," said Hua, according to a People's Daily transcript of the briefing, where the ministry announced a wider clampdown on online gambling and prostitution.

Hua, deputy director of the ministry's bureau of public security management, didn't specify the countries.

Wynn Macau Ltd. closed 3.5 percent higher, Sands China Ltd. and Melco Crown Entertainment Ltd. both gained 3.1 percent, MGM China Holdings Ltd. climbed 2.6 percent, while SJM Holdings increased 1.4 percent. Hong Kong's benchmark Hang Seng index closed down 0.4 percent.

The crackdown on foreign

casinos' representative offices won't impact existing gamblers, who already know those casinos, or on new VIP players, who're brought to them by junket operators, according to Fong.

"Having a much stronger control over the casino representative office in China means this will make their job more difficult to find new players," Fong said, adding that it will hit the recovery for new premium mass market players, referring to high-stakes bettors who don't rely on junkets for gambling loans.

NagaCorp Ltd., which has a casino in Cambodia, is trying to woo more higher-spending Chinese gamblers to its property by working with more

Macau's junket operators, the middlemen who bring in Chinese high rollers for casinos, Chairman Timothy McNally said in an interview last week.

The company is hiring more people in Macau and mainland China and working with travel agencies to draw more customers, McNally said. NagaCorp shares fell 0.34 percent.

Echo Entertainment Group Ltd., operator of Sydney's only casino, is taking more bets by Chinese VIPs, Chief Executive Officer Matt Bekier said.

Macau junket operator David Group, which was closing three of its seven VIP rooms in the city amid the industry downturn, has said it is taking more wealthy customers beyond Macau to Asian centers with more relaxed visa approval process, such as Manila, Vietnam and South Korea.

Macau's government is stepping up regulations of the gaming industry, including tightening scrutiny on junket operators and the use of China UnionPay debit cards at casinos in Macau to obtain cash for gambling.

A hotel executive who's a nephew of casino tycoon and SJM Holdings Ltd. founder Stanley Ho was arrested last month in the largest bust of a prostitution ring in the city's history, in a sign that Xi's crackdown was expanding to include long-tolerated vices. **Bloomberg**

New move likely to 'inflame jitters among junket operators'

THE intent to prevent foreign gaming operators from being able to attract and recruit Chinese citizens to gamble abroad, a view that was announced by the powerful Ministry of Public Security, has sparked several reactions from gaming insiders and the media.

In an article titled "China's president just declared war on global gambling," Business Insider stated, "In other words, Xi is telling companies around the world that saw their revenue triple when Macau opened up to foreigners that the Chinese gambler will not be following them abroad to countries like

Singapore and the Philippines where billions have been spent on new projects to attract those same people."

Business Insider also predicts that Chinese gamblers won't be visiting Macau as much as before, since Beijing has pledged to cut down on advertisements promoting Macau casinos, visa restrictions are being tightened, and officials are paying closer attention to the monitoring of UnionPay money flows.

Wells Fargo analyst Cameron McKnight argues in a recent note that the revenue slowdown is here to stay. "We believe that the Macau government

has embraced the 'new normal' environment, evidenced by the changes in government leadership and a tough stance on smoking, dealer labor, and gaming tables," he wrote

A casino insider in Macau is cited in yesterday's South China Morning Post edition as saying that Hua Jingfeng's statements are likely to "inflame jitters among junket operators, as it looked like Beijing was attempting to close off the places that were looking to take up the slack left by the Macau clean-up campaign."

"The next two or three months are going to be crucial for not only the Chinese authorities, and their bid to clean things up, but also the junkets and casino companies. The post-Lunar New Year period is going to be very interesting," the SCMP source said. **PB**

LRT

New Macau forum slams 'collective irresponsibility'

João Pedro Lau

IN a public forum organized by the New Macau Association (ANM) yesterday at the Luís de Camões Garden, panel guests criticized local government officials for being "collectively irresponsible." They also urged the administration to release a final budget and time frame for the LRT construction as soon as possible.

The forum was arranged to discuss the delay and budget blow-out of the LRT project. Lam U Tou, vice-president of the Choi In Tong Sam Association, said that it is crucial for the Macau government to reveal the total cost of the project and the proposed route of the LRT phase one before the public can make a rational choice on how the route should be planned, or whether it is worth constructing the LRT at all.

Mr Lam also argued that there is a culture of "collective irresponsibility" among public servants, which led to their re-



luctance to make any decisions. "From the rank-and-file [public servants] to the mid-level to senior officials, nobody wants to make any decisions. Instead, all matters were reported to their superiors and the officials do not hold any opinions on any issues," he said. "If this 'collectively irresponsible' culture is not corrected, the LRT construction will not be

completed, even if you were to sack 100 officials."

Moreover, Lam criticized the Macau government for failing to provide a general direction for the future of the Macau transportation system. "It wouldn't matter if [Macau's transportation] plans are to prioritize pedestrians, private vehicles, public transportation such as buses

or the LRT. At least we would have a direction... Now, no matter whether we want to control the growth of vehicle numbers or improve the bus system, there is no direction," he said.

Lam has called on the administration to come up with a new plan for Macau's transportation system, to clarify the role of LRT, and to give higher priority to the

residents who choose to walk.

Meanwhile, another panel guest, lawmaker Ng Kuok Cheong, also urged the government to come up with an overall budget for the LRT construction. He said that before the government can legislate the proposed Budget Law, it should first create an official mechanism that focuses on monitoring the budget and progress of the LRT construction

Nobody wants to make any decisions

LAM U TOU

so that everybody can scrutinize the project. He said that this mechanism can also serve as a model so that other future construction projects can be scrutinized in the same manner after the proposed Budget Law has passed the Legislative Assembly (AL).

Furthermore, the lawmaker cited the thesis of the 2014 Nobel laureate, Jean Tirole, in calling for a second entity, namely the AL, to monitor the LRT construction, rather than solely relying on the Transportation Infrastructure Office.

Joint meeting to be held in Macau

The 20th EU-Macau Joint Committee meeting will be held in the MSAR before the end of this year, the head of the EU Office in Hong Kong and Macau, Mr Vincent Piket, told newspaper Plataforma. Mr Piket traveled to Macau on January 29 to give a talk on "The EU's new leadership: What's on the agenda in 2015?", as organized by the European Union Academic Program in Macau. Mr Piket also met with government representatives in Macau to discuss trade, investment, policy and furthering cooperation – matters on the agenda for both regions. The head of the EU Office in Hong Kong and Macau said that enhancing cooperation between the European Union member states and Macau could help diversify the MSAR's economy.

Visa-free travel to Hengqin for tourists proposed



Hengqin new area plan display room

A Macau representative in the Guangdong People's Political Consultative Conference (PPCC) has proposed further collaboration between Guangdong and Macau on tourism. The suggestion includes allowing foreign visitors in Macau to travel to Hengqin visa-free when traveling within a 24-hour period.

Ke Haifan, the chairperson of the China Travel Service in Macau, said in a speech at a Guangdong PPCC session yesterday that the authorities should adopt some innovative ideas in terms of immigration control that will enable foreign visitors, who are traveling

to Macau, to visit Hengqin without the need for a visa for up to 24 hours. She believes that this could attract more foreign visitors to Hengqin, and could transform the island from a location for transit into a tourist destination.

Ms Ke also advised the authorities to look into the idea of single border inspections, so that residents and visitors of Guangdong and Macau only need to present their documents and clear customs at either side of the border. She thinks that this could bring more convenience to those having to cross the checkpoint.

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ENTERTAINMENT

Venetian celebrates Chinese New Year in style

THE Venetian Macao has prepared a “Seasons of Prosperity” fiesta in the resort’s outdoor area to welcome residents and visitors coming to celebrate the Chinese New Year (CNY). It features events such as a CNY-themed mini model exhibition, a 3D light and sound spectacular, and the “Creative Creatures - Art and the Chinese Zodiac” goat sculpture exhibition.

One of the highlights of the event is the popular 3D light and sound show named “Seasons of Prosperity”. It takes place from February 6 to March 1 between 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. at 30-minute intervals. Visitors will see traditional CNY imagery, including dragons, ‘fai chun’ and goats, adorning the Venetian’s façade.

Another highlight is the CNY-themed mini model exhibition, an all-day exhibition that will take place between February 13 and March 1. It features detailed mini models depicting scenes in both Macau and Hong Kong from the 1960s to the 1980s, and shows how CNY was celebrated and the rituals that were observed during that period.

Apart from the mini models exhibition, the 3D illusion paintings exhibition is another all-day event. These paintings involve symbols and imagery that are associated with CNY, such as dragons, money, and cherry blossoms. Both the 3D illusion paintings exhibition and the mini models exhibition are free and will be open to visitors during the same period as the Venetian’s outdoor lagoon area.

Other performances that are part of the “Seasons of Prosperity” include a rhythmical drum performance, interactive magic acts and LED lion dances. The three performances will take place from February 19 to 25 in different time slots. The drum performance will take place between 4.15 p.m. and 5.15 p.m., the magic act between 4.30 p.m. and 5.30 p.m. and the LED



Sands China senior vice president of marketing Scott Messinger

lion dance between 6.40 p.m. and 7.40 p.m.

To provide visitors with more of a surprise, the “God of Fortune” will also make an appearance among the crowd at the lagoon area during the same period between 2.30 p.m. and 6.30 p.m.

Among all the events taking place as part of “Seasons of Prosperity”, one of the most eye-catching is, without doubt, the “Creative Creatures - Art and the Chinese Zodiac” goat sculpture exhibition. Before se-

ttling at various exhibiting locations in the outdoor areas of the Venetian and throughout Macau, the 38 sculptures and their designers were present at the “Seasons of Prosperity” opening ceremony on February 5.

“It is our great pleasure to once again entertain visitors and locals alike with our spectacular entertainment offerings at The Venetian Macao this Chinese New Year. We are pleased to sponsor ‘Anno Caprum,’ particularly as it supports and offers a platform to local artis-

ts to showcase their significant talents to the world, but also because it is a truly unique addition to our annual festivities,” Sands China senior vice president of marketing Scott Messinger said during his speech at the ceremony.

While saying that he should not play favorites, Mr Messinger said that one of the goat sculptures he had noticed when entering the venue depicts a goat wearing boxer shorts with a pair of boxing gloves hanging around its neck. “I would like to

think of it as some small way of recognizing not only Macau’s strong commitment to boxing over the last 18 months, but also, and very importantly, the career of KK Ng,” he said, reminding the guests that the undefeated local professional boxer will feature in a fight at the Cotai Arena on March 7.

The Times spoke to several artists who attended the ceremony. One of them was Pat Lam, the artist who decorated the boxing-themed goat sculpture that Mr Messinger mentioned. Lam said that he started conceptualizing his creation through breaking down the word “goat” into “go at,” and came up with the phrase “have a go at it,” which is also the name of his sculpture. He said that he wanted the goat to pursue something that it has never done, and thus Lam decided to make it a boxer.

Another participating artist is the Times’ cartoonist, Rodrigo de Matos. He named his sculpture “goatiger” painted it with a tiger pattern. He said that his creation came from the idea of combining two types of animals together. “What I want to express is the reinvention of nature, as if we could intervene so much in the animals that they could become something else,” he said. “That doesn’t mean that it’s a special critique against the use of genetic engineering or something like that. It’s more of a poetic interpretation of the notion of changing and intervening into nature.”

Macau Daily Times is the media partner of “Seasons of Prosperity”.

DSPA urges residents to adopt eco-friendly attitude over CNY

THE Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) is urging citizens to adopt eco-friendly behavior over the Chinese New Year. Measures such as using an eco-friendly and reusable bag for shopping, avoiding the use of unneeded packaging or buying food in a rational manner are some of the suggestions that the Bureau highlighted in a statement.

The bureau recalled that as many families take the opportunity to offer gifts throughout the ho-



The Secretary for Administration and Justice officiated yesterday the lighting ceremony of the Lunar New Year decorations

liday, they should strive to reduce the number of plastic bags they use by

replacing them with eco-friendly bags.

With Chinese New Year

being a holiday full of traditional delicacies, DSPA also urges citizens

to not waste too much food. The Bureau also suggests that residents should recycle “laisi” envelopes, which can be reused to produce festive decorations, thus avoiding waste at the end of the holiday period.

The Bureau also advises citizens to comply with noise pollution regulations and to pay attention to the noise level of Chinese New Year parties.

Macau’s Fire Department also revealed that it held meetings with major hotel brands in Macau

to exchange information on fire prevention strategies for the duration of the Chinese New Year. Authorities urged major hotel management teams to go over their own fire prevention plans; to manage the expected huge flow of tourists well; and to reinforce communication, so that both parties can be updated in case of any incidents.

The department also urged residents to notify them of any accidents, so to avoid the loss of any lives.


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Pascal's exit from Sony concludes the 'Interview' saga

Jake Coyle, New York

OVER a January weekend in 2010, Amy Pascal made one of the most audacious decisions of her long tenure as Sony Pictures Entertainment co-chair, a nine-year run that has come to a tumultuous end.

When "Spider-Man" director Sam Raimi voiced his unhappiness with plans for a fourth installment of the USD2.5 billion franchise Pascal had shepherded, she abruptly changed course, ordering up one of the fastest reboots in blockbuster history.

"I wasn't troubled by it," Pascal matter-of-factly said at the time. "The Amazing Spider-Man," with Andrew Garfield and Emma Stone, would hit theaters less than five years after "Spider-Man 3."

The episode epitomized Pascal's boldness, a trait that served her well as the most powerful female executive force in the industry, a stu-



Amy Pascal

dio head widely respected for championing women filmmakers (like Nora Ephron and Nancy Meyers), producing ambitious awards-winners ("The Social Network"), churning out sharp comedies ("21 Jump Street") and creating some major blockbusters ("Skyfall").

But that same daring also contributed to her undoing. "The Interview," the film that provoked the North Korean hacking attack that precipitate Pascal's departure,

was the kind of adventurous, star-driven film she loved to make, the kind other, less colorful executives would have surely balked at.

On Thursday, Sony announced that Pascal will step down in May, transitioning to a new production venture at the studio with a four-year contract. Pascal's contract was due for renewal in March, and her ouster was possible, maybe even likely (the "Spider-man" turnaround, for one, has underperformed and franchise-making is everything in studio-land).

But the timing was obvious enough. Coming just a few months after the massive hack hit Sony, Pascal's exit is the final blow in the messy fallout of the "Interview" scandal kicked off by hacker threats and fueled by embarrassing email leaks. It turned Pascal into a tabloid figure, tailed by TMZ cameras and pleading for forgiveness for racial remarks in emails in which she joked about President Obama's presumed

taste in movies.

"In recent months, SPE faced some unprecedented challenges, and I am grateful for Amy's resilience and grace during this period," said Sony Pictures CEO Michael Lynton, who for now becomes the temporary film production head.

Conjecture immediately began swirling at who may succeed Pascal, a Sony executive for nearly 20 years. The parent company in Japan, which has struggled in recent years, may look to shake up its movie business, or it could promote from within.

There are several strong candidates already on Sony's Culver City lot. Among them: Columbia Pictures president Doug Belgrad, TriStar Pictures head Tom Rothman (head of Fox until 2012), former DreamWorks executive Michael De Luca; and Jeff Robinov, the former Warner Bros. chief whose production company Studio 8 resides at Sony. AP

corporate bits

4 TEAMS QUALIFY FOR RED BULL WINNING 5 HONG KONG AND MACAU FINAL



The Red Bull Winning 5 Macau Qualifier was successfully held on Saturday at Macau Tower Outdoor Plaza. After a full day of intense competition, 'Blue Sky', 'Beach Boys', 'Vita Green' and 'Tin Yuk Friends' qualified for the Red Bull Winning 5 Hong Kong and Macau Final. They will fight against the top 4 of 32 participating Hong Kong teams for the championship title next Sunday February 15th in Hong Kong.

Red Bull Winning 5, a 5-on-5 football tournament with only five members on each team and no goalkeeper, has come to Macau/Hong Kong for the first time. Teams lose a member every time they concede a goal, until there are no players left on one team, or till the end of 10 minutes. The team with the highest score by the end of the game wins.

This is the first time Red Bull has held a sporting event in Macau. It attracted a large number of applications and only 18 teams were accepted based on a first come first serve basis. Local professional footballers from Macau's Division 1 league, such as Alison Agnes, Pedro Clementes and Samuel Ramoseau participated, and two of them will proceed to the finals with their respective Macau Winning 5 teams.

'Blue Sky', 'Beach Boys', 'Vita Green' and 'Tin Yuk Friends' all entered the Red Bull Winning 5 Hong Kong and Macau Finals. Fabio Ritchie, the Beach Boys team captain said, 'The rules of the game [are] very unique and different from [an] ordinary football game. After scoring or conceding a goal, the energy level on and off the field changes drastically – the crowd was so into the game and for us players, it was such a thrill!'

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Record trade surplus highlights weak domestic demand



CHINA registered a record trade surplus last month as imports plunged on falling commodity prices and weak domestic demand.

Imports fell by the most in more than five years, declining 19.9 percent from a year earlier. That compared with estimates for a 3.2 percent drop in a Bloomberg survey of analysts. Exports slid 3.3 percent, leaving a trade surplus of USD60 billion, the customs administration in Beijing said.

A property downturn and a stall in manufacturing are signals the government may need to step up measures to stimu-

late the economy, as domestic demand for commodities including crude oil and iron ore declines. The record trade

The slump in imports means a slump in the overall situation of the economy

HU YIFAN
CHIEF ECONOMIST
HAITONG INTERNATIONAL
SECURITIES GROUP LTD.

surplus, combined with declines in exports and imports, complicates the government's management of exchange rates after January's depreciation.

"It seems that sharp decline in commodity prices, weak domestic demand and weak external demand, reflected in processing imports, all played a role in the decline in imports," said Wang Tao, chief China economist at UBS Group AG in Hong Kong. "Trade data again creates a dilemma for the exchange rate. A record trade surplus is supposed to add appreciation pressure, but declining exports would say

otherwise."

It's not in China's interest to let the yuan depreciate sharply, Liu Ligang and Zhou Hao at Australia & New Zealand Banking Group Ltd. wrote in a note.

"China's central bank will continue to use a slew of instruments, including fixing rates, open market operations, and direct interventions, to prevent the RMB from weakening sharply," they wrote.

Value of crude oil imports fell 41.8 percent from a year earlier, iron ore imports dropped 50.3 percent and coal plummeted 61.8 percent. Quantities

of the commodities declined as well. Imports declined from all major trade partners, including the European Union and the U.S.

Falling prices have cut the dollar value of imports and contributed to a prolonged decline in factory gate prices, which may extend to a record 35 months, according to economist estimates.

"The slump in imports means a slump in the overall situation of the economy," said Hu Yifan, chief economist at Haitong International Securities Group Ltd. in Hong Kong. "We are going to see more of these alarming data in the next few months."

China's central bank announced a cut to banks' reserve ratio requirements Feb. 4 to offset liquidity outflows and bolster lending.

The slumping exports "underscore concerns about fading competitiveness and weak external demand," Bloomberg economist Tom Orlik wrote in a note. Exports trailed the median estimate of a 5.9 percent increase.

The exports and imports figures, both alarming, "reinforce the case for further moves toward stimulus," Orlik wrote, as he expects one more benchmark interest rate cut in the first quarter.

The surprisingly weak data need to be interpreted with caution, he wrote, as the seasonal effect of Chinese New Year, an artificially high base last year and falling prices may exaggerate the weakness.

Exports to the European Union, Hong Kong and Japan fell 4.4 percent, 10.9 percent and 20.4 percent respectively. Shipments to Russia plunged 42.1 percent.

The decline in exports to Hong Kong may be partially attributed to the government's crackdown on fake invoicing, used by companies to avoid limits on bringing foreign currency onshore, according to Orlik and Haitong's Hu. **Bloomberg**

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TAIWAN

TransAsia gives money to victims' families for funeral costs



Search and rescue divers continue to look for missing passengers from a commercial airplane crash in the water in Taipei

Gladys Tsai, Taipei

TRANSASIA Airways representatives met yesterday with relatives of the victims of last week's plane crash in Taiwan to discuss compensation after it began distributing money to families of the deceased for funeral costs.

At the river crash site, divers tried to find the bodies of the

three people still missing by using metal detectors to locate their watches or seat belts.

At least 40 people died after the propeller-jet crashed into the muddy Keelung River minutes after takeoff Wednesday from Taipei's airport. Fifteen of the 58 people aboard the plane were rescued.

Preliminary investigations indicate the pilots of the TransAsia Airways ATR 72 shut off a

running engine after its other engine went idle, a move that aviation experts said was an error.

A spokesman for France-based plane maker ATR said yesterday that their aircraft were equipped and designed to fly on a single engine. The spokesman spoke on condition of anonymity in line with company rules.

The bulk of the passengers were from the Chinese mainland.

A TransAsia spokeswoman, Fang Chia-wen, said a second meeting would be held Wednesday to discuss compensation matters further. She said the airline had already begun distributing 1.2 million Taiwan dollars (USD38,000) per victim to families for funeral expenses.

Premier Mao Chi-kuo told Taiwan's private Formosa TV yesterday that the priority was to find the three missing people. Longer-term, he said the country needs to work on improving "our civil aviation in terms of its management and training."

Huang Han-chung, a mem-

ber of the underwater search team, also told the station that rescuers were using metal detectors, which had already been used to locate pieces of wreckage.

"Some bodies might have some metal on them, like necklaces, watches and coins, which will be detected," said Wu Jun-hung, a Taipei city fire department official. "There are still four seats missing, so it's possible that the victims are still fastened in their seats by seat belt, that they sunk together with the seats to the bottom of the bank." **AP**

TRANSASIA PILOTS UNDERGO PROFICIENCY TESTS FOLLOWING CRASH

THE DOZENS of pilots who operate TransAsia Airways' ATR propeller-jets began proficiency tests on Saturday, three days after one of the carrier's ATRs crashed into a river, killing at least 40 people. The airline said it had canceled 90 flights over the next three days to accommodate the requirement by Taiwan's Civil Aeronautics Administration that all 71 of its ATR pilots be retested.

Preliminary investigations indicate the pilots of Wednesday's doomed flight shut off a running engine after its other engine went idle. "It's a mistake," said John M. Cox, a former US Airways pilot and now head of a safety-consulting com-

pany. "There are procedures that pilots go through — safeguards — when you're going to shut down an engine, particularly close to the ground. Why that didn't occur here, I don't know."

Local prosecutors have said they will look into the possibility of "professional error."

Thomas Wang, head of Taiwan's Aviation Safety Council, said Saturday that it was too early to reach conclusions about any pilot error. Pratt & Whitney Canada, the plane's engine maker, and the safety council have begun to examine both of the aircraft's engines, a process that can take four months, Wang said.

Authorities seize toilet paper bearing image of Hong Kong leader

Didi Tang, Beijing

AUTHORITIES in southern China have seized about 8,000 rolls of toilet paper and another 20,000 packages of tissues containing unflattering images of Hong Kong's pro-Beijing chief executive, according to an official of the small political party that placed the order.

The items were to be sold at a market in Hong Kong during Lunar New Year celebrations later this month, said Lo Kin-hei, a vice chairman of

the Hong Kong Democratic Party.

The seizure came after Hong Kong was shaken by a massive pro-democracy movement in which demonstrators demanded greater electoral freedom than Beijing is willing to grant. During the demonstrations, protesters expressed anger at Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying, calling him a puppet of Beijing, and asked him to step down.

No reason was given for the seizure of the USD12,900 worth of goods in the city of Shen-

zhen, outside of Hong Kong, Lo said.

"I guess (the Chinese authorities) don't like people mocking government officials, especially high-ranking government officials, after the movement. They have become more cautious about criticisms about them," he said.

The party's 4,000 rolls of toilet paper with Leung's image sold out at last year's seasonal market, and it decided to get more this year from a factory in Shenzhen, Lo said.

The images of Leung on the novelty products are



Rolls of toilet paper and packages of tissue paper printed with images of pro-Beijing Hong Kong Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying

cartoonish and unflattering. One has him bearing two fangs, and another has the word "lying" on his forehead. The sickle-and-hammer symbol of the Communist Party of China also appears on some products.

The order was placed under the name of a friend to obscure the par-

ty as the true buyer, and all communications were done through the friend instead of the party, Lo said.

Citing the need to protect the manufacturer, Lo declined to reveal the factory's name and said he had no information on the whereabouts of the factory owner. "We

are worried about what has happened to him," Lo said.

Calls to Shenzhen police rang unanswered on Saturday, and there was no official report about any seizure of toilet paper.

Lo said he found the act worrisome because it indicates further tightening by Chinese authorities on freedom of speech, which is guaranteed in Hong Kong's constitution.

"Many productions in Hong Kong rely on the mainland. This kind of tightening means in the future it will be more difficult to make products in the mainland," Lo said. "It's alarmful for Hong Kong people that they keep suppressing freedom in Hong Kong. We will become the mainland if this kind of mocking will be not allowed in Hong Kong." **AP**

AUSTRALIA

Abbott moves up leadership challenge

Rod McGuirk, Canberra

AUSTRALIAN Prime Minister Tony Abbott said yesterday he has moved up a challenge to his leadership to today in the interests of ending uncertainty about his government's direction.

The challenge was triggered by disgruntled government lawmakers last week and was to be discussed on Tuesday at the first scheduled meeting for the year of the ruling Liberal Party's 102 lawmakers. But Abbott said he had arranged a special meeting for this morning, leaving some lawmakers scrambling to book earlier flights to the nation's capital.

"The last thing Australia needs right now is instability and uncertainty," Abbott said.

Abbott has come under increasing criticism from some members of his own party — which is conservative despite its name — over the government's sagging approval ratings. Polls have slumped since May, when the government's first annual budget was widely criticized as toughest on the poor and most vulnerable.

A polarizing figure, Abbott likes to project himself as a macho man of action, but he also has image problems, particularly among female voters.



Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott

Recently, he drew widespread criticism by making Queen Elizabeth II's 93-year-old husband, Prince Philip, an Australian knight on Australia's national day. Many saw it as an insult to worthy Australians.

Public dislike of Abbott has been blamed in part for big election losses for conservative governments in Victoria state in November and Queensland

state last month.

If a so-called spill motion passes today, the positions of prime minister and his deputy, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, will be declared open. There would then be secret ballots of Liberal lawmakers to either return Abbott and Bishop or replace them.

Abbott is counting on a majority of his party colleagues

defeating the motion so that the ballots don't take place and the level of his support is not tested.

No lawmaker has yet announced he or she would be prepared to run against Abbott if the motion passed.

Communications Minister Malcolm Turnbull, who led the party in opposition until he lost to the more conservative

Abbott in a leadership ballot in 2009 by a single vote, is touted as the favorite to replace him. Turnbull refused to say yesterday whether he would contest the leadership.

"The Cabinet ministers are all expected to support the prime minister on a spill motion," Turnbull told Nine Network television, indicating that he would vote against the motion.

Government lawmakers had mixed reactions to the news that the leadership crisis would be discussed hours before Parliament is due to sit for the first time this year. Some first heard of the change through the media.

Arthur Sinodinos, a senator who is critical of Abbott and who has announced his support for the motion, said his colleagues' decision should not be rushed. Party members "should be given time to discuss the matter at hand. Tuesday is the time to do that. It is disappointing," Sinodinos told Fairfax Media.

Abbott wants to maintain Australia's ban on same-sex marriage and is opposed to making polluters pay for their greenhouse gas emissions. His government made good an election promise by abandoning Australia's carbon tax last year. **AP**

NORTH KOREA

Pyongyang says it test-fires anti-ship cruise missile

NORTH Korea said Saturday that it has test-fired a new anti-ship cruise missile, a move experts in Seoul viewed as an attempt to raise tensions ahead of joint military drills between the United States and South Korea.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was on-site to observe the successful testing of the "ultra-precision" rocket conducted by the country's East Sea fleet, the North's official Korean Central News Agency said. The official Rodong Sinmun newspaper published front-page photos of Kim watching a missile being fired off a naval vessel, although the state media outlets did not mention the time or location of the exercise.

Yang Uk, a Seoul-based security expert and an adviser to South Ko-



A man watches a TV news program showing that North Korea's Rodong Sinmun newspaper front-pages a photo of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, center, on-site to watch the testing of a new missile, at Seoul train station in Seoul

rea's navy, said the North Korean missile looked similar to Russia's KH-35 anti-ship missile, which has a range of about 130-140 kilometers and is capable of traveling at high speeds while staying close to the

sea's surface.

North Korea began importing KH-35 missiles in the mid-2000s and the test-firing suggests that the country has succeeded in producing missiles of similar design domestically, Yang said.

Yang Moo-jin, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul, said North Korea was demonstrating its military capabilities ahead of next month's annual U.S.-South Korean drills, which

Pyongyang says are a rehearsal for an invasion. The U.S. and South Korea have repeatedly said that the war games are defensive in nature, and that they have no intentions of attacking the North.

North Korea told the

United States last month that it was willing to impose a temporary moratorium on its nuclear tests if Washington scraps the military drills with South Korea this year, but the allies have refused to cancel the exercises. **AP**

NORTH KOREA TEST-FIRES 5 SHORT-RANGE MISSILES INTO THE SEA

IN ADDITION to public consultation, the Housing Bureau also started consulting major social groups for the government's public housing policy. The first body consulted yesterday was the influential General Union of Neighborhood Associations of Macau. Its president, Ng Siu Lai, was quoted by TDM as saying, in response to the Bureau's briefing, that the authority needed to come up with a

policy that puts family housing in 'first place', by securing public flats for those families which cannot afford to buy their own properties. After the Bureau set a 4-year limit for the waiting time for social houses, she also called for a maximum period for economical house applications; along with a reasonable ratio between social and economic houses, in order to meet the various needs of residents.

UBER says it's introducing two new safety features for riders in India in response to concerns about safety that followed a passenger reporting she had been raped by a driver.

The San Francisco taxi alternative company says it will launch a "panic button" in its ride-hailing app that allows riders to notify the police in case of an emergency, and a "safety net" feature that will allow users to share trip details and their location with as many as five other people.

Uber says it is also creating a local team that will respond to reports by riders and will get a notification when the panic button is pressed.

The company says the new features will be available Wednesday. Uber did not say if the new features will be available in other countries, but said in an email that it will have more updates in the coming months.

Uber, valued at USD40 billion, lets passengers summon cars through an app in more than 250 cities around the world. It faces multiple legal and regulatory challenges as it expands in the United States and abroad.

An Uber passenger said she was raped by a driver in New Delhi in December,

INDIA

Uber to introduce 'panic button' safety feature



In this Monday, Dec. 8, 2014 file photo, 32-year-old Shiv Kumar Yadav, center, a driver from the international taxi-booking service Uber, is escorted by police to be produced to a court in New Delhi

and she sued the company in January. The lawsuit alleges Uber isn't doing enough to keep passengers safe, and Uber may also face charges if Indian prosecutors believe it misrepresented the safety of its services.

The company says it plans to improve its safety programs in 2015 and is looking for new ways to screen drivers.

In India, Uber has been banned in New Delhi, the southern technology hub of Hyderabad, and the entire southern state of Karnataka.

The Times of India said Thursday that regulators in Mumbai also supported a ban and that they want Uber to set up emergency support services, put panic buttons in cabs, and display phone numbers for the police and regional transportation office.

On its blog, Uber said the idea of a physical panic button wasn't feasible because it doesn't own the cabs. It added that buttons would be vulnerable to wear and tear and said that if it and other operators were forced to put buttons in cars, passengers might get confused in an emergency.

Uber said it would support physical panic buttons if the owner of the vehicle were responsible for installing them and if the button called the police directly. AP

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NIGERIA

Gov't postpones elections to March 28, cites uprising

Bashir Adigun and Michelle Faul, Abuja

NIGERIA is postponing presidential and legislative elections until March 28 because security forces fighting Boko Haram extremists cannot ensure voters' safety around the country, the electoral commission announced Saturday in a decision likely to infuriate the opposition.

Officials in President Goodluck Jonathan's government have been calling for weeks for the postponement, saying the commission is not ready to hold what promises to be the most tightly contested presidential vote in the history of Africa's biggest democracy.

"Many people will be very angry and annoyed," Independent National Electoral Commission Chairman Attahiru Jega told a news conference Saturday night. "I want to assure all Nigerians, no one is forcing us to make this decision, this is a very weighty decision."

He said the commission had considered holding elections outside of the four northeastern states most affected by the



A protestor holds a banner as Nigerian security forces look on, during a protest in Abuja

uprising by Boko Haram Islamic militants, but decided that the likelihood of an inconclusive presidential election would be "very, very high."

Nigerian elections traditionally are violent and several people already have died in clashes. Some 800 people were killed in protests in the predominantly Muslim north after 2011 elections when Jonathan beat former military dictator

Muhammadu Buhari. Jonathan is a Christian from a minority tribe in the mainly Christian south. Buhari is a Muslim northerner.

Both men are facing off again and supporters of both are threatening violence if their candidate does not win this year's contest, one analysts say is too close to call since opposition parties for the first time formed a coalition led by Buhari.

A statement from Jonathan's party commended the postponement but blamed it on the commission, saying it is suffering "numerous logistical problems and numerous internal challenges."

Buhari's coalition said it was holding an emergency meeting

to discuss the implications of "this major setback for Nigerian democracy." It appealed to all Nigerians "to remain calm and desist from violence."

Jega told reporters that national security advisers and intelligence officers have said security forces need six weeks to conduct "a major operation" against Boko Haram and cannot also safeguard the elections.

He said it would be "highly irresponsible" to ignore that advice and endanger the lives and security of electoral personnel and materials, voters and observers as well as the prospects for free, fair and credible elections. **AP**

BOKO HARAM STAGES NEW ASSAULT ON NIGER BORDER TOWN

BOKO HARAM staged an overnight assault on a border town in Niger, residents said yesterday, the second time the West African nation has come under attack by the Nigeria-based extremists since Friday. The attack on the town of Diffa began Saturday night, and fighting between Boko Haram and Niger's army lasted until 5 a.m. toward the town's southern entrance before the extremists were forced to flee and calm was restored, Diffa resident Adam Boukar said. Officials could not immediately be reached to confirm residents' accounts or give casualty figures. The fight against Nigeria's Boko Haram has taken on an increasingly regional dimension in recent

months, with the extremists staging attacks in both Cameroon and Niger last week alone.

Nearly 100 people were killed and some 500 wounded in an attack on the town of Fotokol in Cameroon on Wednesday and Thursday that saw Boko Haram fighters raze mosques and churches and use civilians as human shields, Cameroon officials said.

On Friday, Boko Haram reached into Niger, attacking Diffa and Bosso, another border town. Chad and Niger troops responded to the assault in Bosso, while Niger's army pushed Boko Haram out of Diffa, inflicting "heavy losses," Niger Defense Minister Mahamadou Karijo said.

MEXICO

Argentine experts question missing student probe

Maria Verza, Mexico City

A team of Argentine forensics experts is questioning Mexico's probe of the disappearance of 43 students, saying that the evidence doesn't support the government's conclusion and that it should be allowed to investigate all theories.

The Argentine Forensic Anthropologists team, hired on behalf of the victims' parents as an independent party, issued what it said was a list of discrepancies in the case. The team had access to forensic evidence and crime scenes along with federal prosecutors and Mexico's own forensic investigators.

Its statement said Mexico's government presented biased analyses of the scientific evidence to support its conclusion that the youths were killed, their bodies burned

to ashes in Cocula in southern Guerrero state and their remains thrown into a river to hide the evidence. So far only one of the students has been identified from charred remains found at the river.

The team "would like to reiterate that it doesn't exclude the possibility that some of the students met the fate described by the attorney general," the experts said in the statement issued after they met with parents. "But in our opinion there is no scientific evidence to support that in the Cocula garbage dump."

The Attorney General's Office didn't respond Saturday to requests for comment on the statement from the Argentine team, which is a nonprofit forensic science organization that investigates human right violations around the world. It was established in 1984 to in-



In this Dec. 18, 2014 file photo, relatives of missing students protest in front of the entrance to the 27th Infantry Battalion base in Iguala

investigate cases of at least 9,000 missing under Argentina's 1976-1983 military dictatorship.

Attorney General Jesus Murillo Karam said Jan. 27 that based on 39 confessions, 386 declarations, 487 forensic tests, 16 raids and two reconstructions, investigators concluded that municipal police arrested the youths in the city of Iguala on Sept. 26 and

handed them over to the Guerreros Unidos cartel. The government alleges gang members killed the students, burned their corpses into the next day using a huge pyre and disposed of the ashes.

Many groups inside Mexico and abroad have questioned Murillo Karam's conclusion as implausible, including that the temperature of an open-air fire could rea-

ch that of a crematorium oven and turn 43 bodies to ash.

According to the Argentine team's statement, there was satellite evidence of many fires at the same dump in the last four years. The team found human remains at the dump that did not belong to the students, including a tooth belonging to a set of dentures. None of the students wore dentures.

The team noted the Attorney General's Office made mistakes in 20 genetic profiles collected from family members of the 43 students that made them unusable for DNA matches. It said such errors are unusual as the process of collecting material is simple.

The prosecutor's office also allowed the dump, a key crime scene, to go unguarded for several weeks, permitting anyone to plant or manipulate

evidence, the team said. It said its members were not present at key moments in the investigation, including when the remains were first found in and along a river and during a Nov. 15 trip to the garbage dump when prosecutors said they found 42 shell casings. The site had not been guarded at that point.

The team said it is important that it have access to the initial chain of custody of the remains found at the river, where a bone fragment was found that led to the identification of only one of the students, Alexander Mora.

Murrillo Karam's January press conference was seen as an effort by the government to finally close the case, which has caused significant political turmoil inside Mexico and protests at home and abroad. He later said he was not trying to close the case. **AP**

Matthew Lee and Geir Moulson, Munich

UKRAINE

Leaders aim to hold summit in Minsk Wednesday

THE leaders of Germany, France, Russia and Ukraine aim to hold a summit in Minsk this week as they try to stem fighting in eastern Ukraine, officials in Germany and France said yesterday.

The plan for a meeting Wednesday in the Belarusian capital emerged from a phone call between German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Francois Hollande, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko. Merkel's spokesman, Steffen Seibert, described the call as "intensive."

The aim is to draw up a package of measures that breathes new life into a much-violated September peace plan. Seibert and the French government said preparations for the summit will take place today in Berlin, without elaborating.

There will also be a meeting in Minsk by Wednesday of the signatories to last September's accord, including Russia, Ukraine and representatives of separatists in eastern Ukraine, they said.

Before the summit Merkel, who met Friday night in Moscow with Russian President Vladimir Putin, is scheduled to meet with President Barack Obama in Washington Monday on a previously scheduled trip.

At an international security conference in Munich, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said the U.S. and its European allies are "united in our diplomacy" on Ukraine. He said the U.S. supports efforts by France and Germany to



Ukrainian troops guard a roadblock between the towns of Vuhlehirsk and Debaltseve

produce a new plan to end the conflict that is now raging in east Ukraine.

Kerry denied that there is a U.S.-Europe rift over how to respond to the crisis and how to deal with Russia's role in it despite a debate over whether to arm the government in

Kiev.

"There is no division, there is no split," Kerry said. "I keep hearing people trying to create one. We are united, we are working closely together."

His comments came amid reports of a deep trans-Atlantic rift over the Obama administration's consideration of

providing defensive weaponry to Kiev. Germany and France oppose such a move, saying it could lead to an escalation and that they do not believe the conflict can be resolved militarily. Russia, which is accused of supporting separatist

rebels in eastern Ukraine, has said the introduction of U.S.-supplied weaponry will have grave consequences.

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, speaking alongside Kerry, reiterated that he considers delivering weapons "not just highly risky but counterproductive."

Kerry said the United States agrees that there is no military solution to the Ukraine crisis that has now killed more than 5,300 people, according to the United Nations.

At the same time, U.S. officials say Obama is rethinking his previous opposition to sending arms to Ukraine despite fears it could lead to a proxy war between Washington and Moscow. The officials have, however, suggested that any such weaponry would be intended to help Kiev defend itself once a peace agreement is reached.

Kerry likened the U.S.-European debate over arms to previous consultations over the breadth and strength of sanctions against Russia.

"The discussion taking place today is absolutely no different — it's tactical, it is not strategic," Kerry said. "On the fundamental goal with respect to Ukraine, we are absolutely united ... we want a diplomatic solution." AP

SLOVAKIA

Vote on gay rights curbs not binding due to turnout

Anationwide referendum on restricting gay rights in Slovakia has failed to produce a legally binding result after the required number of eligible voters did not turn out.

In Saturday's vote, Slovaks were asked whether they agree to three points: that marriage can only be called a union between a man and a woman; that same-sex partners must be barred from adopting children; and that it's up to parents to decide whether their children receive sex education.

The vote was forced by the Alliance for Fa-



A billboard depicting Pope Francis with his thumb up, located at Klokocina district in Nitra, Slovakia, invites voters to the Slovak national referendum on the protection of the traditional family

mily, a social conservative group that received a massive support from the Catholic Church.

With all the votes tallied early yesterday by the country's Statistics Office, voters in the predominantly Catholic country overwhelmingly voted "yes" — 95, 92 and 90 percent, respectively — to the three questions.

But turnout reached only 21.4 percent, far less than the 50 percent needed.

"It's a success of Slovakia's democracy," said Silvia Porubanova, an analyst.

A leader of the alliance, Anton Chromik, said he was delighted that a clear majority of the voters who participated in the ballot supported the alliance and called it "a good base" for its further activities.

Romana Schlesinger, a LGBT activist said, she

hoped the government will now work to make it possible for same-sex couples to live in registered partnership "because all our partnerships, our families are living without legal recognition or protection."

Slovakia doesn't allow same-sex partners to live in registered partnerships and the country's constitution was amended last year to define marriage as a union between a man and a woman.

The vote in Slovakia — which follows a similar one that succeeded in Croatia in 2013 — points to a cultural divide within the European Union in which more established western members are rapidly granting new rights to gays, while eastern newcomers entrench conservative attitudes toward LGBT people. AP

what's ON

"BEYOND THE SURFACE, MIO PANG FEI
FEATURED ART EXHIBITION" (MACAU)
TIME: 12pm-8pm (Tuesdays to Sundays)
3pm-8pm (Mondays)

UNTIL: March 1, 2015
VENUE: Albergue SCM - Gallery A2,
Calçada da Igreja de São Lázaro No.8, Macau
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 2852 2550 / 2852 3205

TRANSCEND
- WORKS BY LAI SIO KIT AND SYLVIYE LEI
TIME: 12pm-7pm
(Closed on Sundays and public holidays)
UNTIL: March 7, 2015
VENUE: Estrada da Areia Preta No. 52, Edifício da
Fabrica de Baterias N.E. National, 3rd Floor, Macau
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 2836 6064

IMPRESSION OF MACAU
- OIL PAINTINGS BY ZHEN GUO
TIME: 10am-7pm (Mondays to Fridays, closed on
the public holidays); 3pm-8pm (Saturdays)
UNTIL: March 3, 2015
VENUE: Rui Cunha Foundation Gallery,
Avenida da Praia Grande, n° 749, r/c
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 2892 3288

EXHIBITION OF OIL PAINTINGS & COLLAGES
BY MARCO SZETO
TIME: 10am-7pm
UNTIL: February 18, 2015
VENUE: Dare to Dream flagship store and
art gallery, Calçada da Barra No.16 A,
Edifício San Chak, Macau
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 2830 2012

MACAU SCIENCE CENTRE
TIME: 10am-6pm (Closed on Thursdays)
ADDRESS: Avenida Dr. Sun Yat-Sen
ADMISSION: Exhibition Centre: MOP25
Planetarium (Dome/Sky Shows): MOP50
Planetarium (3D Dome/3D Sky Shows): MOP65
ENQUIRIES: (853) 2888 0822

"SEE AND TOUCH"
- TOUCHABLE ARTS EXHIBITION
TIME: 12pm-7pm (Closed on public holidays)
UNTIL: March 31, 2015
VENUE: Artistry of Wind Box Community
Development Association / Rua Tomas Vieira 3A
R/C
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 6685 9215

Offbeat

RARE MONKEY EATEN BY OTTERS IN
ACCIDENT AT BRITISH ZOO

A British zoo says an endangered monkey that acciden-
tally fell into a pond was eaten by otters.

Bristol Zoo Gardens say the rare golden lion tamarin
monkey, a squirrel-sized species native to Brazil, was clim-
bing on a branch when it fell and became trapped in the
otter enclosure last month. The zoo said staff arrived too
late to intervene.

The zoo made the statement after a whistleblower disclo-
sed a series of animal deaths at the institution, including an
endangered Visayan warty piglet that was eaten by its fa-
ther shortly after it was born in December. The zoo said the
male pig, Elvis, also attacked and killed the piglet's mother.

The zoo's director of conservation Christoph Schwitzer
said despite their best efforts, keepers are unable to pre-
vent unforeseen accidents.

TV canal macau

13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:30	RTPi Live
17:35	Brazil Avenue (Repeat)
18:30	Non-Daily Portuguese News (Repeated)
19:30	Soap Opera
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	TDM Sports
22:10	Brazil Avenue
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Documentary Series
00:35	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
01:05	RTPi Live

cinema

CINETEATRO

5 FEB - 11 FEB



JUPITER ASCENDING

ROOM 1
(2D) 2.30, 4.45, 9.45 pm
(3D) 7.15 pm

Director: Andy Wachowski, Lana Wachowski
Starring: Channing Tatum, Mila Kunis, Eddie
Redmayne
Language: English (Chinese)
Duration: 127min



GANGNAM BLUES

ROOM 2
2.00, 4.30, 7.00, 9.30 pm

Director: Yoo Ha
Starring: Lee Min-ho, Kim Rae-won
Language: Korean (Chinese/English)
Duration: 135min



THE CON ARTIST

ROOM 3
2.30, 4.45, 7.15, 9.30 pm

Director: Kim Hong-sun
Starring: Kim Woo-bin, Lee Hyun-woo, Ko Chang-seok
Language: Korean (Chinese/English)
Duration: 116min

MACAU TOWER

5 FEB - 18 FEB

JUPITER ASCENDING

2.30, 4.30, 7.00, 9.30 pm

Director: Andy Wachowski, Lana Wachowski
Starring: Channing Tatum, Mila Kunis, Eddie
Redmayne
Language: English (Chinese)
Duration: 127min

this day in history

1950 McCARTHY LAUNCHES
ANTI-RED CRUSADE

United States Senator Joe McCarthy has accused
more than 200 staff in the State Department of being
members of the Communist Party.

He made the startling allegation in a public speech
in Wheeling, West Virginia, saying the State Depart-
ment was infested with communists and brandished
a sheet of paper which purportedly contained the
traitors' names.

Senator McCarthy told the Ohio county women's
Republican Club that Secretary of State Dean Ache-
son knew the names of 205 people who were in his
words still "working in and shaping the policy of the
State Department".

His comments brought an immediate denial from
Lincoln White, press officer at the State Department.
Mr White said: "If he is correctly quoted, his allega-
tion that the Secretary of State has a list of 205 Com-
munist Party members who are working and shaping
policy in the State Department is entirely without
foundation."

"We know of no Communist Party members in the
department and if we find any they will be summarily
dismissed. We did not furnish Senator McCarthy with
any such list and we would be interested in seeing
his list."

Senator McCarthy has made his claims against a
background of growing anti-Communist feeling.

Alger Hiss, a former senior public servant, was con-
victed and jailed last month of perjury after being
accused of being an accomplice to a self-confessed
former member of an underground Communist net-
work.

Senator McCarthy's speech also coincides with the
collapse of the Kuomintang regime in China and the
establishment there of a Communist government,
adding to American fears about the global spread of
Communism.

Mr McCarthy was defeated for the Republican no-
mination for the Senate in 1944 but two years later
was able to win the Republican nomination away
from veteran Senator, Robert La Follette.

In the election he beat his Democrat opponent af-
ter a campaign of continuous misrepresentation of
Professor Howard McMurray as a Communist sym-
pathizer.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Two days after this initial outburst, Senator Joe McCarthy
wrote to President Harry Truman saying he had been able to
compile a list of 57 Communists.

On 20 February he delivered a six hour speech to Congress
in which he referred to 81 individuals - not by name but never-
theless identifiable - who he said were members of the Com-
munist Party or loyal to it.

By the time an investigating sub-committee was set up to
look into his claims, his list of communists had dwindled to
10 names. He named Dr Owen Lattimore as "the top Russian
espionage agent".

His claims were not substantiated, but many lost their jobs or
reputations. He used a combination of intimidation and hear-
say evidence to browbeat the accused.

His Communist witch-hunt did win him popular support. At
its height, 25 states passed legislation outlawing communist
organizations.

The conviction in March 1951 of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg
for passing atomic secrets to the Russians also helped fuel his
campaign.

His downfall came when he turned his attentions to the US
Army. His methods were finally exposed to the public during a
televised cross-examination of army personnel following fur-
ther unsubstantiated allegations.

In 1954 he was censured by the Senate committee. His health
declined through heavy drinking and he died in 1957.

YOUR STARS

Aries

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Something small turns out to be a bigger deal than you had feared - so take care of it! This may involve a lifestyle change or something more drastic, but you can definitely take care of it.

Taurus

April 20-May 20

Your social attachments are making life a lot sweeter today - so make sure that you're spreading the love far and wide! Things should start to get pretty interesting by the time you get up tomorrow.

Gemini

May 21-Jun. 21

Gossip is a real problem today - but it's not because of you. In fact, you may not really understand what's going on until the rumor mill turns on you. Do what you can to set people straight.

Cancer

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

The big picture is not that important right now - especially if the tiny details aren't working right. Focus on the small stuff until you're satisfied. Expect a tiny surprise late in the day.

Leo

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

You've got to rethink a few things - and today is perfect for that. Your energy is just right for shifting perspectives and getting others to do the same. Save action for another day.

Virgo

Aug. 23-Sept. 22

When you pore over the little details of today's work, you should find at least one surprise that delights you. Share your findings with your people and see if you can start to move in a new direction.

Libra

Sep.23-Oct. 22

Rely on yourself and your own resources today - you can handle almost anything that comes your way. It's a really good time to clear off that one big project that's been haunting you.

Scorpio

Oct. 23 - Nov. 21

You're planning something new today - so make sure that you're dealing with the right people. Things are definitely moving, and your energy is good enough to know when you're in the right place.

Sagittarius

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

People are not feeling especially generous today, so try to keep your requests small and reasonable. In fact, if you can avoid asking for favors entirely, you should do just fine.

Capricorn

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

You're emotionally stable today, and ready for something totally new. It's a good time to deal with an old problem that has plagued you for years. See if you can push toward something bigger and better!

Aquarius

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Superficial business is keeping you on your toes today, but you should still try to get stuff done. You need to look beneath the surface to really get to the truth of the matter this time.

Pisces

Feb.19-Mar. 20

This isn't one of those times when you need to set up every last detail in advance. In fact, if you get moving quickly, your momentum should be enough to carry you through this phase.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy

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

Easy+

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

Medium

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

Hard

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

WEATHER

CHINA

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

WORLD

Table of weather conditions for various world cities including Moscow, Frankfurt, Paris, etc.

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Put a new price on; 6- Brown ermine; 11- Spy org.; 14- Gandhi's land; 15- Singer Bryson; 16- Tropical cuckoo bird; 17- Class of Indian society; 18- Brother of Moses; 19- Part of UNLV; 20- Rings of a chain; 22- Sniff; 24- Tool to break solid water; 28- Legally responsible; 29- Threaten; 30- Reprimand; 32- Dark cloud; 33- Drive away; 35- Cried; 39- Morale of "NYPD Blue"; 40- Clear (of); 41- Doozy; 42- Hula hoops?; 43- Facial expression used by Elvis Presley; 45- Female horse; 46- Pays to play; 48- Delphic shrine; 50- Second day of the week; 53- Hallowed; 54- Guide; 55- Copycats; 57- Condensed moisture; 58- Babbled; 60- "Who's there?" reply; 65- Surgery sites, briefly; 66- Vows; 67- ___ your life; 68- Non-dairy milk; 69- Large marine mammal; 70- Huge;

DOWN: 1- Rocker Ocasek; 2- Bambi's aunt; 3- NFL scores; 4- Small island; 5- Irish tongue; 6- Slap; 7- Furniture wood; 8- Long objects used to row a boat; 9- Blood letters; 10- Bodily organ; 11- Biblical spy; 12- Counting everything; 13- Bridal path; 21- Bakery worker; 23- Insane female; 24- Drive forward; 25- Quit; 26- China's Zhou ___; 27- Fence of stakes; 28- Chat room chuckle; 30- Secret agents; 31- Yield; 34- Fish-eating eagle; 36- Put into law; 37- Hostess Mesta; 38- Cornered; 43- Filthy place; 44- Stadium din; 47- Of little width; 49- Ascending; 50- Windows predecessor; 51- Alamogordo's county; 52- Informative; 53- Psychics claim to have a sixth one; 55- Architectural pier; 56- Sci-fi author Frederik; 59- Exclamation of relief; 61- French pronoun; 62- RR stop; 63- Calendar abbr.; 64- Med. specialty



USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999
Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
Fire department 28 572 222
Water Supply - Report 1990 992
PJ (Open line) 993
Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333
Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944
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Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
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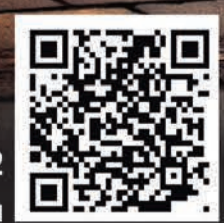
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Joseph Wilson

FOOTBALL

Atletico thrashes Madrid 4-0 in derby to open up title race

ATLETICO Madrid thrashed crosstown rival Real Madrid 4-0 in a dominant derby performance on Saturday that threw open the Spanish league title race.

The defending champion set the tone from the start as Tiago Cardoso and substitute Saul Niguez scored early before Antoine Griezmann and Mario Mandzukic sealed Atletico's most lopsided victory over Madrid since 1987.

It was also Madrid's biggest defeat to any opponent since a 5-0 loss to Barcelona in 2010.

The return of Ballon d'Or winner Cristiano Ronaldo didn't help an injury-hit Madrid, which also got poor showings from its other star players at Vicente Calderon Stadium.

"We played poorly from start to finish. Nothing worked. It's a day to forget," Ronaldo said. "Madrid can't lose to any team 4-0."

Diego Simeone's side extended its undefeated streak against Madrid to six meetings since losing last season's Champions League final in extra time. Atletico has outscored Madrid 12-4 in the undefeated run.

Atletico may have had more important victories over its fiercest rival since ending Madrid's 14-year unbeaten domination of their contests in the 2013 Copa del Rey final, but it had yet to beat Madrid at home in the league since the 1998-99 season.

Simeone, however, downplayed the significance of a win its fans will relish for years to come.

"It's just another league match," Simeone said. "We have our philosophy of going forward one game at a time, partly because we don't know any other way."

Atletico pulled to within four



Mario Mandzukic, top, celebrates his goal with teammate Fernando Torres

points of Madrid. Barcelona also trails Madrid by four before visiting Athletic Bilbao today (Macau time).

Villarreal moved to one point off fourth place and the last Champions League spot by beating Granada 2-0.

David Barral also scored a hat trick to help Levante escape last place with a 4-1 comeback win over Malaga, while Manuel "Nolito" Agudo leveled with five to play to salvage Celta Vigo a 1-1 draw at Real

Sociedad.

Madrid was without injured first-choice players such as James Rodriguez, Sergio Ramos, Pepe and Luka Modric, while Marcelo was suspended. But it still had enough star power with Ronaldo back from a two-match ban for kicking an opponent, along with Gareth Bale, Karim Benzema, and midfield pair Toni Kroos and Francisco "Isco" Alarcon.

None of them could hold back the red-and-white tide.

"Atletico beat us in every facet. We didn't have a player who had a good game," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said. "This is the worst game by my team since I have been coach."

Since finishing 2014 on a Spanish record 22-win streak, Madrid has been eliminated by Atletico from the Copa del Rey, and beaten a second time in the league this season.

Benzema called the defeat "a disaster." Several Madrid players asked their fans for

"forgiveness."

While Atletico overpowered Madrid in the midfield — even after it lost playmaker Jorge "Koke" Resurreccion to a leg injury in the eighth minute — it picked the visitors apart on the wings.

Atletico's first goal in the 12th started when right back Juanfran Torres broke down the flank to send in a cross that was flicked on to Mandzukic. The striker spotted Tiago arriving in a second wave, and he used one touch to drill his strike through the hands of goalkeeper Iker Casillas, who could have done more to keep the ball out.

"Everything went our way from the first minute and we didn't give Madrid a chance," Tiago said. "Our coach again has been boosted because everything he said came to pass. He told us to find spaces to attack Madrid behind its defense and that's what happened."

Four minutes later, Madrid was overrun on the left as Siqueira dribbled to the endline before crossing for Niguez to stun both his teammates and opponents with an acrobatic bicycle kick that sent the ball in off the post.

Atletico went close to a third goal on four occasions before Griezmann beat Raphael Varane to the far post, where he tapped in Niguez's headed pass in the 67th.

Mandzukic polished the result in the 89th when he headed in substitute Fernando Torres' cross. **AP**

AFRICA CUP OF NATIONS

CAF fines Equatorial Guinea over fan violence

AFRICAN soccer's ruling body CAF said it fined Equatorial Guinea USD100,000 after fans disrupted its match against Ghana yesterday.

Equatorial Guinea, which is hosting the Africa Cup of Nations, lost 3-0 in the semifinals to the Black Stars in Malabo. Play was halted eight minutes from the end because of people throwing items onto the field. Riot police had to escort players from the field.

Equatorial Guinea stepped in as host in November after Morocco dropped out over concerns about the spread of the Ebola virus. Today Morocco was banned from the next two tournaments and fined \$1 million, as well as 8 million euros (\$9.1 million) in damages to the CAF, the group said on Twitter.

At least 36 people were injured in the Ghana match, with 14 taken to the hospital for further investigations and one

case requiring close monitoring, CAF said in a statement on its website.

The fine is "for aggressive behavior and being repeat offenders," CAF said. The host must also cover the cost of treating the injured. It will have to play its next match without spectators if there are any incidents at its third-place match against the Democratic Republic of Congo for tomorrow.

Ghana will play Ivory Coast in the final today (Macau time). **Bloomberg**



opinion

Rear Window

Severo Portela



NEW ADJUSTMENT

Chan Wai Kuong, the new director of the Judiciary Police, broke the news during PJ's annual meeting with the local media that gaming-related crimes have increased year-on-year by 16%. Translating the rise into figures, Macau recorded 3,023 felonies of the kind. There were 424 more crimes taking place in casinos in 2014, mainly abductions and loan-sharking.

These are the numbers. We take the cold figures today as an opportunity to emphasize Director Chan's open-mindedness in providing an explanation rather than...just numbers.

The PJ Director acknowledged candidly that the relative growth in gaming-related crimes came as the casino industry "entered an adjustment phase", but he was cautious enough not to go as far as to suggest a linear cause and effect relationship.

This said, we borrow just the "adjustment phase" part in order to point to some of the broad array of problems coming on the horizon, and spin it a bit.

Only occasionally did the "adjustment phase" quasi-slogan mean more than the descent of Macau gambling revenues (gross revenue at USD 44 billion in 2014), and its short-term prospective: the overall impact of the downsizing in the junkets mechanism, and the slow-cooking wild competition for market "house" share, the effects of the downturn in the labor market and in the so-called Small and Medium Enterprise sector. Even the in-your-face growth explosion on the Cotai Strip seems to be downplayed as a natural phenomenon equivalent to the "build it and they'll come".

Only occasionally, did the adjustment-slogan prompt a fast-forward to the re-negotiation of the gaming concessions, and to the eventual revision of the gambling tax system. There hasn't been much opportunity to reflect on this yet mainly because new Secretary Leong only took office on December 20th, barely over one month ago. The fact is that any change on taxes can only occur after an overall re-evaluation of the casino business to be completed this year, and that this reevaluation will serve as the basis to renegotiate the ongoing contracts with the 3+3 operators.

This said, what is on the table, or should be, are the assessment criteria, which the Secretary for Economy and Finance has disclosed and underlined in an unequivocal way: "(The evaluation) will take into consideration other elements besides gaming, like social responsibility, and training workers for non-gaming related activities". We take as granted that everybody would agree that this demand is a polite warning to casino operators about employment as a social responsibility.

If everybody understands the substance of those demands, no one will have difficulty understanding that the re-evaluation process is substantially about checking if the operators have fulfilled their commitments to non-gaming elements. Sands China has no near match in non-gaming activities.

Strictly speaking, non-gaming activities could hardly be the answer to the call to diversify the economy tout court...but it is far from a placebo.

One could say that interested parties would do better to show a more committed attitude toward non-gaming activities, with which all casino operators are contractually obliged to comply. This, far better than dropping hints about political agenda.

THE BUZZ FIRE IN SOUTHERN CHINA MARKET KILLS AT LEAST 17 PEOPLE

A 9-year-old boy playing with a lighter caused a fire at a southern China wholesale market that killed 17 people and injured at least five firefighters, including one who was seriously hurt, officials said Saturday.

The fire broke out Thursday afternoon on the fourth floor of the market in southern Guangdong province and was brought under control that night, said a statement issued Friday by

the Communist Party's propaganda department in Huidong County. On Saturday, the provincial government's news office said investigators found that the blaze was caused by a boy who played with a lighter in front of a store and set merchandise on fire. Local police have taken the boy into custody for further investigation, the provincial news office said in a written statement.

Station	Air quality
Roadside	80-110 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	90-120 Moderate
Ambient	70-100 Moderate

SOURCE: DSMG

SUPER BOWL

Phoenix didn't get rich

Ira Boudway

THE Super Bowl was a thud of a game, a television ratings smash—and a dud for the Phoenix economy, which played host to the big event. New credit card transaction numbers from First Data, a payment processing company, make the Super Bowl look like less of an economic engine than an average January in Phoenix.

The big spenders arriving on private jets and thousands of ordinary spectators did drive an uptick in local consumer spending during the two-week period before the Super Bowl. The pre-game span saw a 3.1 percent increase in credit card spending compared to First Data's transaction numbers from same two weeks last year. But that increase is actually slower than the Super Bowl-free interval in 2014, when sales grew by 6.4 percent from the preceding year.

The data includes credit and debit card transactions at more than 20,000 merchants in the greater Phoenix area that used First Data to process more \$3.5 billion in sales in the two weeks before this year's game. Gas purchases are excluded to filter out the impact of dramatic price decreases at the pump. Here is how the Phoenix numbers compare to the last two Super Bowls in East Rutherford, N.J. (2014) and New Orleans (2013):

The First Data numbers



New England Patriots wide receiver Julian Edelman (11) celebrates after a catch in front of Seattle Seahawks cornerback Byron Maxwell (41) during the first half of NFL Super Bowl XLIX football game

show Super Bowl spending concentrated in predictable places: bars, restaurants, rental cars, and other tourist attractions. Bars, in particular, did well, with 15.8 percent growth around the game compared to 6.1 percent last year. These gains, however, were mostly counteracted by sluggish growth in categories such as building supplies, home furnishings, and groceries—the things normal Phoenix residents buy. Here are some of the most and least improved sectors:

It appears that while tourists were opening their wallets, locals were not. So while hotels saw their average ticket go from \$255 to \$350, according to First Data, the furniture shops of metro Phoenix were down nearly three percent

from last year.

Of course, it's possible that local shoppers will come roaring back to make purchases delayed to avoid Super Bowl traffic and crowds. But this hasn't been the pattern in the past, according to Victor Matheson, an economist at the College of the Holy Cross who has studied the impact of sporting events. "You think, OK, we displaced everyone at Home Depot, but then they just go back the next weekend," says Matheson. "When we go back and look, we don't see that in the data."

Locals, it seems, either clear out of town or join the tourists in dining out, skipping a trip to the grocer. Leisure spending was among the poor performers. This, says Matheson, is likely a case of "crowding out": Super Bowl visitors took the place of those who would otherwise be in town to go to a spa, and people watching the game didn't go to the movies.

On the plus side, Phoenix consumer spending did tick up slightly in January compared to December, when growth was only 2 percent. Credit card data, of course, is not the whole picture. The Super Bowl generates boom times for local advertising and contract work. The consumer data, however, confirms Matheson's skepticism over the numbers tossed around by boosters.

"The impact is big in some areas," says Matheson, "but it's a fraction of what they are claiming." Bloomberg

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

Ron Antonelli/Bloomberg



Revel Atlantic City is seen through a vacant lot between homes on Adriatic Ave. in Atlantic City, New Jersey, U.S. Once the East Coast's gambling hub, Atlantic City has suffered as casinos opened in neighboring states including Pennsylvania and New York after they legalized gambling or expanded betting to increase tax revenue.

WORLD BRIEFS

JORDAN has launched 56 airstrikes against Islamic State group weapons depots, training centers and military barracks since militants released a video of them burning a Jordanian pilot to death, Jordan's air force chief said yesterday. Jordanian officials have said they would retaliate harshly for the slaying of the pilot, Lt. Muath al-Kaseasbeh, who was set ablaze while trapped in a cage.



MALAYSIA Long-haul budget carrier AirAsia X said one of its flights heading from Malaysia to Saudi Arabia turned back yesterday shortly after takeoff due to a technical problem, circling for hours before landing safely in Kuala Lumpur. The incident comes after an AirAsia plane crashed into the Java Sea on Dec. 28 while flying from the Indonesian city of Surabaya to Singapore, killing all 162 people on board. It was the first fatal accident for AirAsia, the region's top budget carrier, which was formed in 2001. AirAsia X is the group's long-haul arm.

UKRAINE The leaders of Germany, France, Russia and Ukraine aim to hold a summit in Minsk this week as they try to stem fighting in eastern Ukraine, officials said yesterday. More on p15



USA Neighbors along a quiet, suburban street outside Atlanta were left horrified after police say a man shot six people, killing four of them, including his ex-wife and several children before ending the rampage by turning the gun on himself. The shooting happened Saturday around 3 p.m. in a housing development west of Atlanta, Douglas County Sheriff's Lt. Glenn Daniel said.

IRAN With an approaching deadline on reaching a nuclear deal with Tehran, Iranian officials yesterday signaled a willingness to come to an agreement, with Foreign Minister Mohammed Javad Zarif telling a gathering of the world's top diplomats and defense officials that "this is the opportunity."