



NEW DECLINE IN CASINO SHARES

Bloomberg has related the slump to Axiis Tam's statements hinting at restrictions on Chinese tourists to ease overcrowding

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SEAC PAI VAN RESIDENTS FEAR BECOMING 'SECOND SIN FONG'

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CUPID STRIKES FOR HK CAREER WOMEN ON THE MAINLAND

Nearly 7,500 women from Hong Kong married Chinese men in 2013, a threefold increase from 2003

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Generation gap within New Macau Association

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HONG KONG

Grandma has to find a job

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WORLD BRIEFS



CZECH REPUBLIC A man in the Czech Republic opened fire yesterday in a restaurant, leaving at least eight people dead, the town's mayor said. Patrik Kunzar, mayor of the southeastern town of Uherske Brod, also said the gunman, a local man around 60 years old, then killed himself. A waitress from the restaurant was also hospitalized, he said.

AFGHANISTAN Gunmen in southern Afghanistan kidnap 30 members of the Hazara ethnic community, in what appears to be the latest in a series of attacks on Shiites in the predominantly Sunni country.

INDIA The leader of the U.N.'s expert panel on climate change stepped down yesterday amid an investigation into allegations of sexual harassment in his native India. R.K. Pachauri, 75, had chaired the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change since 2002 and accepted the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize on its behalf.

More on backpage

Catarina Pinto

MACAUS pro-democracy group, the New Macau Association (ANM in the Portuguese acronym) used to be, according to its former president Jason Chao, “a fan club for lawmakers Au Kam San and Ng Kuok Cheong”. But its current leadership is planning to operate the group “more like a political organization,” Chao and its current president Sulu Sou revealed in a press conference yesterday.

The separation between the younger and older generations seems to be embedded into the group’s history. Founded over 20 years ago by lawmakers Au Kam San and Ng Kuok Cheong, ANM’s current youth-based leadership has made it clear that they are parting ways on a number of issues.

“The New Macau Association was initially what we would call ‘a fan club’ for Ng Kuok Cheong and Au Kam San. Since I took office as president, it has evolved to be a political organization,” said Jason Chao, who served as president between 2010 and 2014 and is now a member of the board. Sulu Sou was elected ANM’s president last year.

Looking ahead to the new year, ANM’s executive is planning on introducing a series of reforms, including a donation program as they believe the association can no longer rely merely on the donations of the two lawmakers.

Au Kam San and Ng Kuok Cheong currently donate one fifth of their income equalling around MOP10,000 per person. However, Jason Chao and Sulu Sou believe this is no longer a sustainable way to run an association: “Elections are highly unpredictable and this is not a healthy way to sustain an association,” Chao explained, adding that the diversification of funding sources will allow for a more sustainable development.

While lawmakers are still providing one fifth of their

NEW MACAU ASSOCIATION

Younger and older generations parting ways



salary to the association, Chao said that no one can tell for sure if “an official separation” will take place or not. He revealed that Au Kam San failed to pay his contribution for about half a year. However, after being sent a reminder “he issued a cheque to the

association.”

Not wanting to rely solely on lawmakers’ financial contributions, the political activists said they are planning to implement two main funding initiatives: one seeking small donations from the public, and a second involving organizing a

fundraising dinner. “The donation program will be better advertised and regulated. After the mass protest against the compensation bill we received a single anonymous donation of MOP40,000,” Chao mentioned. The association received an additional MOP10,000

accumulated from numerous different citizens.

He added that to their knowledge, the association has never received donations from overseas organizations but they do not discriminate against funding, either local

“**The New Macau Association was initially what we would call ‘a fan club’ for Ng Kuok Cheong and Au Kam San**

JASON CHAO

or foreign. Nevertheless, Chao stressed that they will not proactively look for foreign donations. In addition, Sulu Sou made it clear that ANM will “never apply for any funding from the government.”

Association managed ‘like a political organization’

ANM leaders are looking to develop “a more institutionalized” association: “It should be managed more like a political organization and find ways to sustain itself,” Chao concluded.

ANM’s younger generation is seen as more “radical” than the association’s former leaders. The causes they now tend to privilege also differ in subject matter. The separation is becoming clearer, as ANM’s current leadership yesterday highlighted a few matters in which their views collide.

Former leaders and the current leadership disagreed on a proposed increase of membership fees. Jason Chao explained that Sulu Sou had tabled a motion suggesting to increase the current MOP200 fee per annum to MOP400. However, “Au Kam San left before the motion was voted on and we did not have enough

members to hold a lawful assembly session,” he recalled.

Chao stressed that “legislators were against the raise because they said this would turn the association into an organization of elites or one which caters to a particular class.”

Current leaders deemed the legislators’ views as “nonsense.” “It’s a rational move to raise the membership fee because the medium income has raised two or three times over the past decade” and the membership fee hasn’t been updated over the past ten years. “From time to time we have to encounter this nonsense from the legislators,” Chao reiterated.

Asked what lawmakers Au Kam San and Ng Kuok Cheong think of the announced measures to develop the association, Jason Chao replied that, “they

made very few comments on what we are doing.”

When also requested to comment on whether ANM’s current leadership would like to distance themselves from the lawmakers, Chao stressed that, “we should combine their experience with our new ideas.”

He reiterated that, actually, the initial separation was triggered by the lawmakers. “The separation was motivated by them, not by anyone else from New Macau. It was clearly their choice to distance themselves from the leadership at ANM.”

This year, the association’s leaders plan on holding forums, internships and training programs, as well as continuing to hold protests. They are also looking to launch a public consultation on legislation against sexual abuse.

Resident caught slapping Zhuhai bus driver

THE mainland Public Security Department has taken a Macau resident into custody after he was alleged to have slapped a bus driver in a

traffic dispute.

It was reported by Jornal Va Kio that on February 9, a man driving a vehicle with both Macau and mainland license plates

hit the window of a Zhuhai bus and accused the bus driver of obstructing his vehicle when the bus was approaching a bus stop. The man was alleged to

have gotten on the bus and slapped the bus driver before driving away from the scene. The incident was widely reported by mainland media.

After conducting investigation into the occurrence, the authorities found the 63-year-old Macau resident, surname Lei, on February 16. The Zhuhai police said that it is still investigating into the case. It stated that the authorities

will penalize any individual who causes trouble and disturbance and will strive to protect the rights of public transportation personnel. The bus company in Zhuhai also thanked the public for their attention to the incident.

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STATISTICS

Big spenders have left the building



THE total amount spent by tourists (excluding gaming expenses) in the fourth quarter of 2014 amounted to MOP14.05 billion, down by 13.9 pct from MOP16.32 billion in the fourth quarter of 2013.

According to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC), the spending of overnight visitors totaled MOP11.06 billion, down by 17.7 pct year-on-year. Conversely, that of same-day visitors increased by 4.2 pct to MOP3.00 billion. Per-capita spending of visitors was MOP1,757, indicating a decrease of 20.2 pct year-on-year.

Analysed based on place of residence, the total per-capita spending of tourists from mainland China in the fourth quarter of 2014 was MOP2,038, showing a drop of 27.3 pct year-on-year. The spending of those travelling under the Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) decreased by 10 pct, amounting to MOP2,618.

The per-capita spending of visitors from Singapore and Malaysia increased by 10.2 pct and 5.1 pct, at MOP1,977 and MOP1,718 respectively, whereas that of visitors from Japan (MOP1,716), Taiwan (MOP1,510) and Hong Kong (MOP912) registered a year-on-year decrease. Tourists from the United Kingdom had a relatively high per-capita spending rate among the long-haul visitors, which reached MOP1,518, a figure up by 19 pct year-on-year.

The total spending of tourists for the entirety of 2014 reached MOP61.75 billion, up by 3.7 pct from MOP59.54 billion in 2013. The total spending of overnight and same-day visitors rose 2.6 pct and 9.1 pct, at MOP50.88 billion and MOP10.87 billion respectively. The per-capita spending of visitors for all of 2014 was MOP1,959, down by 3.5 pct year-on-year.

Police to step up patrols on noise 'blackspots'

THE Public Security Police (PSP) revealed on Monday that it will prepare a list of "blackspots" where people have complained about loud noises.

In a TDM radio program, some residents explained that on some occasions, police officers were unable to reach the apartments which were deemed the source of the noise because they were in old buildings and there was no security guard to open the gate.

A PSP spokesperson told the media that they will list these locations as "blackspots" in the future and will arrange a more frequent patrolling schedule for those areas.

In the first two days the Prevention and Control of

Environmental Noise Law came into force, PSP and the Environmental Protection Bureau have received a total of 41 complaints so far. The police said that around half of the complaints can be settled through issuing advice.

Moreover, the PSP commented yesterday on the two cases of prosecution relating to the noise law involving two Filipino individuals who were chatting on the street at around midnight. The authorities said that the reason those two people were prosecuted is because they were seen by the officers to be making inappropriately loud noise. As a result, the officers argue that they could not have settled the case by only issuing advice.

WYNN Macau Ltd. fell to the lowest number of shares in more than two weeks, leading widespread declines. Bloomberg has related the slump to statements made by the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture hinting at restrictions on mainland Chinese tourists to ease overcrowding.

Alexis Tam has said that local authorities intend to approach China's central government in Beijing to examine Macau's capacity for visitors, and to consider the extent to which "too many tourists impact residents' quality of life."

Wynn Macau dropped by 3.7 pct to HKD21.95 at the close of trading in Hong Kong. Galaxy Entertainment Group Ltd. and Sands China Ltd. fell by 2.7 pct, SJM Holdings Ltd. declined by 2.3 pct, MGM China Holdings lost 2 pct and Melco Crown Entertainment fell 1.7 pct. The benchmark Hang Seng index also fell by 0.4 pct.

Chinese President Xi Jinping urged Macau in December to rely less on casinos in order to diversify and turn the city into an internationally-recognised tourism and leisure hub. Macau's casino revenue slumped for an eighth straight month in January, signalling the longest losing streak on record. This comes as Xi's two-year long crackdown on official corruption in favour of stricter travel rules have deterred high-rollers from entering the territory.

As the Times reported, during a Lunar New Year event on February 19, Alexis Tam expressed his desire for talks between Macau and mainland authorities to review the Individual Visa Scheme.

"We have to make a scientific decision [regarding the Individual Visa Scheme]. The core principle is that our residents' quality of life should not be worsened... There are many possible measures [to be considered]," he said.

The scheme was introduced in 2003 and allows millions of visitors



GAMING

New decline in casino shares

from mainland China to visit Macau and Hong Kong by obtaining entry permits without the need to travel with tour groups. The program was first implemented in four cities in Guangdong province and extended to 49 cities throughout China.

The number of mainland Chinese visitors to Macau for the first four days of the Lunar New Year rose by 6.7 pct to 443,421, compared with the same lunar calendar period a year ago, according to data from the Macau Government Tourist Office.

Hong Kong is also assessing issues of overcrowding and will need to determine whether or not to restrict or reduce the number of China's visitors in collaboration with Beijing, Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying told reporters yesterday.

"I don't agree on expanding China's individual visitor scheme because Hong Kong has a limited capacity," Leung said, adding that the number of Chinese travelers to

I don't agree on expanding China's individual visitor scheme because Hong Kong has a limited capacity

CY LEUNG

Hong Kong fell slightly over the festive season.

China's Lunar New Year started from February 19 this year, while the country's public holiday to mark the festival is from February 18 to February 24. Hong Kong's markets reopened yesterday after a two-day break. **MDT/Bloomberg**

ONE SHOT NEWS



Figures from the Public Security Police showed a further decline in the number of people crossing the borders yesterday. Until 9pm, 398,679 people crossed Macau's checkpoints, including 204,758 inbound and 193,921 outbound. There were 267,006 people who crossed the border at the Border Gate, with 134,114 of them entering the MSAR. A total of 54,714 people crossed the border at the Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal and 16,854 at the Macau International Airport.

CRIME

Security guard caught stealing from museum

João Pedro Lau

THE Judiciary Police (PJ) has taken a 27-year-old security guard from the mainland into custody after he was alleged to have stolen money from the safety deposit box of the Macau Maritime Museum.

The authorities received a report at around midday yesterday from the museum, claiming that they realized the sum, totaling around MOP30,000, went missing from their safety deposit box

between February 19 and 21, while clearing it as part of their weekly routine. The PJ spokesperson said that according to the procedure, all revenue is put inside the upper drawer of the safety box at the end of the day. After the drawer is closed, the mechanisms of the box will allow the money to drop into a lower drawer.

Only the senior managing staff of the museum have the key to the lower drawer while the key to the upper drawer is kept by the security guard who

is on duty that day.

After investigating and reviewing the surveillance footage, PJ targeted a security guard and asked him to assist in their investigation. PJ said that the guard has admitted to stealing the money by jamming the door between the two drawers in the safety deposit box with a leaflet from the museum. After the door was jammed, the money in the upper drawer could not drop to the lower one and the guard could then use the key he kept to open the upper

drawer and empty it.

The authorities found a piece of paper that recorded the amount he stole in the suspect's locker, which matched the record of the museum. The man claimed that he already sent all the money back to mainland China. PJ is charging him with aggravated theft and will hand him over to the Public Prosecutions Office today.

In a separate case, the PJ is looking for the culprit who has damaged the stamp kiosk at Praca 1 de Outubro twice and pur-

chased more than 4,000 MOP0.5 stamps that haven't been sold since January last year.

The PJ was approached by the Macau Post on February 18 after the button of the kiosk, which was for selling the MOP0.5 stamp and is now sealed with a metal plate, was damaged twice in this month. The records also showed that the kiosk had sold a total of 4,125 MOP0.5 stamp on two occasions.

It is unclear why the offender, who is still at large, wanted the out-of-print stamps.

EDUCATION

Local writers tour schools to share reading experiences

LOCAL writers have been touring Macau's schools to share their experiences of reading and writing with students. Between November 2014 and January this year, local writers were invited

by the Macau Foundation and newspaper Macao Daily to give a series of lectures in 16 of the local secondary schools.

The Macau Foundation revealed in a statement that about 3,000 studen-

ts took part in these lectures, which adds to the existing "Writing Comments about Reading of a Text for Secondary Education Students" contest.

The contest is in its 20th year and aims to pique

students' interest in reading and writing activities.

"The initiative was very well-received by teachers and students and to broaden its scope to include more schools. Organizers intend to promote the same event this year," a representative from the Macau Foundation said.

Several local writers were invited to give lectures to exchange their reading and writing ex-



periences with students. "This will help broaden their horizons while drawing students' attention towards Macau's literature," they added.

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WORK SAFETY

Harsher fines proposed for construction safety breaches



THE Labor Affairs Bureau (DSAL) intends to introduce harsher fines in relation to breaches of occupational safety law. According to Lam Iok Cheong, chief of DSAL's Occupational Safety and Health Department, new legislation is currently being drafted. The present regulations stipulate fines ranging from MOP1,000 to 5,000 when construction safety rules are violated.

"The regulations on construction safety and hygiene were made in 1991. We are now drafting the regulations on occupational safety and health. The penalty will be adjusted. We already have the initial draft. We hope to have public consultation and discussion as soon as

possible," Lam told TDM.

The number of serious accidents at construction sites is on the increase. DSAL estimates that 800 construction workers were injured in Macau last year, totalling 100 more injuries compared to 2013. In 2012, over 500 people were injured in construction site accidents.

Two deaths were reported just last month. On January 20, one worker was killed after the mobile crane he was working in collapsed. Prior to this, another laborer was run over by a mobile crane at Coloane's Ka Ho Port and died.

Lam Iok Cheong attributes the accidents partly to the complexity of large-scale constructions and partly the overwhelming pressure to meet deadlines which construction companies often face. But the head of department at DSAL stated that cases of occupational safety law violation - like lack of fences or protective wear - are regularly spotted.

"The works are large in scale and complexity. There is also a time limit on the work. As workers need to rush, they usually neglect their own safety. Contractors also want to rush, and may also overlook safety at the sites," she told TDM.

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Home

Welcome to Macanese food in London

Written by Suet-Ming Lau

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Booking and Events

- > Booking
- > Events List

A bite of Macau in London

MACAU may be a "tiny territory on the southern coast of China," but its culinary tradition is great and reaches faraway places, and now a London-based group has started to organize culinary evenings dedicated to Macanese cuisine.

The Macau Patua Talk & Taste evening consists of a four-course dinner prepared by Chef Lau Suet-Ming, a Hong Kong native who has worked in several Michelin-starred fine dining establishments in London (China Tang at the Dorchester),

Tokyo (Nobu) and Hong Kong (Mandarin Oriental).

Before the dining experience begins, Annabel Jackson, anthropologist and author of "Taste of Macau" and "Macau on a Plate," will present a talk. The former Times contributor, who is working on a new recipe-based Macanese cookbook, will explain how the Macanese cuisine blends Portuguese, Chinese, Southeast Asian and African recipes. The result is a "richly varied canon of dishes," each one of which

holds its own history and significance.

Macau Patua is presented by promoters as a "unique culinary experience in London." Ten events are scheduled for this year at the Chinatown Chinese Community Centre close to the Leicester Square station. Bookings can be made on the group's website (www.macaupatua.uk). To enjoy one of the culinary events, guests are asked to pay £40 per person (MOP490), with each event hosting a maximum of 10 people. **PB**

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João Pedro Lau

A group of proprietors from the public housing estate in Seac Pai Van have handed a petition to the Macau government, expressing their concerns regarding the construction quality of their building. They urged the government to commission an independent third party to conduct a full examination of the property's structure.

In the petition addressed to the Chief Executive Chui Sai On, the residents stressed that there were many issues concerning the public housing projects in Seac Pai Van that various government departments had failed to resolve. It also listed several problems regarding the quality of the buildings and the facilities inside.

They included the so-called "paper wall" incident where paper bags were found in the wall of an apartment in the affordable housing project "Edificio Koi Nga", located in Seac Pai Van. Cracks were also said to have emerged on the walls and ceilings of units. There was even a case in which the switch box of an apartment was damaged, causing a power shortage due to water leakage nearby.

The petition also included some issues at Seac Pai Van that are affecting the daily lives of the residents, such as the lack of shops and problems regarding the water quality.

"Now, we implore the government to provide a time frame to allow an open and transparent third party professional surveyor to assess the structure of the buildings, and to hold the contractor and supervising institutions responsible," the proprietors wrote in the petition.

"The government spokesperson has reiterated that the part of the apartment [with the paper bags in it] was not

Seac Pai Van residents fear becoming 'second Sin Fong'



the load-bearing wall (shear wall). However, who knows if the load-bearing wall was filled with bags too? It is unacceptable to explain it as a 'construction flaw'," the petition said.

Speaking to the media, one of the Koi Nga apartment owners, Mr Cheang, said that after talking to his neighbors, he noticed that many of them had found objects such as plastic bags and newspaper inside their walls. "We are really worried that the public housing buildings we are living in have structural problems because several public housing projects [throughout Macau] have had issues as well... Therefore, we hope that the government can find a third party to determine whether there are actually any structural problems," he said.

Who knows if the load-bearing wall was filled with bags too? It is unacceptable to explain it as a 'construction flaw'

PETITION

"If there are already problems like these, even if it is only one to two years since we moved in, will the buildings tilt to one side in the future and will we

have nobody to appeal to and become homeless, just like [the owners] of Sin Fong Garden?"

Moreover, Mr Cheang said that even though they have been offered free repair services for their apartments, he is still concerned that there has been no examination on the structural safety and no solution offered to the fundamental problems.

Another proprietor, Mr Souza, claimed that the cracks on the ceiling of his bedroom had already joined together and encircled the whole ceiling. In fact, many decorators told him that the construction quality is very poor and the construction workers were very neglectful. He said that he notified the authorities as soon as the cracks in his apartment started appearing. "But the only feedback I got after waiting for a long period of time was that they would find someo-

ne to inspect our unit. Some people came to our apartment once and inspected it, without doing anything else," he said. "They told me that it was only a minor problem and said that they would have some workers to cover the cracks with cement. For me, they have not addressed the issue that affects our lives."

Apart from the problems inside the apartments, some facilities inside the buildings, including elevators and emergency exit lights, were also said to be prone to malfunctioning. "There are times when all three elevators [in a building] have been out of order... There were times when they had even stopped working for several hours," said Mr Loi, a Koi Nga apartment owner.

"There were already incidents in Hong Kong where people died in a malfunctioning elevator. We are really worried about it. Those elevators [in my building] were brand new and they just broke down like this. What if one of or several of the elevators' wire ropes were broken, it would be fatal," he said.

"Another issue that threatens our safety is the emergency lighting [that did not activate when the power was cut off]. It is just like when there is no water coming out from a fire hydrant. You can imagine how scary it is," he said.

The proprietors argued that the government is ultimately responsible for all the problems in Edificio Koi Nga because it is that authority that chose the contractors who failed to deliver on the project in a professional manner.

"We don't want to be the second Sin Fong Garden," they warned.

Opinions call for inspection against public housing irregularities



FOLLOWING the Housing Bureau's revelation that it has inspected 296 affordable housing apartments in Edificio Cheng Chong in early February for irregularities and has found 12 units not being used by the registered proprietors as their residency, a member of the government's Public Housing Affairs Committee has called for the government to

step up its patrolling and inspection rates.

Kou Ngon Fong told TDM that people are "in fluke psychology" and do not have a proper knowledge of the law. "The government should routinely patrol every kind of [public] housing. For example, there are 50 affordable housing buildings, [so] the government should inspect 10 percent of the flats in each building," he said.

Mr Kou believes that more frequent inspection will deter people from using their apartments illegally.

Meanwhile, Ng Sio Lai, secretary-general of the Macau General Union of the Neighborhood Associations pointed out that the illegal use of public housing units has been taking place for a long time and the authorities have failed to patrol the buildings strictly enough. "That's why so many cases surfaced so suddenly. I believe it is because the authorities have patrolled more units and in a stricter manner," she said.

SEAC PAI VAN PROJECT COST HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS

ACCORDING TO data from the government, the public housing projects on the Seac Pai Van CN3 land plot, where the Edificio Koi Nga is located, cost the government a total of MOP380 million. Housing Bureau information indicates that Koi Nga comprises eight buildings. The apartments there were selling, on average, for MOP17,166.9 per square meter. The prices of T1 units ranged from MOP488,000 to MOP626,000; T2 from MOP622,300 to 917,700 and T3 from MOP911,300 to MOP1,097,300.



Honda to replace its CEO amid air bag crisis, sales drop

Elaine Kurtenbach
Business Writer, Tokyo

HONDA Motor Co. — hurt by falling sales and embroiled in a crisis over defective air bags — is replacing its CEO.

The Japanese automaker said Monday that Takanobu Ito, its president and chief executive officer since 2009, will step aside in June and be succeeded by longtime executive Takahiro Hachigo.

The unexpected decision follows the recalls of more 6.2 million Honda vehicles in the U.S. — and millions of others elsewhere — equipped with air bags made by Japan's Takata Corp. The air bags have inflators that can explode, expelling shards of metal and plastic. At least six deaths and 64 injuries have been linked to the problem worldwide.

At a press conference Monday, the 61-year-old Ito said it was his



Honda Motor Co.'s newly appointed President Takahiro Hachigo attends a press conference at the automaker's headquarters in Tokyo

own decision to step down. He has been at Honda since 1978, when he joined the company as a chassis engineer.

"I believe Honda needs to become one strong team in order to overcome challenges and the team requires a new, youthful leadership," Ito said, according to a transcript provided by Honda. Hachigo is 55.

Other automakers use the Takata air bags, but Honda has the most exposure and is spending heavily on the recalls. The company has lowered its full-year profit forecast to USD4.6 billion from \$4.8 billion.

Honda is also facing civil penalties and lawsuits over the issue. In January, the U.S. fined the company \$70 million, which was

the largest civil penalty levied against an automaker, for not reporting to regulators some 1,729 complaints that its vehicles caused deaths and injuries and for not reporting warranty claims.

Amid the crisis, Honda lowered its global vehicle sales forecast for the full year to 4.45 million vehicles from 4.6 million. Its U.S. sales grew just 1 percent last year as plummeting gas prices hurt demand for its lineup of small cars such as the Civic.

Earlier this month, Ito scrapped Honda's goal of selling 6 million vehicles per year by 2017, saying the company needed to focus on quality instead of on sales targets.

Stephanie Brinley, a senior analyst with IHS Automotive, said Ito's six-year tenure as Honda's chief is in line with Honda's past three CEOs.

Ito's tenure was largely a successful one, Brinley said. Between 2009 and 2014, Honda's global sales grew 28.5 percent.

He encouraged a focus on sportier cars, like the upcoming Acura NSX, and returned Honda to Formula 1 racing. He also expanded Honda's global manufacturing footprint with new plants in Mexico, Brazil, Thailand, Indonesia, India and China.

Expanding production always carries the risk of quality fumbles, Brinley said. Consumer Reports wouldn't recommend the 2015 Honda Fit small car to U.S. customers because it was the first model made in Mexico. The Fit was recalled in the U.S. in July because some parts were assembled improperly.

Last October, Ito and other top executives took a pay cut after Fits made in Japan were repeatedly recalled for quality problems.

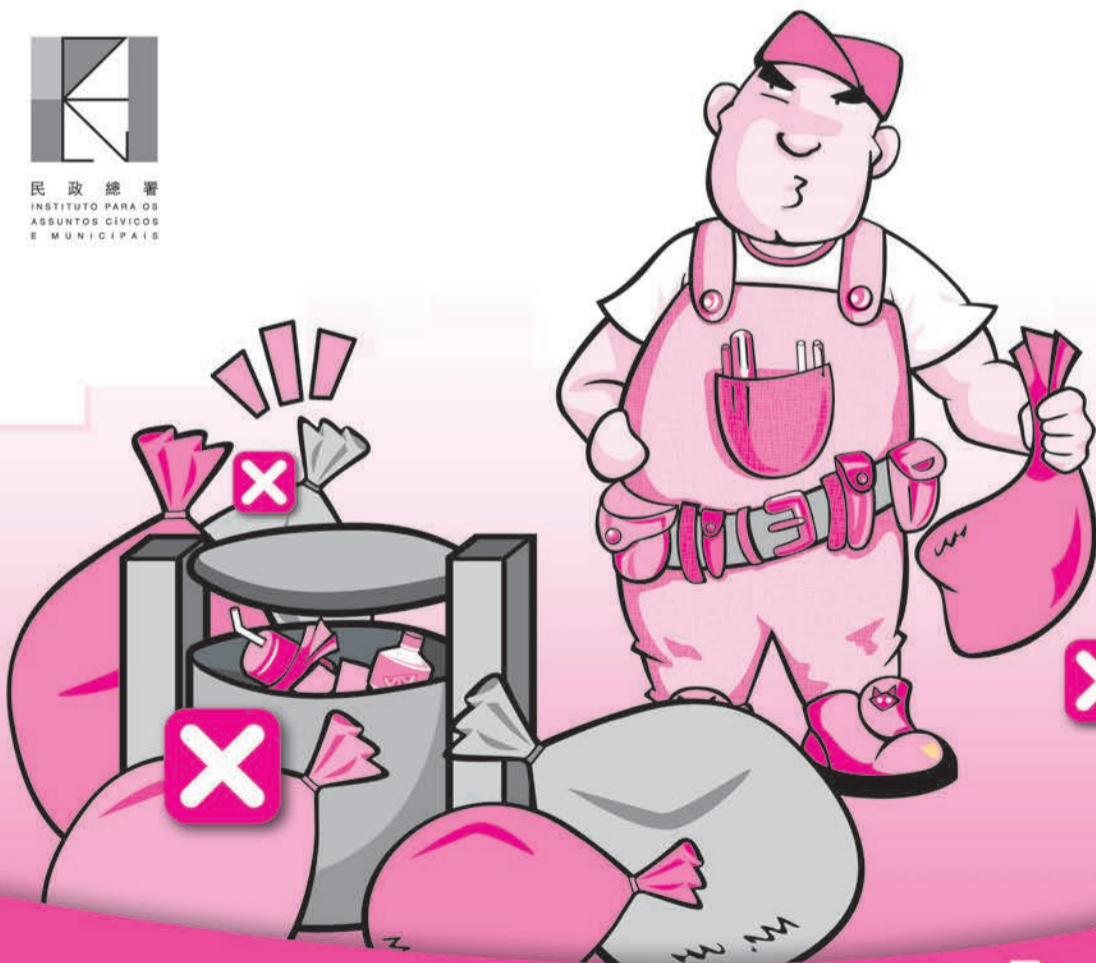
The massive quality problem at Takata centers on air-bag inflators that can explode with too much force, blowing apart a metal canister and sending fragments into the passenger compartment.

Takata's president, Stefan Sticker, resigned in December.

Hachigo, Ito's hand-picked successor, handled development of the U.S.-built Odyssey minivan and has guided the automaker's businesses in the U.S., Europe and China during his 33-year career with Honda, the company said. AP



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Gulliver seeks extreme solutions as HSBC breakup option seen

Stephen Morris

HSBIC Holdings Plc Chief Executive Officer Stuart Gulliver, up against rising capital demands and a sluggish global economy, is facing calls to break up Europe's largest bank after saying profitability will be lower.

Gulliver, who is also struggling to contain a tax-evasion scandal at HSBC's private bank that he said brought "shame" to the company, reported 2014 earnings that missed analysts' estimates, driving the stock down almost 5 percent. The CEO said parts of the investment bank and some national divisions don't offer sufficient returns and may face "extreme solutions."

On Monday, he cited Brazil, Mexico, Turkey and the U.S. as potential markets for disposals, among 74 countries where HSBC operates. The bank has more than 250,000

The most obvious solution is to break the bank up, as the evidence suggests that the bank is too big to manage

ED FIRTH
ANALYST
MACQUARIE GROUP LTD, LONDON



People use ATM machines outside a branch of HSBC in London

staff, even after exiting 77 businesses and cutting some 50,000 jobs in Gulliver's four-year tenure. HSBC is the largest European bank by market value, leaving it exposed to the toughest regulator scrutiny.

"The most obvious solution is to break the bank up, as the evidence suggests that the bank is too big to manage," said Ed Firth, a London-based analyst at Macquarie Group Ltd. in London. "It's difficult

to get around the numbers."

The shares were little changed at 577.3 pence at 8:40 a.m. in London after dropping as much as 6.5 percent on Monday. The bank's share rating was cut to neutral from buy at UBS Group AG, while Canaccord Genuity analysts lowered their recommendation to cut from buy.

"There are no sacred cows," Gulliver said on a conference call. "We're still on a journey

to simplify the firm. I don't rule out that we might make more disposals," he said, adding he didn't accept that the bank is too large to be manageable and he still believes in the universal banking model.

Return on equity, a measure of profitability, fell to 7.3 percent in 2014 from 9.2 percent. HSBC said it's looking for the measure to exceed 10 percent, compared with the 12 percent to 15 percent range set in

2011, when Gulliver took over as CEO.

"Targeting a 10 percent return on equity is hardly market-leading, is it?" Macquarie's Firth said.

The bank's cost-efficiency ratio - a measure of costs versus revenue - jumped to 67 percent last year from 60 percent in 2013. Adjusted revenue was little changed at USD62 billion in 2014 from the previous year.

Though headquartered in London, HSBC still makes most of its earnings in Asia and grew into an emerging-market giant through decades of deal making, including the acquisitions of Midland Bank in the U.K. and Marine Midland Bank in the U.S. Its expansion was only halted by the financial crisis and the resultant increase in regulation and capital requirements.

"If there were disposals from the U.S., Brazil, Mexico, Turkey, the market would receive it well because it could relieve both cost and capital burdens," said Sandy Chen, an analyst at Cenkos Securities in London. "A lot of their global banking and markets probably fails their return on risk-weighted asset hurdles," he said, referring to the unit that houses the investment bank.

Global regulators have already toughened rules for the largest lenders. The Financial Stability Board, the global regulator led by Bank of England Governor Mark Carney, proposed last year that the biggest banks be forced to have subordinated debt and other loss-absorbing liabilities equivalent to as much as a fifth of their assets weighted for risk.

The rule, intended to keep taxpayers off the hook when lenders fail, would apply to the FSB's list of 30 global systemically important banks, with HSBC and JPMorgan Chase & Co. identified as the most significant. **Bloomberg**

corporate bits

EXECUJET SEES SIGNIFICANT GROWTH OPPORTUNITY IN THE REGION

ExecuJet Aviation Group is predicting an acceleration in its growth in Australasia, as clients in the region increasingly turn to support organizations with global experience and scale.

Speaking yesterday at Avalon 2015, the Australian International Airshow and Aerospace & Defence Exposition, Darren McGoldrick, Vice President Australasia, ExecuJet Aviation Group, said: "The macro outlook for business aviation in Asia is encouraging, with all OEMs predicting rising deliveries across the region in the next two decades. We believe the current high levels of product innovation from aircraft manufacturers will only

support that trend, encouraging more people to become business jet owners for the first time."

"This development is in turn driving a maturing of the business aviation services market. In the past year alone, ExecuJet's managed fleet in Australia, New Zealand and South East Asia has grown by 10 aircraft to a total of 18, and we are experiencing a steady increase in enquiries. Clients typically have high service expectations and are seeking out businesses like ExecuJet that have global scale, the resources to invest in quality processes and which offer comprehensive expertise in aircraft operations."

OUTBOUND TOURISM SPENDING OF CHINA'S POST-80S TRAVELLERS TO CONTINUE TO GROW IN 2015

According to UnionPay International, the spending of Chinese outbound travellers is expected to continue to grow in 2015, driven mainly by increased travel and overseas consumption made by the country's post-80s generation, or the Millennials. With the Chinese Lunar New Year holiday, a peak season for outbound travel, the enormous spending power of Chinese tourists will also bring about a "peak harvest" for foreign merchants.

China has become the world's second largest travel and tourism economy - the country's outbound travellers exceeded 100 million in 2014, spending a record USD164.8 billion



overseas. A 2014 research report from the World Tourism Cities Federation (WTCF) revealed that Chinese travellers under 35 years, also known as the "post-80s", or the Millennial, generation have become the main force of outbound tourism in China, accounting for over 67.5% of outbound travellers surveyed last year.

WYNN MACAU CELEBRATES THE YEAR OF THE GOAT



Wynn Macau celebrated the arrival of the Year of the Goat with a dragon and lion dance performance and the lighting of 800,000 firecrackers on the very first day of the Lunar New Year.

On February 19, the first day of the Lunar New Year, Mr. Ian Michael Coughlan, President of Wynn Macau, led the management team in officiating the dragon and lion eye-dotting

ceremony. This was followed by a lion dance performance featuring pyrotechnics and lions that were custom-made in signature Wynn colors. Mr. Coughlan then lit the 800,000 firecrackers. 100 lion dance performers then continued to parade around the hotel with the accompaniment of drums and gongs, bestowing wishes of good fortune on the hotel and its guests.

Sao Tome and Principe posts trade deficit of USD154.5m



A column marks the Equator line in Sao Tome's Rolas Islet

THE trade balance of Sao Tome and Principe for 2014 recorded a deficit of 154.5 million dollars, an increase of 11% over the deficit recorded in 2013, reported the National Statistics Institute (INE). The information sent by Sao Tome INE indicates that the recorded deficit was the result of imports totaling 164.5 million dollars and exports worth 10 million dollars. The INE also said that the export coverage rate of imports was 6.2 pct from January to December 2014, compared with 4.6 pct in 2013. From January to December

2013 imports reached 145.9 million dollars and exports amounted to 6.7 million dollars. The archipelago of Sao Tome and Principe depends on more than 80 pct of external support to finance the state budget, which this year includes expenses of USD150 million. Despite the existence of a joint oil exploration zone with Nigeria, as well as another exclusive maritime area, the surveys carried out have not discovered deposits of commercial value. MDT/Macauhub

2014 Trade between China and Lusophone countries reaches USD132.58b

TRADE between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries in 2014 reached USD132.58 billion, an increase of 0.85 pct over the figure recorded in 2013, according to figures from China's Customs Bureau published in Macau. This amount resulted from imports from China totaling USD86.43 billion (-1.19 pct) and Chinese exports to the eight Portuguese-speaking countries worth USD46.14 billion (+4.91 pct). Most of the trade between China and Portuguese-speaking countries took place with Brazil and Angola, which together, accounted for US\$123.97 billion or 93 pct of the total. With Brazil, China's main trading partner globally, trade amounted to US\$86.9 billion (-3.29 pct) with Brazilian sales of US\$51.97 billion (-3.15 pct) and Chinese sales to the amount of US\$34.92 billion (-3.49 pct).



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Angola is second with bilateral trade of US\$37.07 billion (+3.23 pct), which resulted from Angolan sales of US\$31.09 billion (-2.67 pct) and Chinese sales of US\$5.97 billion (+50.73 pct). In third place in order of importance was Portugal with trade worth US\$4.8 billion (+22.88 pct), in which US\$3.13 billion (+25.15 pct) was in Chinese exports and US\$1.66 billion in Portuguese exports (+18.81 pct). Mozambique came in fourth place with two-way trade totaling US\$3.62 billion (+119.79 pct), in which US\$1.96 billion (+64.55 pct) were in Chinese exports and US\$1.65 billion (+266.37 pct) in Mozambican sales. The other Portuguese-speaking countries – Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Sao Tome and Principe and East Timor – registered trade with China worth a total of US\$184 million dollars.

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HK seeks to tighten visit scheme: chief executive

Hong Kong Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying said yesterday that the Individual Visit Scheme for tourists from the Chinese mainland is not expanding and the government is seeking to tighten it up. Speaking ahead of an Executive Council meeting yesterday morning, Leung said the overall number of mainland tourists visiting Hong Kong during the Lunar New Year was similar to last year, but the number of those came under the visit scheme dropped. Despite the drop, the government will discuss with mainland authorities measures to tighten arrangements under the scheme, Leung said, adding he understood that mainland tourism growth had placed pressure on local people's livelihoods. He said that contrary to newspaper reports, the scheme was not being extended to more mainland cities, and that he had been advising the central government not to expand the scheme as Hong Kong's capacity to receive tourists is limited. Leung added that the government will develop tourism facilities including shopping malls to increase its capacity for visitors.

Traffic peaks as CNY holiday ends

China's railways, air routes and highways saw surging traffic yesterday as the week-long Lunar New Year holiday came to an end. Traffic authorities estimated that about 9.7 million trips were made by train and some 1.4 million by plane yesterday, setting new records. Another 73.6 million trips were made by highway. Altogether, Chinese passengers made 8.25 million trips by air during the week-long holiday, up 7.3 percent year on year, according to the Civil Aviation Administration of China. Every year, tens of millions of Chinese return to the cities where they work or attend school after reuniting with family during the Spring Festival, which fell on Feb. 19 this year. The pre- and post-holiday travel rush known as "Chunyun" in Chinese has been called the world's largest human migration.

3 killed in illegal gold mine

Farmers trying to extract gold from an abandoned mine in central China were overcome by chemical fumes, leaving three dead and six hospitalized, state media reported yesterday. Rescuers were dispatched to the mine in Songxian County in the central province of Henan on Saturday after a tipoff from the public, the Xinhua News Agency said. Although the mine had been abandoned, making any operations there illegal, local farmers were hoping to separate remnants of gold from the rock with the use of chemicals such as sodium cyanide, Xinhua said. They were then apparently overwhelmed by the gasses released. Xinhua said the case remains under investigation. Yesterday was a national holiday and calls to the local government rang unanswered. No official notice was posted on the county's website or official microblog. China has vastly improved its mine safety record in recent years through the closure of thousands of small operations.

Cupid strikes for Hong Kong career women on the mainland



AFTER a few failed relationships in her home city of Hong Kong, Doreen Cheung did not expect Cupid to strike when she moved to Shanghai in 2002.

A PR manager then in her late 30s, Ms Cheung was attracted by better job opportunities in China's most westernized city. As a "leftover woman" — a term referring to highly educated, well-paid but unmarried Chinese females in their late 20s or older — she felt her chances of meeting someone were slim. "I was almost 40. The age became a big problem. It's already very late and hard for me to find someone suitable," she told Financial Times reporter Julie Zhu in Hong Kong.

But things changed when she met Mr Chen, newly returned to Shanghai after working in New Zealand. They fell in love and married two years later.

Back then, it may have been rare for Hong Kong women to look for love on the Chinese mainland. Traditionally, older and poorer Hong Kong men went to China to find younger brides. But in recent years, according to the FT story, thousands of highly educated Hong Kong women have

Men are in a short supply. And men always like to marry down, women always like to marry up

PAUL YIP

followed in Ms Cheung's footsteps.

Nearly 7,500 women from Hong Kong married Chinese men in 2013, a threefold increase from 2003, the paper revealed. Likewise, the number of cross-border marriages registered in Hong Kong accounted for 38 per cent of the total in 2013, compared with 32 per cent 10 years earlier.

It is not hard to understand why women look for love outside of Hong Kong, marriage brokers and sociologists conveyed to the broadsheet. Hong Kong is a tough marriage market for women because of the city's skewed gender ratio — 876 males for every 1,000 females, a gap predicted to worsen to 712 to 1,000 by 2041.

"Men are in a short supply," Paul Yip, an expert on population policy at the University of Hong Kong, told the FT. "And men always like to marry down, women always like to marry up... what we will see is an increasing number of women who remain single."

China's economic boom — and with it, its growing number of wealthy men — has also encouraged women to consider partners from the mainland.

Renowned for being independent and selective, says Sandy To, a sociologist at the University of Hong Kong, women from the territory tend to favor Chinese bachelors with decent education, particularly haigui or "sea turtles" — Chinese who have studied overseas and returned to China.

More than 400,000 haigui returned to the motherland last year, the newspaper stated, according to Chinese government data. "They speak fluent English, have the global perspective and cultural sophistication,"

she says. "Their background is similar to that of professional Hong Kong women. They would click."

Moreover, according to the Financial Times, there could be a political and social benefit to these marriages. Tensions between Hong Kong, anxious to maintain its status as an international metropolis, and mainland China have risen in recent years, most noticeably with last year's pro-democracy protests.

Such cross-border liaisons are believed to help defuse conflicts and enhance mutual understanding between two sides. "Of course, this [cross-border marriage] brings us closer, says Mr Yip. "What else could happen? They can influence us and we influence them too. We don't need to be paranoid about this."

But, Mei Ling Liu, founder of Hong Kong Matchmaker, an elite dating agency, voices a note of caution. Although China and Hong Kong are geographically close, she warns that "the core values and social mentality are different".

Some cultural differences may be difficult to overcome. The government data, though comprehensive, do not include divorces of cross-border couples.

"Hong Kong people speak terrible Mandarin and (most) Chinese speak terrible Cantonese," Ms Liu says. "When you talk about business, you can struggle and manage. When you talk about love, you really need to communicate."

"We don't have a big problem in our daily communication," says Ms Cheung of her relationship. But her accent still marks her out as a Hong Kong native. "He (my husband) sometimes makes fun of me." **MDT/FT**

Lisa Pham and Michelle Yun

HONG KONG

Grandmas vie for jobs as Asia's worst aging crisis looms

EIGHTY-SIX years old and still job hunting, Wong Siu-ying had to stop passing out leaflets on a Hong Kong flyover when she hurt her knee in August. With two-thirds of her social security income spent on rent and no steady allowance from her three children, retirement isn't an option.

"It isn't enough," Wong said of the roughly HKD2,200 (USD284) a month she gets from the government, which provides a benefit to the elderly as a supplementary income, with the expectation families will pay for living expenses. "The most important thing is to find work."

In a city with the most Rolls Royce cars per capita, Wong is among the growing number of elderly forced to sweep streets, collect cardboard for recycling, or hand out pamphlets to stave off poverty. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and World Health Organization forecast Hong Kong will have the highest share of population aged 65 years and over in Asia by 2050, outpacing Japan.

For Hong Kong Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying and his finance secretary, due to hand down the 2015-16 budget today, pressure to help the city's aging combines with more immediate risks including heading off renewed political turmoil after protests last year and girding for higher interest rates.

Rival financial center Singapore on Monday announced plans to strengthen social security support for older and middle-income workers. The island's demographic challenge mirrors Hong Kong's, with the median age of its citizens set to rise to 47 in 2030, from 39 in 2011.

Offering Hong Kong some fiscal firepower is a budget surplus. Hong Kong-based Bank of America Merrill Lynch economist Marcella Chow estimated a surplus of about HK\$62 billion,

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or 2.8 percent of gross domestic product, led by revenue from stamp duties of property and stock transactions, land sales, salaries and business taxes.

"It is essential that the government adjusts the fiscal policy appropriately so as to address the pressures that may arise from an aging population and a declining labor force," Chow wrote in a note this month. "However, given the government's extremely conservative and prudent stance, there is little expectation of any revolu-

tionary proposals."

Even so, the prospect for higher interest rates in the U.S., followed in Hong Kong due to its currency peg to the greenback, raises the risk of undercutting revenue from property transactions that have kept government coffers flush.

In the meantime, Fok Meisong, who turns 65 next month, is in need of work. The grandmother of five said she is taking a break from cleaning the streets of Sham Shui Po, a densely populated working-class dis-

■ In a city with the most Rolls Royce cars per capita, Wong is among the growing number of elderly forced to sweep streets to stave off poverty

trict, after her employer wouldn't give her enough paid leave to recover from a knee injury.

"My children have a lot of burden," she said of her three sons, who aren't able to give her additional spending money.

Hong Kong Chief Executive Leung in January asked the finance secretary to earmark HK\$50 billion for future retirement financing needs. Even if enacted, that would be a long way from providing widespread coverage.

"We cannot rely solely on the government for universal retirement protection," Leung said in a policy address on Jan. 14.

"We are therefore not optimistic a consensus on retirement protection financing arrangements can be reached."

The Commission on Poverty will be seeking public feedback on the pension plans in the second half of this year.

More than a third of Hong Kong's elderly live in poverty, according to a government report in 2012. That compares with an average poverty rate of 12.8 percent in OECD countries, according to a 2013 report.

Younger generations aren't planning sufficiently for their own futures either. One in five single workers in their thirties and forties in Hong Kong don't have any retirement planning, according to an online survey conducted by Fidelity Worldwide Investment in 2013.

That will leave future generations in the same shoes as Lee Yuet-yan, who also has to worry about medical expenses for his wife's respiratory illness. Now 79, the former cook is working six days a week as a building security guard.

"I like my job and I can contribute to the society," he said after completing a nine-hour shift. "I don't get any government support and I can ask my children for money if I need it. But I'll keep working for as long as I can." **Bloomberg**



AP PHOTO

NEW ZEALAND

Gov't to send troops to Iraq to train local forces

Nick Perry, Wellington

NEW Zealand will send a small number of troops to Iraq to help train local forces in their battle against the Islamic State group, Prime Minister John Key announced yesterday.

Key told lawmakers the country would deploy up to 143 military personnel, who would be based "behind the wire" and would train Iraqi security forces rather than being actively involved in combat missions.

Key and his government made the decision without putting it to a parliamentary vote, a contentious move which some say was prompted because the government didn't have the support it needed to win such a vote.

Key said most of the troops would likely be based in the Taji military base north of Baghdad as part of a joint mission with Australia. He said the two-year deployment would begin about May and would be reviewed by the government after nine months.

Key said the government had been considering options to expand upon the humanitarian assistance it was already providing.

"New Zealand is a country that stands up for its values. We stand up for what is right,"



An Iraqi army trainee rehearses proper room clearing techniques under the supervision of a U.S. Marine during training, as part of their commitment in helping combat the Islamic State militant group in Iraq, at Al-Asad Air Base in Anbar province

Key told lawmakers. "We have an obligation to support stability and the rule of law internationally. We do not shy away from taking our share of the burden when the international rules-based system is threatened, as it is today."

The announcement was criticized by opposition Labour Party leader Andrew Little, who said New Zealand should not be sending troops to Iraq and that lawmakers should have been given the opportunity to vote on the issue.

Little said it was unrealistic to say the troops would be there purely in a non-combat role.

"They won't just be behind the wire, they will be exposed to the much wider conflict," Little said. "And it won't just be the soldiers we send to Iraq, it will be Kiwis traveling around the world."

Little said the Iraqi army was broken, treacherous and corrupt and was not the right organization to defeat the Islamic State group.

Lt. Gen. Tim Keating, the chief of New Zealand's defense force, acknowledged that insider attacks by Iraq forces posed a threat, but said New Zealand trainers could add value.

"We will start with anything, and we will work toward our mission to develop a professional Iraqi defense force," he said.

Key said New Zealand was one of 62 nations that were part of an international coalition battling the group.

He said up to 106 troops would be deployed to the Taji base about 22 kilometers north of Baghdad, while others would be sent to the coalition headquarters or other facilities in the region. **AP**

INDONESIA

President rejects any intervention in executions



Australian death-row prisoners Myuran Sukumaran, right and Andrew Chan

Indonesia's president has rejected any attempts by other countries to intervene in the execution of foreign drug traffickers. The government has announced plans to execute eight people — one Indonesian and seven foreigners from Australia, Brazil, France, Ghana, Nigeria and the Philippines. President Joko Widodo told reporters yesterday that the death penalty is part of the country's legal system, and insisted that other countries should not interfere. He said he has received phone calls from some foreign leaders asking that the executions be canceled. In January,

the government brushed aside appeals from several foreign countries and executed an Indonesian and five foreigners from Malawi, Nigeria, the Netherlands and Vietnam who were convicted of drug trafficking. There are 133 people on death row in Indonesia, including 57 for drug crimes.

MALDIVES

FM blasts foreign concern over arrest of ex-president

The government of the Maldives has criticized foreign countries and groups that expressed concern over its recent arrest of an ex-president, saying it will not accept advice on governance issues. Foreign Minister Dunya Maumoon said yesterday that the arrest of former President Mohamed Nasheed had been conducted lawfully and he would receive a fair trial. The United States, India and the United Nations were among those who expressed concern over Nasheed's arrest on Sunday for ordering the arrest of a top judge when he was president three years ago. Nasheed has been charged under an anti-terror law and a court has ordered him held in detention until the trial ends.

SOUTH KOREA

Spy chief says teenager joined Islamic State group

Ateenager who went missing in Turkey last month is probably the first known South Korean to join the Islamic State group, officials said yesterday.

The director of South Korea's National Intelligence Service, Lee Byung-kee, told legislators in a closed-door meeting that the 18-year-old man is alive in Syria and with an Islamic State group unit that trains combat personnel, opposition lawmaker Kim Kwang Jin said.

Kim said Lee didn't reveal how the spy agency obtained the information or where the Islamic Sta-

te group unit is based.

The man, identified only by his last name, Kim, was last seen leaving a hotel in the Turkish border town of Kilis on Jan. 10. An official from Seoul's Foreign Ministry, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, citing office rules, confirmed that he would be the first known South Korean to join the militant group.

South Korean police said in a news conference last month that Kim likely attempted to enter Syria with the intention of joining the Islamic State group, citing his computer, social

media and telephone records that showed him actively communicating with people suspected to be recruiters from the group.

Lee also told legislators that there was no evidence to support media reports that Kim Kyong Hui, aunt of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, was dead, said Kim the lawmaker. Kim Kyong Hui last made a public appearance in September 2013, three months before Kim Jong Un executed her husband, Jang Song Thaek, on treason charges, according to South Korea's Unification Ministry. **AP**

Lorne Cook and Raf Casert, Brussels

GREECE

GREECE'S creditors in the 19-country eurozone yesterday approved a list of reforms Athens proposed to get a 4-month extension to its bailout, which should keep the country afloat over the coming months.

An encouraging initial reaction from the so-called institutions — the European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund — to the reforms Greece proposed in a letter late Monday was backed by the eurozone nations.

Greece had to make the proposals in order to get the bailout extended. Without the financial lifeline over the coming few months, Greece faces the possibility of going bankrupt, imposing capital controls and ditching the euro.

"The three institutions agreed to start the process with this. They thought it was a serious enough list and all the countries have just agreed with that in the meeting so we can start," said eurogroup president Jeroen Dijsselbloem on RTL television.

The proposal to extend Greece's bailout, which ends at the end of the month, now goes to some member nations for approval.

The reform plans, which include measures to deal with tax evasion and corruption and were



Dutch Finance Minister and the head of the eurogroup Jeroen Dijsselbloem, right, sits next to the chairman of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs Roberto Gualtieri during a meeting of the committee at the European Parliament in Brussels

sent ahead of Monday's deadline, also met with a favorable response in the markets. The main stock market in Athens was up around 9 percent in afternoon trading.

Though the reform measures

were welcomed, the eurozone ministers said Greece had to take further steps to flesh out the details.

"We call on the Greek authorities to further develop and broaden the list of reform measure,"

the eurozone said in a statement.

So far, the reform list "is sufficiently comprehensive to be a valid starting point," EU Financial Affairs Commissioner Pierre Moscovici wrote. "We are

encouraged by the commitment to combat tax evasion and corruption ... as well as to pursue reforms to modernize the public administration."

In its list of reforms, the Greek government says it will combat tax evasion and corruption, reduce bureaucracy, review public spending, modernize the pension system and address rising poverty through measures that have "no fiscal effect." It says authorities will "turn the fight against corruption into a national priority."

It pledges not to roll back any privatizations that have already been completed and to "respect the process, according to the law," of any tenders that have already been launched. Privatization was one of the elements of Greece's bailout that Tsipras' Syriza party had promised to cancel.

The letter is a general outline of policies and does not include any figures or specific details on how the policies will be achieved. **AP**

USA

Alaska becomes 3rd US state to legalize marijuana

Molly Dischner, Juneau

ALASKA yesterday became the third U.S. state to legalize the recreational use of marijuana, but organizers don't expect any public celebrations since it remains illegal to smoke marijuana in public.

In the state's largest city, Anchorage, police officers are ready to start handing out USD100 fines to make sure taking a toke remains something to be done behind closed doors.

Placing Alaska in the same category as Washington state and Colorado with legal marijuana was the goal of a coalition including libertarians, rugged individualists and small-government Republicans who prize the privacy rights enshrined in the Alaska state constitution.

When they voted 53-47 percent last November to legalize marijuana use by adults in private pla-



Peter Lomonaco, co-founder of the Alaska Cannabis Club, and CEO Charlo Greene roll a joint at their medical marijuana dispensary in Anchorage, Alaska

ces, they left many of the details to lawmakers and regulators to sort out.

That has left confusion on many matters.

The initiative bans smoking in public, but didn't define what that means, and lawmakers left the question to the alcohol regulatory board,

which planned to meet early yesterday to discuss an emergency response.

That's left different communities across the state to adopt different standards of what smoking in public means to them. In Anchorage, officials tried and failed in December to ban a new commercial marijuana industry. But Police Chief Mark Mew said his officers will be strictly enforcing the public smoking ban. He even warned people against smoking on their porches if they live next to a park.

But far to the north, in North Pole, smoking outdoors on private property will be OK as long as it doesn't create a nuisance, officials there said.

As of yesterday, adult Alaskans can not only keep and use pot, they can transport, grow it and give it away. A second phase, creating a regulated and taxed marijuana market, won't start until 2016 at the earliest. **AP**

UKRAINE

Rebels claim weapons pullback begins

Jim Heintz, Kiev

RUSSIAN-BACKED rebels in eastern Ukraine said yesterday they have begun a large-scale pullback of heavy weapons in line with an international peace plan that aims to form a wide buffer zone between separatists' and Ukrainian forces' artillery.

The claim by Eduard Basurin, a top rebel commander, couldn't immediately be confirmed. Michael Bociurkiw, a spokesman for the observer mission that is monitoring the fighting in eastern Ukraine, said he couldn't comment until receiving monitors' reports at the end of the day.

The peace plan that was signed Feb. 15 calls for heavy weapons to be pulled back by each side from the front line by 25 to 70 kilometers, depending on their caliber.

The cease-fire has been troubled by violations, leading to concern that it wouldn't solidify and that fighting would continue.

Russia denies Ukrainian and Western claims that it is supplying the rebels with troops and equipment, with the possible aim of a full-scale war.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, in an interview with state television on Monday, said "such an apocalyptic scenario is hardly possible."

A rebel website cited Basurin as



Russia-backed rebels ride on an armored vehicle in the center of Debaltseve

saying about 100 122-mm howitzers would be moved yesterday.

There was no immediate comment from the Ukrainian side, but military officials have said that they won't pull back weapons until a cease-fire fully takes hold.

Yesterday, military spokesman Lt. Col. Anatoliy Stelmakh said rebels had shelled the town of Popasna seven times and launched one barrage on the village of Luhanske.

Stelmakh also said rebels tried to storm Ukrainian positions near the southern village of Shyrokyne, which is near the strategic Azov Sea port of Mariupol. Concerns persist that rebels aim to take Mariupol to help establish a land corridor between mainland Russia and the Crimean peninsula that Russia annexed last March. **AP**

MPC

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ISRAEL

Report: Mossad was less alarmed than Netanyahu on Iran

Ian Deitch, Jerusalem

ISRAEL'S Mossad spy agency in October 2012 had a less alarmist view of Iran's nuclear program than an assessment delivered by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the United Nations just a few weeks earlier, according to a purported secret cable published Monday by two media outlets.

In a landmark speech to the United Nations in September of that year, Netanyahu had brandished a cartoon drawing of a bomb and said Iran was moving ahead with plans that would allow it to potentially build a nuclear bomb within a year or so.

But in the document published Monday by The Guardian and Al-Jazeera, the Mossad is quoted as saying "Iran at this stage is not performing the activity necessary to produce weapons."

The news organizations said the document was an assessment shared with South African intelligence, part of a trove of leaked spy cables sent by several different intelligence agencies, including the CIA and Russian intelligence.

The British newspaper said the documents detail an attempt by



In this Sept. 27, 2012, file photo, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel shows an illustration as he describes his concerns over Iran's nuclear ambitions during his address to the 67th session of the United Nations General Assembly at U.N. headquarters

the CIA to establish contact with the Islamic militant group Hamas, South Korean intelligence targeting the leader of Greenpeace and South Africa spying on Russia over a joint satellite deal. The paper said it had "independently authenticated" the cache.

An Israeli official said there was "no discrepancy" between Netanyahu's assessment and the unverified leaks. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the matter on the record.

The leaks come just days before Netanyahu is scheduled to speak before the U.S. Congress about Iran's nuclear program.

In the 2012 speech, the Israeli leader held a diagram of a cartoon-like bomb showing escalating levels of uranium enrichment. He pulled out a red marker and drew a line across what he said was a threshold which Israel could not tolerate — uranium enrichment to 90 percent, the level needed to make an atomic bomb.

"By next spring, at most by next summer at current enrichment rates, they will have finished the medium enrichment and move on to the final stage. From there, it's only a few months, possibly a few weeks before they get

enough enriched uranium for the first bomb," Netanyahu said.

He said his assessment was not based on "military intelligence," but on publicly available U.N. reports.

The purported leaked Mossad cable expresses far less urgency.

"Even though Iran has accumulated enough 5 percent enriched uranium for several bombs, and has enriched some of it to 20 percent, it does not appear to be ready to enrich it to higher levels," the document says.

"Bottom line: though Iran at this stage is not performing the activity necessary to produce weapons, it is working to close gaps in areas that appear legitimate such as enrichment, reactors, which will reduce the time required to produce weapons from the time the instruction is actually given," it said.

Iran reached a landmark interim nuclear deal with world powers in November 2013 under which it converted or diluted its stock of 20 percent enriched uranium. It is negotiating a final deal with the U.S., Britain, France, Russia, China and Germany, with the two sides hoping to agree on a preliminary deal in March and a follow-up pact in June. AP

USA

Republicans struggle for way out as Homeland shutdown looms

Erica Werner, Washington

DIVIDED Republicans are searching for a way out of an impasse over immigration that is threatening to shut down the Homeland Security Department within days.

With the agency's budget set to expire Friday at midnight without action by Congress, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell announced Monday he would separate language overturning President Barack Obama's contested immigration measures from the department's funding bill.

The move seemed aimed at pressuring Senate Democrats who have opposed the legislation because the immigration language is included. It also would

allow Republicans who oppose Obama's executive actions on deferring deportation for millions of immigrants living in the U.S. illegally to register their opposition with a stand-alone vote. But Senate Democrats were quick to point out it left unanswered the question of how to fund the Homeland Security Department.

"This proposal doesn't bring us any closer to actually funding DHS," said Democratic Sen. Chuck Schumer. "It's a disgrace that ISIS and al-Shabab are fully funded, but thanks to Republican game-playing, the Department of Homeland Security might not be."

ISIS in one acronym for the Islamic State militant group that has taken over

much of Iraq and Syria. Over the weekend, a video purported to be released by Somalia's al-Qaida-linked rebel group al-Shabab urged Muslims to attack shopping malls in the U.S. and other Western countries.

In the wake of a federal court's ruling last week saying Obama overstepped his authority, and putting his immigration actions on hold, a growing number of Senate Republicans argued for letting the immigration fight play out in court, and passing a "clean" bill to fund Homeland Security, free of the language on immigration. The Obama administration on Monday asked U.S. District Judge Andrew Hanen in Texas to put his immigration ruling on hold and filed a notice of appeal

of his ruling to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans.

"Leave it to the courts. I think we have an excellent case before the Supreme Court," Sen. John McCain said Monday night.

House conservatives, by contrast, said the court developments only strengthened their resolve to use the Homeland Security budget to fight Obama on immigration. They remained adamantly opposed to a funding bill that doesn't include language blocking Obama on immigration, and also said they would not support a short-term extension of current funding levels.

Republican Rep. Mick Mulvaney said that now that Republicans have full control of Congress, they



President Barack Obama gestures as he finishes speaking to members of the National Governors Association

have the responsibility to stand firm against Obama.

It was unclear whether McConnell would succeed in breaking the unity of Senate Democrats, who held together for a fourth time Monday night to block debate on the House bill that funds the Homeland Security Department through the Sept. 30 budget year, while also overturning Obama's moves granting work permits to millions in the U.S. illegally. Three

previous attempts earlier in the month to advance the House bill had yielded similar results.

McConnell's move came after Obama warned the nation's governors that states would feel the economic pain of a Homeland Security shutdown, with tens of thousands of workers in line to be furloughed if the agency shuts down at midnight Friday, and many more forced to work without pay. AP

what's ON



ORCHID EXHIBITION WELCOMES LUNAR NEW YEAR 2015

TIME: 8am-8pm (February 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 & 8pm (Saturdays & 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 & 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

RED SANDALWOOD ART EXHIBITION OF OLD BEIJING CITY GATES

TIME: 12pm-9pm (Tuesdays to Sundays, open on Mondays that fall on a public holiday)

UNTIL: March 22, 2015

VENUE: Level 2 MGM Art Space

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8802 8888

Offbeat

'FIFTY SHADES' DOMINATES BOX OFFICE AGAIN WITH USD22.2 MILLION



"Fifty Shades of Grey" stayed on top of the box office.

Universal's erotic drama starring Dakota Johnson and Jamie Dornan earned USD22.2 million at No. 1 in its second weekend at the box office.

The total domestic haul for the adaptation of E.L. James' best-selling novel now stands at \$129.1 million.

The action spy film "Kingsman: The Secret Service" and the family friendly "The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out of Water" similarly maintained their respective No. 2 and No. 3 spots.

Fox's "Kingsman" grabbed \$18.3 million, while Paramount's "SpongeBob" surfed away with \$16.7 million.

Oscar-winner "Birdman" stood at 15th, grossing \$877,586 last week at U.S. and Canadian theaters.

TV canal macau

13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
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
23:50	Documentary Series
00:25	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)

cinema

CINETEATRO

18 FEB - 25 FEB

STAND BY ME DORAEMON_

ROOM 1

2.00, 5.40 pm

Language: Cantonese (Chinese)

Duration: 95min

TRIUMPH IN THE SKIES_

ROOM 1

7.30 pm

Language: Cantonese (English and Chinese)

Duration: 127min

KINGSMAN: THE SECRET SERVICE_

ROOM 2

2.30, 7.15, 11.30 pm

Director: Matthew Vaughn

Starring: Colin Firth, Michael Caine, Samuel L. Jackson

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 127min

PENGUINS OF MADAGASCAR_

ROOM 2

4.45 pm

Language: Cantonese (Chinese)

Duration: 127min

STAND BY ME DORAEMON_

ROOM 2

7.15 pm

Language: Cantonese (Chinese)

Duration: 95min



FROM VEGAS TO MACAU 2_

ROOM 3

3.45, 7.30, 9.30 pm

Language: Cantonese (English and Chinese)

Duration: 90min

PENGUINS OF MADAGASCAR_

ROOM 3

2.00, 5.45 pm

Language: Cantonese (Chinese)

Duration: 127min

MACAU TOWER

19 FEB - 04 MAR

12 GOLDEN DUCKS_

2.30, 4.30, 7.00, 9.30 pm

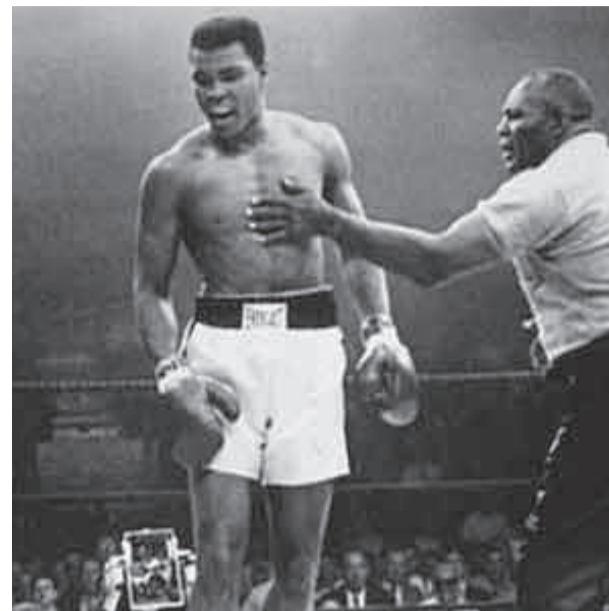
Director: Matt Chow

Starring: Eason Chan, Louis Koo, Sandra Kwan Yue Ng

Language: Chinese (Chinese)

Duration: 92min

this day in history



1964 CASSIUS CLAY CROWNED WORLD CHAMPION

Cassius Clay, 22, has been crowned heavyweight champion of the world after beating Sonny Liston in one of the biggest upsets in boxing's history.

Clay, from Kentucky, was announced the winner after the hot favourite retired at the end of the sixth round in Miami.

When the bell rang for the start of the seventh round, Liston stayed on his stool in the corner of the ring - saying he did not want to continue.

Florida state attorney Richard Gerstein is to launch an inquiry into the fight.

Clay was earlier fined around £900 for disgraceful conduct after he ranted at his 32-year-old opponent during the weigh-in.

He had chanted "I wanna rumble...I wanna rumble!" before saying "You're a tramp. I am going to eat you up. Somebody's going to die at the ringside tonight. Are you scared?"

Liston had built his reputation on two first round knock-outs of Floyd Patterson and in the boxing world he was thought to be invincible.

Clay had come into the fight after suffering his greatest humiliation to date - being knocked down by Henry Cooper's left hook.

Liston reigned supreme when he was challenged by former Olympic gold medallist Clay, who ring experts said was "all talk".

The majority of sports journalists covering the bout thought that Clay, who was 7-1 underdog, would be no match for Liston. Only half of the seats had been sold and around 8,000 people attended the fight.

The fight started at 0310 GMT at the Convention Hall in Miami Beach and Liston had been widely expected to retain his title in the third round.

Liston, known as the "dark destroyer", had managed to pin Clay to the ropes during round two but in round three the champion was forced to retreat, with his left eye pouring with blood.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The World Boxing Association let Cassius Clay keep his heavyweight championship following the controversy over his fight with Sonny Liston at Miami Beach.

Ed Lassman, president of the WBA, had earlier demanded that Clay be stripped of his title and recommended giving the title back to him if his conduct improved over the next five months.

Miami State attorney Richard Gerstein said a month-long inquiry revealed no evidence of match-fixing. He added that there was little doubt that Liston was suffering from a sore shoulder during the fight.

Both the original fight and the rematch a year later in Maine, which Clay won with a first-round knockout, have been dogged by allegations of rigging.

Muhammad Ali, as he was later known to his adoring fans, said the victory in Miami over Liston was the most important of his career - because he had proved he was qualified to be champion of the world.

Shortly after the fight, Clay surprised the sports world by announcing that he had joined the Nation of Islam and had changed his name to Muhammad Ali.

His boxing career lasted 20 years, during which he won 56 fights and scored 37 knock-outs.

As an admirer once said, Ali would, "float like a butterfly, sting like a bee". In December 1981, Ali decided to retire from the ring and Parkinson's disease was later diagnosed.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 You're moving pretty slowly today...

Taurus April 20-May 20 Your interpersonal relations have never gone this smoothly...

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 This is not a great time to play games - you need to really focus...

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Your friendly energy is perfect for charming new love interests...

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 You can't help but say no to what at first sounds like a reasonable request...

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 It's time to think about travel once again - and your great energy is pushing you in one specific direction...

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 A cultural epiphany comes your way and may help you find new ways to live your life...

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 You should find that things aren't quite as simple as you had expected...

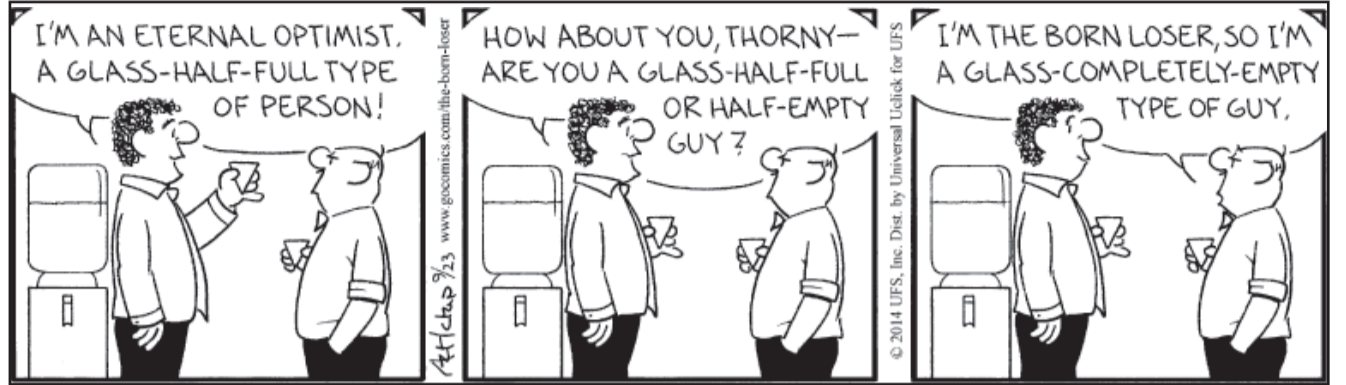
Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 Your analytical mind is chugging along and making short work of life's little problems...

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 Your romantic situation is getting a lot more interesting today...

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 You feel a little bored today - but that may just be par for the course...

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 How's your love life? Your answer is likely to change for the better as the day goes on...

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Sudoku puzzles categorized as Easy, Easy+, Medium, and Hard, each with a 9x9 grid and some numbers filled in.

WEATHER

Weather forecast table with columns for MIN, MAX, and CONDITION for various cities in CHINA and WORLD.

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- It's a long story; 5- Just ___; 9- Bullwinkle, e.g.; 14- Crude cartel; 15- ___ Beach, Florida...

DOWN: 1- Work up lather; 2- Church recess; 3- Will of "The Waltons"; 4- Broadway opening; 5- Birdlike...



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IRELAND captain William Porterfield reckons his team has had enough time to savor its surprising opening win over the West Indies at the World Cup. Now it's time to get on with business.

The Irish had a four-wicket win over the two-time World Cup winners in Nelson, New Zealand, chasing down the target of 305 with four overs to spare nine days ago. So they've had plenty of time to prepare for today's match against the United Arab Emirates, one of the three other so-called Associate teams at the tournament.

"The lads are raring to go," said Porterfield, who is determined to continue Ireland's 13-game unbeaten streak against the UAE. "It's obviously a decent record, but it doesn't account for anything. It's anyone's game."

But, "If we go in there and play the kind of cricket we want to play ... the result can go from there."

The UAE had to wait until Thursday to get started, its first game at the World Cup since 1996 ending in a four-wicket loss to Zimbabwe at Nelson. The UAE team, comprising part-time players and mostly ex-pats, scored 285-7 in an encouraging batting display. There's been much made of the International Cricket Council's plans to cut the number of teams competing at the World Cup from 14 to 10 in 2019, mostly due to performances like Ireland's win over the West Indies and Scotland running New Zealand close in its opening match.

Porterfield said his team had set a goal of reaching the quarter-finals, which could further complicate matters for the ICC.

"We've spoken openly about wanting to make the quarter-finals — at least, that's our first goal," Porterfield said. "We've come here and expecting to get through the group."

"There is a long way to go. We've played one game of cricket. We've got five to go. We

CRICKET | WORLD CUP

After surprising opening win, Ireland back in action v UAE



William Porterfield

can't expect to pick up where we left off against the West Indies — I think it would be foolish to do that. So we've got to prepare well as we have done again, and have a look at the UAE."

George Dockrell took 3-50 to restrict the West Indies to 304

and then Paul Stirling scored 92, Ed Joyce made 84 and Niall O'Brian hit an unbeaten 79 to lift Ireland to 307-6 and a famous victory. Ireland is unlikely to tinker much with its lineup.

UAE vice-captain, Khurram Khan, the oldest player at the

tournament, said the outcome in Brisbane was crucial for both teams. The weekend match between four-time champion Australia and Bangladesh at the Gabba was abandoned due to cyclonic rain. There's more rain on the forecast, but the UAE and Ire-

land are hoping there's no repeat of the no result from Saturday.

Khan scored 45 against Zimbabwe, while Shaiman Anwar posted 67 to bolster the UAE innings. They're looking for more from the top order on Wednesday.

Ireland will "be targeting us. We've played lots of games against them," Khan said. "For us, as well, from associates, we've played a lot of games and we know the weaknesses as well. So I think it's a wonderful opportunity because it's, you know, it's a very important game for us as well. So we're targeting definitely this game."

Khan expected the Ireland batsmen to try to get on top of the game, but the UAE had plans to combat that.

"I think they're batting side, and bowling has been their weakness," he said. "Obviously they'll be very up as an associate, and they know they have chances because they beat West Indies — the extra pressure will be on them." AP

Philander ruled out of South Africa's next World Cup match

PACEMAN Vernon Philander has been ruled out of South Africa's next World Cup match against the West Indies due to a left hamstring injury he picked up during last weekend's loss to defending champion India.

South Africa team manager Mohammed Moosajee released a statement yesterday saying medical scans in Sydney confirmed the extent of Philander's injury, which would take a week to 10 days to heal.

Moosajee said Philander would miss Fri-



Vernon Philander

day's match against the West Indies, but it was too early to make an assessment on his availability for the Pool B match against Ireland in Canberra next Tuesday.

"We have to give him every opportunity to make sure that he can be available," Moosajee said. "At the same time we don't want to be foolish by taking short-cuts — we will go through the usual treatment protocols. If he passes all the fitness tests and is symptom free going into the Ireland game, he may play."

Philander was only able to bowl four overs against India, leaving South Africa's attack short of options in a lopsided match at Melbourne. South Africa, one of the leading title contenders, opened the tournament with a win over Zimbabwe. AP

THE AUTUMN WORLD CUP

FIFA recommends November-December for Qatar 2022

AFIFA task force yesterday recommended playing the 2022 World Cup in November-December to avoid the summer heat in Qatar.

FIFA said the task force chose the "most viable period" over other proposals to play in January, April or May, dates favored mostly by European soccer. FIFA also said the tournament should be shorter than the current 32-day schedule.

The plan must be approved by the FIFA executive committee, chaired by President Sepp Blatter, at

a March 19-20 meeting in Zurich.

Blatter, who is an IOC member, has long favored November-December to avoid clashing with the Winter Olympics, scheduled for February 2022.

"Given that the two bidding cities for the 2022 Winter Olympics — Almaty (Kazakhstan) and Beijing (China) — pledged recently to host the winter games from Feb. 4-20, 2022; that the month of Ramadan begins on April 2 in 2022; and that consistently hot conditions

prevail from May to September in Qatar, the only remaining effective option is the November-December window," FIFA said in a statement.

European clubs and leagues oppose FIFA's proposal, which shuts them down for several weeks in midseason.

The FIFA executive committee chose Qatar as host in December 2010, when the gas-rich emirate won a five-nation bidding contest to host the tournament in the traditional June-July slot.

Tuesday's recommendation comes 17 months after the FIFA board — minus several members who have left since the hosting vote after being implicated in corruption — ordered a consultation on finding the best dates in Qatar.

The process was widely seen to have been pre-judged by Blatter, who insisted on November-December as the only realistic choice.

Blatter also reversed his position on the winter World Cup debate. After the December 2010 vote,

he said the tournament would be played in summer and the dates could only be changed at Qatar's request.

Two months ago, Qatar was confirmed as host when a FIFA ethics committee investigation into the 2018 and 2022 bidding contests was closed, concluding that wrongdoing did not influence the results. Russia was chosen as 2018 host.

The FIFA task force will have further meetings to study extending the World Cup qualifying program

into early 2022.

FIFA said it is also looking to stage the 2021 Confederations Cup in the usual June-July slot in a different Asian country. Three Asian Football Confederation members — Australia, Japan and South Korea — were losing candidates in the 2022 contest, which also included the United States.

The FIFA-organized Club World Cup, which is traditionally played in December, could be staged in Qatar in 2021 as a World Cup test event, FIFA said. AP

opinion

World Views
 The Editors, Bloomberg

SODA TAX BUBBLES UP

Is it smart to impose a sin tax on soda? Many Americans hate the idea, considering it an imposition on personal freedom. Congress, likewise, won't go near it anytime soon. But it's been recommended – for good reason – by the panel of doctors and public-health experts who help define U.S. dietary standards. And it deserves a try – ideally by city and state governments.

Americans have a serious sugar problem, as the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee reported last week. A sugar-rich diet is a major cause of obesity, which can lead to diabetes, heart disease and plenty of other deadly and debilitating ailments. So to suggest that people should consume less sugar is hardly controversial.

To go a step further and recommend using tax policy to persuade people to comply may be novel, but it's based on a sound and well-established economic principle: Tax the bad stuff. Levying taxes on alcohol, tobacco and gambling – all of which impose heavy costs on society – has led to reduced consumption and helped finance the government programs that address the problems they cause.

Taxing sugary drinks, which are a leading cause of obesity but have no nutritional value, makes at least as much sense. Perhaps even more; after all, according to some studies, modest alcohol consumption may at least have some positive health benefits. No such evidence exists for sugary drinks.

While the economic case for a soda tax is sound, the political argument will take more time to develop. The soda industry, like the tobacco industry before it, still denies being part of the problem

Critics ask: Why not tax doughnuts and candy bars, too? But there is an important distinction between junk foods and junk drinks. Foods usually have a modicum of nutritional value and help fill the stomach, sending a signal to stop eating. Sugary drinks do nothing but supply empty calories.

One city is already experimenting with a soda tax. In November, voters in Berkeley, California, voted by a 3-to-1 margin to impose a penny-an-ounce tax on sugary drinks. (Michael R. Bloomberg, founder of Bloomberg L.P., supported the referendum.) A legislator in Connecticut recently proposed a similar levy. It's too soon to know what the effect of Berkeley's tax will be, but early indications from Mexico – which adopted a sugary-drink tax in 2013 – are encouraging. People there say they are drinking less soda, and they're better aware of the link between sugary drinks and diabetes and obesity.

While the economic case for a soda tax is sound, the political argument will take more time to develop. The soda industry, like the tobacco industry before it, still denies being part of the problem.

As obesity-related problems worsen and public health expenses multiply, states and cities will need a range of new strategies. Providing greater subsidies for fruits and vegetables – an idea that the federal advisory committee also endorsed – could improve diets. But to fight one of obesity's leading causes head on, the best weapon may be a tax.

THE BUZZ SPAIN'S RAJOY RAISES 2015 GROWTH FORECAST TO 2.4 PERCENT

Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy says Spain's economy will grow by a better-than-expected 2.4 percent in 2015, claiming it as strong evidence that the country has emerged from the severe economic crisis.

Opening the annual state-of-the-nation debate yesterday, Rajoy said Spain had moved from the edge of the abyss to being the euro-zone country with the highest growth and job

creation.

Rajoy had last predicted the economy would grow by 2 percent in 2015, a year in which he faces general elections.

Despite the growth – Spain also grew 1.4 percent in 2014 – unemployment remains high at 23.7 percent. Rajoy promised to create some 500,000 jobs this year, raising to 1 million the number created since taking office in 2011.

US States predict inmates' future crimes with secretive surveys



A guard tower on the fence line at North Central Unit at Calico Rock, Ark

U.S. states are trying to reduce prison populations with secretive, new psychological assessments to predict which inmates will commit future crimes and who might be safe to release, despite serious problems and high-profile failures, an Associated Press investigation found.

These programs are part of a national, data-driven movement to drive down prison populations, reduce recidivism and save billions. They include questionnaires often with more than 100 questions about an offender's education, family, income, job status, history of moving, parents' arrest history – or whether he or she has a phone. A score is affixed to each answer and the result helps shape how the offender will be supervised in the system – or released from custody.

Used for crimes ranging from petty theft to serial murders, these questionnaires come with their own set of risks, according to the

AP's examination. There are dozens of different surveys in use.

Many rely on criminals to tell the truth, and jurisdictions don't always check to make sure the answers are accurate. They are used inconsistently across the country, sometimes within the same jurisdiction. The same defendant might be scored differently in the same crime.

Supporters cite some research, such as a 1987 Rand Corp. study that said the surveys accurately can predict the likelihood of repeat offenses as much as 70 percent of the time if they are used correctly. But even the Rand study, one of the seminal pieces of research on the subject, was skeptical of the surveys' overall effectiveness.

Some surveys have the potential to punish people for being poor or uneducated by attaching a lower risk to those who have steady work and high levels of education. The surveys are clouded in secre-

cy. Some states never release the evaluations, shielding government officials from being held accountable for decisions that affect public safety.

But sometimes the assessments are not accurate.

In 2013 in Texas, a routine risk assessment used on sex offenders when they are released from prison found convicted rapist Darren Vann to be a low-risk to re-offend. About a year later, in Indiana, Vann confessed to police that he killed seven women.

The Justice Department's position on the surveys is inconsistent. On one hand, the department is helping bankroll this movement by providing millions of dollars to help states develop and roll out new policies. Yet it's also putting on the brakes and is reluctant to use them for the federal prison population.

"Criminal sentences must be based on the facts, the law, the actual crimes committed, the circumstances surrounding each individual case, and the defendant's history of criminal conduct," Attorney General Eric Holder told the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers in August. "They should not be based on unchangeable factors that a person cannot control, or on the possibility of a future crime that has not taken place." AP

THE DECISIVE MOMENT



Filipino children chat on top of concrete tubes that will be used for a drainage system at the slum district of Tondo in Manila. Will any of these kids beat the odds and escape from their fate?

Station	Air quality
Roadside	45-65 Good
High Density Residential Area	60-80 Moderate
Ambient	40-60 Good

SOURCE: DSI/MG

WORLD BRIEFS

NEW ZEALAND will send a small number of troops to Iraq to help train local forces in their battle against the Islamic State group, Prime Minister John Key announces.

More on p12



SYRIA Islamic State militants have abducted at least 70 Assyrian Christians, including women and children, after overrunning a string of villages in northeastern Syria, two activist groups said.



QATAR Long seen as inevitable, a 2022 World Cup in November and December is now practically a done deal. A FIFA task force has recommended playing the tournament in Qatar at the end of the year to avoid the summer heat – where temperatures routinely top 40 degrees – when the World Cup traditionally kicks off in June.

USA Divided Republicans are searching for a way out of an impasse over immigration that is threatening to shut down the Homeland Security Department within days. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell announced he would split language overturning President Barack Obama's contested immigration measures from the department's funding bill.

More on p15

UK Conservative Party lawmaker Malcolm Rifkind quit yesterday as head of the committee overseeing Britain's intelligence services and announced his retirement from Parliament, after being caught in a hidden-camera sting appearing to discuss swapping political influence for money.