



ASIAN FILM AWARDS NOMINEES ANNOUNCED

The 9th Asian Film Awards (AFA), set to be held in Macau on March 25, feature 74 nominations and 42 films from eight countries

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AMNESTY CONCERNED WITH ACADEMIC FREEDOM

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HK BUDGET OFFERS RELIEF TO PROTEST-HIT BUSINESSES

In his annual budget speech, Financial Secretary John Tsang unveiled USD37 million in measures aimed at giving relief to some business

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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'"

WORLD BRIEFS



FRANCE At least three small civilian drones flew over iconic landmarks in Paris in the early hours yesterday for a second night, local media reported. Citing its own sources, the local broadcaster Europe1 said the drones were spotted over La Place de La Concorde. Police had already been investigating who was behind some five separate drone flights over emblematic places including the Eiffel Tower, the Place de la Concorde, the Invalides military museum and the American Embassy the previous night.

CHINA's manufacturing activity edged up to a four-month high in February although export orders decreased for the first time in nearly a year, in the latest sign of uncertainty for the world's No. 2 economy, according to a private survey. *More on p11*

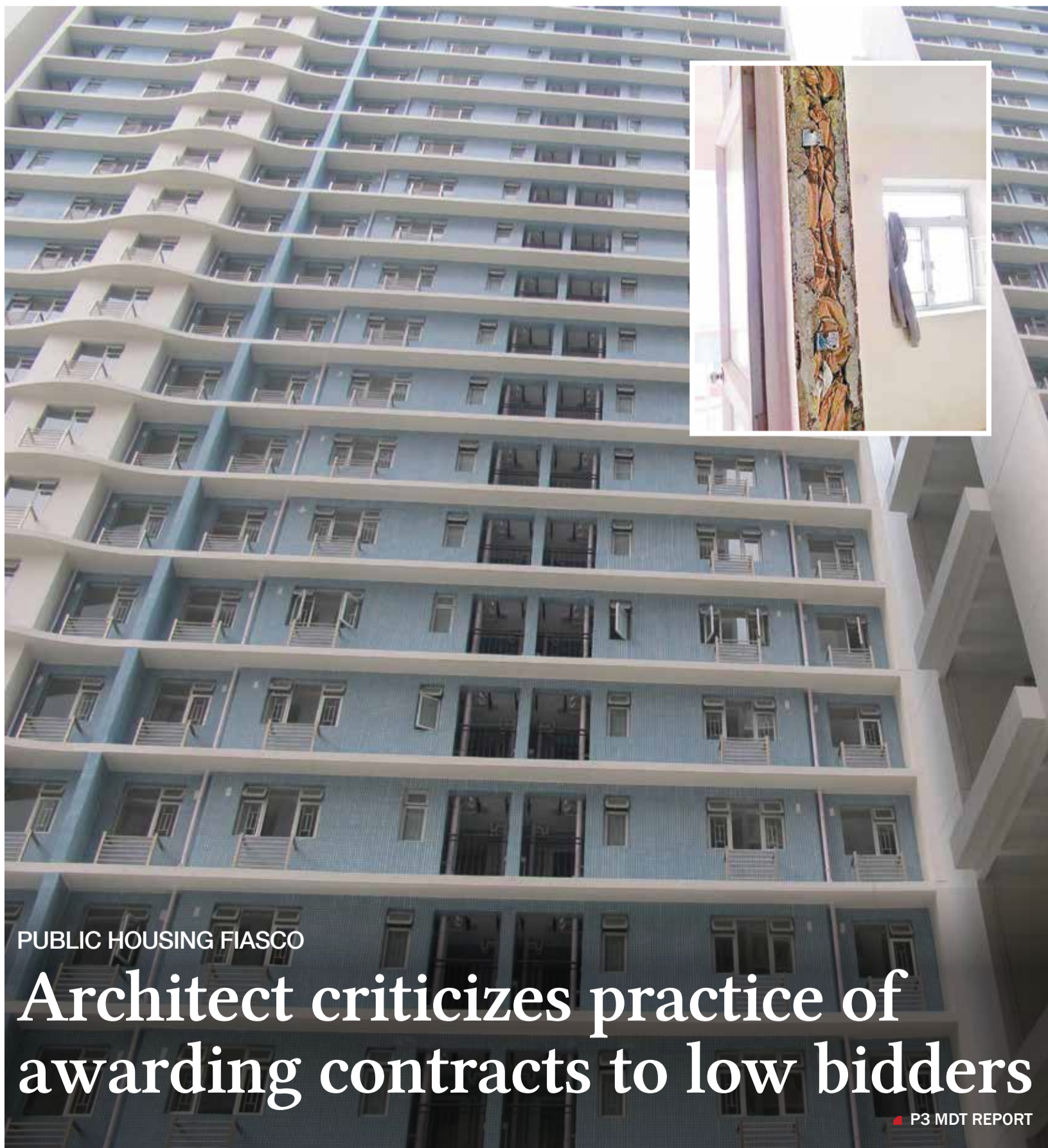
SOUTH KOREA A gunman shoots and kills three people in a Sejong City convenience store that he then sets on fire before fleeing, South Korean police say. The suspect is later found dead with a gunshot wound in his head in an apparent suicide. *More on p13*

MALAYSIA The family of jailed Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim seeks a royal pardon in a last-ditch effort to try free him from a sodomy conviction.

AUSTRALIA-EGYPT Australia imposes financial sanctions on the Egypt-based militant group Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis.

More on backpage

Gaming revenue more than halves in February



PUBLIC HOUSING FIASCO

Architect criticizes practice of awarding contracts to low bidders

P3 MDT REPORT

GAMING | CNY

Weak revenue trends in both VIP and mass segments

Daryl Loo and Jonathan Burgos

MACAU casino shares plunged in Hong Kong trading on weak gambling over the Lunar New Year holiday period fueling expectations that revenue from Chinese high-rollers will continue to slump in the coming months.

Wells Fargo & Co. said its checks suggested weak revenue trends in both VIP and mass segments, with a number of mass tables empty on the third and fourth days of Lunar New Year, analyst Cameron McKnight wrote in a note. Macau gross gaming revenue may fall 53.5 percent this month, according to the median estimate of eight analysts surveyed by Bloomberg, worse than the 40 percent drop forecast before the holiday began.

China's Lunar New Year, which started on Feb. 19 this year, is traditionally a period for Chinese to travel and a peak gambling season in Macau. Last February was a record high for the local casinos, which have since been hit by Chinese government crackdowns on graft and stricter travel rules, deterring high rollers from entering the territory.

"We're still cautious on gaming stocks," Daphne Roth, head of Asian equity research



Gross gaming revenue may fall 53.5 percent this month

at ABN Amro Private Banking which manages about USD218 billion, said over the telephone. "The Chinese government is determined to pursue its anti-corruption drive and that's negative on the casino stocks." Macau's casino revenue had slumped an eighth straight month in January for the industry's longest losing streak since monthly records started in 2005. The 53.5 percent year-on-year slump predicted for February would be the all-

time worst.

"We believe the situation is likely to deteriorate in the coming months," Credit Suisse analyst Kenneth Fong wrote in a note yesterday. "On the VIP side, with more junkets shutting down business post Chinese New Year and working capital in the system shrinking, revenue may see another leg down."

MGM China Holdings Ltd. fell 7.2 percent to HKD17.68 at the close of trading in Hong Kong, the biggest decline since May 8 2014. Sands China Ltd. dropped 5.8 percent and Galaxy Entertainment Group Ltd. fell 5.1 percent, the worse performers on the benchmark Hang Seng Index, which gained 0.1 percent.

Wynn Macau Ltd. and Melco Crown Entertainment both lost 5.9 percent, and SJM Holdings Ltd. declined 5.1 percent. The shares extended their declines from yesterday after the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Alexis Tam said the city wants to study restrictions on mainland Chinese tourists to ease overcrowding. **MDT/Bloomberg**

SJM profit drops 12.7 percent in 2014

THE portion of SJM's profit attributable to owners of the company declined by 12.7 percent year-on-year in 2014 to HKD6,731 million, the operator revealed in a press release yesterday. Despite leading in market shares (with an overall gaming market share of 23.2 percent), SJM's gaming revenue dropped by 8.8 percent year-on-year in 2014, amounting to HKD79,269 million.

SJM Holdings Limited said that the adjusted EBITDA of the group decreased by 10.5 percent to HKD7,763 million.

The company yesterday announced the audited results for last year. Figures show that hotel, catering and other income decreased by 22.4 percent to HKD971 million, "reflecting the impact of a one-off gain of HKD149 million from the group's investment in Macau Legend Development Limited in 2013 and a decrease in fair value of financial assets of HKD140 million in the current year."

SJM Holdings Limited said that the group maintained its strong balance sheet, with cash and bank balances tota-

ling HKD24,418 million by December 31 last year.

SJM Holdings' CEO, Ambrose So, acknowledged that, "2014 proved to be a challenging time for Macau's gaming industry, particularly the second half." "Nevertheless, the efforts of our team and the appeal of our products enabled SJM to maintain the number one position in our industry as well as to make significant progress in construction of the Lisboa Palace on Cotai," he said in a statement.

GAMING

Citi cuts Feb revenue to MOP17.5bn, down 54 pct

REFERRING to its sources, Citi Research has indicated that Macau's table Gross Gaming Revenue (GGR) for the first 23 days of February reached MOP13.3bn (or MOP14.0bn, including an estimated MOP700m in slot-related revenue).

The total daily GGR run rate over the past eight days equated to

MOP558m/day, declining 5 percent from the previous week.

Citi said the numbers are weak as the sample includes the 3-4 days just before the CNY holiday, which are understood to be the weakest days of the year due to the celebratory season. With only five days left, February looks set to significantly miss even

the most conservative estimates on the street.

The research house stated, "We cut our February GGR forecast from MOP22.5bn to MOP17.5bn down 54 percent compared to the highest GGR on record in February 2014."

To alleviate the effects of seasonality, Citi believes it is better to look at combined Ja-

nuary/February GGR which is now forecast to decline 38 percent year-on-year. At this run rate, Citi said its -4 percent 2015 GGR forecast looks challenging, but the research house highlighted "the more important data point is next week, which will show if the normal post-CNY ramp will occur in 2015."

GENTING SINGAPORE Q4 PROFIT DROPS

SHARES OF Genting Singapore, regional leisure, hospitality and integrated resorts operator, have dropped to their lowest since 2010 as the company reported a 36 percent decline in its fourth-quarter profit, the Straits Times reported yesterday. Genting Singapore's fourth-quarter net profit declined by 36 percent to SGD89.2 million

(USD65.77 million), as the operator was affected by poor performance in its VIP business as well as by bad debts. Analysts believe that bad debts might have also been triggered by Chinese high-rollers who were unwilling or unable to pay their gambling arrears due to tougher credit conditions as the Chinese economy slows.

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EXPLAINING THE SEAC PAI VAN FIASCO

Lowest bidder tends to neglect quality

João Pedro Lau

FOLLOWING the discovery of various flaws in the public housing estate in Seac Pai Van, including that of paper bags inside the apartments' walls and cracks appearing on walls and ceilings, the quality and safety of the structures have been called into question.

The deputy council president of the Macau Institution of Engineers, Addy Chan Kuai Son told the Times yesterday that while the workers certainly did not use proper materials to fill the gaps in the walls, he does not believe that the buildings are structurally unsound.

Meanwhile, Rui Leão, vice president of the Architects Association of Macau said that the incident reflects the challenges the government and contractors in Macau are facing. He also said that the authorities should review the practice of awarding public project contracts to firms submitting the lowest bid.

Addy Chan described the filling of gaps between the walls and the doorframes with objects like paper bags as a "local method", which has gradually been phased out in Macau over the space of a decade. "[Filling gaps with paper bags] is not the standard measure. The correct way is to use styrofoam strips", he said. "If the consultants at the construction site have noticed such an issue, they would usually take pictures and notify the contractor to take down all the frames affected and correct the problem."

The engineer said that the building shouldn't have structural problems, as the usage of unauthorized objects was restricted to fill the gaps between the wall and the doorframe. Nevertheless, it is still a potential household hazard, as the doorframe may collapse if it endures too much pressure. He added that it is possible to find the same problem in walls located near windows.

As for the cracks on the wall and crumbling tilts, Chan said



Rui Leão

it is again a craftsmanship issue instead of a safety one. "Tilts are destined to crumble, the problem is how long they are going to last before falling. This is related to whether the workers had followed instructions when installing the tilts; whether the ratio between the cement and sands are in accordance with the standard and if enough of them were [applied on the tilts]", he said.

"There are various factors that have to come together to result in a perfect finish. If there were any shortfalls in any of the steps, it could then lead to [the problems] we now see", the engineer added.

While it is possible to carry out a large-scale repair that may involve the examination of all walls and the dismantlement of others, Chan reckoned that it would de-

initely disturb the residents. Instead, he said that the authorities should deal with problems such as cracks as soon as they are found. He also said that the authorities can take infra-red photos for the walls at the public area to determine which of them are in need of repair.

In the meantime, vice-president Rui Leão of the Architects Association of Macau argues that the public should consider various factors before passing judgment and blaming the government for the construction flaws. He stressed that the administration does follow international standards in terms of supervising public construction with various personnel, such as the appointed designer, on-site supervisor, as well as staff from quality control institutions.

Mr Leão believes that there are several factors that have influenced the development of the Seac Pai Van project. One of them is the bidding mechanism of Macau's public schemes that consistently awards the projects to contractors who lodge the lowest bid. The architect added that there is a considerable difference between the budget of government projects and that



Addy Chan

of private ones, such as casino resort constructions, in the recent years. "If the contractor [of public projects] is awarded for giving the lowest [bid], and if there are too many contractors bidding, which is [often] the case, then there may be high levels of competition. At the end, we cannot expect a good quality", he said.

Given that many high performing contractors are focusing their business on casino resort constructions, which have a far higher return, Mr Leão thinks that the government simply cannot compete with the private sector by of-

fering a low-profit contract.

Moreover, the architect pointed out that the labor shortage in Macau has further impacted on construction quality because contractors cannot find enough people who are committed to delivering high-caliber results similar to those of previous decades.

He thinks that the problems in the Seac Pai Van public housing projects merely reflect the overall challenges the contractors are facing. "If a contractor is struggling to not lose money or to break even, he's going to have to cut somewhere, either a cut at the windows or the door or the finishing materials or the walls", he said.

Rui Leão believes that the Macau government has enough financial capability to avoid choosing contractors who submitted the lowest bid and should instead focus on other factors such as the bidder's track record.

"In the end, I don't think it's the fault of the Infrastructure Development Office because they are trying to do their best. But all the conditions have changed. If you look at the works the office was doing several years ago, the quality was much better before the casino boom", he said.

PUBLIC HOUSING PLAGUED BY QUALITY PROBLEMS

THE SEAC Pai Van public housing estate is not the only government project that has experienced quality issues. In another public housing project, Edifício do Lago, residents have reported problems with walls and doors, as well as with water pipes. Residents in the

affordable housing estate Edifício da Alameda da Tranquilidade also complained about low-quality gas pipes that were alleged to have caused gas leakage last year. Various lawmakers have already questioned the government on the issue.

■ ■
If you look at the works the office was doing several years ago, the quality was much better before the casino boom

RUI LEÃO

Asian Film Awards return to town, nominees announced

THE 9th Asian Film Awards (AFA), set to be held in Macau on March 25, feature 74 nominations and 42 films from eight countries, the Asian Film Awards Academy announced yesterday at a press conference in Hong Kong.

Film director and producer Mabel Cheung Yuen-ting has been appointed this year's AFA jury president, the academy revealed.

The ceremony, this year sponsored by Sands Resorts Cotai Strip Macao and the Venetian Macao, will take place at the Venetian Theatre.

"Black Coal, Thin Ice," (mainland China) "Blind Massage," (mainland China) "Haider," (India) "Hill of Freedom," (South Korea) "Ode to My Father," (South Korea) and the "The Light Shines Only There" (Japan) have been nominated for the Best Film category.



Nominees for Best Director include Lou Ye from mainland China with "Blind Massage," Tsukamoto Shinya from Japan with "Fires on the Plain," Lav Diaz from the Philippines with "From What Is Before," and Vishal Bhardwaj from India with "Haider." Film director Hong Sang-soo ("Hill of Freedom") from South Korea and Ann Hui with "The Golden Era," a joint production by Hong Kong and mainland China, were also nominated.

The AFA Academy said in a press release it recognizes and celebrates the achievements of Asian film productions in a total of 14 categories, namely Best Film, Best Director, Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Supporting Actor and Actress, Best Newcomer, Best Screenwriter, and Best Cinematographer, among others.

Competing films span several genres, from historical epics, romances, cop and courtroom dramas, to comedies, intense

psychodramas, and horror films.

"This year the AFA received over 1,000 eligible films [applications] from 34 countries across Asia. The wide range of styles show the diversity, creativity and vitality of the region's cinema," the academy stated.

"The AFA is a formidable exercise. Each film has its own strengths fueled by the filmmakers' passion, creative styles and captivating stories. With the high standard of work on display, we recognize the responsibility and challenge involved in voting for the winners," jury president Mabel Cheung Yuen-ting said in a statement.

Wilfred Wong Ying-wai, chairman of the AFA Academy and the Hong Kong International Film Festival Society, added that "the developing network of filmmakers and film industries in the Asia-Pacific will strengthen the AFA and drive the globaliza-

tion of Asian films."

Popular Hong Kong actor Aaron Kwok has been appointed celebrity juror at this year's AFA. He stated that, "as an actor who has participated in many Asian movies, mainly in Greater China, it is indeed a delight to witness the rise of Asian films and their positive reception worldwide. The Asian Film Awards is a brilliant platform for the Asian film industry to make positive progress as well as to encourage aspiring film professionals."

Founded by the Hong Kong International Film Festival, Busan International Film Festival and Tokyo International Film Festival in late 2013, the AFA Academy is intended at promoting, developing and enriching Asian cinema, its talents and audiences by organizing the AFA, as well as a range of other programs across Asia.

Ciaran Carruthers, senior vice president and director of Venetian and Plaza Operations, Sands China Ltd., stated that the company is committed to bringing such "high-profile events to the city" as part of their multi-tiered entertainment strategy "to fulfill our promise to help develop Macau as a world center of tourism and leisure." **CP**

American production 'Now You See Me' to be filmed in Macau

THE American production "Now You See Me: The Second Act" will be filmed in Macau between March 12 and 18. The crew will be filming at various historical locations as well as in casinos.

Producers are already recruiting movie extras to play clients and casino employees. The scenes will be filmed in downtown Macau, and in casinos located in the peninsula and Taipa, the producers said. The film, which according to the IMDb web-

site will be directed by Jon M. Chu, will depict scenes of elderly citizens in the city, men playing mahjong and people riding motorbikes.

"Now You See Me" was released in 2013 and depicts the story of an FBI agent and an Interpol detective tracking down a team of illusionists who pull off bank heists during their performances and reward audiences with the money, according to IMDb. The sequel's plot is yet to be disclosed. **MDT/Lusa**

CRIME

Customs raid fake purse shop during CNY

THE Macau Customs Service (SA) revealed that it has transferred a female shop owner to the Public Prosecution Office after she was found selling counterfeit products.

During the Chinese New Year period, the SA has inspected more than 10 shops throughout Macau, specially targeting shops with a history of illegal trade practices. On February 24, SA officials found a number of

allegedly fake designer handbags, on the shelves of a jewelry and souvenir store in Fai Chi Kei alongside counterfeit apparel and suitcases.

After asking the patent holders for assistance, the SA was able to confirm that these products were all counterfeits.

Authorities detained the female shop owner to assist in their investigation before charging her for the crime. She alle-

edly denied knowing the origins and cost of her products and denied the accusation that she was selling fake products.

During the investigation, SA also found counterfeit clothing being sold along items from unknown brands. It is suspected that the shop was mainly selling the nameless clothing and the counterfeit clothing to create the impression that it was an outlet-style store.

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HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

Amnesty: One paragraph dedicated to Macau

ACADEMIC freedom and the 'Occupy Central' movement were highlighted as the key human rights issues facing Macau and Hong Kong by an Amnesty International report released yesterday.

A single paragraph of the 415-page annual report released yesterday is dedicated to the MSAR: "Pro-democracy academics reported being targeted for their political involvement and criticism of the government. Bill Chou Kwokping, an academic at the University of Macau and vice-president of Macau's largest pro-democracy group, said he was suspended for 'imposing [his] political beliefs' on his students; after an inquiry, the university did not renew his contract. Another academic, Eric Sautede, a lecturer at the University of St. Joseph, lost his post in July; the university rector told a local Portuguese language newspaper it was due to Eric Sautede's political commentary," the paragraph reads.



Sergei Nikitin, director of Amnesty International representative office in Russia, shows a copy of the report

Predictably, Hong Kong receives more attention than Macau due to the pro-democracy protests that made world headlines last year. Several incidents related to the 'Occupy Central' movement are mentioned, such as the one which occurred on 28 September. This was when police reportedly "used tear gas and pepper spray in an attempt to disperse thousands of peaceful protesters who had gathered in streets near the administrative

headquarters."

Amnesty International, a non-governmental organization focused on human rights, also mentions the existence of "fears for the right to freedom of the press," a reference to the dismissal of the former chief editor of Ming Pao newspaper Kevin Lau. The report mentions that other journalists have complained of stringent censorship rules.

The situation of the 300,000 migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong is also raised. Amnesty International states that thousands of these workers "were trafficked for exploitation and forced labor, and heavily indebted with illegal and excessive agency fees."

Regarding China, the report uses a similar tone to previous years, stating that, authorities continued to "severely restrict the right to freedom of expression" and that ethnic minorities including Tibetans, Uighurs and Mongolians faced discrimination and increased security crack-

downs.

"Activists and human rights defenders risked harassment and arbitrary detention. Torture and other ill-treatment remained widespread and access to justice was elusive for many," the report reads.

Some positive aspects are also mentioned in the NGO's assessment of the situation in China, such as the abolition of the Re-education Through Labor system announced in 2013 and the fact that the Fourth Plenum in October 2014 was "focused on the rule of law." **PB**

CLUSTER BOMBS HAVE BEEN USED IN UKRAINE CONFLICT

ILLEGAL WEAPONS such as cluster bombs have been used in the Ukraine conflict, according to Amnesty International. The human rights organization also criticized both sides - not the pro-Russian separatists - for the high number of civilian deaths. "Taking into account everything we understand as of now, we think that they (cluster bombs) were used by both sides," the organization's senior director for research, Anna Neistat told reporters.

Over 172,000 non-resident workers

The number of non-resident workers in Macau reached 172,062 in January this year, according to data released by the Human Resources Office. There are more than 31,297 non-resident workers when compared to January last year. The majority are from mainland China (11,523), followed by the Philippines (21,977). Mainland Chinese non-resident workers are mainly employed within the construction sector whereas Filipino citizens work mainly as domestic helpers.

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patrocínio/sponsor:
Fundação Macau

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Danica Kirka, London

FIRST there was money laundering. Then foreign-exchange rigging. Now tax evasion.

HSBC, Europe's biggest bank, has endured a string of scandals and paid millions in penalties to regulators around the world. But recent revelations that its Swiss private bank helped the wealthy evade taxes are raising new questions about HSBC's conduct and shining a spotlight on an industry still reeling from the 2008 financial crisis.

Politicians and analysts are asking whether big banks, which during the crisis were considered to be too large to be allowed to fail without endangering the wider economy, have also become too big to manage.

"If they're too big to fail, they're too big to control," said Crawford Spence, a professor of accounting at Warwick Business School. "But are they too big to bludgeon into corporate responsibility?"

HSBC Chairman Douglas Flint and Chief Executive Stuart Gulliver may get the chance to answer that question today, when the U.K. Parliament's Treasury Committee grills them about allegations that HSBC's Swiss private bank actively marketed tax avoidance schemes that helped as many as 1,000 Britons evade taxes.

While Flint and Gulliver have publicly apologized for HSBC's conduct, they stress that the issue is an historical one and that the bank has taken steps to ensure proper practices. HSBC has "no appetite" to help tax evaders, the bank said in an open letter published in national newspapers.

The scandal broke this month when reporters mined a trove of leaked documents from 2005-07 for details of 30,000 accounts at the Swiss private bank that held almost USD120 billion of assets. The information was turned over to French

Too big to manage? HSBC's chiefs to testify on tax scandal



AP PHOTO
People use ATM machines outside a branch of HSBC in London

authorities by a former bank employee.

HSBC isn't the first bank to be hit with allegations it helped clients avoid taxes as governments sought to boost revenue

If they're too big to fail, they're too big to control. But are they too big to bludgeon into corporate responsibility?

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and balance budgets ravaged by the financial crisis.

Swiss banking giants UBS and Credit Suisse have both agreed to fines in the U.S. on allegations they conspired to help Americans evade taxes. The U.S. Department of Justice says it is investigating "numerous additional offshore banks" in Switzerland, India, Israel and other countries.

"Although the political pressure has been on HSBC for helping wealthy individuals avoid tax, other banks will be just as culpable," said Louise Cooper, a former Goldman Sachs stockbroker who writes the financial blog CooperCity. "If you think this is just HSBC, then you are mistaken. HSBC is just the bank to get caught as the French whistleblower happened to work there."

But tax evasion is only the

most recent issue to damage HSBC's reputation.

In 2013, the bank agreed to pay U.S. authorities \$1.9 billion to settle charges that its practices enabled Latin American drug cartels to launder billions of dollars. U.S. and U.K. regulators in December fined it another \$618 million for failing to prevent manipulation of foreign-exchange markets.

HSBC executives acknowledge that the bank's sheer size and rapid growth before the financial crisis led to control issues.

HSBC acquired much of its Swiss private bank when it bought Republic National Bank of New York and Safra Republic Holdings in 2009.

"The business acquired was not fully integrated into HSBC, allowing different cultures and standards to persist," the bank

said in a report released this month. "With hindsight, it's clear that too many small and high risk accounts were maintained and the business was stretched over more than 150 geographical markets."

Founded 150 years ago as the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corp., HSBC now has more than 6,100 offices in 73 countries. Under Gulliver's leadership, HSBC has simplified its organizational structure and reduced its workforce by about 17 percent to 257,000.

"It might be worth thinking more carefully about whether some banks can become 'too big to regulate' - in terms of the legal jurisdictions they span, in terms of the influence they can bring to bear upon regulators over extended periods of time, and in terms of the possible systemic effects of strict enforcement actions," said Kim Kaivanto, an economist at Lancaster University Management School.

On a conference call with reporters this week, Gulliver said society now holds public companies to a higher standard than other large institutions, such as the military - arguing essentially that top executives shouldn't be held responsible for the actions of individual employees, just as generals aren't expected to track the actions every soldier in the trenches.

"I don't think the firm is too big to manage," Gulliver said.

The chief executive was personally dragged into the scandal last weekend, when the Guardian reported that Gulliver himself had an account at the Swiss private bank. **AP**

corporate bits

8-DAY HOTEL SALE OFFERS AVAILABLE AT SANDS RESORTS COTAI STRIP AND SANDS MACAO

Sands Resorts Cotai Strip Macao, comprising The Venetian Macao; Four Seasons Hotel Macao; Conrad Macao, Cotai Central; Sheraton Macao Hotel, Cotai Central; and Holiday Inn Macao, Cotai Central, and Sands Macao, is rolling out a limited Sensational Spring 8-Day Sale for hotel offers. Room bookings will start from Feb. 25 until 8 p.m., March 4, 2015 (Macao time), valid for stays between Feb. 25, 2015 and Jul. 10, 2015, with rates at up to a 50 per cent discount.

The Venetian Macao is offering accommodation for two in a Royale Suite, while Sands Macao is promoting

Book at SandsResortsMacao.com/8-day-sale

its Deluxe Suites. The Four Seasons Hotel Macao likewise is offering accommodation

for two in a Deluxe Room, as is the Conrad Macao and the Sheraton Macao.

AGODA.COM STUDY REVEALS WHERE ASIAN TRAVELERS GO DURING CHINESE NEW YEAR

Hotel booking site Agoda.com, part of Nasdaq-listed Priceline Group, announced yesterday the results of its most recent Travel Smarts study which shows where outbound Asian travelers are spending their Chinese New Year.

The study looked at data from thousands of customers who booked hotel stays during Chinese New Year week through Agoda.com. Overall, Asians are staying in Asia and travelers from China prefer Thailand for this annual holiday. For Chinese travelers, destinations in the Southeast Asian country took the top three spots, with Hong Kong and Taipei



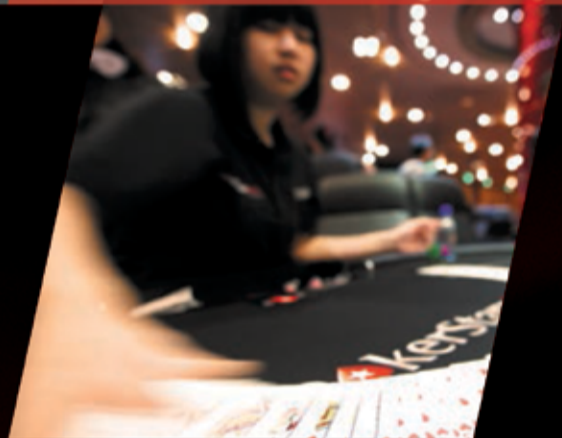
following just after.

"Thailand's continuous growth as the preferred destination for Chinese travelers is a testament to the country's excellent tourism product complemented with value for money accommodations and

increased flight accessibility. Chiang Mai for example, which rose in popularity since the movie 'Lost in Thailand,' is now just a short flight away from several Chinese cities," said Errol Cooke, Vice President for Global Hotels.



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* THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN' *

MOZAMBIQUE

Port of Nacala processes record cargo in 2014

THE port of Nacala, in Mozambique's Nampula province, processed a record amount of cargo in 2014, totaling over 2 million tons, while the number of containers handled stood at almost 100,000, said the CEO of Portos do Norte, the port's management company.

Langa said the port of Nacala, by processing over 2 million tons of cargo and 97,000 containers, reached a new high despite operating under limits due to the ongoing modernization program.

The CEO of Portos do Norte, the company that took over the management of the port of Nacala just over a year ago, also said that the results obtained in 2014 were due to an investment of USD3 million in equipment and infrastructure.

The modernization works at the port, as part of the Deve-



lopment Project of the Port of Nacala, cost US\$300 million that are funded by Japan,

with completion scheduled for 2017. The work is being carried

■ The port of Nacala processed over 2 million tons of cargo and 97,000 containers

out by Japan's Penta-Ocean Constrution Co Ltd and the contract agreement was signed in January 2014 by representatives of the company and the Mozambican Ministry of Transport and Communications.

The port of Nacala will also be the final station on the railway built by Brazilian group Vale from Moatize, in Tete province, passing through Malawi, to transport coal. **MDT/Macauhub**

Angola starts issuing multiple entry visas

IN March Angola will start issuing ordinary and tourist multiple-entry visas, the country's Interior Minister, Angelo Veiga Tavares said Monday cited by Angolan news agency Angop.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the Consultative Council of his ministry, Angelo Veiga Tavares said the ongoing modernisation process in the Immigration Service had succeeded in overcoming constraints on issuing multiple-entry visas of different types.

The minister also said a "rapid" system would be implemented at Luanda International Airport, that will allow Angolan and foreign citizens covered by the various existing agreements, to cross the border (exit and entry) automatically, in less than 15 seconds. **MDT/Macauhub**

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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'"

Activists slam mainland's most watched program for sexist jokes

Louise Watt, Beijing

CHINA'S annual Lunar New Year variety show, which mocked unmarried women and suggested female officials provide sexual favors to get promoted, has led to online outrage and some state media to urge more attention to discrimination against women.

Sexism at the gala is nothing new. But following last week's program, women's rights activists sent an open letter to broadcasting regulators demanding that reruns of the show be suspended, that the director and state broadcaster China Central Television apologize and that regulators halt discriminatory programs.

This year's gala was directed by a woman, Ha Wen, who hasn't publicly commented on the criticism.

Despite waning viewership, the gala is the country's most watched program — by a reported 690 million people this year — and is used to push political messages. Sketches this year referred to President



Xi Jinping's anti-corruption campaign.

In one sketch, a female official insinuated she had slept with her boss when giving advice to a subordinate about how to advance her career. In another, a woman in her 20s complained that she didn't have a boyfriend, so her brothers brought out a model, causing the sister to criticize her own body.

Letter signatory Feng Yuan said activists counted 44 examples of sexism in the 4 1/2-hour show.

"We know sex discrimination has existed in China for several thousands of years and has become part of people's lives. The gala will allow people to continue to stereotype women in this way, and let people think they are humorous if they offend women," she said.

Calls to the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television rang unanswered yesterday, and CCTV had no immediate comment.

The China Daily newspaper said in an editorial yesterday that the letter raised an "essential topic" that had been ignored for too long. It "should not be swept under the carpet in a country that calls itself civilized, and which aspires to flaunt its soft power globally," it said. AP

Firecrackers behind death of tiger cub

A tiger cub died after falling off a building in an east China city, as it was apparently spooked by firecrackers during the Spring Festival holiday. The seven month old cub struggled free of its chains and escaped its cage on Feb. 18, the eve of the Chinese Lunar New Year, and jumped off the Guwu Building in Pingdu City, Shandong Province, according to the local government. Firecrackers play a big part in Chinese celebrations, as many believe that they scare away evil spirits. Pictures on the Sina Weibo microblog site show the dead tiger in a parking lot. Police and forestry officials are investigating whether the tiger was legally raised.

Bus overturns in Xinjiang, killing 22

A bus overturned on a highway in China's far western region of Xinjiang, killing 22 people and injuring 38, state media said yesterday. The official Xinhua News Agency said the accident occurred shortly before midnight on Tuesday night in Kashgar prefecture. It said all of the injured were hospitalized and the cause of the accident was being investigated. China has a high road fatality rate, and traffic accidents killed more than 62,000 people in the country in 2011. Inexperienced drivers and overloaded buses and trucks are common.

Suspended sentence for 81-year-old dissident writer

Christopher Bodeen, Beijing

A famed 81-year-old Chinese dissident writer was given a suspended 2 1/2-year prison sentence yesterday on charges of running an illegal business, apparently because he published articles critical of the country's propaganda chief.

A lawyer for Huang Zerong, who uses the pen name Tieliu, said his client was also fined 30,000 yuan (USD5,000). The lawyer, Liu Xiaoyuan, said Huang denied running an illegal business, a charge that was related to a self-published magazine Huang distributed for free.

A vague charge of causing trouble lodged at the time of Huang's detention in September was dropped before the trial.

"Clearly this is a compromise outcome," Liu said in a telephone interview. "He was held for five months for nothing."

Huang was taken from his Beijing home after publishing articles criticizing propaganda chief Liu Yunshan, a member of the ruling Communist Party's all-powerful Politburo Standing Committee, for tightening controls over the news media.

His magazine, Small Scars from the Past, also published articles chronicling the experiences of people perse-



cuted during party political campaigns.

Huang is one of the oldest dissidents to be formally charged. His history as a critic of the party dates from the 1950s, when he was labeled a "rightist" under the founder of the Communist state, Mao Zedong, and was sentenced to 23 years in a labor camp.

Huang's caregiver, Huang Jing, was given a 1-year suspended sentence and fined 5,000 yuan (\$800). It was not clear why the caregiver was detained along with Huang.

Calls to the court in the southwestern city of Chengdu, where the trial had been moved from Beijing, rang unanswered. Huang's wife, Ren Hengfang, said she was too distraught to

comment.

Liu was not at the trial, and Huang was represented instead by a court-appointed lawyer. That, and the lightness of the sentence, appeared to indicate the authorities wanted to wrap up the matter quickly and quietly by expediting the proceedings.

"The charges didn't stand up and the court lacked jurisdiction," Liu said.

China's leadership has become less tolerant of criticism, and authorities are increasingly using coercion and detention to suppress dissent. Lawyers, activists, writers, artists and businesspeople have been caught up in the web of the internal security forces, with many disappearing for months before facing trial. AP

HONG KONG

Budget offers relief to protest-hit businesses



BLOOMBERG

Hong Kong aims to get third runway ready by 2023 as demand soars

Clement Tan

HONG Kong, the world's largest international air cargo airport, aims to start construction next year on a third runway that will open by 2023 as regional rivals step up efforts to capture growing passenger traffic and cargo demand in Asia.

The new facility will help Hong Kong International Airport boost capacity to 100 million passengers and 9 million tons of cargo a year by 2030, Financial Secretary John Tsang said in his budget speech yesterday. The airport said it handled 63.4 million passengers and 4.38 million tons of cargo last year, both records.

"It is imperative for us to take forward the development of a three-runway system in order to meet our long-term air traffic demand and to maintain our status as an international and regional aviation center in the face of fierce competition from other airports in the region," Tsang said in a prepared statement.

Tsang's pledge comes af-

ter Singapore announced plans Monday to spend S\$3 billion (USD2.2 billion) to begin developing a fifth passenger terminal at Changi International Airport over the next decade, and as other countries gear up to tap growing travel demand from China and other parts of Asia.

Beijing has started construction on a second international airport, while the southwest Chinese city of Chengdu has received regulatory approval for a new 69.3 billion yuan (\$11.1 billion) airport that will have three runways.

Hong Kong's third runway is projected to cost HK\$150 billion (\$19.3 billion).

Hong Kong's total trade came to HK\$8.4 trillion last year, with air cargo through the airport comprising nearly 40 percent of exports and imports by value, Tsang said yesterday.

Tsang also announced plans to develop air financing in Hong Kong and pledged to explore measures to promote such business. **Bloomberg**

Survey: Factory activity up but export orders drop

Kelvin Chan

Business Writer, Hong Kong

CHINA'S manufacturing activity edged up to a four-month high in February although export orders decreased for the first time in nearly a year, in the latest sign of uncertainty for the world's No. 2 economy, according to a private survey yesterday.

HSBC's preliminary purchasing managers' index released yesterday rose to 50.1 this month from 49.7 in January.

The reading comes in barely above the 50-point level that indicates no change on the 100-point scale.

The bank's chief China economist, Qu Hongbin, said the reading showed there was a "marginal improvement" in China's outside manufacturing sector heading into the Lunar New Year period.

The holiday tends to distort China's economic data at the beginning of the year, with factories stocking up on raw materials and rushing to complete orders before shutting down for an extended break that begins at different times in January or February.

"However, domestic economic activity is likely to remain sluggish and external demand looks uncertain," Qu said. "We believe

Kelvin Chan

Business Writer, Hong Kong

HONG Kong's finance chief yesterday unveiled USD37 million in measures aimed at giving relief to some business owners and restoring confidence in the Asian financial hub following pro-democracy protests last year that choked traffic for 11 weeks.

In his annual budget speech, Financial Secretary John Tsang said the government would waive for half a year license fees to help thousands of travel agencies, hotels and guesthouses and 26,000 restaurants and food stalls.

Vehicle exam fees for bus and taxi operators would also be waived once.

About a third of the amount budgeted would be set aside for events to promote Hong Kong globally.

Thousands of demonstrators in this southern Chinese financial hub occupied streets in three districts for 79 days last year to protest Beijing's curbs on the planned inaugural vote in 2017 for the city's top leader. The

protesters clashed with police in violent scuffles, upset over the plan for a pro-Beijing committee to screen candidates, which they call fake democracy.

Tensions still simmer in Hong Kong more than two months after the last protest camp was cleared as the city's unpopular leader refused to offer any concessions to the activists.

"Prolonged political bickering is detrimental to public administration and the international image of Hong Kong as a stable, law-abiding and efficient city. It may even dampen investors' confidence in Hong Kong," Tsang said.

The protests divided Hong Kong and "also aroused concern about much more radical social conflict which in turn will make it harder to mend conflicted relationships among people," Tsang said in his speech, which was interrupted near the end by radical lawmaker Leung Kwok-hung, who started heckling him over Hong Kong's lack of a universal pension and was thrown out of the legislature chamber by security guards. **AP**



A man checks a shirt at a garment factory in Jinjiang in southeast China's Fujian province

more policy easing is still warranted at this stage to support growth."

The report said that new export orders contracted for the first time since April, a sign of waning demand as the global economy struggles to recover.

China's economy grew 7.4 percent last year, its slowest pace in nearly a quarter-century, and economists forecast growth to slow further in the coming years.

Earlier this month, policymakers acted to counter the

deepening economic slowdown by cutting the minimum level of reserves banks are required to hold. The People's Bank of China said the reduction will free up more money for lending and will support small and rural enterprises, construction projects and other activity.

The HSBC survey, compiled with Markit, is based on 85-90 percent of responses from more than 420 purchasing managers. The final report is due March 2. **AP**



Min Min, from Myanmar, tears at his thick black hair in agitation, as he tries to remember details about his family. Min Min was rescued from a tiny island in December, on the verge of starvation, and brought back to Thailand, the world's third-largest seafood exporter

THAILAND

Overfishing driving slavery on seafood boats

Robin McDowell and Margie Mason, Samut Sakhon

URINE pools under a bed where an emaciated Burmese man lies wearing only a T-shirt and a diaper.

As he struggles to sit up and steady himself, he tears at his thick, dark hair in agitation. He cannot walk and doesn't remember his family or even his own name. He speaks mostly gibberish in broken Indonesian — a language he learned while working in the country as a slave aboard a Thai fishing boat.

Near death from a lack of proper food, he was rescued from a tiny island in Indonesia two months ago. He is just one of countless hidden casualties from the fishing industry in Thailand, the world's third-largest seafood exporter.

A report released yesterday by the British nonprofit Environmental Justice Foundation said that overfishing and the use of illegal and undocumented trawlers have ravaged Thailand's marine ecosystems and depleted fish stocks. Boats are now catching about 85 percent less than what they brought in 50 years ago, making it "one of the most overfished regions on the planet," the report said.

Shrinking fisheries in the

Traveling longer distances to catch fish raises operating costs, and increases pressure on fishing companies to save money by relying on forced, bonded and slave labor

Gulf of Thailand and Andaman Sea have, in turn, pushed Thai fishing boats farther and farther from home. The group estimates that up to half of all fish labeled a "product of Thailand" is sourced from outside its borders — mainly in Asia, but as far away as Africa.

The report, compiled from the group's own research and the work of others, explains how Thailand's vast seafood industry is almost wholly de-

pendent on cheap migrant labor. Since few Thais are willing to take the dangerous, low-level jobs that can take them far from home, a sophisticated network of brokers and agents has emerged, regularly recruiting laborers from impoverished neighboring countries such as Myanmar and Cambodia, often through trickery and kidnapping.

Men — and sometimes children as young as 13 — are sold onto boats where they typically work 18- to 20-hour days with little food and often only boiled sea water to drink, enduring beatings and sometimes even death at the hands of their captains. Most are paid little or nothing. They can be trapped at sea for months or years at a time; transshipment vessels are routinely used to pick up catches and deliver supplies.

Concerns about labor abuses, especially at sea, prompted the U.S. State Department last year to downgrade Thailand to the lowest level in its annual human trafficking report, putting the country on par with North Korea, Iran and Syria. It highlighted abuse on both ships and in processing plants, noting widespread involvement from corrupt officials.

The Southeast Asian nation responded by launching a ma-

JOR public relations campaign, with the government drafting its own country assessment to highlight steps taken to clean up the industry since a military junta took control of Thailand in May. The unreleased Thai report, obtained by The Associated Press, includes establishing a new national registry of illegal migrant workers and plans for stricter labor regulations on vessels and in the seafood industry.

However, just a month after the new government stepped in, Thailand was the only country in the world to vote against a U.N. international treaty aimed at stopping forced labor.

"If you drill down, if you look at the substance of enforcement and the implementation of existing laws and regulations, it's minimal," said Steve Trent, the group's executive director. "What the Thai government seems to do repeatedly, again and again in the face of these accusations, is conduct a high-powered PR exercise rather than seek to address the problem."

A Thai government spokesman and officials at the Department of Fisheries did not immediately respond to The Associated Press' requests for comment.

Thailand, which exported USD7 billion in seafood in 2013, is one of the biggest suppliers to the U.S. But a study published last year in the journal *Marine Policy* estimated 25 percent to 40 percent of tuna shipped from Thailand to America is from illegal or unreported sources — the highest rate of any species or country examined — and is frequently linked to labor abuses at sea.

Human rights advocates say some improvements have been noted in domestic waters, but such policies have little impact when vessels stray into the territorial waters of other countries. Traveling longer distances to catch fish raises operating costs, and increases pressure on fishing companies to save money by relying on forced, bonded and slave labor.

"On long-haul boats, nothing has changed in the brutal working conditions and physical abuse meted out by captains against their crews," said Phil Robertson, deputy director of Human Rights Watch's Asia division, who has worked extensively on the issue. "The reality is the Thai government's high-sounding rhetoric to stop human trafficking and clean up the fishing fleets still largely stops at the water's edge."

The man rescued from the Indonesian island in December now remembers his name — Min Min — and bits of his old life in Myanmar, also known as Burma. But his mind remains far from clear.

He knows he worked three years on a boat in Indonesia where his ankles were sometimes bound with rope. He recalls collapsing one day on deck during a storm and being unconscious for three hours before the Thai captain forced him to get up and haul the nets back in.

Eventually, he became too sick and weak to work and was abandoned on the remote island two years ago.

Min Min was on the verge of starvation when he was rescued and taken to the nonprofit Labor Rights Protection Network in Samut Sakhon, a gritty port town on the outskirts of Bangkok. He's eating well and taking vitamins to try to regain his strength, and he can now stand and slowly shuffle across the floor.

He is still far from well. He's confused about such basics as his age, saying once that he is 43 and later that he is 36. If his family back in Myanmar is mentioned, he becomes rattled and stutters his thoughts as if it's too much to bear.

"Working on the boat is no good. People like to take advantage of you," he said. "If I recover from my illness, I'll never be on a boat again in my life. Never again. I'm scared." AP

Matthew Pennington, Washington

NORTH Korea could increase its nuclear arsenal from at least 10 weapons today to between 20 and 100 weapons in five years, U.S. researchers said Tuesday, as the Obama administration vowed to work with U.S. allies to pressure Pyongyang to denuclearize.

The forecast of the secretive Asian nation's nuclear stockpile is based on projections made by American experts on weapons technology and the experience of nuclear programs of countries such as Israel, Pakistan, India and China. The findings were presented by the U.S.-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington.

It comes as the U.S. and South Korea begin annual military drills that have angered North Korea, and as U.S. lawmakers push legislation that would tighten sanctions intended to restrict leader Kim Jong Un's access to the international banking system. Aid-for-disarmament negotiations have stalled since 2008, and the North has since conducted two nuclear tests, fired a rocket into space and unveiled a long-range, road-mobile missile, deepening concern in Washington over its capabilities.

"The United States remains committed to the peaceful denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and will continue - in close consultation with our allies - to bring pressure to bear on North Korea in support of that goal," Secretary of State John Kerry said in congressional testimony Tuesday.

But North Korea struggles for attention in a crowded U.S. foreign policy agenda. During two Senate hearings, Kerry was peppered with questions about Ukraine, the fight against the Islamic State group and nuclear negotiations with Iran, but none on North Korea.

The U.S.-Korea Institute concluded that North Korea has made important progress in its weapons programs in the past five years, and those programs "appear poised for significant expansion over the next five years, presenting a serious challenge to the United States, Northeast Asia and the international community."

In its analysis, provided to The Associated Press ahead of publication on its website, 38 North, the institute estimated that North Korea currently has between 10 and 16 nuclear weapons, some based on plutonium, others on uranium. It said U.S. experts meeting in October came up with various scenarios on how that stockpile could grow by 2020.

Under the "minimal growth" scenario, the North would have 20 weapons with yields of about 10 kilotons. A kiloton is equivalent to the destructive impact of 1,000 kilograms of TNT. The U.S. bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, in 1945 was estimated to have a yield of 15 kilotons.

Under the "rapid growth" scenario, in which the North accelerates nuclear production and makes significant advances in weapons designs, it would have 100 weapons with average yield of 20 kilotons, and some of 50 kilotons.

Despite orthodox opinion that

NORTH KOREA

Nuke arsenal could multiply to 100 bombs



North Korea has yet to miniaturize a nuclear device that could fit on a missile that could

target America, the institute concludes the North already has plutonium-based weapons

small enough to mount on medium-range and intercontinental-range missiles. AP

SOUTH KOREA

Gunman kills 3 in Sejong City, later found dead

Kim Tong-Hyung, Seoul

A gunman shot and killed three people yesterday in and around a South Korean convenience store that he then set on fire before fleeing, police said. He was later found dead with a gunshot wound to his head in an apparent suicide.

A shotgun was found on the 50-year-old gunman's body about 4 kilometers from the store, located in Sejong City, Lee Ja-ha, head of the Sejong Police Agency, said in a televised briefing. Another shotgun was found in his vehicle, which was parked about 100 meters away from the body, he said.

The other dead were a father, 74, and son, 50,



South Korean police officers investigate the scene of an incident in Sejong, south of Seoul

linked to the family that owned the store, and another man, 52, who'd been living with the elder

man's daughter, Lee said. Sejong City is 120 kilometers south of Seoul, the capital, and is home

to some of South Korea's government agencies and ministries.

The daughter told police

that she had lived with the gunman before breaking up about a year and a half ago. She had recently quarreled with him over financial matters, including the man's claim that he had a financial stake in the store, Lee said.

The suspect shot the son as he sat in a car in front of the store and then entered a house next to the shop and shot the father, police said. In the store, the suspect then shot the other man before pouring paint thinner on the floor and setting the shop ablaze.

The gunman had gotten the shotguns from a police station in the nearby city of Gongju in the central part of South Korea about two hours before

the morning shooting, Lee said.

South Koreans can obtain licenses for shotguns and rifles for the purpose of hunting animals, but they are required to keep the weapons at police stations and use them only during legal hunting periods. Lee said the suspect owned the shotguns and had proper licenses that he got last year.

Shooting incidents are rare in South Korea, which tightly controls gun possession, although there has been a spate of shooting deaths among soldiers. Every able-bodied South Korean man has to serve about two years in the military because of tensions with rival North Korea. AP

Amid congressional battles Obama vetoes Keystone bill

Jim Kuhnhehn, Washington

AMID appeals for bipartisanship, President Barack Obama in just three days has provoked Republicans on issues as disparate as immigration, Wall Street and the Keystone XL pipeline — a combative mix of defense and offense that underscores Washington's political realignment.

Sensing a Republican retreat, Obama is headlining a Miami town hall yesterday, enlisting his Latino base of support to increase pressure on Republican lawmakers who want to tie funding for the Homeland Security Department to repeal of his immigration executive actions. Before leaving for Florida, Obama was to meet at the White House with immigration advocates.

On Tuesday, he vetoed Republican-backed legislation that would have forced construction



In this Jan. 10, 2015, file photo, demonstrators rally in support of President Barack Obama's pledge to veto any legislation approving the Keystone XL pipeline, outside the White House in Washington

of the Keystone XL oil pipeline from Canada to the U.S. Gulf Coast. And on Monday he proposed tougher rules on financial brokers who help manage retirement accounts, over Wall Street objections.

Such aggressive activism delights Obama's supporters but irritates the Republicans who now control both chambers of Congress.

It's not as if Republicans di-

dn't see it coming. But it unfolds as Obama insists he is willing to find common ground with Republican leaders on such issues as trade and reforms to the criminal justice system.

Indeed, Obama on Tuesday summoned a bipartisan group of lawmakers to the White House for a private meeting on how to address modernizing juvenile justice, sentencing and incarceration policies. And today, Obama

planned to draw attention to the economic benefits of trade and exports in a series of interviews at the White House.

"Let's try to focus on some of things that we have in common and deliver real results," he told governors of both parties who attended a White House luncheon Monday.

But can the confrontational Obama exist alongside Obama the accommodator?

Among those attending the criminal justice session at the White House on Tuesday were Republicans who have been among the most high-profile critics of Obama on other issues, such as Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky, a potential presidential candidate.

On trade, Obama is seeking legislation that will give him the authority to negotiate international trade deals that Congress can only approve or reject but not amend. A majori-

ty of Democrats oppose such "fast track" authority, which means Obama must rely on mostly Republican votes to get his way.

"I think we're in synch with the administration," said Republican House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Paul Ryan of Wisconsin, who is leading the pro-trade drive in the House.

Such efforts at bipartisanship occur against a steady effort by Republicans to undo or roll back Obama actions on immigration, health care and financial regulation. Obama has promised to use his veto to reject those as he did the Keystone bill.

So far, both sides have demonstrated an ability to place confrontation on one track and cooperation on another.

"The bluster over the veto-bait bills that Republicans are trying to pass is mostly fake — everyone knows that he can't sign them," said Matt Bennett of the centrist Democratic group Third Way. "So when it comes time for the trade bills, on which most Republicans, many Democrats and the White House are all aligned, there won't really be any hangover from these battles." AP

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USA

Man convicted for death of 'American Sniper' author

A former Marine was convicted Tuesday (yesterday, Macau time) in the deaths of "American Sniper" author Chris Kyle and another man at a Texas shooting range two years ago, as jurors rejected defense arguments that he was insane and suffered from psychosis.

The trial of Eddie Ray Routh has drawn intense interest, in part because of the blockbuster Oscar-nominated film starring Bradley Cooper based on former Navy SEAL Kyle's memoir about his four tours in Iraq.

Since prosecutors didn't seek the death penalty in the capital murder case, the 27-year-old Routh receives an automatic life sentence without parole in the deaths of Kyle and Kyle's friend, Chad Littlefield.

Routh showed no reaction in court, even when family members of Littlefield addressed him. His defense team said they would appeal the conviction.

Routh "took the lives of two heroes, men who tried to be a friend to you, and you became an American disgrace," Jerry Richardson, Littlefield's half-brother, told Routh in court.

"We're so thrilled that we have the verdict that we have tonight," Littlefield's mother, Judy Littlefield, said at a news conference outside the courthouse.

The Littlefield family had waited "two years for God to get justice for us," she said. "He was faithful."

Kyle's widow, Taya Kyle, had left the courtroom earlier in the day and had not returned when



Former Marine Cpl. Eddie Ray Routh, center, enters the court for his capital murder trial at the Erath County, Donald R. Jones Justice Center in Stephenville Texas

the verdict was read. Chris Kyle's brother and parents were among a group hugging and crying inside the courtroom after the verdict was read. They

did not issue a statement.

The prosecution painted Routh as a troubled drug user who knew right from wrong, despite any mental illnesses. While

trial testimony and evidence often included Routh making odd statements and referring to insanity, he also confessed several times, apologized for

the crimes and tried to evade police.

Criminal law experts said the verdict hinged on whether the defense could prove Routh was insane and did not know the killings were wrong at the time they were committed. Jurors had three options: find Routh guilty of capital murder, find him not guilty, or find him not guilty by reason of insanity. If found not guilty by reason of insanity, the court could have initiated proceedings to have him committed to a state mental hospital.

Kyle and Littlefield had taken Routh to the shooting range at Rough Creek Lodge and Resort on Feb. 2, 2013, after Routh's mother asked Kyle to help her troubled son. Family members say Routh suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder from serving in Iraq and in Haiti after the devastating 2010 earthquake.

A forensic psychologist testified for prosecutors that Routh was not legally insane and suggested he may have gotten some of his ideas from television. Dr. Randall Price said Routh had a paranoid disorder made worse by his use of alcohol and marijuana, calling his condition "cannabis-induced psychosis." AP

SYRIA

Rights group says 1,500 sites of air attacks

Edith M. Lederer

HUMAN Rights Watch said Tuesday it has identified nearly 1,500 sites where the Syrian government has carried out indiscriminate air attacks over the past year using barrel bombs and other improvised weapons that have killed or injured thousands of people.

The human rights group accused President Bashar Assad of lying when he said his government was not using barrel bombs and said in a new report that the attacks have had "a devastating impact on civilians."

Human Rights Watch said that by examining satellite imagery it identified some 450 major damage sites in 10 towns



Human Rights Watch's Executive Director Kenneth Roth

and villages held by rebel groups in the Daraa governorate in the south and over 1,000 in war-ravaged Aleppo, Syria's largest city. It also examined video and photographic evidence and interviewed witnesses to document the attacks.

Nadim Houry, the group's deputy Middle East and North Africa director, told a news conference that the majority of deaths are still caused by the Assad government, and the bombing is the "key cause of the displacement crisis in Syria."

The four-year-old Syrian conflict has killed 220,000 people, according to U.N. estimates, and displaced 6.5 million inside the country and more than 3 million people to neighboring countries.

In an interview with the BBC on Feb. 10, Assad de-

nied his forces have used barrel bombs, insisting that the army uses bullets, missiles and bombs. "There are no barrel bombs; we don't have barrels," he insisted.

Philippe Boloignon, United Nations director at Human Rights Watch, told reporters "we know he is simply lying."

The government's use of barrel bombs, usually dropped by helicopters, has been widely documented by international human rights organizations and residents of opposition-held areas in Syria.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights reported on Feb. 22 that 6,163 civilians — including 1,892 children and 1,720 women — have been killed by the crude explosive

devices since the Security Council adopted a resolution a Feb. 22, 2014 which demanded that all parties to the conflict in Syria end the indiscriminate use of barrel bombs and other weapons in populated areas.

The Violations Documentation Center, a local monitoring group, has documented 609 civilian deaths in Daraa and 2,575 civilian deaths in Aleppo governorate over the past year from aerial attacks, Human Rights Watch said.

The rights group urged the Security Council to impose an arms embargo on Syria's government and any group implicated in widespread human rights abuses.

"We believe an arms embargo would deal adequately with the issue of barrel bombs," Boloignon said, because it would target shipments of spare parts, fuel for aircraft and other key items. AP

what's ON



WINTER ART BAZAAR

TIME: 11am-8pm

UNTIL: February 28, 2015

ADMISSION: Free

VENUE: Macpro Gallery / Avenida da Praia Grande, no.417-425, Centro Comercial Praia Grande, basement, Macau

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2833 7828

VOICE IN THE MURK BY PAPA OSMUBAL

TIME: 2pm-7pm (Closed on Sundays)

UNTIL: March 14, 2015

VENUE: Creative Macau, G/F Macau Cultural Centre Building, Xian Xing Hai Avenue

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2875 3282

POSTER DESIGN EXHIBITION IN CELEBRATION OF THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MACAU HANDOVER

TIME: 10am-7pm (Closed on Mondays, no admission after 6:30 pm)

UNTIL: March 15, 2015

VENUE: The Handover Gifts Museum of Macau, Avenida Xian Xing Hai, NAPE

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8504 1800

GRAND TAIPA NATURAL PARK

PARK AND SCULPTURE ZONE: 24 hours

GRASS-SKIING FIELD: 2:30pm-5:30pm (Tuesdays to Fridays)

10:30am-5:30pm (Weekends and public holidays)

VENUE: Rampa do Observatório, Taipa

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2888 0087

PENGUINS UNDERCOVER ICE WORLD WITH THE DREAMWORKS GANG

TIME: 11am-8pm

UNTIL: March 8, 2015

VENUE: Cotai Expo

ADMISSION: MOP120

ENQUIRIES: 2882 8818

WATER AURORA

TIME: 24 hours daily

VENUE: MGM Macau, Av. Dr. Sun Yat Sen, NAPE

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8802 8888

Offbeat

POLAND: ROMAN POLANSKI APPEARS IN COURT IN EXTRADITION HEARING



Filmmaker Roman Polanski appeared in a court in Poland yesterday for a hearing concerning a U.S. request for his extradition charges of sex with a minor, a case that has haunted him since 1977.

Judge Dariusz Mazur was not expected to make a ruling yesterday and scheduled another hearing, buying time to study documents that arrived this week from Switzerland,

which in 2010 refused to extradite Polanski. The next hearing could be in April or sooner, according to court spokeswoman Grazyna Rokita.

Wearing a dark suit, the Oscar-winning director entered the court in Krakow with his two Polish lawyers. On the attorneys' request, the court banned media from the hearing.

Polanski, 81, is in Poland preparing to make a movie about Alfred Dreyfus, a 19th-century French army officer wrongly accused of spying.

Prosecutors in Polanski's childhood city of Krakow, where he has an apartment, have refused a U.S. request to arrest him, but have said there are no legal obstacles to his extradition and have asked the court for a ruling.

If the judge refuses to hand Polanski over, the case is closed. If he allows the extradition, the final decision will belong to the justice minister.

TV canal macau

13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:30	RTPi Live
18:10	Brazil Avenue (Repeated)
19:00	Montra do Lilau (Repeated)
19:30	Soap Opera
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	TDM Talk Show
21:30	Criminal Minds S8
22:10	Brazil Avenue
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Champions League Highlights
23:50	Miscellaneous

cinema

CINETEATRO

26 FEB - 04 MAR

STAND BY ME DORAEMON_

ROOM 1
(2D) 2.00, 5.55 pm
(3D) 7.45 pm

Language: Cantonese (Chinese)

Duration: 95min



FROM VEGAS TO MACAU 2_

ROOM 1
3.50, 9.45 pm

Language: Cantonese (English and Chinese)

Duration: 90min



PENGUINS OF MADAGASCAR_

ROOM 2
2.00, 3.45, 7.45 pm

Language: Cantonese (Chinese)

Duration: 127min



KINGSMAN: THE SECRET SERVICE_

ROOM 2
5.30, 9.30 pm

Director: Matthew Vaughn

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

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 127min

TRIUMPH IN THE SKIES_

ROOM 3
2.00, 3.45, 9.30 pm

Language: Cantonese (English and Chinese)

Duration: 127min

FROM VEGAS TO MACAU 2_

ROOM 3
5.30, 7.30 pm

Language: Cantonese (English and Chinese)

Duration: 90min

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



1991 IRAQI TROOPS FLEE KUWAIT CITY

The Kuwaiti capital has been liberated by the Gulf War Allies after 208 days of Iraqi occupation.

Thousands of Iraqi troops began leaving the city after an order from President Saddam Hussein, broadcast this morning, to withdraw immediately.

He said he was ordering the retreat because of "the aggression of 30 countries against Iraq" and the economic blockade led by the US.

The first group of Allies into the city centre was a reconnaissance team of 12 US marines who arrived in the capital this evening, ushered in by some Kuwaiti resistance forces.

To the north of the city a trail of abandoned Iraqi T-55 tanks were scattered along the main highway into town, as well as transport trucks and smaller vehicles.

US pilots said the Iraqi troops, deserted by officers and in disarray, left the city "bumper to bumper".

They made an easy target for the American fighter jets which carried out repeated air strikes on the retreating troops, saying they would continue to attack until ordered not to. They reported only light anti-aircraft fire.

The main resistance came from Iraqi armoured units trapped at the international airport on the southern outskirts of the city, but the US Marine 2nd Division was reported to have the upper hand.

Kuwaiti radio, run by the government-in-exile, urged people not to take revenge on the retreating troops.

But there were claims that the Iraqis took many prisoners as they left as hostages. Reports say up to 5,000 people were captured as the troops retreated.

Families told reporters their sons had been taken from them, ordered into the retreating Iraqi army buses as they walked to work.

During the last days of Iraqi occupation there were widespread reports of torture, rape and execution.

Colonel Abu Fahad, an officer with the Kuwaiti resistance, told The Guardian newspaper: "I have seen a lot of my friends and some of our guys executed in front of their families for nothing, just being in the country. In the past few days, we didn't even leave our houses."

Much of the city has been destroyed, with 200 buildings set on fire. Hotels, parliament buildings and government offices have been attacked.

The manager of the Sheraton hotel, Mohammed Mousa, told reporters he had been given an hour to clear the building and then Iraqi soldiers had looted it, taking everything from video recorders to the piano.

They then poured petrol over the ground floor, mined it and blasted it with tank fire.

The university, museum, schools and hospitals have all been looted and soldiers have taken whatever they could find from shops and homes.

Even clothes and mattresses lie scattered around the streets, stolen, but too bulky to take away.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

President George Bush announced his intention to press on with "undiminished intensity" to complete a rout of Iraqi forces apart from liberating Kuwait, he said the Allies wanted to secure large parts of southern Iraq and defeat Saddam Hussein's elite Republican Guard.

Two days later the president announced a ceasefire after Iraq accepted all 12 resolutions laid down by the United Nations.

Two of the main conditions were the return of all allied prisoners of war and Kuwaitis taken hostage and also the renunciation of all claims to Kuwait.

Saddam Hussein remained in power until George Bush's son, George W. Bush, mounted another attack on Iraq in March 2003.

With the backing of British and Australian forces, he succeeded in toppling Saddam Hussein, who fled into hiding.

He was eventually captured in December 2003 put on trial by an Iraqi court, sentenced to death and executed on 30 December 2006.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Go your own way and make sure that you're not taking what others say at face value.

Taurus April 20-May 20
Your financial mind is active and energetic now, so make sure that you're focusing some of that energy on your future.

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21
Your mate is in need of some attention, but it's easy to give them what they need.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Your ability to help others is making life a lot more interesting - and not just for them!

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Your love life takes a big upswing today, and you should find that your interpersonal energy is perfect either for finding a new crush or for getting in deeper with your current sweetie.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22
You want to make lots of progress today, but you just can't - so make sure that you're not banging your head against a wall!

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22
Your ability to express yourself is heightened - which is really saying something! Make sure that you are writing up everything that needs to be written and reaching out to all the right people.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21
Your impulsive behavior is making you more open to serendipity - but, of course, it also opens you up to risk!

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Your friends are unusually dedicated today, and you should find that at least one of them has an important message or opportunity for you.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Where did the day (or week) go? It feels like time is moving faster, but that's just a sign that you are in the flow and ready for the big new change that is coming your way.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Today brings new opportunities - be ready to jump on them! You are full of great ideas, but some of them have to wait so you can move forward in a bold new direction.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20
You've got to make sure that your righteousness doesn't interfere with the practicalities of everyday life.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Sudoku puzzles categorized by difficulty: Easy, Easy+, Medium, and Hard. Each category contains a 9x9 grid with some numbers pre-filled.

WEATHER

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

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Invitation request; 5- Marrow host; 9- Snack in a shell; 13- Oops!; 14- Spoil; 15- Gung-ho; 16- Actress Kedrova; 17- Wynonna's mom; 18- Alcoholic drink of fermented honey; 19- Very; 21- Some MIT grads; 22- Warner ___; 23- Points to; 25- Extinct bird; 27- Vigorous exercises; 31- Sickness at the stomach; 35- Boring, so to speak; 36- Ladies of Sp.; 38- Copper and zinc alloy; 39- Cartoon Chihuahua; 40- Saturn's largest moon; 42- Mil. officers; 43- Cave; 46- List from which to choose; 47- Square; 48- Ancient fortress in Israel; 50- Absence of light; 52- Grounded fleet; 54- Just ___; 55- On the peak of; 58- Digit of the foot; 60- Adequate; 64- Denier's words; 65- Communion table; 67- Queue after Q; 68- Ripped; 69- Tusks; 70- Slaughter of baseball; 71- Smelting waste; 72- Hawaiian goose; 73- Cumberbund;

DOWN: 1- Dominion; 2- Switchblade; 3- Meadow mouse; 4- Ancient Egyptian king; 5- Feather scarf; 6- Thin woodwind instrument; 7- Identified; 8- Prolific inventor; 9- Embroidery frame; 10- Affirm; 11- Later; 12- Probability; 14- Writer of aphorisms; 20- Bro or sis; 24- Theatrical backdrop; 26- Apply lightly; 27- President Garfield's middle name; 28- Actress Verdugo; 29- Tirades; 30- Satisfied; 32- Medicinal ointment; 33- Adlai's running mate; 34- Orgs.; 37- Capital city of Yemen; 41- Room for infants; 44- Grating; 45- Begley and Bradley; 47- Curtain calls; 49- Achieve; 51- He's a doll; 53- Find the answer; 55- Aardvark's prey; 56- Implement; 57- Other, in Oaxaca; 59- Thames town; 61- Annapolis inst.; 62- Old Pontiacs; 63- Silence; 66- Exist;



USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999
Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
Fire department 28 572 222
Water Supply - Report 1990 992
PJ (Open line) 993
Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333
Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944
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Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
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Nasser Al Khater Qatar 2022 Local Organizing Committee Deputy CEO, left, Hassan Al Thawadi, head of the Qatar World Cup organizing committee, center, and FIFA Secretary General Jerome Valcke at a press conference yesterday, in Doha

Abdullah Rebhy, Doha

QATAR 2022

Valcke: No FIFA compensation to clubs for 2022 date switch

FIFA will not compensate European clubs for disrupting their season by rescheduling the 2022 World Cup, according to the governing body's secretary general.

Jerome Valcke also ruled out apologizing for a November-December tournament that avoids Qatar's summer heat and shuts down top national leagues for several weeks.

"There will be no compensation," Valcke said yesterday, the day after a FIFA task force recommended the switch in dates. "We are doing nothing which destroys football. There is seven years to reorganize football around the world for this World Cup."

Compensation was demanded Tuesday by European Club Association chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, who said his members would not bear the costs, including losing lucrative match days.

"I definitely don't feel I need

UEFA supports playing the 2022 World Cup final on a Friday, Dec. 23

to apologize," said Valcke, who is part of stalled talks to renew a working agreement with the ECA which expired after the 2014 World Cup. "Why should I apologize to clubs?"

Valcke also revealed that UEFA supports playing the

2022 World Cup final on a Friday, Dec. 23.

That claim will raise tension between UEFA and its British members angered by threats to their traditional holiday schedule.

Every World Cup final since 1970 was played on Sunday. Dec. 18 is also an option for 2022.

UEFA acknowledged its support for a final on the Friday before Christmas, when its preferred option of a January tournament was rejected.

"Once the FIFA Task Force recommended to stage the competition from late November to late December 2022, UEFA su-

ggested that an option could be for the final to be played on December 23," UEFA spokesman Pedro Pinto said in a statement.

The 2022 World Cup playing dates will be confirmed at a March 19-20 meeting of the FIFA executive committee in Zurich.

Valcke said one concession to clubs and leagues was planning a 28-day schedule instead of the current 32.

Legal threats to challenge moving soccer's marquee event now appear over, unless a European league takes the high-risk option.

Valcke also acknowledged that awarding Fox broadcast rights

to the 2026 World Cup this month averted possible legal action from the American broadcaster, which has NFL and college football commitments in November and December.

The unexpected deal extended Fox's 2018 and 2022 rights, which it bought for \$425 million more than three years ago when FIFA was still insisting on a June-July tournament in Qatar.

"We have done what we had to do in order to protect FIFA and to protect the organization of the World Cup and without any breach of any international rules on the business side of this negotiation," Valcke said. **AP**

BID officials from Durban will present their plans for the 2022 Commonwealth Games on Monday. The South African city is set to be the first African host.

Durban, a possible future Olympic bidder, is the only candidate for 2022 after Edmonton withdrew this month citing financial difficulties caused by falling oil prices.

South African officials, including the minister of sport and the chief executive of the Olympic committee, will make a 20-minute presentation to the Commonwealth Games Federation execu-

tive committee in London on Monday, the deadline for the lodging of bids.

The 2022 host will be announced at the CGF General Assembly in New Zealand in September.

The CGF has called the bid by Durban, a city with balmy, tropical weather on South Africa's east coast, "an historic and special moment for the Commonwealth sporting movement."

South African officials say they still have to follow due process with their bid, despite it being the only one.

"The CGF will still have to make an assessment of

South African Commonwealth bid officials head to London

our bid book which will subsequently lead to site visits of the facilities in Durban," bid committee and South African Olympic committee chief executive Tubby Reddy said in a statement yesterday.

Durban's games will be centered on Moses Mabhida Stadium, built for the 2010 soccer World Cup.

Durban's Commonwealth Games has complica-

ted a possible South African Olympic bid.

Durban was widely touted as an Olympic contender five years ago after South Africa's widely praised hosting of the World Cup, but the government backed down on a bid for the 2020 Summer Games.

South African Olympic officials say the country is still considering a bid for the 2024 or 2028 Games,

but there has been no government commitment and the Commonwealth Games is now the priority.

The International Olympic Committee's reforms which allow a country to spread an Olympics across more than one host city, could help South Africa host the biggest sports event on the planet. South Africa could consider splitting an Olympics between the

picturesque seaside city of Durban and the economic hub of Johannesburg, the country's biggest city.

The deadline for cities to inform the IOC of their intention to bid for the 2024 Olympics is Sept. 15.

Durban bid committee chairman Mark Alexander said the Commonwealth bid "demonstrates our capacity to host global events." **AP**

opinion

Vox Parva

Benedict Keith Ip



SPIRIT OF A CENTURY-OLD MISSIONARY REMAINS IN KA HO

What can be considered immortal in this secular world? Would it be a celebrity, a 100-story high-rise building, or a UNESCO façade visited by millions of people every week? All of them may perish one day, but only the spirit of a good and truthful entity can remain. They are not objects for idolatry, but rather a model which serves others.

On February 14, 2015, with the help of staff, teachers and students from the Escola D. Luis Versiglia de Ka Ho, the hundred year-old Salesian missionary, Fr. Gaetano Nicosia, SDB visited the island where he served for half a century - Coloane.

Coloane is no longer an isolated island. The Cotai Strip merges Taipa and Coloane together. Ka Ho cannot escape the fate of the other buildings on the island, which have seen extensive reconstruction and redevelopment. The area is no longer primitive after a series of protests against the very pollution which this redevelopment has caused. Newly paved roads and bridges are prepared for heavy traffic. Large trucks still dominate the roads. A mountain is gone to make way for the new prison facilities. And the village for Hansenians (lepers) is also gone and under reconstruction to make way for a new rehabilitation center.

However, hearing about this great man's return has triggered a celebration in the form of school activities and a birthday reception. The outskirts of the school have suddenly amassed hundreds of people trying to greet one of the greatest benefactors of our time.

Sicilian Fr. Nicosia joined the Salesian community at the age of 15, and traveled to China for a mission at 20. The bishop of Macau invited him to the city when he was 48 years old. This is when his mission of serving the Hansenians and homeless children began. The Chapel of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows was built in 1967, then the boarding school in Ka Ho (1976), Escola D. Luis Versiglia de Ka Ho (1985), Don Bosco Youth Village (2000), and then more institutions, were set up under his guidance.

Fr. Nicosia is awe-inspiring because he lifts up those who are marginalized. He cares for and saves the people who have not been treated as humans, imbuing them with dignity and a second-chance at life. This clearly goes far beyond evangelization. People like me who live in a city and have been raised in normal circumstances will never understand the importance of Fr. Nicosia offering his life to warm the hearts of others.

Yet, I was touched when I was attending the mass together with the cured Hansenians. They were full of tears. Upon greeting each other, they clearly displayed the positive role of Fr. Nicosia in their lives. This may be the very last time Fr. Nicosia will travel to the old but very different place, and this place will no doubt keep transforming. But he seems to not care about the changes. During the celebrations, Fr. Nicosia's main message was always focused on discipleship. "Yes, I'm very happy, because God loves me! Please, follow Jesus and follow Don Bosco. But I'm also not so happy, because there are still many millions of young people who don't know about the love of Jesus, the love of God for them" said Fr. Nicosia.

He did so many material things but he never spoke a word to uplift himself during his speech. A great man like him is great because he always strives to adhere faithfully to his religion and devote his life to others with an unshakeable mind.

THE BUZZ Ooops! VATICAN SEEKS TO QUELL MEXICAN ANGER OVER POPE'S DRUG REMARK

The Vatican sought yesterday to defuse a diplomatic tiff with Mexico after Pope Francis referred to the possible "Mexicanization" of his native Argentina from drug trafficking, the latest instance of Francis' casual speaking style getting him into trouble.

The Vatican said it had sent an official diplomatic note to Mexico's ambassador insisting that Francis "absolutely did not intend to offend the

Mexican people" with the remark, or to detract from the government's anti-drug efforts.

Francis made the reference in an email over the weekend to an Argentine friend and lawmaker, Gustavo Vera, who is involved in combating the drug trade. He published the pope's email on the website of his Alameda Foundation.

In the email, Francis wrote: "Hopefully we are in time to avoid Mexicanization."

Stolen statue, painting returned to Italian government in NYC

DECADES after being stolen in Italy, an ancient statuette and an 18th-century painting were returned to the country's government yesterday after turning up in New York.

The handover marked the latest case of U.S. authorities helping Italy and other countries reclaim what they see as cultural patrimony.

"For decades, two significant pieces of Italian heritage have been on the run," FBI Assistant Director Diego Rodriguez said as he and Manhattan Deputy U.S. Attorney Richard Zabel gave the artworks to Warrant Officer Angelo Ragusa of the Carabinieri Tutela Patrimonio Culturale, an art-crimes police force.

The painting, called "The Holy Trinity Appearing to Saint Clement," is attributed to the renowned artist Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, also called Giambattista Tiepolo. It was taken from a house in Turin in 1982, prosecutors said.

The Etruscan bronze statuette of the Greek mythological hero Heracles — also known as Heracles or, to the Romans, Hercules — dates to the sixth or fifth century B.C. It vanished from the Oliveriano Archaeological Museum in



An 18th-century painting attributed to painter Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, "The Holy Trinity appearing to Saint Clement"

Pesaro in 1964.

The works eventually ended up with an art dealer and an art-investment firm, which consigned them for sale in recent years. They relinquished the items after learning of the thefts and aren't accused of involvement.

Italy has campaigned in the last decade to get back cultural items including ancient Roman, Greek and Etruscan artifacts the government says were looted

or stolen.

New York prosecutors have been involved in the effort before. Federal prosecutors in Manhattan announced in 2011 that a Renaissance painting and a Roman sculpture from about the first century were being returned to Italy after popping up at New York auction houses.

And the Manhattan district attorney's office prosecuted a prominent coin collector who pleaded guilty in 2012 to trying to sell what he believed were ancient coins found in Italy after 1909, when it became illegal to remove antiquities from the country. Some of the coins proved to be forgeries, but five authentic coins from his collection were returned to the Greek government this summer.

Other countries also have taken action in recent years to reclaim antiquities, sometimes with help from U.S. authorities. In one example, fossilized remains of more than 18 dinosaurs were turned over to Mongolia's government last year after U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents discovered that mislabeled dinosaur bones were illegally being shipped into the U.S. AP

Station	Air quality
Roadside	40-60 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	50-70 Moderate
Ambient	25-45 Good

WORLD BRIEFS



JAPAN A panel of experts appointed by Japan's prime minister met for the first time yesterday to discuss what he should say in a statement marking the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, fueling speculation that he may water down previous government apologies for the country's wartime past.



BANGLADESH A court in Bangladesh issued an arrest warrant Wednesday for former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia after she failed to appear in court for the fourth time in two corruption cases against her.

AFGHANISTAN Avalanches caused by a heavy winter snow killed at least 108 people in northeastern Afghanistan, an emergency official said yesterday, as rescuers clawed through debris with their hands to save those buried beneath.

USA For the first time, a study shows that a drug used to treat HIV infection also can help prevent it when taken before and after risky sex by gay men.

GERMANY An 18-month-old boy dies of measles in Berlin, the first known fatality in an outbreak of the disease that has seen more than 570 cases in the city since October.

UK Britain has become the first country in the world to allow the creation of human embryos from the DNA of three people, a technique intended to help mothers avoid passing on genetically degenerative diseases to their babies. The bill granting the controversial techniques was passed Tuesday by the House of Lords, after being approved earlier this month by the House of Commons.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT



Behind the scenes. Models are pictured backstage prior to the start of the Stella Jean women's Fall-Winter 2015-16 show, part of Milan Fashion Week, unveiled yesterday in Milan.