



### ATFPM URGES FOR POLITICAL REFORM

The Macau Civil Servants Association met the Chief Executive and pushed for more directly elected lawmakers

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### MGM ANNOUNCES 'SPECIAL BONUS'

A 'special bonus' to non-management team members at MGM Macau was announced yesterday

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### GOOD LUCK CHICKEN FOR LUNAR NEW YEAR

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# Revamped street hopes to foster local creativity



P3 MDT REPORT

## WORLD BRIEFS



**AFGHANISTAN** Taliban suicide bombers dressed as police officers attacked a police station Tuesday in Afghanistan, killing at least 20 people in the latest assault targeting local security forces, authorities said. The attack happened in Pul-i-Alam, the capital of Logar province, some 80 km east of Kabul. There, the first bomber detonated his explosives at the gate of the police headquarters, while a second blew himself up at a security checkpoint inside the compound, said Din Mohammad Darwesh, a spokesman for the provincial governor.

**CHINA** Officials have put the brakes on some popular Chinese New Year events in big cities in the wake of a deadly stampede in Shanghai last month, leaving some observers complaining of a dampened mood and a kill-joy bureaucracy. More on p11

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# 'Heat map' captures massive CNY migration

P6,11



Catarina Pinto

**T**HE Macau Civil Servants Association (ATFPM) has called on the government to ensure the development of a democratic political system here, pushing for an increase in the number of seats granted to directly elected lawmakers at the Legislative Assembly, while vowing for the implementation of universal suffrage for the Chief Executive's election.

ATFPM representatives met with Chief Executive Chui Sai On yesterday to present a set of suggestions in the lead up to the CE's preparation of his 2015 Policy Address, which he will be delivering on March 23.

ATFPM's president José Pereira Coutinho told reporters yesterday that they have requested that the Chief Executive ponder changes to Macau's political system – namely by progressively increasing the number of directly elected lawmakers taking part at the Legislative Assembly and later abolishing appointed lawmakers. Currently, the Chief Executive appoints seven lawmakers, while twelve are indirectly elected and only fourteen elected by Macau residents.

"When the Chief Executive launched his political platform he pledged for transparency, but then he's allowed to appoint seven lawmakers who can actually influence [the rest of the plenary]," he said.

# ATFPM calls for 'development of democratic political system'



ATFPM has also suggested the Chief Executive increase the cash handout granted to Macau's temporary residents from MOP9,000 to MOP12,000. He stressed that due to the rising cost of living residents should be entitled to a more generous annual cash handout.

Social housing has always been regarded as top priority by different sectors of society, and ATFPM is no exception. The association suggested the government build a total of 80,000 public housing units. It also urged Macau's administration to complete construction work on

five new reclaimed land zones as soon as possible.

Recalling that Macau's residents have found themselves strangled by skyrocketing rental and housing prices, ATFPM representatives have also asked the government to increase the value of permanent residents' medical vouchers from MOP600 to MOP1,000. The association called for a raise on the subsidy granted to elderly citizens from MOP7,000 to MOP10,000, as well.

Furthermore, ATFPM stressed

that the government needs to review current contracts with gaming concessionaires and that Macau's population should have a say. They asked the CE to reinforce supervision over gaming operators, particularly regarding human resources, pushing operators to improve employees' benefits.

The association recalled that, although Macau is known as a gambling hub, the diversification of its economy is crucial. They recalled that there's a need to further regional cooperation, and that the city's administration should request authorization "to rent" the entire Hengqin Island so that the "development area of Macau" can grow.

On transportation, ATFPM called the Chief Executive to suspend the LRT construction works and review the project, assessing whether it is truly needed. "The construction of the LRT is a wrong decision. So [the government] should stop the [LRT] construction works and improve the remaining public transportation services, namely buses and taxis so that these means of transport meet the punctuality, and security needs," they suggested.

ATFPM provided a series of suggestions to improve Macau's public administration system too, and called for a new regime of accountability among top officials.

## Raising awareness on consumer rights

**P**EREIRA Coutinho is urging the government to raise awareness over consumer rights. In a written enquiry, the legislators recalled that Macau residents have faced hurdles when trying to acquire a house, since deadlines set to handover the house are not always met. "The buyer is – sometimes – wanting a number of years before they can actually have the house," the lawmaker said.

Mr Coutinho stressed that the situation is even worse due to the lack of information residents have on consumer rights. Therefore, he called

on the government to update legislation on consumer rights to "truly protect consumer's interests, namely by protecting their health and ensuring produce and services' quality."

The lawmaker also urged the government to effectively promote consumer rights' information, by raising awareness in schools and universities. Finally, José Pereira Coutinho called for improvements and uniformity on official institutions dealing with consumer rights, as these are currently being handled by different public services.

### CE MEETS WITH CHINESE CIVIL SERVANTS' ASSOCIATION

**THE CE** also met with representatives of the Macao Chinese Civil Servants' Association yesterday, listening to their opinions regarding the improvement of the civil servants' legal regime, and frontline public workers' welfare. The association's president Cheong Koc Iun suggested the government should raise public servants' starting salaries and establish a complaint mechanism for them.

## Chinese group could end up controlling Novo Banco Ásia

**N**OVO Banco Ásia is likely to be sold, together with Novo Banco, to one of the Chinese groups who have expressed interest in buying the bank.

Novo Banco is a result of the restructuring of Banco Espírito Santo,

once Portugal's largest lender by market value. A rescue plan was put in motion to split the troubled financial institution into a "good bank" – renamed Novo Banco, housing healthy assets – and a "bad bank," housing

riskier assets.

BESOR, was established in Macau in the mid-90s. Its successor, Novo Banco Ásia, is considered a strategic asset by the Resolution Fund, a public body financed by contributions from the

banking sector and by Treasury loans.

The Fund is set to complete the privatization of Novo Banco by the end of the first half of 2015.

"In Portugal, we decided that Novo Banco Ásia is a strategic asset and is not

to be sold separately. The sale of Novo Banco will be made as a whole and not by splitting it," the Resolution Fund administrator Vítor Fernando told Lusa when he visited Macau last month.

Novo Banco Ásia is ex-

pected to play a role in linking China to the Portuguese speaking countries and even to Latin America.

The Macau subsidiary of Novo Banco's latest balance sheet was published in the Official Gazette last week, revealing a major deposit decrease that can be attributed to the Banco Espírito Santo turmoil.

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Duarte Silvério

# Old quarter street revamp under progress

Catarina Pinto

**T**HE streets leading up to St. Paul's Ruins are as lively as they could be ahead of the Chinese New Year: as soon as they catch a glimpse of Macau's most famous monument, crowds of tourists grab a chance to snap a photo of the old church façade. Surrounded by shops selling their famous almond cookies or Portuguese-inspired egg tarts, antiques and souvenirs, these streets are equal parts tourist paradise and nightmare to residents.

Hang on just a little longer though, because as soon as you take the first left before the St Paul's Ruins, there's a breath of fresh air leading down to Calçada do Amparo and the Chon Sau patio. As soon as you see the colorful walls and multi-colored bun-

**Although this district is very close to the St Paul's Ruins, these streets are quieter**

DUARTE SILVÉRIO

ting banners it's a whole oasis of tranquility compared to the streets we've just been through.

At the Chon Sau patio and Rua de Nossa Senhora do Amparo, a project developed by local company Number 81 is adding a splash of color to this quiet old district. Over 10 shops – offering a wide array of options, ranging from

ceramics to crafts from South Africa, coffee or Murano glass – will be opening until May.

Around seven shops already opened to the public early this month. Duarte Silvério, project director at Number 81, told The Times that they're hoping to see all new shops opening in this district by May.

"Our project is linked to real estate, otherwise we wouldn't be able to get all these spaces. So we opened a set of shops at the same time, some are based on a partnership; others are being rented out to respective shop owners; and others are consignments," Mr Silvério explained.

The idea took shape one year ago, he added, since his company was also behind the opening of an art gallery at Lilau Square. They were hoping to sprinkle Macau's

streets with more creative shops, craftsmanship and bits of local culture.

But on these streets not everything can be about creative industries, Mr Silvério acknowledged. "We could not focus merely on the creative industries, because we wanted to reach a balance here. So there will be a coffee shop, there's already the pastry shop 'Cacao,' serving French cookies and Italian ice cream. We have another shop here selling Murano glass, a shop of cookies from around the world, and shops showcasing and selling artwork by local artists," he stressed.

Statuettes and small sheep figures flourish in the Chon Sau patio, which instantly draws the attention of all tourists who happen to stumble upon this old Macau neighborhood.

An antique shop was already open there, but "there wasn't much happening" before Number 81 launched its project, Mr Silvério recalled.

"Although this district is very close to the St Paul's Ruins, these streets are quieter and there wasn't much going on here before. We wanted to bring more variety to these streets, although we don't have anything against what streets surrounding St Paul's Ruins offer [to tourists]," he said.

A café and a noodle shop due to open soon, a Korean clothing and make-up shop, and establishments showcasing locally produced artworks are some of the choices available at the Chon Sau patio. A shop showcasing works by Portuguese artist Mario Reis, who's a ceramist, has also opened early this month.

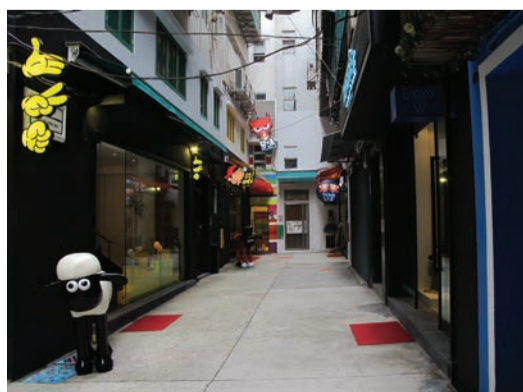
A store called "Dare to Dream," by a local fashion designer, will be opening at a later stage, Mr Silvério added.

With skyrocketing rents strangling many small businesses, Mr Silvério acknowledged that the company had to be more flexible: "Some of these places are being rented out at a lower price. Some rents are 60 or 70 percent of the current market price. We have other shops that operate under consignments, as the space is not really ours. So we try to be a bit more flexible because we know it's difficult [to pay rent in Macau]."

Number 81's plan doesn't stop on these streets. They are hoping to extend the project and expand their ideas into other historic Macau districts. "In May, we are planning on launching the same project in a different district, but another historic area. It's also in a neighborhood which is known for having a lot of meaning to Macau," he continued.

At the same time, there's a second phase planned for these streets where the project is now being developed, he recalled.

Number 81 acknowledged that launching their project now that Chinese New Year is fast approaching is also a move toward capturing the attention of tourists. After a while, we all need a breath of fresh air amidst the chaos of Macau's main touristic sites.





## Man detained for alleged rape of 12 year-old

Macau authorities yesterday detained a 22-year-old man for the alleged rape of a 12-year-old girl, Radio Macau reported. The Judiciary Police said that the suspect pretended to assist on a case that happened in December last year.

## IPOR signs agreement in Hainan

The Portuguese Institute of the Orient (IPOR) has signed an agreement with the Economic and Cultural Association of Hainan to promote the Portuguese language in Hainan, while fostering exchange programs between Macau and the Chinese province. According to a statement issued by Forum Macau, which is also backing the initiative, the protocol is aimed to "develop different sectors, namely education and culture, while cementing Macau's role as a service platform," by training more bilingual professionals in Chinese and Portuguese. Furthermore, the agreement will lead to the production of teaching materials and the development of different cooperation mechanisms.

# Lawmaker urges IPIM residency scheme suspension for full review

Brook Yang

MACAU'S investment residency policy has long been out of date, and should be suspended for a full review, lawmaker Lei Cheng I urged in a recent written inquiry to the government.

The Macau Federation of Trade Unions (FOAM) representative pointed out that the region launched three residency-granting schemes in 1995 through the Macau Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM), but there has been next to no adjustment in its criteria till today.

"The Chief Executive should respond to this matter in his next Policy Address, but it would be better if the government could pause the scheme right now and start discussing and reviewing it within society before opening the gate again," she told the Times.

Lei said that the government had to cease the residency scheme for an acquisition of property in 2007, due to its pressure on society such as soaring property prices and a rampant specu-



Lei Cheng I

lation. Nevertheless, the other two schemes granting residency to applicants with major investments as well as to the management and technical personnel are still running without clear criteria or enough transparency.

"There is a certain degree of randomness in the IPIM's approval system for both schemes. There are no specific standards in accordance with Macau society's actual needs," she stressed. "This doubt is the biggest problem of the policy. Only after a transparent vetting system is established could we reopen the applications again," she urged.

Lei argues that "the entire perspective of attracting capital investment needs to be changed," as the policy was initially launched to boost the economy during a crisis time, while today the same development model is no longer fit for the city.

"The schemes have deviated from the original purpose of the policy. There has always been questioning from the public if these schemes have become a negative impact," she said.

"Our hospitality and gaming workers are questioning if those approved positions are really in great demand in Macau, or if our local workforce is really incompetent for those middle-level management positions," she added.

The lawmaker pointed out that the neighboring city of Hong Kong has recently ceased its Capital Investment Entrant Scheme to "avoid troubles in the future." Moreover, several countries including Canada and Singapore have canceled or tightened their investment residency policies since last year, in order to cope with the change in global invest-

ment trends and local society's demand.

Lei warned that those moves might bring about an uncertain impact to Macau. Thus "now is the right time to suspend and review the policy, before more social consequences and misuse of the policy would occur." "The Macau government itself has also realized the problems in current schemes as indicated by the consultation on population policy," she said.

Despite her call for an immediate suspension on the investment residency schemes, the lawmaker said it would still take several years for the government to process the existing applications.

"The residency scheme for investors in real estate lasted for six more years since it was cancelled in 2007. The last approval for that scheme was granted in the third quarter of 2013," she indicated.

Over 4,000 applicants were on the waiting list for the IPIM's assessment when the scheme was called off.

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GAMING ALERT

# Mongolia considers legalizing gambling



Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia

**M**ONGOLIA plans to establish two new casino resorts, according to the iGaming Post. The country's parliament may vote as early as this week on draft legislation to develop casino resorts.

The political move comes while other locations, such as Japan, are also considering the legalization of gambling.

The two prospective Mongolian casino resorts are in the initial stages of planning. One of them is looking to be located at Khushigt International Airport, which is currently under construction. It would cater to Asian gamblers, in particular those from China.

"Russia, China and Japan are some of the biggest gamblers in the world. Japan and Russia already don't need visas for Mongolia, and Chinese with official passports don't either," said a member of the government party responsible for the bill.

The casino bill includes restrictions that would bar Mongolians from playing at the casinos, similar to countries like Vietnam, South Korea and Cambodia, where locals are not allowed to gamble.

GAMING

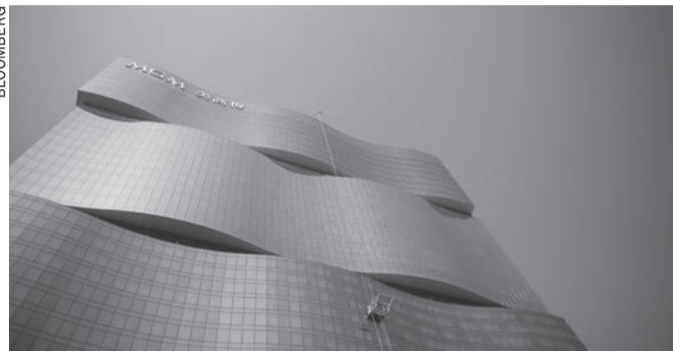
# MGM announces 'special bonus'

**A**'special bonus' to non-management team members at MGM Macau was announced yesterday. The bonus is equal to one month's salary and will be paid out in July 2015.

This means that the total bonus received by non-management employees will be equal to two months' salary for 2014, since the bonus comes in addition to the annual discretionary one announced earlier in the month.

The gaming operator launched its audited consolidated annual results yesterday.

According to a statement released yesterday, "last year produced a number of records for MGM China." The company highlights that adjusted earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization, or Ebitda, rose by 5% to HKD6.998 billion. Net



profit increased by 7% to HKD5.707 billion.

"These results were achieved despite the many challenges confronting us in Macau, requiring us to constantly adapt and respond to the rapidly changing external environment," MGM China stated.

MGM says it was the only local gaming concessionaire to register growth in the main floor business during the fourth quarter of 2014, a fact considered relevant "given the current market

trends, which have seen revenue migration from the VIP to the mass segment." MGM China says it has reallocated capacity such that over half of our tables

are now allocated to the main floor.

Over the whole year of 2014, MGM's VIP table wins decreased by 15%, and slot wins decreased by 10% year on year. Hotel rooms at MGM Macau achieved a record high occupancy rate of 98.7% for 2014.

Grant Bowie, chief executive officer and executive director of MGM China said in the statement: "We are certainly not immune to the challenges confronting the Macau market, but we do believe we have robust and responsive strategies that will allow us create opportunities for future growth. We are keen to get our Cotai property opened as MGM China has the greatest potential for growth in the market with the addition of our second property in Cotai."

## 26 ON ROUTE TO VEGAS

**26 LOCAL** managers at MGM Macau will be traveling to Las Vegas for a 10-day trip, to obtain operational cross-experience and insight into the business models of destination-style resorts. According to MGM, the trip "is the culmination of a 15-month management development program for high-potential local management employees within the company, who were selected to undergo intensive training to prepare them for their next career advancement."

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TRADITION

## Good luck chicken for Lunar New Year

**T**HE poultry bought live and killed on the spot at wet markets constitute one of the main treats for Chinese New Year festivities. But the H7N9 flu strain (bird flu) is changing consumer habits and could lead to the ban of live poultry sales.

Local wet markets are bustling these days, and costumers look for live birds to cook the favorite dishes you'd find in most Chinese homes

during the festive season.

According to Fernando Sales Lopes, a journalist and researcher based in Macau, the custom of buying live poultry is mostly a way to make sure of its quality. "This is what happened all over the world before people started moving from rural areas into cities," he says. "In the rural societies, or even in the urban ones that have a strong attachment to

the rural land, like the Chinese, the animals are provided for sale alive."

That's why, according to him, a frozen chicken is seen as something suspicious by the consumer, since they don't know its origin or the way it has been preserved. Food safety scandals are common in mainland China and even in Macau.

But something is certain, he says: sold live or frozen,

the chicken will remain a strong symbol during the Lunar Year season.

It is appropriate to eat chicken on the first day of the Chinese New Year. Fernando Sales Lopes stresses that the chicken is a common treat on the family table, and also in the traditional cult of the ancestors.

According to Sales Lopes, in ancient times the chicken was considered a bird of five virtues, with the rooster's comb representing "civil dignity," the leg's spike "military dignity and courage fighting enemies." The way that chickens share food was also viewed as benevolent.

During the Lunar Year, it is also the custom to stick, paste or paint chicken talismans on the doors of dwellings.

MDT/Lusa

## Price of residential units surges 22 pct in 2014



**T**HE average price of residential units increased 22 percent year-on-year in 2014, reaching MOP99,795 per square meter, as revealed in data released by the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC).

The average price per square meter in the Macau peninsula reached MOP95,576; while in Taipa it amounted to MOP106,316 and in Coloane prices reached MOP122,697, up 19.8 percent, 29.6 percent and 20 percent respectively.

The average price per square meter of pre-sale residential units (MOP156,164) and existing residential units (MOP85,219) rose 48.1% and 28.8% respectively. Furthermore, the average price of office units and industrial units was set at MOP121,112 and MOP54,250 respectively per square meter, up 62.5% and 60.9% year-on-year.

DSEC revealed that both the volume and value of real estate transactions in 2014 recorded a year-on-year decline. A total of 13,230 building units and parking spaces were purchased and sold at MOP83.69 billion for the whole year of 2014, according to Stamp Duty records, representing a decrease of 31.2 percent and 12.9 percent respectively year-on-year.

The purchase and sale of residential units totaled 7,625 at MOP49.80 billion, down 36.7 percent and 27 percent respectively.

In the fourth quarter of 2014, a total of 2,156 building units and parking spaces were purchased and sold at MOP13.81 billion, down 29.8 percent and 24.9 percent respectively quarter-to-quarter. Purchase and sale of residential units totaled 1,414 (including 197 pre-sale residential units) at MOP8.57 billion, down 20.1% and 24.9% respectively.

DSEC said that the average price of residential units stood at MOP94,788 per square meter in the fourth quarter, down by 5.2 percent quarter-to-quarter.

The average price of pre-sale residential units rose slightly by 1.8% quarter-to-quarter to MOP146,608 per square meter, with the average price of those in Taipa rising 10.0%, while the average price of those in the Macau peninsula and Coloane dropping by 5.9% and 3.2% respectively.

The average price of office units and industrial units was MOP123,601 and MOP55,075 per square meter, representing a decrease by 6.6% and 8.8% respectively quarter-to-quarter.

Regarding construction in the private sector, the gross floor area of construction of new buildings in the fourth quarter totaled 322,000 square meters, providing a total of 899 units and 808 parking spaces for cars upon completion, DSEC said. For the whole year of 2014, the gross floor area for construction of new buildings totaled 2.24 million square meters, providing 1,900 units (1,744 of them are residential units) and 6,497 parking spaces for cars upon completion.

## Extra flights to cope with CNY

**A** total of 73 extra and charter flights have been approved by the Civil Aviation Authority of Macao (AACM) to cope with demands on air transport over the Chinese New Year.

Compared to last year's 28, this marks an increase of more than 1.5 times, which, according to the authorities, will allow the local air transport market to provide enough capacity over this Lunar New Year, especially for travels between Macau and Taiwan, mainland China, as well as Japan and Korea.

"Traditionally, the Chinese across the straits often go home during Chinese New Year to enjoy their holidays. For the mainland Chinese, the mood for outbound travel or travelling within the country is often enthusiastic during this time. This often leads to a high demand for the air transport market in Macau," said the AACM in a statement on Monday.

"Furthermore, local residents can enjoy four to five leisure days this year, the duration of which makes it possible to go on a short trip. As a result, the market for short-haul flights such as mainland China,



Taiwan, Japan and Korea are in great demand," the report continued.

The 73 extra and charter flights have been in operation since last Saturday and will run until February 28. Fifty of them are between Macau and mainland cities such as Shanghai, Ningbo, Zhengzhou and Tianjin, whereas 13 are for Korea. Moreover, the AACM approved 5 more flights for both Taiwan and Japan.

The AACM said it only received one application for extra and charter flight

ts last year, from Air Macau; this year, four more airlines also submitted an application, namely East Asia Airlines, Juneyao Airlines, TransAsia Airways and Jin Air.

"The SAR Government has always supported the development of aviation and has adopted liberal air transport policies since the beginning. In approving extra and charter flights, the authorities will put passenger interests into consideration, based on safety first as the top priority," the AACM stressed in their statement. **BY**



Michelle Yun and Vinicy Chan

# China firms replace banks to drive Hong Kong rents

**C**HINESE brokerages and asset management firms are underpinning Hong Kong office rents as the city cements its financial-market ties to the world's second-largest economy.

Prime office space leased by financial companies north of the border was 148,000 square feet last year, a 51 percent jump from 2013, according to data from realtor CBRE Group Inc. Industrial Securities Co., a brokerage based in Fuzhou city in eastern China, and Sino Life Insurance Co. are among those that have rented new offices in Hong Kong's Central business district in the last two quarters, CBRE said.

Chinese firms are expanding in the city as Hong Kong connected its stock exchange with Shanghai in November and is expected to replicate the link with Shenzhen's bourse later this year in a push by China to globalize its markets. They are also propping up the world's costliest office market after London as some foreign banks including Standard Chartered Plc and Barclays Plc scale back unprofitable businesses.

"Chinese financial services companies are eager to expand here because they see Hong Kong as a perfect springboard for their internationalization," Ricky Lau, the head of office leasing at Savills Plc in Hong Kong, said in an interview. "Hong Kong's stock market is robust and active. That also attracts Chinese brokerages."

Overall rents this year are expected to rise 5 percent, compared with 0.2 percent growth in 2014 and a 1.6 percent decline in 2013, according to CBRE.

Hong Kong's Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying said at a Feb. 9 forum he hopes the bourse link with Shenzhen



The Four Seasons hotel, from left, Two International Finance Centre (IFC), One International Finance Centre, and Exchange Square stand in the business district of Central in Hong Kong

will begin in the second half of this year. Like the Hong Kong-Shanghai connect, it will allow foreigners to invest in China's equities and Chinese investors a route to buy Hong Kong stocks.

"A lot of mainland banks and brokerages still don't have branches in Hong Kong, or they only make up a small portion of the business," said Marcos Chan, CBRE's head of Hong Kong research. "Those in securities trading and wealth management will gradually start to position themselves in Hong Kong" as links extend to other markets including com-

modities, he said.

China is also studying connecting its bond market with Hong Kong, the South China Morning Post reported on Feb. 10.

The average value of shares changing hands on the Hong Kong bourse climbed 18 percent to HK\$72 billion (USD9.3 billion) in the past 12 months from a year earlier, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

London's West End has the world's most expensive office rents at \$274 a square foot a year, followed by \$251 a square foot in Hong Kong's Central

and \$198 per square foot on Beijing's Finance Street, according to a CBRE survey.

Chinese firms looking to establish Hong Kong offices are willing to pay a premium of 5 percent for a good location, according to Lau of Savills, they are opting for smaller spaces.

They are mostly seeking new offices under 10,000 square feet as vacancy rates in prime Central buildings remain low, according to Jones Lang LaSalle. They accounted for 28 percent of all new lettings in Central last year, the realtor said.

"The demand is healthy, but

they're not scrambling for the space," said Paul Yien, regional director of markets at Jones Lang LaSalle. "They might renew and expand by another 3,000 to 4,000 square feet. It's not massive growth."

Industrial Securities rented a whole floor in the AIA Central building, while Shenzhen-based insurer Sino Life leased 6,200 square feet of net floor area in Two International Finance Centre, according to CBRE. Two IFC, the second-tallest skyscraper in the city, is home to the Hong Kong Monetary Authority and UBS Group AG.

China Re Asset Management Co., a unit of Beijing-based China Reinsurance Group Corp., leased 5,000 square foot at Three Exchange Square in Central, according to Savills.

Everbright Securities Co., the brokerage that's seeking to purchase Hong Kong-based Sun Hung Kai Financial Ltd., expanded its offices at Far East Finance Centre in the Admiralty district, paying as much as HK\$80 a square foot, a person with knowledge of the transaction said. Average rents in Admiralty and Far East Finance Centre are HK\$50 to HK\$60 per square foot.

High rents are a concern for Haitong International Securities Group Ltd., which said it wants to hire some people dismissed by global banks.

"We will utilize our existing offices before considering expanding," spokeswoman Mimzy Si said by phone. "We could consider getting more space if the rent is attractive." **Bloomberg**

## corporate bits

### GEG VOLUNTEER TEAM MEMBERS DISTRIBUTE NEW YEAR PUDDINGS TO THE UNDERPRIVILEGED



With Chinese New Year around the corner, Galaxy Entertainment Group ("GEG") distributed new year puddings to 240 members from The Macau Association for the Mentally Handi-

capped, Associação dos Familiares Encarregados dos Deficientes Mentais de Macau, Macau Deaf Association, Richmond Fellowship of Macau and Macau Association of the Hearing Impaired.

### SINGING BOWL RITUAL AT MGM MACAU'S SIX SENSES SPA

Six Senses Spa at MGM Macau is now incorporating a holistic Singing Bowl Ritual at the commencement and conclusion of all types of body and facial treatments, to offer guests an enhanced experience and overall well-being.

The ritual begins with a therapist gently striking the singing bowl with a wooden wand throughout the several chakras (the subtle energy points of the human body), gliding the wand around the rim of the bowl to create a soothing humming vibration. The therapist then moves the singing bowl around the shoulders, moving it slightly above the forehead,



following to the "third eye," throat, heart, and the belly area. Softly striking the bowl three times symbolizes the unification of body, mind and spirit, as the vibrations travel through the body, triggering a transformation of energy, into a positive and healing experience.

### MGM MACAU OFFERS GUESTS CHINESE NEW YEAR FORTUNE BAGS

From the first to the third day of Chinese New Year (February 19 - 21), MGM will give away to all hotel room guests nicely designed Chinese New Year fortune bags, jointly created by Fuhong Society of Macau and Sam Meng Chi Restaurant, a subsidiary of the Macau Association for the Mentally Handicapped. As a festive greeting to guests from around the world, these fortune bags also reflect MGM Macau's support for the underprivileged.

Inside the fortune bags are vibrant-colored small bags skillfully stitched by the mentally challenged students of Fuhong Society of Macau.



The fortune bags also contain cookies and cupcakes prepared by the mentally challenged employees of Sam Meng Chi Restaurant.





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ANGOLA

# Standard & Poor's lowers credit rating

The Standard & Poor's rating agency (S&P) downgraded its credit rating of Angola's debt in foreign currency from while maintaining a stable outlook, the agency said in a statement. The cut in Angola's credit rating was due to the impact felt in the economy from the drop in the price of oil and consequent reduction in tax revenue. S&P expects Angola's deficit to experience significant deterioration, reaching 5 percent on average, between now and 2017, compared to the forecast announced in August 2014 of a surplus of 1 percent for Angola's public accounts. "When we looked at Angola in August 2014, we predicted the price of Brent crude oil would stand at USD105 in 2015 and US\$100 from 2015 to 2018. We now expect that the price per barrel will be US\$55 in 2015 and US\$70 between 2015 and 2018, so we have revised forecasts for Angola's main macroeconomic aggregates," S&P's statement said.

# Portugal is China's 4th biggest European investment destination

PORTUGAL was the fourth country in Europe to receive the most Chinese investment in the last ten years, ahead of much larger economies such as Spain or even Italy, according to a new comparative study.

The study by the Rhodium consultancy, prepared for the Baker & McKenzie law firm, analyses total transactions between 2004 and 2014, which was by far the year in which China invested most in Europe, and shows that Portugal even came in ahead of Germany.

In 2014, the study said, China's total investment in Europe was USD18 billion, or double the previous year, with Chinese investors focusing on the United Kingdom (US\$5.1 billion), Italy (USD3.5 billion) and the Netherlands (US\$2.3 billion).

Portugal had similar amounts of investment – US\$2 billion in fourth place – followed by Germany (US\$1.6 billion).

The largest Chinese investment in Portugal in 2014 was in the insurance sector – the purchase of insurance company Tranquilidade by Fosun,



People stand and take photographs from a viewpoint overlooking Alfama neighborhood and the Tagus river, in Lisbon,

which was already a shareholder of the Portugal's power grid company REN.

Chinese individual investors have shown a strong appetite for Portuguese real estate, especially since the launch of "golden visas" providing euro zone residence permits to people who invest at least 500,000 euros in property.

Since 2000, the study noted, the UK has been by far the largest investment destination – US\$16 billion – followed by Germany (US\$8.4 billion), France (US\$6.7 billion) and Portugal (US\$6.7 billion).

Some analysts have pointed to higher amounts invested by Chinese investors in Portugal,

in the order of US\$10 billion.

When the total amount invested is considered in relation to the size of the economy, the "stock" of FDI in recent years or the size of the capital market, Portugal is clearly the country in which the weight of Chinese investment is highest.

The four sectors that attracted the most investment in Europe in 2014 were food and agriculture (4.1 billion euros), energy (3.7 billion euros), real estate (3 billion euros), the automotive industry (2.2 billion euros) and financial and business services (1.7 billion euros).

Out of these sectors, Portugal received few Chinese investments in agriculture and the

automotive industry, and technologies are expected to receive the next wave of investment, according to Rhodium.

"The trend will continue in any scenario, but the magnitude and shape of Chinese investments will depend on developments in Europe," said Thomas Gilles, specialist at Baker & McKenzie for China.

The news comes at a time when the Portuguese press is reporting the interest of major Chinese companies such as the Bank of China and Fosun International in Novo Banco, the bank that inherited the "healthy" assets of Banco Espírito Santo, rescued by an interbank fund in the summer of 2014.

If this interest is confirmed, this may be the biggest investment ever by China in Portugal, alongside power company EDP – Energias de Portugal by China Three Gorges, the largest privatization ever undertaken in the country, at a time when the country was forced to sell assets to comply with the terms of the 2011 financial bailout. **MDT/Macauhub**

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MacauDaily Times

"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN' "



Patrick Whittle, Portland

**N**OW on the menu in Beijing for Chinese New Year: lots and lots of American lobster.

Exports of U.S. lobster to China have rocketed in the past few years, largely to satisfy the appetites of the communist country's growing middle class, to whom a steamed, whole crustacean — flown in live from the United States — is not just a festive delicacy and a good-luck symbol but also a mark of prosperity.

And that's good news for Maine, far and away the No. 1 lobster state in the United States. The lobster boom has put more money in the pockets of lobstermen and kept shippers and processors busy during the usually slack midwinter months.

For Stephanie Nadeau, owner of The Lobster Co., a wholesaler in Arundel, Maine, the demand has meant 14-hour nights spent stuffing wriggling lobsters into crates so they can reach China in time for the Lunar New Year, which falls on Thursday. She said she sends 100,000 pounds a week to China this time of year.

"There's lot of orders, lots of demand right now — it is a race to get them there for Chinese New Year," Nadeau said.

On the other side of the world, every morning at 9, the Auspicious Garden restaurant in Beijing receives 800 lobsters that have just crossed the Pacific aboard a cargo plane. In the evening, hundreds of diners fill the two-story restaurant in the gigantic Pangu Seven Stars hotel for a nearly USD80 all-you-can-eat buffet with New England lobster as the main attraction.

Xu Daqiang, a 35-year-old businessman on a romantic date with his girlfriend, said food-safety concerns in China make him choose expensive high-class restaurants where

## American lobster: the mainland's new festive delicacy



Chinese chefs prepare Boston lobsters at the Auspicious Garden restaurant in Pangu Seven Star Hotel in Beijing

■ Exports of U.S. lobster to China have rocketed in the past few years, largely to satisfy the appetites of the country's growing middle class

he can find imported seafood.

Cao Lijun, a 24-year-old Shanghai resident celebrating her friend's birthday, alluded to lobster's reputed aphrodisiac properties with a laugh: "How to say it? It makes my husband healthier. Really, this is what we say, because it is high in proteins."

Lobsters and other foods seen as luxuries are popular at Lunar New Year and other festive occasions. The bright red of a cooked lobster is considered lucky, as it resembles a dragon.

China also imports lobsters from Canada, Australia, Sou-

th Africa, the Caribbean and elsewhere, but the market for the U.S. variety is exploding, with the demand strong year-round, not just at New Year's.

American exports of live or processed lobster to China climbed from \$2.1 million in 2009 to \$90.5 million in 2014, federal statistics show. China took about 12 percent of U.S. lobster exports in 2014, up from 0.6 percent in 2009.

For the Chinese, the preferred way of enjoying lobster is to cook it in plain water and then dip the pieces in soy sauce and wasabi. Another popular

way is to braise it with green bean vermicelli noodles in garlic sauce, said Lv Hui, the cook in charge of the daily buffet at the Auspicious Garden.

Wang Kang, a marketing manager at Zhangzidao Group, a seafood distributor and processor in Shanghai, attributed lobster's popularity in China to rising incomes.

"That naturally means that people are buying more foreign luxury goods," Wang said.

New England lobstermen have been recording epic catches in recent years. Maine, which accounts for more 80 percent of all U.S. lobster, hauled in more than 250 million pounds in 2012-13, the highest two-year total in the record books, which go back to the 1800s.

Chinese New Year is on the verge of becoming Maine's second-biggest lobster shipping week of the year, behind Christmas week, according to industry officials.

Lobsterman Gerry Cushman of Port Clyde said the year-round demand from China has helped drive prices up, and he is using the extra money to build a new boat.

But so far, Cushman said, the surge has not driven large numbers of Maine fishermen to go out in the middle of winter, a punishingly cold and wet time of year in the Atlantic when lobsters head out into deeper, more dangerous waters.

Maine's small number of winter lobstermen, Cushman said, consists of "stragglers who are stupid like me, or who have kids." AP

## Thanksgiving celebrations have nothing on CNY

Rina Chandran

**T**HE Lunar New Year festival, which kicks off this week, is the biggest in Asia. Here's how it stacks up against the Thanksgiving holiday:

About 2.8 billion trips will be made in China, including 295 million on board trains, according to government estimates. In the U.S., AAA Travel had projected last year that 46.3 million Americans will jour-

ney 50 miles or more from home during the Thanksgiving weekend, with more than 89 percent of those journeys by car.

Spending at retail and restaurants in the holiday week in China last year totaled 610.7 billion yuan, or almost USD100 billion. In the U.S., sales totaled \$50.9 billion over the four-day weekend, according to the National Retail Federation.

Turns out, the Chi-

nese also like to watch TV while eating copious amounts of food. The Spring Festival Gala, a variety show featuring dance, music and drama telecast on the eve of the Lunar New Year by the state broadcaster attracts 700-800 million viewers annually, according to CCTV's estimates. By contrast, the top Thanksgiving football game last year drew an audience of 32 million. **Bloomberg**





## Prosecutors take down senior leader amid anti-corruption campaign



A former top official accused of taking bribes in return for government positions is under criminal investigation, Chinese prosecutors said yesterday, a day after he was expelled from the ruling Communist party and stripped of all government positions.

Su Rong, a former provincial party leader and former vice chairman of China's top political advisory body, is one of the most senior officials to have fallen in President Xi Jinping's sweeping anti-corruption drive.

Xi has warned that rampant corruption, if unaddressed, threatens the party's rule. About 70 high-ranking officials have been implicated in Xi's campaign, speaking not only to the severity of corruption but also the determination of Xi's administration to root out the problem.

Last year, the public applauded when Xi took down Zhou Yongkang, a former member of the all-powerful standing committee of the party's Political Bureau, over corruption charges. Zhou is the highest-ranking official, albeit retired, to be snared in Xi's campaign.

Su, 66, came under investigation last year when he was still serving as vice chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Congress, which makes his ouster remarkable.

Before he took the national position, Su had served as the provincial party chief for three provinces — Qinghai, Gansu and Jiangxi. That position has more power than that of a provincial governor.

The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, the Communist Party's top watchdog agency, said Monday in a written statement that Su violated party disciplines by altering decisions arbitrarily. The commission said Su also took "huge amounts of bribes" and, in turn, sought promotions for others and benefits for businesses.

The party agency said Su's acts have caused significant losses in state assets and that he was responsible for severe corruption in Jiangxi.

The statement said the party has handed his case over to judicial authorities, who are likely to indict Su on charges of taking bribes and abusing public power.

China's national prosecutors said yesterday they have started to investigate Su and placed limits on his freedom of movement. **AP**

# Tens of millions on the move for Lunar New Year

A new interactive map of China's Lunar New Year travel tells a story of massive migration home from the big city.

The updating graphic posted online by the Chinese Internet portal Baidu shows a "heat map" of lines tracing the trips of individual travelers. The brightest spokes emanate from eastern employment hubs Beijing, Shanghai and the southern nexus of Shenzhen, Guangzhou and Dongguan.

About 80 million people were traveling on Monday alone, mostly by road, according to government estimates. Baidu was able to illustrate many of those journeys thanks to the 350 million active users of its smartphone map and other apps that use location positioning.

If someone uses a Baidu app in Beijing in the morning, then pings from the southwestern city of Kunming in the evening, a new trip will be registered and a straight line added from Beijing to Kunming.

Lines glow white-hot during the biggest travel days of the holiday, which officially runs from today through Feb. 24 but unofficially includes many days on either end. The period of heightened travel is consid-



Chinese travelers queue up at the main entrance of the Beijing railway station to catch their trains

ered 40 days long.

"You're basically looking at the serious intensity of travel in this holiday. It's not just the world's biggest human migration, it's the biggest mammalian migration," Baidu spokesman Kaiser Kuo said. "It's a sight to behold. It's quite miraculous that nothing goes terribly wrong."

The Baidu Migration interactive also includes data for individual cities, airports

and train stations, and could help transportation officials plan future seasons, Kuo said.

If he used Baidu apps, 28-year-old Li Shengtao would have contributed to the Baidu interactive when he departed by train from Shanghai where he works as an interior designer for his annual, 1,100-kilometer journey to his northern hometown of Shijiazhuang.

"Even if you don't manage

to buy a ticket you have to get home somehow," Li said. "That's the tradition of us northern Chinese."

The interactive has been employed for more than details on holiday travel. Last Lunar New Year season, some media outlets suggested, rather dubiously, that many of the bright lines on the map emanating from the city of Dongguan were prostitutes fleeing a crackdown there. **AP**

## Shanghai dampens festive events after deadly stampede



Visitors walk under Lunar New Year decorations on display at Yu Garden in Shanghai

Didi Tang, Beijing

**OFFICIALS** have put the brakes on some popular Chinese New Year events in big cities in the wake of a deadly stampede in Shanghai last month, leaving some observers complaining of a dampened mood and a kill-joy bureaucracy.

Shanghai canceled its lantern festival at Yu Garden that draws up to 3 million people over the seven-day

holiday, which this year starts today, the eve of the Lunar New Year. In Beijing, crowd-drawing karaoke has been yanked from a traditional temple fair, and authorities asked stores to notify police of any sales.

The safety measures are a response to the stampede at Shanghai's glitzy riverfront in which 36 people were crushed to death on Dec. 31.

Shanghai resident and commentator Zhao Chu said cautious authorities are taking the easy way out to ensure safety "at the cost of folk customs and the desire of people to have some fun."

Government officials are paid to provide public services, such as safety during holidays, but canceling events that were allowed in previous years shows their "capriciousness" and that they want a "worry-free" holiday, Beijing-based commentator Shi Shusi said.

"Can our government please grow up a little?" Shi said.

Shanghai's annual lantern show at Yu Garden has been a city staple for Chinese New Year for the past 20 years. Last year, the event set a single-night record of 600,000 visitors. This year, it was called off along with smaller lantern shows at Fangta Park and Guyi Garden. A popular product expo was also scrapped.

Shanghai residents interviewed in local media say they understand the safety concerns, but lament that their holiday will feel less festive.

Shanghai's Longhua Temple canceled a popular Money God ritual, and doubled the fee to offer incense and flowers on Chinese New Year's Eve to 600 yuan (USD97) to control foot traffic.

In Beijing, one temple fair was called off, but the others will continue as usual with kitschy trinkets and food stalls. However, they will ditch the karaoke, limit attendees and permit fewer vendors so that there is more room for evacuations. **AP**



## INDONESIA

# Jakarta postpones moving of Australian drug convicts for execution

Ali Kotarumalos, Jakarta

INDONESIA has postponed the transfer of eight convicted drug smugglers, including seven foreigners, to a prison island for execution due to technical problems and to allow the two Australians among them to spend more time with their families, an official said yesterday.

The eight convicts are facing imminent execution despite international appeals for clemency. Among them are Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran, the ringleaders of a group of nine Australians arrested in 2005 for attempting to smuggle 8.3 kilograms of heroin to Australia from the Indonesian resort island of Bali.

Authorities said Monday that all of the inmates would be transferred this week to Nusa Kambangan prison off the main island of Java to face a firing squad.

But Attorney General's Office spokesman Tony Spontana said yesterday that executors surveying the island found it was not ready to handle the execu-



Andrew Chan



Myuran Sukumaran

tions.

He said the inmates would be transferred after the location is ready, but did not give a time frame.

Spontana said that "the execution plan is still on schedule" since the inmates' clemency appeals have been rejected. "The change is the plan of transfer, which was to have been carried out this week," he said, adding that prison offi-

cials in Nusa Kambangan have suggested that the convicts be moved there three days before the executions.

The postponement was also in response to requests from Australia's government to allow Chan, 31, and Sukumaran, 33, to spend more time with their families before they are transferred, Spontana said. The two are currently being held in a prison in Bali.

Indonesian President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo has rejected appeals by Australia's government for clemency for Chan and Sukumaran, and has vowed not to grant mercy to any other drug offenders because Indonesia is suffering a "drug emergency."

Australia has abolished capital punishment and opposes executions of any Australian overseas.

Chan and Sukumara were the

only two members of the group of nine Australians arrested to be given the death penalty. The seven other members of the group — dubbed the "Bali Nine" by Australian media — have received prison sentences ranging from 20 years to life.

The other convicts to be executed are five men from France, Brazil, Ghana, Nigeria and Indonesia, and a woman from the Philippines. AP

## SRI LANKA

## UN council endorses delay to war crimes report

Geir Moulson, Berlin

THE United Nations Human Rights Council on Monday delayed by six months the release of a report into alleged war crimes committed during Sri Lanka's civil war, a move sought by the country's new government.

The council postponed the publication from March until September at a procedural meeting in Geneva, endorsing by consensus a recommendation from U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Raad al-Husseini.

Thousands of civilians are suspected to have died in 2009 when government forces crushed a quarter-century fight for an ethnic homeland by

ethnic Tamil rebels.

Sri Lanka's new government says it wants time to set up its own judicial mechanism to probe rights violations that would follow up on the U.N. report's findings. Former President Mahinda Rajapaksa, who ended the civil war but faced international isolation for failing to probe civilian deaths, lost an election last month.

There were "strong arguments for deferring the report's consideration a bit longer, given the changing context in Sri Lanka, and the possibility that important new information may emerge which will strengthen the report," Zeid said in a statement. He said the delay should "allow for a stronger and more comprehen-

sive report."

He said the new Sri Lankan government had indicated that it is prepared to cooperate on a range of human rights issues, "which the previous government had absolutely refused to do."

Sri Lanka's deputy foreign minister, Ajith Perera, welcomed the decision.

"We are very happy, we need time and space to recover from the position of the previous government, to form a credible mechanism for accountability," he said.

The government plans as a first step to take a victim and witness protection law to parliament Thursday and then to set up a South African-style truth and reconciliation commission, he added. AP

## MYANMAR

## Tens of thousands of ethnic refugees flee to China

TENS of thousands of refugees from Myanmar's ethnic region of Kokang have fled into the neighboring Chinese province of Yunnan over the past week amid fighting between militant rebels and government troops.

Citing government officials, the state-owned news site Yunnan.cn reported Monday that there have been 30,000 border crossings by Myanmar nationals, and that Chinese authorities had offered them food and medical care.

Lin Sen, a volunteer helping refugees in Yunnan, said by phone yesterday that he estimated 30,000 to 50,000 refugees had escaped the conflict region of Kokang over the past week.

Kokang is dominated by ethnic Han Chinese, and the region has been embroiled in fights since conflicts between the militant rebels led by Phone Kya Shin and government troops intensified on Feb. 9.

The rebel group's general secretary, Htun Myat Lin, told The Associated Press by phone yesterday that

the group is seeking autonomy for Kokang and its ethnic Han Chinese people.

"We want to have a high degree of autonomy where we can manage our own affairs, but we do not wish to split the country of Myanmar," Htun said.

Htun complained that the ethnic Han Chinese have been second-class citizens in Myanmar. "Our ethnicity must have dignity," he said.

Myanmar only recently emerged from a half-century of military rule. Since assuming power in 2011, the government of President Thein Sein has been trying to strike peace agreements with rebels in resource-rich border regions.

Though preliminary pacts have been reached with most of the ethnic groups, clashes occasionally occur with Kachin, Shan and others. In addition to control over jade, timber and other natural resources in areas under their control, they want assurances that they will have some say over future troop movements. AP



NORTH KOREA

# Pyongyang threatens strong response to DC rights meeting

Cara Anna, United Nations

**N**ORTH Korea said it would respond "very strongly" to a conference in Washington yesterday about its widespread human rights abuses and says the United States ignored Pyongyang's offer to attend and defend itself. Puzzled conference organizers said the event was open to the public.

North Korea's U.N. Ambassador Jang Il Hun told reporters Monday his country has asked the U.S. government to "immediately scrap the so-called conference" hosted by the nonprofit Center for Strategic & International Studies. Speakers include Robert King, the U.S. special envoy for North Korean human rights issues.

Victor Cha, Korea chair at CSIS, said he was not sure what Jang was referring to. "We issued no specific invitations to anyone," he said.



North Korea's U.N. Ambassador Jang Il Hun, center, is seated between North Korea's mission consuls Kin Song, left, and Kwon Jong Gun, right, as he speaks during a press conference

Nuclear-armed North Korea has been on the defensive ever since a groundbreaking U.N. commission of inquiry detailed vast rights abuses there. International pressure behind last year's report led the U.N. Security Council to place the issue on its agenda of matters of international peace and security.

Jang said he sent a formal re-

quest to his counterpart in the State Department and that the counterpart responded that the conference was not a government one. "That means our request was denied," Jang said.

North Korea and the United States do not have formal diplomatic relations, but Jang is tasked with communicating through the so-

called "New York channel" that the country's U.N. mission uses to reach out to U.S. officials. Jang said his communication to the U.S. was only about the conference.

The U.S. restricts North Korean diplomats to traveling within a 40-kilometer radius of midtown Manhattan, and they must request permission to go farther.

The State Department said the conference was a privately organized event.

North Korea has repeatedly said the U.S. uses the human rights issue as a pretext to overthrow it, and it has started demanding that the U.S. should instead look into the CIA's "torture crimes."

The U.N. General Assembly in December approved a resolution that urged the council to refer North Korea's human rights situation to the International Criminal Court, and the head of the commission of inquiry has written to

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un warning that he could be held accountable for crimes against humanity.

"We are not guilty of any crime," Jang said Monday, smiling.

But alarmed by anything targeting their young leader, North Korean diplomats briefly proposed last year that the U.N. high commissioner for human rights could visit their country if the U.N. resolution would drop the language about Kim and the ICC.

Jang on Monday told reporters that the opportunity had passed. "Once it's gone, we have to start all over again," he said.

Jang also has said his foreign minister was not allowed to attend a meeting with Secretary of State John Kerry and other diplomats about North Korea's human rights during the U.N. General Assembly of world leaders last fall.

Another organizer of yesterday's conference, Greg Scarlatoiu with the Washington-based Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, said he had not heard from North Korea about it. "I find it encouraging that North Korea is paying attention to a conference commemorating one year since the release of the report, since they've been unwilling to accept the commission of inquiry," he said. AP

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Juan A. Lozano, Houston

USA

# Federal judge stalls Obama's executive action on immigration

A federal judge in Texas on Monday temporarily blocked President Barack Obama's executive action on immigration, giving a coalition of 26 states time to pursue a lawsuit that aims to permanently stop the orders.

U.S. District Judge Andrew Hanen's decision comes after a hearing in Brownsville, Texas, in January. It puts on hold Obama's orders that could spare as many as five million people who are in the U.S. illegally from deportation.

Hanen wrote in a memorandum accompanying his order that the lawsuit should go forward and that without a preliminary injunction the states will "suffer irreparable harm in this case."

"The genie would be impossible to put back into the bottle," he wrote, adding that he agreed with the plaintiffs' argument that legalizing the presence of millions of people is a "virtually irreversible" action.

The federal government is expected to appeal the ruling to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans. Neither the White House nor the Justice Department had any immediate comment early yesterday.

The first of Obama's orders — to expand a program that protects young immigrants from deportation if they were brought to the U.S. illegally as children — was set to start taking effect today. The other major part of Obama's order, which extends deportation protections to parents of U.S. citizens and permanent residents who have been in the country for some years, was not expected to begin until May 19.

Joaquin Guerra, political director of the Texas Organizing Project, called the ruling a "temporary setback."

"We will continue getting immigrants ready to apply for administrative relief," he said in a statement.

In a 2013 ruling in a separate



In this Feb. 4 file photo, President Obama meets with a group of "Dreamers" in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington. On Monday a federal judge temporarily blocked Obama's executive action on immigration

case, Hanen suggested that the Homeland Security Department should be arresting parents living in the U.S. illegally who induce their children to cross the border illegally.

The coalition of states, led by Texas and made up of mostly conservative states in the South and Midwest, argues that Obama has violated the "Take Care Clause" of the U.S. Constitution, which they say limits the scope of presidential power. They also say the order will force increased investment in law enforcement, health care and education.

In their request for the injunction, the coalition said it was necessary because it would be "difficult or impossible to undo the President's lawlessness af-

ter the Defendants start granting applications for deferred action."

"Judge Hanen's decision rightly stops the President's overreach in its tracks," Texas

Gov. Greg Abbott said in a statement. Hanen, who's been on the federal court since 2002 after being nominated by President

**[The decision] puts on hold Obama's orders that could spare as many as five million people who are in the U.S. illegally from deportation**

George W. Bush, regularly handles border cases but wasn't known for being outspoken on immigration until a 2013 case. In an order in that case, Hanen suggested the Homeland Se-

curity Department should be arresting parents living in the U.S. illegally who induce their children to cross the border illegally.

Congressional Republicans have vowed to block Obama's actions on immigration by cutting off Homeland Security Department spending for the program. Earlier this year, the Republican-controlled House passed a USD39.7 billion spending bill to fund the department through the end of the budget year, but attached language to undo Obama's executive actions. The fate of that House-passed bill is unclear as Republicans in the Senate do not have the 60 votes needed to advance most legislation.

The White House has said Obama's executive order is not out of legal bounds and that the U.S. Supreme Court and Congress have said federal officials can set priorities in enforcing immigration laws. Past U.S. Supreme Court decisions have granted immigration officials "broad discretion" on deportation matters.

Others supporting Obama's executive order include a group of 12 mostly liberal states, including Washington state and California, as well as Washington, D.C. They filed a motion with Hanen in support of Obama, arguing the directives will substantially benefit states and will further the public interest.

A group of law enforcement officials, including the Major Cities Chiefs Association and more than 20 police chiefs and sheriffs from across the country, also filed a motion in support, arguing the executive action will improve public safety by encouraging cooperation between police and individuals with concerns about their immigration status. **AP**

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## UKRAINE

# Army, rebels fighting despite pullback deadline

Peter Josek, Luhanske

**U**KRAINIAN government troops and Russia-backed rebels faced a deadline yesterday to start pulling back heavy weapons from the front line in eastern Ukraine, but Associated Press reporters saw no signs of it on the ground.

Ukrainian military spokesman Andriy Lysenko told reporters yesterday that the separatists continued to attack government positions overnight around the town of Debaltseve and that the pullout hinged on the cease-fire being fully observed. He said at least five troops were killed and nine injured in the past 24 hours in the war zone.

The cease-fire deal, brokered by European leaders last week, specifies the pullout begin on the second day after the parties stop fighting. This condition has not been met, Lysenko said. "As soon as the fire ceases ... we will be ready to begin the withdrawal," he said.

The war in eastern Ukraine



Ukrainian government soldiers sit on top of their vehicle driving on a road stretching away from the town of Artemivsk, Ukraine, towards Debaltseve

has already killed more than 5,600 people and displaced more than a million, according to U.N. figures issued Monday. It has also left the country's industrial heartland in ruins.

Fighting has stopped or subsided in some parts of war-torn eastern Ukraine, however. Rebel mouthpiece the Donetsk News Agency quoted rebel officials saying yes-

terday they had not seen any violations of the cease-fire in their area since 8 p.m. Monday.

Associated Press reporters saw artillery rounds fired yesterday from Ukrainian government positions at rebel positions around Debaltseve. Sustained shelling was heard in the area all morning, some coming from Grad rocket launchers.

Debaltseve is a government-held town surrounded by rebel forces, and both sides claim it should be on their side of the cease-fire line. The issue was not resolved under a cease-fire agreement negotiated last week by the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France.

Elsewhere, at least one rebel leader claimed that his troops

had begun to withdraw their heavy weapons.

"I was at the front line last night, and our tanks, our artillery were pulling back," Igor Plotnitsky, the leader of the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic, northeast of Debaltseve, was quoted as saying by the Russian news agency Tass.

He added that he "expects the same from Ukraine."

Due to security issues, his claims could not be immediately verified. Lysenko said the Ukrainian troops "have not noticed any such actions" on the ground.

The separatists were expected to discuss the withdrawal of the weaponry later yesterday with representatives of Ukraine, Russia and the group charged with monitoring the cease-fire, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

In a phone call late on Monday German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko appealed to Russian President Vladimir Putin to use his influence on the separatists to ensure that they stop the fighting.

Merkel's office reported that the three leaders agreed on "concrete steps to enable an observation" of the situation in Debaltseve by the OSCE. It did not elaborate on what these steps would be.

OSCE representatives could not get to Debaltseve on Monday because of the heavy fighting there. **AP**

Pan Pylas and Lorne Cook, Brussels

## GREECE

# Hopes of deal remain despite snag in talks

**D**ESPITE all the tough talk of ultimatums and games of poker, Greece and its creditors in the 19-country eurozone are still expected to cobble together some sort of deal that will allow the country to remain a member of the euro currency.

Investors and European policymakers are not panicking despite a breakdown in talks between the two sides over the new Greek government's attempt to renegotiate its financial bailout.

That's likely because they've been here before — the eurozone has in recent years often run into moments of brinkmanship, many times with Greece. Each time, a deal was clinched in time.

Both sides want to avoid the worst-case scenario in which Greece is cut off from aid and has to leave the euro. That would devastate Greece's economy and rock global financial markets.

"If Greece were to leave the euro, the financial chaos that would follow



Tourists stand beneath a huge Greek flag in front of sections of ancient columns at the Acropolis hill, in Athens

could also spell the end of the Syriza-led government," said Jane Foley, analyst at Rabobank International, referring to the radical party that won elections last month.

"For this reason it remains our central view that an eleventh hour compromise between Greece and its creditors is still likely."

They're on borrowed time, though. Greece bailout ends after Feb. 28 and the longer a deal is not found, the more jittery markets are likely to get.

While the volatile stock index in Athens actually rose temporarily yesterday before trading flat, Greece's government borrowing rates are rising steadily — a sign

investors are more wary of a potential bankruptcy.

**NOTHING'S FOR CERTAIN**

No one is discounting the possibility that Greece might fail to agree on a deal with its creditors, a development that could have big and unforeseen consequences both for Europe and the global economy.

The latest tension centers on the eurozone's ultimatum to Greece to ask for an extension to its bailout program by Friday before further negotiations on the country's future financing can take place.

Greece's left-wing Syriza government made scrapping the bailout program a cornerstone of its recent triumphant election campaign. In return for 240 billion euros (USD275 billion) of rescue money Greece has been getting since 2010, successive governments have had to implement budget austerity measures such as deep cuts

to spending and pensions.

Syriza, in power for barely three weeks, blames those measures for the country's economic ills. The Greek economy has suffered through a depression and is now around a quarter smaller than in 2008, while unemployment and poverty have swelled.

"It would be an act of subterfuge to promise to our partners to complete successfully a program we challenged the logic of," Varoufakis, said.

**WHERE'S THE COMPROMISE?**

Jeroen Dijsselbloem, the top official in the eurozone who issued the ultimatum, is hopeful that Athens will agree to extend its current program, and as an encouragement he laid out the prospect of an immediate renegotiation of some of its terms.

"We want to formally extend the program and then talk what changes are possible within that," he said.

A deal could depend on

something as simple as what the two sides agree to call the extension.

The Greeks do not want an extension of the current program, but a bridging loan. Whatever it's named, both sides want the country to get a few months' worth of loans to buy time for more thorough talks.

If they can agree on a word that saves face for both sides, a deal would be a lot closer, analysts say.

Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis laid out his hope that an agreement will be concluded in time and that progress could be made within the next 48 hours.

He said he was willing to a compromise that would see Athens delay its budget plans in return for loans. That would start a six-month negotiation on a new financial aid plan.

"We are ready and willing to do whatever it takes to reach an agreement over the next two days," he said. **AP**



## what's ON



## ORCHID EXHIBITION WELCOMES LUNAR NEW YEAR 2015

TIME: 8am-8pm (February 18-25)

8am-12pm (February 26)

VENUE: Lou Lim Ioc Garden / No. 10 Estrada de Adolfo Loureiro, Macau

ADMISSION: free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8504 1218

## COOKIN' NANTA

TIME: 8pm (Tuesdays to Fridays)

5pm &amp; 8pm (Saturdays &amp; Sunday)

8pm (March 22, 2015)

UNTIL: March 22, 2015

VENUE: Sands Theatre at the Sands Macau/

No.203, Largo de Monte Carlo, Macau

ADMISSION: MOP280 up

## EXHIBITION "FOAM TIP BY ARLINDA FROTA AND TRANSMUTATION BY CAROL KWOK"

TIME: 12pm-8pm (Closed on Tuesdays)

UNTIL: March 31, 2015

VENUE: SIGNUM Living Store, Rua do Almirante

Sérgio, no. 285, R/C, Macau

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2896 8925

## "ONE HUNDRED PHOTOGRAPHERS FOCUS ON MACAU" EXHIBITION

TIME: 24 hours

UNTIL: March 22, 2015

VENUE: Level 2 Showcase, MGM Macau

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8802 8888

## MACAU GRAND PRIX MUSEUM &amp; WINE MUSEUM

TIME: 10am-8pm (Closed on Tuesdays)

VENUE: Rua Luis Gonzaga Gomes, 431, basement (Tourism Activities Centre-CAT)

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8798 4108 / 2833 3000

## Offbeat

## PARTY ANIMALS: DOGS ALSO CELEBRATE CARNIVAL IN RIO



At one Carnival street party in Rio de Janeiro, the revelers weren't as skilled at dancing samba as they were at wagging their tails.

More than 100 festive pet owners dressed their dogs in flashy costumes

of superheroes and princesses last weekend for a parade to celebrate animal life in Brazil's most joyful season.

"Carnival is synonymous with partying, and animals are too. They give us so much happiness," said Raquel Santos while she petted her shy, 6-month-old Maltese named Zoe who was dressed as Snow White. "I couldn't wait for this. Now that I see them all cute and dressed up, I want to squeeze them all."

Several others were also dressed as the popular princess, and other canines represented Superman and Wonder Woman. An obedient bulldog stayed on top of a skateboard as his owner glided through, and a mutt wore a fruit headpiece and a colorful skirt like Carmen Miranda, the legendary samba singer and actress popular in the 1940s.

The celebration included a woman who has become an animal protection crusader in Brazil after a video of her two French bulldogs being abused gained wide attention earlier this month. A camera hidden in her living room by Ninna Mandin caught her fiancé severely beating her pets. The recording prompted Mandin to break off her engagement.

## TV canal macau

13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:30	RTPi Live
18:10	Brazil Avenue (Repeated)
19:00	TDM Interview (Repeated)
19:30	Soap Opera
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	Montra do Lilau
21:40	Miscellaneous
22:10	Brazil Avenue
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Champions League Highlights
23:45	Documentary Series

## cinema

## CINETEATRO

18 FEB - 25 FEB

## STAND BY ME DORAEMON\_

ROOM 1  
(2D) 2.00, 5.40 (18-25 FEB)  
Language: Cantonese (Chinese)  
Duration: 95min

## TRIUMPH IN THE SKIES\_

ROOM 1  
3.45, 9.30, 11.30 pm (18-25 FEB)  
7.30 pm (19-25 FEB)  
Language: Cantonese (english and Chinese)  
Duration: 127min

## FROM VEGAS TO MACAU 2\_

ROOM 1  
7.30 pm (18 FEB)  
Language: Cantonese (english and Chinese)  
Duration: 90min

## KINGSMAN: THE SECRET SERVICE\_

ROOM 2  
2.15, 7.00, 9.15, 11.30 pm (18 FEB)  
2.30, 7.15, 11.30 pm (19-25 FEB)  
Director: Matthew Vaughn  
Starring: Colin Firth, Michael Caine, Samuel L. Jackson  
Language: English (Chinese)  
Duration: 127min

## PENGUINS OF MADAGASCAR\_

ROOM 2  
4.30 (18 FEB), 4.45 pm (19-25 FEB)  
Language: Cantonese (Chinese)  
Duration: 127min

## STAND BY ME DORAEMON\_

ROOM 2  
(2D) 7.15 (19-25 FEB)  
Language: Cantonese (Chinese)  
Duration: 95min

## JUPITER ASCENDING\_

ROOM 3  
(2D) 2.15, 4.30, 9.15 pm (18 FEB)  
(3D) 7.00 pm (18 FEB)  
Director: Andy Wachowski, Lana Wachowski  
Starring: Channing Tatum, Mila Kunis, Eddie Redmayne  
Language: English (Chinese)  
Duration: 127min

## FROM VEGAS TO MACAU 2\_

ROOM 3  
11.30 pm (18-25 FEB)  
3.45, 7.30, 9.30 pm (19-25 FEB)  
Language: Cantonese (english and Chinese)  
Duration: 90min

## PENGUINS OF MADAGASCAR\_

ROOM 3  
2.00, 5.45 pm (19-25 FEB)  
Language: Cantonese (Chinese)  
Duration: 127min

## MACAU TOWER

19 FEB - 04 MAR

## 12 GOLDEN DUCKS\_

2.30, 4.30, 7.00, 9.30 pm  
Director: Matt Chow  
Starring: Eason Chan, Louis Koo, Sandra Kwan Yue Ng  
Language: Chinese (Chinese)  
Duration: 92min

## this day in history



## 1969 LULU TIES KNOT WITH BEE GEE

Hundreds of people have clamoured to see the marriage of popstars Lulu and Maurice Gibb of the Bee Gees in a Buckinghamshire church.

Lulu, 20, had hoped to keep her wedding plans secret but around 1,000 people - mostly women and girls - filled the grounds of St James' Church in Gerrards Cross.

Several children were hurt as the crowd - that had waited for an hour - surged forward when Lulu arrived in her green Rolls Royce, 20 minutes late.

Wearing a long, white, mink-trimmed coat with fur hood and a white, silk mini-dress, Lulu - born Marie McDonald McLaughlin - begged onlookers to let her through, saying, "Please let me in, please let me in."

As police formed a cordon to allow the bride to reach the church, Maurice Gibb - also wearing white - waited inside with his best man, twin brother Robin, who was married only three months ago.

The third Gibb brother, Barry, arrived 10 minutes later, after earlier objecting to the wedding saying the couple was too young.

The Bee Gees and the bride were the only celebrities at the small, family wedding.

After a half-hour service - presided over by Reverend Gordon Harrison - the newlyweds were trapped in the church for another 10 minutes until a path had been cleared to their waiting car.

They spent a few minutes at the 19-year-old groom's parents' house in Gerrards Cross before travelling to London for their reception.

After a one-day honeymoon Lulu plans to return to work on her BBC television series.

She says she wants to cut down on her work-load to concentrate on her family and wants lots of children.

The daughter of a Glaswegian butcher, Lulu has already enjoyed a successful singing career for five years - beginning with number one single, Shout.

She will represent the UK at the Eurovision Song Contest in March.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Lulu shared victory at the 1969 Eurovision Song Contest in Madrid - in a four-way tie - with her song Boom-Bang-A-Bang. Lulu and Maurice Gibb separated in April 1973, when Lulu said the marriage was not working, but emphasised there was no-one else involved.

Over her 36-year career Lulu has enjoyed 16 top 40 hits and became a familiar face on UK television.

In June 2000 she was awarded an OBE.

Over five decades the Bee Gees had record sales of £110 million worldwide and are one of the top five most successful recording artistes of all time.

The Bee Gees were awarded CBEs in the 2002 New Years Honours list.

Maurice Gibb died of a heart attack in Miami in January 2003, aged 53.







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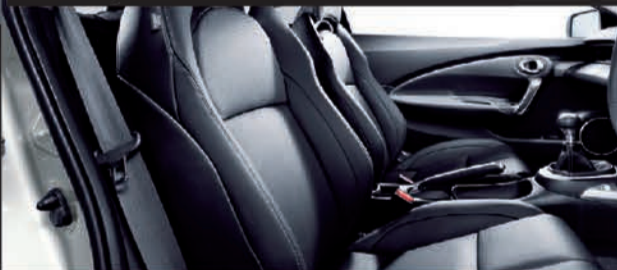
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The winners on the podium, with from left, France's Maurice Manificat who finished 2nd, Norway's winner Finn Haagen Krogh, and Sweden's Marcus Hellner who finished 3rd

## SKIING

# Norway expected to dominate cross-country at worlds

Mattias Karen  
Sports Writer

**E**VEN by cross-country skiing standards, there may be an unusually high number of Norwegians climbing the podium in the coming two weeks.

Going into the Nordic skiing world championships that start tomorrow in Falun, Sweden,

Norway is dominating its national sport like rarely before, winning two-thirds of the World Cup events so far this season.

It's getting to the point where some other nations are openly worried they can't compete with the Scandinavian powerhouse anymore, and Norway monopolizing the podium at the worlds would certainly not go down well with the host — its skiing

archival Sweden.

But the Norwegians, led by six-time Olympic champion Marit Bjoergen on the women's side and the brash Petter Northug on the men's, are keen to ruin the party.

"Championships are always special and in this case it's extra special because it's in Sweden," said Northug, a nine-time world champion who always enjoys stoking up the rivalry with his Scandinavian neighbors.

And the next two weeks could become very painful for the home fans if recent trends continue. In 30 World Cup events this season — not including stage races — Norway has 20 wins, 18 second-place finishes and 14 thirds. The second-best teams, Sweden and Russia, have three wins each.

No wonder skiers like Justyna Kowalczyk of Poland — a two-time Olympic champion and former overall World Cup winner — are getting a bit fed up.

"Norwegians love cross-country skiing more than anyone in the world, but at the same time they are killing the sport," Kowalczyk wrote in a column for Polish newspaper Gazeta this season. "It's not possible to compete at their level any longer."

The Norwegian success does cause a problem for the sport.

TV ratings for cross-country events in Germany, Italy and France have all dropped in recent years, while winter sports like Alpine skiing and biathlon have become more popular. While American Kikkan Randall has been one of the top sprinters in recent years, the sport remains peripheral in the U.S.

One of the only non-Norwegian stars is Switzerland's Dario Cologna, who again will be a medal favorite in Falun. One of the few women who could challenge the Norwegians is Sweden's Charlotte Kalla, who blew away her rivals in a 10-kilometer freestyle event in the last World Cup meet before the worlds. She beat Bjoergen by more than 30 seconds in that race — the first time in five years that the Norwegian lost a 10K freestyle World Cup race.

"It's always good to get a wake-up call, and a reminder that you can't just go there and collect medals," Bjoergen told Norwegian newspaper Verdens Gang.

In all, there are 12 cross-country medal events at the worlds — six each for men and women — four Nordic combined competitions and five in ski jumping, including a mixed team competition. **AP**

## WOMEN'S SKI JUMP

**DEFENDING WORLD** champion Sarah Hendrickson of the U.S. seems to be getting back to her best at just the right time. Hendrickson beat Japanese rival Sara Takanashi for the world title two years ago in Italy, but her chances of becoming the sport's first female Olympic champion were ruined when she blew out her knee in a training crash. She has yet

to win a World Cup competition since returning to fitness but was boosted by two straight third-place finishes at this past weekend's meet in Slovenia.

"I'm really happy about my podiums this weekend," Hendrickson said. "I have had such a hard time mentally trusting myself and believing in myself. This just broke down that wall."

## NORDIC COMBINED

**ERIC FRENZEL** of Austria remains the man to beat in any Nordic combined event and is expected to add to a trophy collection that already includes two world titles, an Olympic gold from Sochi and two overall World Cup titles. He was unstoppable in January, winning five straight World Cup events. Jason Lamy Chappuis of France, who won three golds in Val di Fiemme in 2013, has had a quiet season so far but can never be counted out at big events.

## FOOTBALL

## Gaungzhou R&F beats Mariners to reach Asian Champions League

Jiang Ning and Liu Lin scored a goal in each half to give Chinese club Gaungzhou R&F a 3-1 win over the Central Coast Mariners yesterday and a spot in the Asian Champions League. Ning opened the scoring at Central Coast Stadium in the eight minute and Lui made it 2-0 in the 57th. Central Coast defender Joshua Rose compounded the Mariners' woes with an own goal in the 89th.

Glen Trifiro scored a consolation goal for the Mariners in the second minute of added time.

Guangzhou joins Japan's Gamba Osaka, South Korean side Seongnam FC, and Buriram United of Thailand in Group F of the Asian Champions League, with its first game of the competition at Osaka next Tuesday.

## RUGBY

## Scotland lock Gray out of the 6 Nations with arm injury

Scotland lock Richie Gray has been ruled out of the rest of the Six Nations with an upper arm injury sustained in the 26-23 loss to Wales at Murrayfield. The 25-year-old Gray will be out for 12 weeks and will miss the remaining matches against Italy, England and Ireland. The news is a further blow to Scotland after prop Jon Welsh was ruled out of the competition with a fractured hand.

## GOLF

## Love to return as Ryder Cup captain

Davis Love III is getting another chance as captain of the U.S. Ryder Cup team. Two people familiar with the decision told The Associated Press yesterday the PGA of America has selected Love as captain for the 2016 matches at Hazeltine. They spoke on condition of anonymity because it has not been announced. Golf Channel first reported that Love will be the next captain. He is to be introduced on Feb. 24, when the Honda Classic is held at PGA headquarters in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. Love led the Americans to a 10-6 lead at Medinah in 2012 until Ian Poulter and Europe staged an improbable rally and matched the greatest comeback in Ryder Cup history.



opinion

Artifacts

Vanessa Moore



RAMMING THE POINT

It's that time of year again where everything gets even more chaotic than usual. The world's largest human migration is firmly underway as the whole of China gets down to 'chunyun', the annual Lunar New Year travel rush. But lamenting the hordes of tourists anticipated to flock to Macau and Hong Kong isn't what I'm going to devote my column inches to. Actually what's got me bothered is characteristically something way more philosophical. As CNY approaches, looking at the Chinese zodiac, what animal are we supposed to be celebrating anyway?

As you can't fail to have noticed in recent weeks, dotted all over the place are stacks of banners, statues and mascots of sheep, goats and rams. What's more, some New Year gift items look decidedly like a cross between sheep and goats, and sometimes even more puzzlingly, like curly-horned rams. It's like full-scale androgyny of the woolly variety. And it's got me downright confused.

As with most things in China, the root of all the New Year uncertainty stems from linguistics. In Mandarin, the word used for 'sheep' is 'yang' 羊, but the problem is that exactly the same word can frequently be used to describe other horned animals like goats or a rams. It's all mightily linguistically blurred. So what's the right description then?

Thinking back to my university days, all this confusion reminded me of American philosopher Saul Kripke's theory about the philosophy of language. Titled "Naming and Necessity", he addresses how words come to point to the things in the world that they refer to. Kripke says that names are not fixed by some set of properties that people believe the thing possesses. Instead, our references are fixed through the history of how the name is used in our community. According to the philosopher, an initial baptism takes place when the name is first used. From then the name comes to be linked to whatever object is named. That name is then passed amongst the community of speakers. So it doesn't matter how the speaker thinks the reference is fixed, i.e. the set of characteristics, but rather it's the history of the term's use in speaking that is used, regardless of that person's ideas about the object.

So philosophical digressions aside, getting back to my pressing real world CNY dilemma, Kripke's argument applies to the usage of the word "yang" in the mainland. According to an article published by the state-run Xinhua news agency last week, the animal image is open to regional interpretation. "People depict the zodiac animal based on the most common Yang in their region. So it's often sheep in the north while goats in the south", expert folklorist Fang Binggui told the news site. So there we have it, it all depends on the community we're in, right?

Not quite. It only matters if you say it does, and for some people it doesn't even matter anyway. "This 'yang' is fictional. It does not refer to any specific kind (of sheep or goat)," Zhao Shu, a researcher with the Beijing Research Institute of Culture and History, told the AFP agency. So - terrible Shakespearean pun coming up - the news site calls the whole debate a lot of "much ado about mutton". Ouch.

Adding further fuel to the fire, according to Xinhua, what's more it's only us foreigners causing unnecessary trouble in the first place as few ordinary Chinese are even troubled by the sheep/goat distinction. Instead, many people just buy the creature that they see as possessing their own favored qualities. "I've seen more goats in zodiac images, but I prefer to buy a sheep mascot, as sheep are more fluffy and lovely," one Beijing office clerk told Xinhua.

And that's probably what rings most true. If you value the goat's energy or the ram's stubbornness, get one of those. Or failing that, like the guy above said, forget the philosophy. Sheep are just cuter anyway.

THE BUZZ EUROPEAN CAR MARKET CONTINUES REBOUND IN JANUARY

Europe's car market showed more signs of healing as it posted the 17th straight month of sales increases in January.

New car registrations in the European Union were up 6.7 percent over the same month the year before to just under 1 million.

January's figures continue the recovery seen for all of 2014, when full-year sales rose for the

first time in six years. Car sales have suffered from Europe's troubles over high debt, which led to an economic crisis in countries such as Ireland, Greece, and Portugal and weaker growth elsewhere.

Spain led the rebound with an increase of 27.5 percent while sales in Italy rose 10.9 percent. Britain saw sales rise 6.7 percent.

RIO CARNIVAL

Battling racism theme of some parades

RACIAL pride and the fight against racism in Brazil were the themes of samba group presentations and street parties on yesterday (Macau time) as Rio de Janeiro's flashy parades entered their second night of over-the-top festivities.

Some samba groups put together dance numbers to honor Afro-Brazilian heritage, and one built a giant Nelson Mandela float. The float was meant to remind people of his fight for equality, while calling for more racial integration in this South American country, which has more blacks than any nation aside from Nigeria.

On the second day of the Carnival shows, thousands of performers carpeted the entire half-mile street with fluorescent orange-and-yellow costumes and Halloween-like floats featuring anything from tarantulas and Jack the Ripper to Michelangelo's David and the Maracana Stadium.

Tens of thousands of people gathered on both sides of the imposing sambadrome to watch and sing along to the blasting music.

Top-tier samba group Imperatriz Leopoldinense said it was inspired by an incident of racism in soccer, when a banana was thrown at Barcelona star Dani Alves during a match last year against Villarreal. The Brazilian Alves ignited a movement



Performer from the Imperatriz Leopoldinense samba school parades on a float during carnival celebrations at the Sambadrome in Rio de Janeiro

against racism in soccer after he was seen coolly picking up the banana and eating it before taking a corner kick.

Imperatriz, in its samba parade, alluded to that incident with dozens of performers playing black-and-white harlequins inside peeled bananas.

"People think that discrimination in Brazil is a thing of the past," said Andre Bonate, who helps coordinate cultural affairs for Imperatriz. "But we are here to say it is not like that. There are still many racist displays in our society."

Advocates say blackface makeup during Carnival is one such display. Some people have complained this year of Carnival street parties where people use blackface, including one called "Luxury Maids" in which white

men wear black makeup and dress as servants.

"It is shocking that something so explicitly and ridiculously racist is being treated as a funny tradition worth preserving," wrote columnist Jarid Arraes, for Forum, an online magazine.

On Monday, animals of the savanna and pieces of tribal art were recurring props and costumes on the marathon parades, which began Monday night but extended through the wee hours of Tuesday.

An entire block of performers also honored the U.S. and civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. by holding flags with his image and wearing red- and-blue hats with an eagle. Other members of the troupe held photos of black Brazilians known as samba icons.

Felipe Ferreira, a professor who heads the Carnival Reference Center at Rio de Janeiro State University, says the origins of the samba groups stem from people brought as slaves from Africa who thought of mixing their customs of playing drums and tambourines in the streets with the more extravagant European parties.

"The aspect of racial integration and the meeting of different cultures was something that samba schools initially promoted," said Ferreira. "This seems to be a return to the ideal." AP

THE DECISIVE MOMENT



Rio de Janeiro, Carnival. Performers from the Mocidade samba school greet spectators from their float during the Carnival parade at the Sambadrome in Rio de Janeiro yesterday (Macau time).

Station	Air quality
Roadside	65-95 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	65-95 Moderate
Ambient	65-95 Moderate

SOURCE: DSI/MG

WORLD BRIEFS

**JAPAN** A magnitude-6.9 earthquake struck off the northeastern coast of Japan early yesterday, triggering minor tsunamis but no reports of major damage or injuries. The Japan Meteorological Agency lifted a tsunami advisory two hours after it was issued following the quake.

**JAPAN** says it will provide USD15.5 million in development aid to support anti-terrorism efforts in the Middle East and Africa. The move comes after the recent beheadings of two Japanese hostages by militants from the Islamic State group.



**FRANCE** A French prosecutor has called for the acquittal of Dominique Strauss-Kahn (pictured) in his pimping trial in Lille — a day after five of six plaintiffs dropped their accusations. Frederic Fevre said the former International Monetary Fund chief should be acquitted "pure and simple" — saying that "his notoriety shouldn't be in any way a presumption of guilt."

**S KOREA's** president has replaced her point man on North Korea in a reshuffle that involved three other top officials. President Park Geun-hye's office announced yesterday that presidential adviser Hong Yong Pyo has been nominated as the country's new unification minister in charge of relations with Pyongyang.

**EGYPT** bombs Islamic State militants in neighboring Libya and called on the United States and Europe to join an international military intervention in the chaotic North African state after extremists beheaded a group of Egyptian Christians. The airstrikes bring Egypt overtly into Libya's turmoil, a reflection of Cairo's increasing alarm. Egypt now faces threats on two fronts — a growing stronghold of radicals on its western border and a militant insurgency of Islamic State allies on its eastern flank in the Sinai Peninsula — as well as its own internal challenges.