Patriotic education sparks concern over brainwashing

China’s biggest public political event: is it relevant?

China's top judge renewed his commitment to uncovering and overturning wrongful convictions, citing to national legislators yesterday the much-publicized case of an 18-year-old executed and confirmed years later to have been innocent. Chinese courts at all levels overturned convictions in 1,317 criminal cases last year, Zhou Qiang, president of the Supreme People’s Court, said yesterday in an annual report to the legislature.

Thailand's anti-corruption body has recommended that 250 former lawmakers be impeached, in the latest move targeting supporters of ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. National Anti-Corruption Commission spokesman Vicha Mahakun said yesterday that the agency found the lawmakers had misused their authority by seeking to amend the now-defunct constitution to make the Senate fully, rather than partly, elected.

Malaysia’s transport minister yesterday vowed to take stern action against an air traffic control supervisor if it is confirmed that he was asleep on the job when Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 disappeared a year ago.

Macao Water asks for higher subsidy to be sustainable

“Every time we ask for an increase, we only get a minor adjustment. This is not enough to make Macao Water sustainable,” said Felix Fan.

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“Learning about China’s biggest public political event: is it relevant?”

The Good Shepherd Center is calling on local businesses and casino operators to enforce “a zero tolerance” policy on human trafficking.

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Front cover
**Region’s role as Lusophone link highlighted in Beijing**

Macao Water wants higher subsidy to be sustainable

**Macao Water** achieved "hand-won better financial performance" during 2014, according to the company's executive director, Felix Fan. The company's profits after tax totalled MOP$28 million, but this result is considered insufficient to face the company's financial performance, according to the company's estimations. "In either case, it will bring uncertainty to Macao Water over the company's financial performance," Felix Fan said. "In the water bill, the fixed price decreases for car imports in order to make progress on the Main Storage Reservoir Water Treatment Plant III (MSR III) expansion works, after the project was suspended several times. The MSR III is expected to be completed this year, and will increase the region's daily water supply capacity. The complex aims, in particular, to meet the water demand in the Cotai area. In addition to the MSR III project, Macao Water is currently designing the Seac Pai Van Water Treatment Plant and its supporting water supply network. Felix Fan stressed that "all these efforts make up the important measures to ensure the water supply safety of Macao".

**Round-the-clock border may affect revenue**

The Transport Bureau (DSAT) director, Wong Wai Ming, announced that tax increases will likely be implemented in order to make car ownership more costly. The secretary told journalists after the meeting that a majority of the committee members are in favor of introducing economic measures to slow the surge in number of cars, which is increasing annually by 5 percent. The measures discussed at the meeting included increasing parking fees and taxation in multiple areas, which have stayed unadjusted for a decade. However, the 50-year-old secretary conceded that, so far, discussion had not yielded conclusions on specific dates or reduction numbers to meet, or even how much the tax increment would be. The Transport Bureau (DSAT) director, Wong Wai Ming, announced that tax increases were being introduced in order to strengthen the theme of "two sides sharing the same blood and culture like a family," in order to narrow the psychological distance between compatriots on both sides. Moreover, he suggested facilitating regional integration and developing a large-scale cooperation platform for four places across the straits. In addition, at the NPC Macau delegation's meeting yesterday, the director of the Chinese Liaison Office in Macau, Li Gang, shared the SAR's experience in institutional procedure, as a reference to the mainland's judicial reform. By the media that several committee members had agreed to put the bus priority policy for the inner harbor district in place this August, which was considered the best time to implement the policy considering a reduced traffic volume. "We will work towards the goal [of enforcing the policy in August], but we have to continue collecting the public's opinion in order to know to what extent the policy will be implemented to," he said. Wong said, was to make the tax adjustment fair to different kinds of car owners. The DSAT director revealed that "advance warnings" would be given to current car owners in case of tax increases, whereas there would not be any advance notification for tax increases for car imports in order to avoid the city's sudden demand for vehicles. According to figures provided by DSAT, the estimated cost of owning a private car (excluding taxes, parking fees, maintenance) in Hong Kong is only 1.75 times more than in Macau. In that, costs four times more to own a vehicle. Staff reporter.
MACAU delegates’ joint proposal to Beijing of strengthening youth national education has sparked concerns over “brainwashing” in local society. Local scholar and educator Teresa Vong suggested that the timing of putting forward such a proposal is unavoidable to generate speculation and panic.

“Overly saying Macau’s youngsters are unpatriotic [in a proposition that] doesn’t bring the right perspective. National education, as part of civic education, will be established as one of the mandatory school subjects like mathematics and physical education. Within the next four and half years, all schools in Macau will be implementing this obligatory course, gradually from kindergarten to high school class level,” she warned.

“I am not against implementing mandatory national education. It’s inevitable for every country to promote national education. It’s not a sin to love one’s country, but I oppose proposing it under such a sensitive circumstance,” stressed the scholar.

Several scholars told the nation’s top advisory body (CPPCC) that they hope the Ministry of Education could collaborate with the Macau’s Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEJ) to compose a national education textbook. A review was called for on the current teaching materials to foster “moral quality, legal concepts and patriotism,” drawing on Hong Kong’s Umbrella Movement.

“Macau has a more standardized national education than Hong Kong. About sixty percent of local students are studying in the patriotic or pro-establishment schools,” indicated the scholar. “All Macau’s eighth graders are required to join in military training, which is also regarded as a type of national education.”

The educator indicated that “patriotic education should be established on the basis of emotions, whereas simply chanting slogans doesn’t mean the children can reach that emotional level.”

“It will be brainwashing if they teach it in a way of drumming it in, rather than fostering students to think about their own relation with the country. The way to handle the teaching mustn’t be just one way. One needs to love the country rationally and critically, to learn not only its good side but also its bad. All those need to be included in the textbook, and what we are most concerned about here is in what way they will teach that,” she stressed.

Since 2005, DSEJ has implemented a series of textbooks compiled by the Beijing Normal University’s center for citizenship and moral education, said the academic. The city further included national education into a mandatory curriculum framework being promulgated last year.

“It’s confusing why the delegates proposed that, as Macau has already been implementing all these. Do they know it [national education]’s happening? It’s obvious in the timing that they might want the youngsters to be quiet and obedient, to abide by laws without asking for reasons. But that runs counter to the purpose of civic education,” she questioned.

Regarding these concerns, the Secretary for Culture and Social Affairs, Alexis Tam, assured the public that “there’s no need to be concerned that ‘brainwashing education’ would appear.”

“I think national education is a very good [form of] education and I’ve heard from many residents and associations that Macau society has this demand yesterday after a plenary meeting of the Youth Affairs Committee be lead.

The secretary further explained that “it will be implemented in a way that lets our local students have more independent thinking rather than letting them grow up in a gree-nhouse.” The DSEJ and tertiary education departments will outreach to schools how to conduct the national education,“ he added.

The DSEJ officials also explained that the mandatory curriculum framework is applicable to all local schools, whether they are public, private-run, Catholic-based or international. However, each school has its own autonomy over what textbook to choose and how they will teach the subject.

“Civic and moral education is a mandatory subject and we will formulate the goals for each educational level to reach. Apart from that, the government won’t intervene,” clarified Wong Kin Mou, educational and research resources department head. Wong said that patriotic education will not become an independent subject and that schools will not be proposed to use a unified textbook in the future.

Locals encouraged to pursue studies in Portugal

The Tertiary Education Services Office (GAEIS) has opened an information session on Monday for residents looking to study in the Portuguese University of Coimbra (UC). A representative of the university will be attending the event, providing information about the university and a glimpse into the university’s application process, GAES said in a statement. The representative will also provide details on the university’s curricula, as well as information on available scholarships. The information session takes place between 5:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. at the Center for Higher Education Students, which is located in front of the Lou Lim Ieoc Garden bus stop.

Meanwhile, UC representatives will begin a visit to China today to meet prospective students and provide them with information on curricula offered at its seven faculties. The university said in a press release that it will be participating in the International Higher Education Exhibition of Macau 2015, taking place between today and Monday at the Venetian Macau.

The UC delegation, which will be led by vice-rector Joaquim Ramos de Carvalho, heads to Beijing on March 20 to attend the China Study Abroad Forum, which is held as part of the China International Education Exhibition Tour. UC is the first Portuguese university to accept students from China, who have undertaken the National Higher Education Entrance Examination (Gaokao). The university also accepts applications from students from Macau, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

“Besides providing quality university education and an internationally recognized diploma, the University of Coimbra, which is now celebrating its 725th anniversary, offers students a unique life experience, promoting a multicultural environment and contact between students of 90 nationalities,” the university says.

The university has made available a specific website addressing Chinese students, with useful information on academic and research programs, as well as details on student financial aid (http://www.uc.pt/en/chi-na/us-visits-china). CP

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced yesterday that Macau and Hong Kong are on a list of countries and regions whose citizens cannot acquire or transfer immovable property in India. In a notification separately, it has been decided that citizens of Macau and Hong Kong will also be included on the list of countries which are prohibited to acquire/transfer immovable property in India, the country’s authority said in a notification, without further explaining why the measure was taken. Under the current regulations regarding foreign ownership, citizens from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, China, Iran, Nepal or Bhutan can’t acquire or transfer immovable property in India without prior permission of the RBI. However, those citizens can lease property, as long as the lease does not exceed five years.
Aside from the artists’ inspired choreographic movements and ear-pleasing vocals onstage that captivates the audience, what really makes the Broadway musical show Cats, which runs until the 15th of this month at the Venetian Theatre, so appealing? One simple answer; the elaborately designed costumes, wigs and, of course, the show’s set.

On a backstage tour this week, Maykayla Bishop, Company Manager of the musical team, shared with The Times some secrets lying within the shows mise-en-scène and on how the artists turn into active and energetic Jellicle cats all by themselves.

The two conspicuous junk piles resting on both sides of the stage, according to the show’s manager, are indeed comprised of rubbish collected from this city intentionally to create a local sense. Therefore, the destinations the show tours bring different indigenous elements to its set. Besides, another noteworthy part of the stage set is a plate bearing “J-AR-12” placed next to the gargantuan tire. The letters there basically stand for the name of the show’s director and choreographer - Jo-Anne Robinson while the number that follows indicates the number of prop edition, meaning that the plate has been changed 12 times since the first performance.

As Maykayla Bishop revealed, the coated-surface stage enables the Jellicle cats to perform swift dancing moves, and its slightly inward inclination allows the audience to catch sight of all performers packed onstage. If you ever look meticulously at the patterns on the stage, it’s not that difficult to find the word “Seoul” written right above the roaring tiger, as the team brought the entire set to the Venetian Theatre from its previous tour stop in South Korea. Taking into account the actual size of the props and the set, “everything, from the broken cellphone or even to the drain pipeline was devised and created from a kitten’s perspective,” she said.

Asked if the performers have adequate rest for the show, the company’s manger said that full-day rehearsals only take place before the musical officially begins its season. “When we first started the show, when we were bumping in and having new cast members, we did the full-day rehearsal. Once we were up and running, we didn’t have to because we’re doing eight shows a week,” she said.

Wearing the right costumes and wigs are essential to making up the vivid appearance of the Jellicle cats for the show. The latter is done by a group of specialists. “Firstly, we need to wash the wigs completely before drying them up, the fragile laces on the exterior of the wigs have to be pinned in order to find the right position for setting,” said one of the specialists, stressing that the “cat ears” are the hardest part to form with hair tips that had to look “slightly transparent” under the spotlight.

For the first few run-throughs, there were make-up artists on set who would do half a face of make-up, for the performers, leaving them to learn how to wear make-up by finishing up the rest. As Maykayla Bishop revealed, initially it would take almost one hour for them to finish the task as they were too cautious, yet now they only need roughly fifteen minutes.

Every single costume was handmade and tailor-made according to the artist’s body size. Some of them even have padding on the knees for sliding. The clothing and the wigs represent different characters and styles of the Jellicle cats, which are portrayed as certain humans in society.

Entertainment

Behind the scenes, a Cats backstage tour

Everything, from the broken cellphone or even to the drain pipeline was devised and created from a kitten’s perspective

MAYKAYLA BISHOP

Staff reporter
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12/03/2015 - 29/03/2015

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New guests confirmed for literary festival

Portuguese journalist Adelino Gomes, Hong Kong writer Kelly Yang, local author Chan Im Wa and Spanish puppeteer Toni Rumbau are among the new names confirmed to be attending the fourth edition of The Script Road, according to an announcement made yesterday by the organizers. The literary festival will take place between March 19 and 29, with the majority of the events happening at the Old Court building.

Ambrose So: No layoffs or unpaid leave for staff

SJM Holdings Limited refuses to resort to unpaid leave or dismissals amid an economic downturn in the gaming sector, reassured Ambrose So, the company’s CEO. “First, we won’t have layoffs. Second, if there are losses, it won’t be that quick to become a fact,” Ambrose So said. “In regards to strengthening non-gaming diversification, we still need to think about what to do with non-gaming staff,” he added.

André Ritchie leaves GIT

The deputy coordinator of the Transportation Infrastructure Office (GIT), André Ritchie, will be leaving his post at the end of the month, newspaper Tribuna de Macau reports. He has been serving as GIT’s deputy director since 2007. Mr Ritchie will start working for the private sector. He did not disclose which company he will be working for, but said that it is not related to the Light Rail Transit (LRT) construction work or any other major public project.

Gaming operators urged to help fight human trafficking

Catarina Pinto

The Good Shepherd Center is calling on local businesses and gaming operators to incorporate “a zero tolerance” policy on human trafficking, and the further training of staff to spot and report any potential cases. The center, together with Vital Voices USA, will be holding a one-day summit next Tuesday at MGM Macau themed “Business Leadership to End Human Trafficking & Modern Day Slavery.”

“The purpose of the conference is to raise awareness about human trafficking and its many faces,” said sister Juliana Devoy, director of the Good Shepherd Center. She added that it is critical to involve the business community in the fight against human trafficking, to urge them to look into the end of their supply chain and to make sure that their products or goods are not produced through slave labor.

Sister Juliana recalled a case of a 13-year-old girl who was being used as a prostitute at a local hotel. She believes that training hotel staff to spot and act upon any potential human trafficking cases would help to tackle the problem. Businesses should implement a zero tolerance policy “for any kind of sex trafficking taking place in or around their casinos,” she said.

“They be trained up, and if they see that there are potential trafficking victims, they can alert the police, because the police can’t just go in unless they have a tip off,” she stressed. “I don’t think most of the hotels [and companies] provide this kind of training for their staff. There are many things that can be done and are being done in other places, but, as far as I am aware, nothing of that kind is being done in Macau. They do not have public policy statements about their policy on human trafficking,” she told a press conference yesterday.

Another strategy to combat human trafficking that companies could adopt, she said, regardless of their own supply chain. Sister Juliana recalled that some enterprises fail to look into the end of their supply chain to make sure that none of their goods are being produced through slave labor.

“Not everyone knows [about human trafficking]. So, for me, this is a very important effort, too, to really get the business community involved.”

Sister Juliana said that Macau’s law against human trafficking, which came into force in 2008, is suitable, and that the government has been willing to tackle the problem. However, law enforcement is often hindered with many cases unable to reach the courtroom due to lack of evidence.

The conference will take place at MGM Macau on Tuesday between 9.30 a.m. and 5 p.m. Representatives of local companies, casino operators, worldwide organizations, and human trafficking researchers and experts from the United States and Asia have been invited to speak.

Sister Juliana revealed that a representative of hotel operator Carlson/Rezidor Hotels will also be speaking at the summit, as their company has been implementing policies to help tackle human trafficking.

Other speakers include representatives from several organizations, such as Macau’s Social Welfare Bureau (IAS), the Global Fund to End Slavery, CSR Asia, and from different consequently. Kathleen Ferrier, who is an expert in international relations and a member of the United Nations-related Expert Review Group (ERG), will also be speaking in the afternoon.

About 100 participants have registered to attend the summit, including representatives of several casino operators, such as Galaxy, MGM, Wynn and SJM, sister Juliana revealed.

The summit is organized by the Good Shepherd Center in cooperation with Vital Voices USA, which was founded by Hillary Clinton.

The event is also supported by the Macau government, with the collaboration of the European Union Office to Hong Kong and Macau, and the Macau Government Human Trafficking Deterrent Measures Concern Committee. Several government entities, as well as MGM Macau and Galaxy Entertainment Group, contributed financially towards the conference.

According to sister Juliana, the International Labor Organization estimates that there are 21 million human trafficking victims worldwide, which makes “forced labor and sex trade one of the greatest human rights violations of our time.”

‘Human trafficking has many faces’

Galaxy, MGM, Wynn and SJM, sister Juliana revealed.

Although sex trafficking is one of the most common types of modern slavery, human trafficking still “has many faces and types,” according to sister Juliana Devoy.

“The traditional [cases] where [victims] are being beaten up and tied up are still happening. But that’s not the only way it happens. In the cases we get at the center, the girls’ vulnerability is exploited. They are very young and ignorant – they’re easily seduced,” she told reporters on the sidelines of a press conference on Monday, where she was to announce a summit on human trafficking that will take place next Tuesday.

The Good Shepherd Center, sister Juliana revealed, has provided shelter to 39 under-aged girls – victims of human or sex trafficking – from mainland China over the past two years. The center received fewer cases in 2014 than in the previous year. Sister Juliana said that the center does not know whether this decrease is related to stricter border control or the crackdown on corruption in mainland China.

Although Macau’s government is committed to treating these victims as children in need of protection, sister Juliana recalled that the girls only stay at the center for one or two weeks, and it is hard to follow up on their cases and to ensure that they will not enter any human trafficking network again.

“When they go back, we worry that they go back to do the same. And we have no way to track that information down (...) usually they are school dropouts and they just want to leave,” sister Juliana said.

The center is trying to link up with other associations that are providing assistance to these victims in mainland China, so that there’s a better way to tackle these cases.

According to sister Juliana, there are cases of sex trafficking victims of other nationalities in Macau. “There are human trafficking victims inside saunas, but the police can’t go there without being tipped off. These saunas are legal. Many girls who end up in these places thought that they were coming here just to do massage, but then they [the owners] want them to be prostitutes,” she said.

Sister Juliana warned that “they feel like they don’t have a choice. They go along and feel they have compromised themselves, and they don’t see themselves as victims.”
Chinese makers roll out wave of Apple watch lookalikes

Joe McDonald, Business Writer, Beijing

A month before Apple Inc.'s smartwatch went on sale in the market, China's thriving copycat manufacturers are selling lookalikes, some openly advertised as Apple copies.

Apple Smart Watch with Bluetooth Bracelet,” says one vendor on Alibaba Group's popular Taobao e-commerce website.

Photos on the vendor’s page appear to be the real Apple Watch. It says features on the Chinese versions include text messaging and a music player. It starts at 288 yuan (US$45), or one-eighth the $349 price of the cheapest Apple Watch.

Alibaba, which listed on the New York Stock Exchange last year after a record initial public offering, has faced criticism in the past for hosting the sale of counterfeit goods. It says it has been taking steps to reduce the problem.

The flood of “me too” smartwatches reflects China’s mix of skilled electronics manufacturers and a growing consumer market for bargain-price style.

Most of the world’s personal computers and mobile phones are assembled in China. But the country’s own companies are only starting to develop design skills and the ability to create breakthrough products.

That has led to the rise of an industry known as “shanzhai,” or “mountain forts” — hundreds of small, anonymous manufacturers that quickly copy the design or features of popular foreign mobile phones or other products at a fraction of the price.

At least eight vendors on Taobao advertised watches as “Apple Watch” or “Apple Watch lookalike.” Most said they were compatible with Apple’s iOS or Google Inc.’s rival Android operating system.

One vendor jokingly used Chinese slang for a vulgar rich person, offering an “All-New Apple Tyrant Gold Mobile Phone—Supporting Watch” for 288 yuan ($45).

Eight vendors failed to respond to questions from The Associated Press sent through their Taobao accounts.

Asked whether it had taken action against any sellers, Alibaba said in a statement, “Alibaba Group is dedicated to the fight against counterfeiters. We work closely with our government partners, brands and industry associations to tackle this issue at its source. We also utilize technology like data mining and big data to scrub our platforms of counterfeits.”

Alibaba faced controversy in January after a Chinese government agency accused the company of lax oversight and allowing vendors to sell counterfeit goods on Taobao. The two sides settled their dispute a few days later.

The agency said its report had no legal force and Alibaba promised to tighten its oversight of vendors.

Apple, based in Cupertino, California, says buyers in China and Hong Kong can pre-order its watch beginning April 10, the same day it takes orders in the United States, Japan, Britain, France and Germany. Most previous Apple products were released in China weeks or months after other markets. That fueled a trade in iPhones that were smuggled in for sale to gadget fans who were willing to pay a premium.

Apple lookalikes also are on sale in markets in the southern city of Shenzhen, “the mainland’s best place to shop for ... hi-tech knockoffs,” according to the Hong Kong newspaper The South China Morning Post.

The mainland’s best place to shop for ... hi-tech knockoffs, according to the Hong Kong newspaper The South China Morning Post.

Apple CEO Tim Cook explains the features of the new Apple Watch during an Apple event on Monday, March 9, 2015, in San Francisco.
The 25 questions you must ask as a tenant renting a property

Juliet Risdon is a Director of JML Property and a property investor. Having established the company in 1994, JML Property offers Investment Property & Homes. It specializes in managing properties for owners and investors, and providing attractive and comfortable homes for tenants.

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All property transactions are sizeable when compared with most other decisions. It follows then that we should give these transactions the extra time and attention that they warrant, but this does not always happen. In many instances it isn’t as much an issue of motivation, but rather the right questions to ask. This series deals with key questions we can ask. Knowing the answers to these questions can help to avoid misunderstandings and, in many cases, will save time, money or both.

With the high costs and the potential happiness or unhappiness of your family at stake, it is natural to be concerned that you are making a good decision and getting what you are paying for. Perhaps the first thing to consider about renting a property whilst starting a new job, moving your family to a new country and setting the kids in a new school at the same time is of course a personal decision, but remembering to ask your agent the most important questions about the property you are considering.

The list below is in no particular order and is a suggested starting point to help identify which property you are considering.

1. Is the landlord willing to keep the property whilst starting a new job, moving your family to a new country and setting the kids in a new school at the same time?

2. How much will it cost in rent and utilities? This becomes a major factor as prices rise, and with so many things going on in a new school all at the same time.

3. Where is the property? Is it in a new school all at the same time.

4. How much does the landlord charge? This is often the major concern when starting to rent, and with so many things going on it is natural to be concerned that you are both making a good decision and getting what you are paying for.

5. Can I actually afford this? This question is often the major concern when starting to rent, and with so many things going on it is natural to be concerned that you are both making a good decision and getting what you are paying for.

6. Are there any additional charges? It’s always a good idea to investigate comparative rates of service before moving in. Another bonus to look at is how quickly rental rates have gone up or down in the building.

7. If you are looking for a new home what is the rent like in the building? If the landlord is more expensive or much cheaper than the competition, it’s better to ask yourself why before moving in.

8. What happens financially if you break the lease? If you have trouble breaking the lease, you might want to consider a lease that’s shorter than two years that contains an increase for the term of the lease.

9. Is it covered by any insurance? This is especially important if you are also keeping another house overseas.

10. Does the landlord offer amenities like cable TV and trash removal are covered? The landlord may be covered in the rent, others not. Ask if there are any fees for these amenities, so that you can budget for them. These questions are important not just for your family’s happiness but for the potential happiness of those who may be coming to take over your lease.

11. Is the landlord willing to keep the property whilst starting a new job, moving your family to a new country and setting the kids in a new school at the same time?

12. How much will it cost in rent and utilities? This becomes a major factor as prices rise, and with so many things going on in a new school all at the same time.

13. Where is the property? Is it in a new school all at the same time.

14. How much does the landlord charge? This is often the major concern when starting to rent, and with so many things going on it is natural to be concerned that you are both making a good decision and getting what you are paying for.

15. Can I actually afford this? This question is often the major concern when starting to rent, and with so many things going on it is natural to be concerned that you are both making a good decision and getting what you are paying for.

16. Are there any additional charges? It’s always a good idea to investigate comparative rates of service before moving in. Another bonus to look at is how quickly rental rates have gone up or down in the building.

17. If you are looking for a new home what is the rent like in the building? If the landlord is more expensive or much cheaper than the competition, it’s better to ask yourself why before moving in.

18. What happens financially if you break the lease? If you have trouble breaking the lease, you might want to consider a lease that’s shorter than two years that contains an increase for the term of the lease.

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21. Is the landlord willing to keep the property whilst starting a new job, moving your family to a new country and setting the kids in a new school at the same time?

22. How much will it cost in rent and utilities? This becomes a major factor as prices rise, and with so many things going on in a new school all at the same time.

23. Where is the property? Is it in a new school all at the same time.

24. How much does the landlord charge? This is often the major concern when starting to rent, and with so many things going on it is natural to be concerned that you are both making a good decision and getting what you are paying for.

25. Can I actually afford this? This question is often the major concern when starting to rent, and with so many things going on it is natural to be concerned that you are both making a good decision and getting what you are paying for.

The 25 questions you must ask as a tenant renting a property
Angola has 14 million mobile phone users

Angola currently has about 14 million users of mobile networks, 3 million Internet users and over 400,000 users of multimedia libraries, said the Minister of Communications and Information Technology Wednesday in Luanda.

The population of Angola is 24 million people, according to the Census conducted in 2014.

Minister José Carvalho da Rocha, who gave the opening speech of the first Angolan Forum of Telecommunications and Information Technology in 2015, pointed out that the sector indicators on public policies for the area, as outlined in a White Paper, had an impact throughout Angola, notably in areas where access was difficult.

Carvalho da Rocha said that, under the 2013/2017 National Development Program, there are goals that the sector should reach to make IT services more accessible to the population.

Economy Minister Abrâao Gourgel closing the Forum, underlined the importance of telecommunications and information technologies, saying that as they evolve they reduce the cost of financial transactions, while boosting production at companies in various sectors of the economy.

He noted that companies now feel empowered to explore new activities and, as production processes become increasingly information intensive, so does the importance of this favorable effect. MDT/Macauhub

Mozambique is the gateway to Southern Africa, China Daily says

Mozambique is a "gateway to the south of the African continent" with "unlimited natural resources," "an enviable location" and "new industries," according to a description given by state-run newspaper China Daily.

"Mozambique is a diamond waiting to be polished with the help of its main Asian partner, China," the newspaper said in a three-page supplement dedicated to that Portuguese-speaking African country.

Saying that Mozambique has large tracts of land available for agricultural production, "and so it should be simple to feed the population," the paper cites examples of Chinese companies, such as Wanhao Grains and Oils, which is investing US$200 million in rice production on a large scale in Gaza province, south of the country.

Paul Muxanga, CEO of the Cahora Bassa Hydroelectric Facility said, "we are delighted with the fact that China is supporting our economic development, given that our country offers exceptional conditions for investments."

The newspaper also refers to the investment of China State Grid Corporation that will be made in the construction of the South-Central power transmission line in partnership with Portuguese power grid company REN, which is the major shareholder, to connect the country’s main hydropower facility to centres of consumption.

China supported Mozambican ruling party Frelimo in its fight against Portugal and was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with Mozambique, on its day of independence, 25 June, 1975.

In 2014, two-way trade between China and Mozambique more than doubled, to US$3.62 billion, with a balance of US$351 million in China’s favour, according to statistics from the China Customs Service. MDT/Macauhub
Economic evolution causes small town upheaval

Joe McDonald
Business Writer, Gujiao

THIS city in China’s northern coal country hardly looks like it is in trouble. After three decades fueling China’s industrial boom, its wide, tree-lined avenues are filled with late model cars. Markets are crowded with people. That activity masks malaise. Surging demand for coal that once propelled Gujiao and its 200,000 people is ebbing, and along with it the local economy. "This year is impossible," said Li Qiumei, who sells fruit on the street. Wearing a parka and padded balaclava in the bright winter sunshine, she said her income has fallen by half since last year to about 50 yuan (USD8) a day.

Asked when she expects things to get better, Li shrugged and said, "I don't know." From coal country to the export-driven manufacturing heartland of China’s southeast, millions of people are enduring wrenching change. Beijing is trying to replace an economic model that has run out of steam after delivering years of blistering growth based on trade and investment in construction and heavy industry.

Consumption of coal declined in 2014 for the first time in 14 years

The World Bank and other analysts say a shift to service industries and domestic consumer spending is unavoidable if the world’s second-largest economy is to keep growing. The change could also help China cope with another challenge of encouraging households to spend, Beijing is allowing wages to rise.

Domestic consumption, a pillar of Beijing’s plan, accounted for just over half of economic growth last year for the first time, according to government data.

But uncertainty about the future, as well as a need to save for school fees and medical emergencies, prompts many households to avoid spending any pay increases.

"People's consumption is lagging," said Zuo Aijun, a 32-year-old truck driver at a Gujiao mine who has started a string of small businesses on the side. Five days a week, he works eight hours a day at the mine for 3,000 yuan ($485) a month, then another six hours at his own businesses, making up to 4,000 yuan ($650) on the side. Zuo is confident his family income will be able to cover school fees and medical insurance, "so there is no need to save," he said.

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In southeastern Guangdong province, a wave of factory closures has led to at least 205 strikes or protests by laid-off workers since August over unpaid wages, according to the China Labour Bulletin, a research group in Hong Kong. In many cases police beat and detained protesters.

Fu, a second-generation miner, said he came to Gujiao in 2013 after a two-year course in mining technology in his hometown east of the provincial capital. He said all 270 of his classmates went to work in coal mines.

Fu said the industry in his hometown is so anemic that at some pits two miners share one job, working alternate months. He said one former co-worker in Gujiao got a job in a pharmacy but most see no alternative to mining.

"If I work at the mine, I get a salary," Fu said.

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Beijing’s biggest public political event - is it relevant?

Much of the National People’s Congress coverage looks more like celebrity-watching than political journalism

Shi Gaole, a salesman for an electrical company, said he has never voted for a delegate and believes they are selected from famous people. “I don’t want to know who designates them to be delegates, and I do not want to know,” Shi said.

The vast majority are drawn from the Communist Party, though about a fifth are from token parties that give the legislature a veneer of diversity. It’s supposed to be a forum for bringing concerns of the provinces to the leadership, but often appears more of a top-down event disseminating the leadership’s priorities.

That top-down nature has only expanded under party leader and President Xi Jinping, who has consolidated his powers at the expense of other institutions, including the NPC, said Ming Xia, a political scientist at City University of New York who studies China’s legislative system.

The congress has become increasingly detached from the public, and its makeup of businessespeople, government officials and party members has become increasingly elite, Xia said.

The full NPC rarely votes on legislation; six of the 10 most recent sessions did not have a single bill on their agenda. This year’s session, which includes an amendment to a procedural law, is among the exceptions.

China’s Constitution grants legislative powers both to the NPC and its Standing Committee, a much smaller group of about 150 members who are much more tightly controlled by the Communist Party. That committee, which meets all year, deals with most legislation. For instance, it is handling an anti-terror bill that has drawn concerns of foreign governments over plans for China to demand keys to encryption of secure communications.

Some news does emerge from the congress’ stage-managed proceedings at Beijing’s Great Hall of the People, including the government’s economic growth target for the coming year — this year pegged at 7 percent, down from 7.5 percent last year.

The session also offers a rare chance for foreign reporters to question government ministers, including the premier. However, government officials work behind the scenes with reporters to vet their questions ahead of time, and only those with pre-screened questions are called upon at the news conferences.

Proposals periodically popular with the public, such as requiring public officials to disclose their assets, never gain traction in the legislature.

To try to keep the public interested, state media have issues of the Great Hall of the People during a plenary session of the National People’s Congress in Beijing.
AUSTRALIA

Gov’t investigating if teen among IS suicide bombers

Kristen Gelineau, Sydney

A USTRALIA’S government was trying to confirm reports that an Australian teenager was among a group of suicide bombers from the Islamic State movement that struck Iraq’s embattled Anbar province.

The Islamic State group claimed in an online statement that it used foreign fighters from Australia, Belgium, Syria and Uzbekistan in Wednesday’s attack, in which at least 13 suicide car bombs exploded almost simultaneously in Ramadi, the provincial capital of Anbar, killing two soldiers and wounding eight. One photo that was posted featured a white van driving down a dusty street, alongside an image of a young man who closely resembles 18-year-old Australian Jake Bilardi sitting behind the wheel.

“I can confirm that we’re seeking to independently verify that he was part of this suicide bombing attack,” Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said yesterday. “The news appears very grim, but we are seeking to independently verify it.”

The British press labeled Bilardi the “White Jihad” in December after images of him armed with a rifle in front of Islamic flags appeared on social media sites.

The teen left his home in the southern Australian city of Melbourne in August and headed to the Middle East. Bishop said he had been on Australia’s radar for several months, and in October, she canceled his passport on the advice of the country’s security agencies.

Last year, the Australian government passed sweeping counterterrorism legislation that made it easier for officials to cancel the passports of people they suspect of engaging in extremism. The law also makes it a crime for Australians to visit certain terrorism hot spots overseas.

“If these reports are confirmed, this is another tragic example of a young Australian being lured to a senseless and violent death by a brutal terrorist organization that is intent on imposing suffering and misery not only in Iraq and in Syria, but beyond,” Bishop said.

Bishop would not comment on an unsourced report by the Australian Broadcasting Corp. that said Bilardi had left a series of homemade bombs in his Melbourne home before leaving for the Middle East. The ABC reported that Bilardi’s family found the devices after he left and alerted authorities, who then began tracking his movements overseas.

Victoria state police later said in a statement that they first learned about Bilardi when he was reported missing in late 2014. While searching his home, police found chemicals that could be used to construct an explosive device — but no actual devices were found.

At least 90 Australians are currently fighting with and supporting terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria, and more than 20 have already been killed, Bishop said. They are among about 100 whose passports have been canceled to prevent them joining militants or from returning home.

More than 30 fighters have returned to Australia and at least 140 people in Australia are actively supporting extremist groups, according to the government.

Two Australia-born brothers aged 16 and 17 were stopped at Sydney Airport last week on suspicion they were heading to join Islamic State fighters. AP

Australia offers to pay for 2 prisoners’ keep in Indonesia

Rod McGuirk, Canberra

A USTRALIA has offered to cover Indonesia’s costs for keeping two Australian heroin traffickers in prison for life if Jakarta grants permanent stays of execution, the foreign minister said yesterday.

Australia is lobbying hard to prevent the executions by firing squad of Australians Andrew Chan, 31, and Myuran Sukumaran, 33. They are among nine foreign drug convicts plus an Indonesian who are to be executed soon on Nusakambangan Island prison off the main island of Java.

The offer to pay for the prisoners’ keep was made by Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop last week in a letter to her Indonesian counterpart Retno Marsudi, seen yesterday by The West Australian newspaper.

Bishop confirmed the offer was among several suggestions of alternative to executions.

“We haven’t had a specific response to that suggestion,” Bishop told reporters.

In the letter, seen by The Associated Press, proposes a prisoner exchange in which the Australians would be swapped for three Indonesian drug traffickers held in Australian prisons.

“The Australian government would be prepared to cover the costs of the ongoing life imprisonment of Mr. Chan and Mr. Sukumaran should a transfer not be possible,” Bishop wrote.

In a response dated Sunday, also seen by AP, Marsudi wrote that President Joko Widodo “is of the position that such an exchange cannot be entertained.”

Also yesterday in Jakarta, the High Administrative Court adjourned a hearing on an appeal by the Australian pair until March 19 because of a lack of proper paperwork. Presiding Judge Ujang Abdillah said state prosecutors who were to have represented President Widodo failed to present authorization letters signed by the president and attorney general.

Lawyers for the Australians have appealed to the high court, arguing that Widodo’s refusal to grant clemency did not give proper and individual consideration to their applications. A Jakarta court dismissed the appeal last month, ruling that clemency is a prerogative of the president.

Bishop also said that an inquiry into alleged corruption of the Australians’ trial judges was another legal avenue open to the pair.

“A Judicial Commission has invited Mr. Chan, Mr. Sukumaran and their original lawyer to make statements in a matter relating to alleged corruption of the trial judges,” she wrote.

“These are serious allegations and I request that your government accord due legal process and institute a pause in the execution preparations until these two important processes are complete,” she added.

A senior Indonesian official on Tuesday warned Australia to tone down its criticism of the planned executions, saying Canberra should be grateful to Indonesia for keeping asylum seekers away from Australian shores.

The minister for political, legal and security affairs, Teddy Edhie Wuryanto, said at a seminar that if about 10,000 migrants who have been stopped in Indonesia from reaching Australia were allowed to proceed, “the entire country will be a human tsunami in Australia.”

Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott responded Wednesday by saying he isn’t picking fights with anyone.
TWO officers were shot in front of the Ferguson Police Department early yesterday, authorities said, as demonstrators gathered after the resignation of the city’s police chief in the wake of a scathing Justice Department report alleging bias in the police department and court system.

A 32-year-old officer from nearby Webster Groves was shot in the face and a 41-year-old officer from St. Louis County was shot in the shoulder, St. Louis County Police Chief Jon Belmar said at a news conference. Both were taken to a hospital, where Belmar said they were conscious, but he described their injuries as “serious.”

“I don’t know who did the shooting, to be honest with you,” Belmar said, adding that he could not provide a description of the suspect or gun.

He said his “assumption” was that, based on where the officers were standing and the trajectory of the bullets, “these shots were directed exactly at my officers.”

The shots were fired shortly after midnight as protesters were gathered following the resignation of embattled Ferguson Police Chief Thomas Jackson on Wednesday. Before the shooting, some at the protest were chanting to show they weren’t satisfied with the resignations of Jackson and City Manager John Shaw earlier in the week, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported.

The protest was a familiar scene in Ferguson, which saw similar and much larger demonstrations after the shooting death of black 18-year-old Michael Brown last summer by city police officer Darren Wilson. When Wilson, who is white, was cleared in November by a state grand jury, the decision set off further protests, looting and fires. Wednesday was the first time an officer at a protest had been shot.

After the shooting, officers with guns and in riot gear circled the station, and more than a dozen squad cars blocked the street. Jackson was the sixth employee to resign or be fired after a Justice Department report last week cleared Wilson of civil rights charges in the shooting. Wilson has since resigned. A separate Justice Department report released at the same day found a profit-driven court system and widespread racial bias in the city police department.

Mayor James Knowles III announced Wednesday that the city had reached a mutual separation agreement with Jackson that will pay Jackson one year of his nearly USD96,000 annual salary and health coverage. Jackson’s resignation becomes effective March 19.

Jackson had previously resisted calls by protesters and some of Missouri’s top elected leaders to step down over his handling of Brown’s shooting and the weeks of protests that followed. He was widely criticized from the outset, both for an aggressive police response to protesters and for his agency’s erratic and infrequent releases of key information.

During a 12-minute news conference, Knowles said Jackson resigned after “a lot of soul-searching” about how the community could heal from the racial unrest stemming from the fatal shooting last summer. “The chief is the kind of honorable man you don’t have to go to,” Knowles said. “He comes to you when he knows that this is something we have to seriously discuss.” AP

Since the conflict began, more than 220,000 people have been killed and 1 million wounded. Nearly 4 million Syrians have fled and registered as refugees in neighboring countries, while another 7.6 million people are displaced inside Syria. All told, an estimated 12.2 million Syrians are in need of humanitarian assistance, according to the U.N.

The spiraling crisis spurred the Security Council — usually paralyzed by divisions on Syria — to pass three resolutions last year aiming to increase humanitarian aid. The latest resolution, approved unanimously in December, extended cross-border aid deliveries to Syrians in rebel-held areas without approval from Damascus.

But the aid groups say diplomacy has not translated into action on the ground. AP

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FIFA EXPELS ZIMBABWE FROM 2018 WORLD CUP QUALIFYING

Zimbabwe was thrown out of 2018 World Cup qualifying yesterday for failing to pay its national team coach.

FIFA's disciplinary committee said it took the action "as a result of the non-payment of an outstanding debt" by Zimbabwe's soccer federation, coach Jose Claudinei Georgini, and 120 days to pay the full amount.

In April 2013, ZIFA was given 60 days to pay half the amount owed Claudinei, and 120 days to pay the full amount.

He died in 1999.
Try to go slower — today is all about taking care, and making sure that everything goes right. Your people may be impatient, but you can tell them that it’s better to avoid mistakes for now.

Your leadership qualities are in focus. Someone near you needs help — step up and challenge yourself in a new way.

Today is the best day to start something new — especially if it involves signing a contract or otherwise entering into a formal arrangement. You can feel the urge to set down roots take over!

Today can be a delight if you let it! It’s the best day to start something new, especially if it involves making a real difference in the world. You may be in the spotlight, but you’ve earned your place there! Your accomplishments are legendary, and today shows how great you can be when it comes to making a real difference in the world.

Someone near you needs help — step up and challenge yourself in a new way. Your ambition isn’t getting the better of you — it’s making you just right for taking command, but that doesn’t mean you feel like it, or even that you’re the best possible candidate. Your energy is just right for leading today — could it be you? Your energy is just right for leading today — could it be you? Your energy is just right for taking command, but that doesn’t mean you feel like it, or even that you’re the best possible candidate. Your energy is just right for taking command, but that doesn’t mean you feel like it, or even that you’re the best possible candidate. Your energy is just right for taking command, but that doesn’t mean you feel like it, or even that you’re the best possible candidate.

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Mandarin Oriental, Macau welcomes Chef José Avillez back to Vida Rica Restaurant for a feast of gourmet delicacies from 17 to 19 March 2015. Having won a second Michelin star this year for his Bica restaurant in Lisbon, he will tantalise your senses with his new contemporary interpretations of traditional Portuguese cuisine. For reservations, please call +853 8805 8918 or email nomac-vidaricia@molpg.com.
FOOTBALL

After Chelsea's exit, English clubs face European humbling

Exiting the Champions League was painful for Jose Mourinho but there was no sense of injustice. The Chelsea manager was uncharacteristically restrained, with no attempt to excuse an abject performance against a Paris Saint-Germain side reduced to 10 men for most yesterday's game.

Chelsea lacked defensive organisation and attacking resolve against the French league's second-place team. And Mourinho was left questioning the mental strength of his players, who have forged a five-point lead in the Premier League but couldn't beat a team shorn of striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic after half an hour.

"When a team cannot defend two corners and concedes two goals from the corners, that pressure."

Mourinho was echoing Arsene Wenger's assessment of Arsenal after the north London club crumbled 3-1 at home to another French side, Monaco, in their round of 16 first leg.

Unlike Chelsea, Arsenal still has a chance of qualifying for the quarterfinals next week. So does Manchester City, which trails Barcelona 2-1.

But faced with those tough away assignments in Europe, City and Arsenal also find themselves playing for the reputation of the Premier League.

"The English topflight has never been stronger as a business, with its financial firepower reinforced by a new $8 billion, three-year deal for domestic television rights sealed last month.

Premier League chief executive Richard Scudamore celebrated the windfall by predicting it will "make our clubs even more competitive against our European counterparts."

It is an optimistic outlook. English clubs have been declining as a force in Europe even though their bank balances have been swelled by Premier League cash. AP

RUGBY / 6N

France coach makes 8 changes to face Italy, after loss to Wales

France coach Philippe Saint-Andre has shaken up his side by making eight changes from the team which lost 20-13 at home to Wales for Sunday's trip to play Italy — although four are injury swaps.

Saint-Andre was scathing after the Wales defeat, ripping into his players and even mocking them for their tendency to easily give away points by saying France has become the "Father Christmas" of international rugby.

Saint-Andre has handed debuts to winger Noa Nakaitaci and No. 8 Loann Goujon. Flyhalf Camille Lopez, whose erratic kicking and poor handling often put France on the back foot against Wales, keeps his place.

South-African born Scott Spedding returns at fullback in place of Maunx Mermoz coming in for Remi Lamerat and Gael Fickou in for Wesley Fofana; and scrumhalf Sebastien Tillous-Borde replaces the injured Morgan Parra.

The combative Parra, who was one of the only France players who did well against Wales, will miss the rest of the Six Nations after being ruled out for at least more two months with a knee injury.

Saint-Andre has been criticized for failing to produce a side capable of showing flair — with only two tries scored in three matches — and he snapped after the Wales defeat, turning the tables on his forwards, veteran Nicolas Mas returns at prop while Alexandre Flanquart is selected at lock.

No. 8 Damien Chouly, lock Romain Taofifenua and prop Rabah Slimani drop to the bench.

Dulin, who was disappointing against the Welsh despite scoring his side's only try, has been left out against Italy, after loss to Wales.

France concludes its Six Nations campaign away to England on March 21. AP
Boxing

Mayweather, Pacquiao begin countdown to the biggest fight ever

 Manny Pacquiao was just walking the red carpet by the time Floyd Mayweather Jr. arrived, fashionably late for their first appearance together to promote a fight that really needs no promoting.

But it didn’t take long yesterday for Mayweather to put the fight into perspective in a way that only a fighter nicknamed “Money” can.

“You get to this level where you’re making nine figures in 36 minutes,” Mayweather said, “and you have to be a winner.”

Mayweather had the math right, though he declined to say just how much he will make in the May 2 fight that has stirred excitement far beyond the boxing community. He will get 60 percent of the purse in what is expected to be boxing’s richest fight ever, a haul that could exceed USD220 million for Mayweather alone.

Pacquiao won’t do badly, either. In a fight that was five years in the making and will break records in another way — it will cost fans more than a BYO discount.

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ADVENTURE FUELED BY THE POWER WITHIN

2014 WRANGLER

A tough, authentic legend born to rule the trails and the open road, the 2014 Wrangler is made to make every day behind the wheel a thrilling adventure.
A New Chapter in China-Portugal Cultural Exchange

JOANA VASCONCELOS at MGM MACAU

Nurturing diversified artistic and cultural exchanges between Macau and Portugal, MGM MACAU invites world-renowned contemporary Portuguese artist, Joana Vasconcelos, to host her first ever exhibition in the Greater China region. Her boundless creative imagination embarks a new chapter for MGM as this visionary arts program further strengthens Macau’s historic role as an important bridge between China and Portugal for the past five hundred years.