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HONG KONG STUDENT ACTIVISTS CHARGED OVER OCCUPY
Two student leaders in pro-democracy movement have been charged a year after the protest against Chinese rule

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WORLD BRIEFS

CHINA A U.N. human rights expert has criticized China for its lack of transparency in handling a chemical blast in Tianjin. Baskut Tuncak says the disaster might have been prevented if authorities had provided more information. The U.N.'s expert on hazardous waste yesterday also criticized Chinese press restrictions in the aftermath of last week's disaster. [More on p11](#)

SRI LANKA's prime minister invites all political parties in the island nation to work together after his party won the most seats in parliamentary elections and thwarted a political comeback bid by the country's former strongman president.

INDONESIA's Search and Rescue Agency says it is still searching for one of the two "black boxes" from a passenger plane that crashed into a mountain over the weekend, killing all 54 people on board.

BANGLADESH A court in Bangladesh's capital allows police to hold three suspects, including a British citizen, for seven days for interrogation in the murders of two secular bloggers.

BANGLADESH Authorities in Bangladesh they have arrested three lawyers for funding a newly founded militant group.

INDIA Two brothers in northern India beheaded their teenage sister and carried her head through their village because they disapproved of her romantic relationship with a cousin, police say.

VIETNAM allows its currency to weaken by at least 1 percent following the devaluation of the Chinese yuan and the expectation of a possible U.S interest rate hike.

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CASINOS PROFIT FALL 40 PCT IN FIRST HALF

Not the bottom yet – analysts say

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Over 40 kids complete MGM's first lion dancing training program

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DSEJ grants scholarships to encourage students majoring in Education

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An artist's rendition of the Parisian

SANDS CHINA APPLIES FOR DEADLINE EXTENSION

Company still committed to open Parisian in 2016

SANDS China Ltd has applied for a deadline extension to complete The Parisian Macao, according to an interim report filed with the Hong Kong Stock Exchange last week. "We have applied for an ex-

ension from the Macau government to complete the Parisian Macao, as we believe we will be unable to meet the April 2016 deadline," Sands China said in the report.

In a written reply to The Ti-

mes yesterday, the company reiterated its intent to open The Parisian Macao in the second half of 2016.

The casino operator last week issued its interim results for the six months ending June 30.

In the report, Sands indicated that it would also consider applying for a deadline extension for the Sands Cotai Central development, in case they determine that they are unable to meet the December 2016

deadline.

Sands China pointed out that if deadline extensions are not granted, the company could risk losing its land concessions for The Parisian Macao and Sands Cotai Central.

"If we are unable to meet the Sands Cotai Central deadline and the deadlines for either development are not extended, we could lose our land concessions for The Parisian Macao or Sands Cotai Central, which would prohibit us from operating any facilities developed under the respective land concessions," it reads.

Sands China concluded: "As a result, the Group could record a charge for all, or some portion of, the USD1.18 billion or USD4.78 billion in capitalized construction costs, including land, as at June 30, 2015, related to The Parisian Macao and Sands Cotai Central, respectively."

"As a listed company in Hong Kong, Sands China Ltd has disclosed related information about the progress of The Parisian Macao project, and the company has no further information to supplement at this time," the operator said yesterday, stressing that, "It aims to open The Parisian Macao in the second half of 2016."

The Parisian Macao, the operator's USD2.7 billion Paris-themed resort, includes a gaming area and a hotel with over 3,000 rooms, as well as retail, entertainment, dining and conference facilities. **CP**

Grant Bowie says MGM Cotai opening on schedule

MGM China's resorts in the Cotai Strip will be opening in the fourth quarter of next year as scheduled, according to Grant Bowie, the group's CEO and executive director, who confirmed the site's progress on the sidelines of an event.

"At the moment, it's just to get our buildings finished and make sure it gets to the standard we're looking for," said Bowie. "At the same time, we obviously understand that we've got to respond to the

challenges imposed by the economy and the expectations of the government."

He stressed that the gaming company has remained "positive" all along, despite the discouraging gaming revenue. Bowie further promised that he would always "make sure to continue to improve the group's performance and efficiency."

According to MGM China's CEO, the group's hotel on the Macau peninsula saw a drop in occupancy and in food and

beverage sales. However, the gaming operator has always strived to seek better performance by offering training to its staff.

Stressing the importance of investment for the future, Bowie urged the region as a whole to maintain an optimistic attitude towards this challenging time.

"There is no point in not being positive and looking to the future," he said, adding that the group's initial target of 500 gaming tables might come true. **Staff reporter**



An artist's rendition of MGM Cotai

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FT REPORT

V-shaped gaming recovery unlikely, Daiwa says

ONE of the most bearish analysts on Macau just got even more pessimistic.

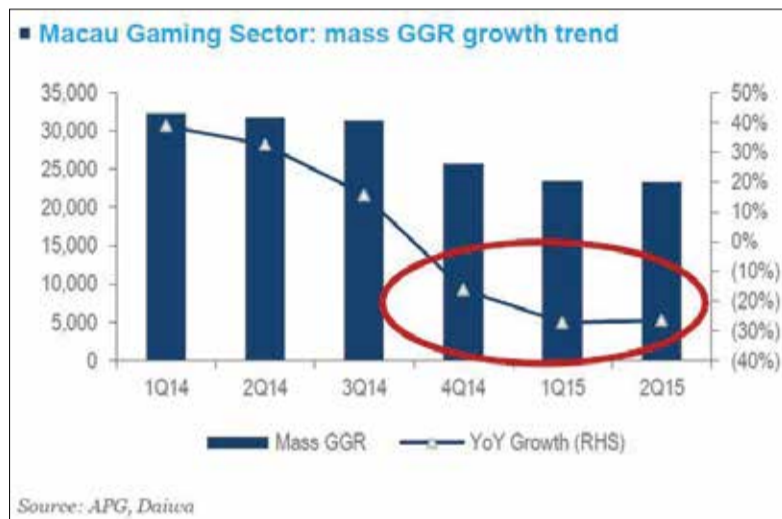
Daiwa said it now predicts gross gaming revenue (GGR) in Macau to fall by 34 per cent this year, versus a January forecast for a 21 per cent decline. A new report says:

“From what we have seen on the ground in Macau, the market continues to underestimate the impact of liquidity constraints, CNY depreciation, cost inflation and negative operating leverage.”

In 2014, gaming in Macau declined 2.6 per cent, marking the first annual decline since records began in 2002 amid a corruption crackdown engineered by Chinese president Xi Jinping.

Macau gaming revenue is driven by VIP rooms, where gamblers can take big bets fuelled by grey market lending. In the past the VIP accounted for about 70 per cent of all reported gaming revenue.

According to research from the Polytechnic Institute of Macau, around half the VIP gamblers in 2010 were either government officials or executives at state-owned enterprises. Many are now avoiding Macau,



causing the monthly gaming figures to see huge declines.

In January, when the Daiwa team led by Jamie Soo forecast a 21 per cent decline in gaming revenues this year, it was the most bearish bet

on the street. But reality has been even worse: in February during the important Chinese New Year period, gaming revenues fell by nearly half. Since then every month has seen a year-on-year decline in ex-

cess of 34 per cent (see chart).

Casinos have responded by lowering minimum bets and with attempts to reshape the business model towards the masses. Macau itself is undergoing a big transition from being a gambling haven to more of a family-friendly entertainment zone.

Mr Soo notes the consensus remains optimistic of a V-shaped recovery in revenue, in part based on the "build it and they will come" model from the six major casino operators. "We foresee continued weakness and do not subscribe to the supply-side-driven growth mantra," he writes.

He said there is "no recovery in sight" for mass revenue trends, as gamblers struggle to get liquidity. In April 2014 Beijing cracked down

on UnionPay credit cards that allowed mainland Chinese to circumvent capital controls and make bigger bets.

“Five straight quarters of tables and resources being reallocated to the mass segment has not stopped the GGR haemorrhage. We see no fundamental basis to support a turnaround at this point.”

The newest headache is last week's devaluation of the renminbi, which has made Macau more expensive and could inflate the cost of outstanding debts. Daiwa expects the renminbi to decline 7.3 per cent against the US dollar in 2015 and another 4 per cent in 2016. Mr Soo writes:

“Over the past few years, we believe Macau's GGR benefited from the strength in the CNY, which has appreciated by ~10% against the HKD since the end of 2008. The revenue for the Macau Gaming Sector as a whole grew by over 90% over the same period.”

As such, it is only logical that a depreciating CNY will have a negative impact on the sector GGR. In a scenario of sustained CNY weakness, we believe that the mass market to be impacted by a direct reduction in the size of customers' gaming wallets and impaired liquidity channels. **MDT/FT Exclusive**

GALAXY Entertainment Group Ltd. reported second-quarter earnings plunged 46 percent on higher operation cost from its new casino resorts and amid a declining market in the city's gambling industry.

Adjusted earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization at Galaxy dropped to HKD1.9 billion (USD245 million) from a year earlier, the casino operator controlled by billionaire Lui Che Woo said yesterday. That compares with the HKD1.8 billion median estimate of five analysts compiled by Bloomberg.

While Galaxy posted "solid" results, "the major concern is demand for the gaming sector in Macau is quite limited now," said Chris Kwai, analyst at China International Capital Corp. He doesn't expect its new properties to improve general demand in the city.

Galaxy in May opened its \$3.1 billion second-phase expansion of a resort and an adjacent revamped property in the Cotai area, marking Macau's first casino projects in three years. A wave of casinos featur-

Galaxy earnings plunge 46 pct on downturn, costs of new casinos



Lui Che-woo



AP PHOTO

ring more non-gaming amenities will open in the next few years which operators hope will draw more visitors back amid the city's worst downturn on record.

The results include 35 days of operation for the new properties and reflect Macau's continued challenging market conditions as macro factors hit customer spending behavior, Galaxy said in a statement. The casino operator implemented a salary freeze for all senior executives while decla-

ring a HK\$0.14 per share special dividend, it said.

High-end gamblers have been staying away from Macau's tables because of the slowing Chinese economy and widening of the country's anti-graft campaign, leading Macau's casino revenue to fall for a 14th month in July.

Still, the slump in the world's largest gambling market has been easing for five straight months, raising hopes a recovery is on its way. While the industry may see a 30

percent drop in gambling takings this year, it could rebound with a 4.5 percent gain in 2016, according to the median estimate of 10 analysts surveyed by Bloomberg.

The government loosened transit visa restrictions in July to allow mainland visitors to stay longer and travel more frequently to the city. Macau lawmakers are also reviewing a bill to ban smoking on all the gambling floors, a discussion that could take a year to complete.

Galaxy is "pleased" the Macau government has "indicated some flexibility and are open-minded to consider the retention of smoking lounges", which would be positive for the casino industry, the company said. The casino smoking ban is in the committee stage and could be held up for another year, it added.

The company is "optimistic" about the medium to long term prospects for Macau and itself, as major infrastructure works will signifi-

cantly enhance access to the city and boost future visits, Galaxy said.

Galaxy's market share rose to 22.6 percent in June from 18.7 percent in May, while Sands China Ltd.'s slipped to 22.4 percent from 26.2 percent, according to data from Barclays Plc.

The Hong Kong-based company plans to spend as much as HKD60 billion for the third and fourth phases.

Melco Crown Entertainment Ltd.'s \$3.2 billion Studio City resort is scheduled to open in October, featuring the tallest Ferris Wheel in Asia. Wynn Macau Ltd. will open its Wynn Palace next March and Sands China will follow with its \$2.7 billion Parisian Macao opening in about a year.

“Individual new opening will not bring too much of an upside in the entire market,” Kwai of CICC said. “But once it added up all the casinos next year, people will be more fond of going to Macau.” **Bloomberg**

Junior training program nurtures future lion dancers



OVER 40 minors have completed MGM Macau's first lion dancing training program. They received their certificates yesterday afternoon at the casino after almost two months of training.

The first-ever "Junior Lion Dance Training Program" aimed to strengthen the future of the Chinese traditional sport within Macau by equipping local children with fundamental techniques and skills needed

for the highly athletic activity.

Every year since 2010, MGM Macau has hosted an annual lion dance championship, and this new youth training program was unveiled in June in tandem with this year's tour-

namment announcement.

"This is just a logical extension to build the capabilities of lion dance participants into the future, because we wish to participate and create a lion dance competition of Greater

China. That means we're going to have more talent and [we'll need to] execute on that cultural and athletic activity," said Mr Grant Bowie, head of MGM China Holdings Limited.

Mak Chi Leong, chairman at the Macau Hong Wai Sports and Recreations Association, and also one of the program instructors, said that the participants, aged between four and ten, learned how to communicate and cooperate with each other over the course of the curriculum.

However, as Leong revealed, the little trainees were occasionally uncooperative during the program, causing the instructors some headaches.

Parents of the graduates were also present at the graduation ceremony yesterday, which concluded with a collective performance by the kids.

Kit Mak, a six-and-half-year-old trainee, thought it was fun all throughout the training. Her mother, who eagerly supported the program, hoped the cultural activity could be passed from generation to generation.

Another parent praised the instructors' patience towards the minors, and believed that such a program could help to instill discipline in the kids. **Staff reporter**

AD

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DSEJ grants scholarships to encourage students majoring in Education

Brook Yang

AIMING to cultivate more outstanding local teachers and to build a stronger teaching staff for Macau, the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEJ) has decided to continue its funding schemes for the upcoming academic year in order to support students pursuing tertiary studies in Education and Portuguese language.

The bureau has issued scholarships of between MOP60,000 and MOP212,000 to a total of 115 students who have been admitted into Education degree programs, depending on the region in which the students' universities are located. In addition, 18 students were granted subsidies of between MOP105,000 and MOP200,000 to partake in Portuguese language and education programs in Portugal.



DSEJ director, Leong Lai (center left) reminded that Macau's teaching staff needs further improvement

Budgets of MOP40 million and MOP21 million have, to date, been allocated to the funding schemes, which were respectively launched in 2012 and 2013. They are expected to help cultivate general teachers, Portuguese language teachers, and multi-lingual

speakers for Macau. The schemes request that all beneficiaries return to Macau to engage in educational work after graduation.

According to the DESJ, the funding scheme for Education degrees has expanded in scale since its launch in 2012

from 40 beneficiaries to 120. The quotas for these two schemes are adjusted each year in accordance with the market conditions and demand for teachers.

During the grant ceremony held yesterday, the DSEJ director, Leong Lai, said that she is pleased to see more and more outstanding local students committed to educational undertakings. She encouraged the scholarship recipients to continue studying hard, to realize their ideals and aspirations for education, and to cultivate more pillars of society in the future.

In addition, the official reminded the students to pay attention to Macau's new educational policies – such as the general framework for private-school teachers – amid the city's educational reform, in order to be fully prepared for their future teaching jobs.

"The recently released Population Policy Research Report

has suggested attaching importance to talent cultivation in some key areas. I think the talent cultivation for the education sector itself is essential," she stressed. "At the moment, the number of students in non-tertiary education level is growing significantly; meanwhile, the ultimate direction for developing education is towards better-quality education. Thereby, Macau's teaching staff needs further improvement, whether in quantity or in quality."

The director further pledged that the DSEJ would "continue to implement the administrative principles of 'rejuvenating Macau with education' and 'building Macau with talent'; proactively cultivating talents for Macau's future development; continuing to promote the long-term development of Macau's education sector; enhancing teaching quality; and building an excellent teaching staff."

AD

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Rosário says authorities too optimistic when estimating public works completion

THE Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo Rosário, apologized on air during yesterday's TDM talk show to residents who had purchased pre-sale flats for the uncompleted Ilha Verde public housing complex.

Since it was revealed that the housing project would fail to be completed by 2016 as scheduled, Rosário acknowledged that the actual completion date is still uncertain. Moreover, he said that the construction of two other public housing projects is currently at a standstill, namely the Toi San and Mong-Há public housing complexes.

The Secretary explained that during the construction of Toi San housing's three basemen-



Raimundo Rosário

ts, cracks emerged in the adjacent old building. The authorities therefore suspended the construction and are now studying a new design, which will be without, or have fewer, basements. As for the Mong-Há project, he said that construction will be resumed after negotiation with the contractor.

The official further stressed that the biggest issue in Macau's public works is schedule overruns. While most of the developments have gone over budget by up to 10 percent – which he believes is normal – time overruns have caused most projects to exceed planned timeframes.

He highlighted some reasons for the overruns, such as authorities being too optimistic when estimating how much time a project needs for completion. He said that, for public housing projects, the authorities tend to add as many social facilities and parking lots into the space as possible, and this has resulted in a need to build basements. Most of the time overruns are caused by the construction of basements due to problems such as inaccurate pre-exploration of soil.

In addition, Rosário acknowledged that contractors in Macau tend to pay little attention to public workers, another factor contributing to the slow progress. **BY**

GOV'T TO REVIEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING LAW TO AVOID VACANT UNITS

THE GOVERNMENT will review the city's affordable housing law in order to introduce penalties for owners who leave housing units vacant, Secretary Raimundo do Rosário revealed yesterday on the sidelines of the Radio Macau talk show.

A total of 2,500 public housing units are currently vacant, despite having been granted to residents; of these, 1,400 are located in Seac Pai Van.

The Secretary acknowledged that there are loopholes in Macau's affordable housing regulations, since units are granted on a permanent and effective basis. However, there are currently no sanctions that can be applied to owners who fail to occupy their flats.

"The law stipulates penalties when apartments are used for other purposes, such as subletting, but there are no penalties for when a housing unit is left vacant," he stated, according to Radio Macau.

The Secretary added that the government is considering reviewing the law to ensure that housing units are not left vacant after being granted to applicants. Meanwhile, the Housing Bureau has set up a special program to investigate reasons behind the issue.

Casino buses stir debate

IN response to requests from residents for the government to regulate casinos' shuttle buses, the Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo Rosário, acknowledged on yesterday's TDM talk show that it is an issue. However, he indicated that it would cause further problems if Macau were to abolish them.

Rosário noted, "Currently, the three public bus service operators carry a total of 530,000 passengers each day, while the casino shuttle buses carry more than 100,000 passengers. Once the casino buses stop operating, there

will be a problem."

Meanwhile, the Secretary suggested that the government's subsidies for public bus passengers are too high, as over half of the tariff is covered by the government. He explained that currently both local residents and visitors benefit from the bus service subsidies, as the subsidies are granted via bus service operators. This makes it difficult to dedicate the subsidies to local residents only. Rosário said that resolving this matter is not an easy task, but he would discuss measures for addressing it with the Transport Bureau.

Foreign labor falls in June

MACAU received fewer migrant workers in June than in May, the Labour Affairs Bureau revealed yesterday in its reply to lawmaker Lei Cheng I's written enquiry. Earlier, Lei had stated in her interpellation that the region's numbers of imported labor still rose against a background of higher unemployment.

Authorities said that up to 212,381 imported workers were allowed into the region in June, which is 1,591 less than the number in May. Wong Chi Hong, director of the bureau, said that the 1.8-percent unemployment rate, which he described as "extremely low," reflected the "still healthy environment" in general.

He added that the administration was always ready to scrap the permits allowing specific industries to hire foreign workers, which were subject to the economic landscape and "actual circumstances." According to the latest survey by the Statistics and Census Service, the historic low unemployment rate of 1.7 percent no longer applies.

The policymaker urged the government to tighten its grip on foreign labor imports to ensure that there are job opportunities for locals, and to activate a scheme to reduce the number of migrant workers amid the growing trend of unemployment. **Staff reporter**

Prof. Rui Martins to head Architecture and Engineering Committee



Professor Rui Martins

THE University of Macau's vice-rector for research, Professor Rui Martins, has been appointed president of the Architecture, Engineering and Urban Planning Committee, according to a notice published yesterday in the government's Official Gazette (BO).

Mr Martins holds a degree in Engineering, as well as master's and PhD in the same field.

Local architect Eddie Wong, who was awarded the design project for Macau's second public hospital, has been appointed vice-president. Other members of the committee include Li Canfeng, who is director of the Land, Public Works and

Transport Bureau (DS-SOPT), engineer João Manuel Costa Antunes, lawmaker and engineer José Chui Sai Peng, and architect Carlos Marreiros.

The members of the committee have been appointed for a two-year term.

The committee will be in charge of certifying and registering architecture, engineering and urban planning professionals. It consists of 13 members, including a president, a vice-president, and seven administrative representatives chosen from the public. The remaining six members were chosen from among private-sector professionals.

MARKETS

Asian stocks fall as oil's decline signals slowing China economy

Jonathan Burgos

ASIAN stocks fell a fourth day as a deepening commodities selloff raised concern growth may be slowing in China, and as investors await clues from the Federal Reserve on the timing of a U.S. interest-rate increase.

Galaxy Entertainment Group Ltd. sank 4.4 percent as the Macau casino operator said quarterly earnings plunged 46 percent. Seek Ltd. tumbled 11 percent in Sydney after the Australian website operator said revenue growth will slow. Daiichi Sankyo Co. slumped 5.4 percent in Tokyo after Morgan Stanley cut its rating on the drugmaker.

The MSCI Asia-Pacific Index dropped 0.6 percent to 136.16 as of 4:01 p.m. in Tokyo, extending a seven-month low. Crude oil resumed losses and copper dropped to the lowest since 2009 as concern mounted that slower growth in China will erode demand for raw materials. Minutes of the Federal Reserve's last meeting will come under scrutiny Wednesday, with traders seeing a 48 percent chance of a September rate increase.

"There's a flow-on effect of the issues given concerns over the Chinese economic slowdown," James Lindsay, who helps manage the equivalent of about \$3 billion in assets at Nikko Asset Management NZ Ltd. in Auckland, said by phone. "The consensus is the Fed will raise rates in September, but there's a potential for that to be pushed



A currency trader gestures at the foreign exchange dealing room of the Korea Exchange Bank headquarters in Seoul, South Korea

out amid increased market volatility."

Japan's Topix index fell 1.4 percent. South Korea's KOSPI index declined 0.9 percent. Taiwan's Taix index slipped 1.9 percent. Hong Kong's Hang

Seng Index dropped 1.3 percent. Singapore's Straits Times Index fell 0.1 percent. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 Index jumped 1.5 percent, the most in a month. New Zealand's NZX 50 Index climbed 0.7 percent.

The Bloomberg Commodity Index fell on Tuesday to the lowest level since February 2002. The gauge of 22 raw materials declined for a sixth day in the longest run of losses in more than a year. With China

the world's biggest consumer of industrial metals, Tuesday's 6.2 percent slump in the Shanghai Composite Index rattled raw-material investors.

The Shanghai benchmark rose 1.2 percent, erasing earlier losses of as much as 5.1 percent, as investors weighed the level of government support for the equity market.

"The market expects the government will step in if the Shanghai Composite falls towards 3,500, but more and more people in the mainland sees that the bull market is over," said Mari Oshidari, a Hong Kong-based strategist at Okasan Securities Group Inc. "With weak sentiment, we will continue to see unstable moves in the market."

Chinese stocks fell this week after the securities regulator said late Friday that China Securities Finance Corp., the state agency tasked with supporting share prices, will reduce buying as volatility falls. China's richest traders are cashing out of stocks, while a record drop in yuan positions at the central bank and financial institutions last month signaled investors are moving money out of the country.

Futures on the Standard & Poor's 500 Index slid 0.3 percent. The underlying measure fell 0.3 percent on Tuesday. **Bloomberg**

Oil lease sale yesterday for tracts off of Texas

THE federal government yesterday was to offer 21.9 million acres off the Texas coast to oil and gas developers, though low oil prices are likely to limit interest.

The last two comparable lease sales in the western Gulf of Mexico brought USD109.1 million last year and \$100.1 million in 2012.

A March 18 sale in the far more popular central Gulf of Mexico brought the lowest number of bids since 1986. Officials said low oil prices were the reason. Since then, the price of U.S. crude has dropped



A small boat crosses in front of the Transocean Polar Pioneer, a semi-submersible drilling unit that Royal Dutch Shell leases from Transocean Ltd., as it arrives in Port Angeles, Wash.

\$1.44 a barrel.

The National Ocean Industries Association, an offshore trade group, said in a news release earlier this week that members looked forward to the lease sale "but do not anticipate jaw-dropping results under current conditions."

The group cited low prices, uncertainty over new regulations — including stronger rules proposed for equipment designed to prevent oil well blowouts — and an upward trend in lawsuits over permits and leases.

corporate bits

ANTHONY CABOT CALLS FOR FRANK TALK AT MACAO TOURISM AND CULTURE SUMMIT 2015



Legal luminary Anthony Cabot, a member of the Advisory Board for The Macao Tourism and Culture Summit 2015 at the Macao Gaming Show, has called for frank talk about Macau and neighboring markets at the autumn gathering of the Asian industry's gaming event.

Talking ahead of his body's announcement on the theme and speaker line-up at this year's conference at MGS

(Venetian Macao, 17-19 November), Cabot has advised the industry that it should expect "valuable discussions" on the developing markets both in Macau and beyond into the Asian Pacific region as the Chinese government's major investment program - One Belt One Road (OBOR) - kicks in.

Speaking to media in Las Vegas, Anthony Cabot, a partner at the legal firm Lewis Roca

Rothgerber (LRR), discussed the direction of The Macao Tourism and Culture Summit 2015 at the Macao Gaming Show: "Macau is significant. It's such a huge market," declared Cabot. "Other markets may impact Macau, but when you look at the sheer size of it, Macau is the sun and everyone else are the planets."

So much so, Cabot and his Advisory Board members at the summit have been assessing this development as the organizers have been quick to confirm: "Macau is at the heart of this wave of development and The Macao Tourism and Culture Summit 2015 at the Macao Gaming Show will be a significant platform in exploring the ideas and concepts that will deliver increasing revenues and growth."

CYRIL BRINGS MAGIC TO BROADWAY THEATRE AT GALAXY MACAU

Broadway Macau is presenting the first stop of the "Cyril: Magic Up Close & Personal" world tour. Cyril, an award winning magician and early pioneer of street magic will be performing on 5th and 6th December.

An internationally acclaimed illusionist, Cyril proves that camera tricks and video special effects are completely unnecessary when it comes to performing illusions.

Cyril first showed his skills at Galaxy Macau during a private performance for VIP guests at last December. Due to the overwhelming audience response, Galaxy Macau is bringing Cyril back with his full touring show to give the public the opportunity to witness the magic live at the Broadway



Theatre.

"Cyril's show last year was simply amazing," said Kevin Clayton, Chief Marketing Officer at Galaxy Entertainment Group. "Broadway Theatre at Broadway Macau features the latest and the very best entertainment with performances

from around the world. Cyril's skills and charisma captivate audiences, and we're so pleased to welcome him back to Macau to perform his world renowned magic as a world class attraction for guests at the Galaxy Macau integrated resort and visitors to Macau."

Chinese group Anbang Insurance offers 3.5b euros to buy Novo Banco

CHINESE group Anbang Insurance has offered 3.5 billion euros to buy Portuguese bank Novo Banco, which represents a loss of 1.4 billion euros to the bank's Resolution Fund, Portuguese daily financial newspaper Diário Económico reported Tuesday.

The group was selected by the Bank of Portugal for final negotiations in the process of selling Novo Banco, the bank that inherited the healthy business activity of Banco Espírito Santo (BES) after the collapse of the Espírito Santo Group (GES).

The revised proposal from the Chinese group also includes the possibility of carrying out a capital increase in Novo Banco to improve the Portuguese bank's financial ratios.

Completion of the sale of Novo Banco for 3.5 billion euros will



result in a loss of 1.4 billion euros for the resolution fund, which spent 4.9 billion euros on bailing out Banco Espírito Santos (BES), transforming it into Novo Banco and maintaining on-going operations.

The Resolution Fund was financed not only with Portuguese state capital but also with

contributions from 80 banks and private Portuguese financial companies.

As well as the Anbang Insurance Group, Chinese group Fosun International and US fund Apollo Global Management were involved in the process to acquire Novo Banco. **MDT/Macauhub**

Ship loading times in Maputo, Mozambique, reduced to two and a half days

THE Maputo Port Development Corporation (MPDC) plans to reduce the time it takes to load a 40,000 ton ship at the port to two and half days, said operations manager Alexandre Houane, cited by Mozambican news agency AIM.

Houane also said that reducing the time required to load a ship – until now taking three and a half days – was a result of the MPDC recently buying two mobile cranes to improve efficiency and productivity of the cargo loading process.

The cranes, of the LHM550 series of German company Liebherr, whose production and adaptation to the port of Maputo's operational requirements took eight months have a lifting capacity of 144 tons.

"A ferro-chrome operation, for example, which under optimum conditions, can load a Handymax vessel (40,000

tons) in three and a half days will now be concluded in two and a half days," Houane said.

The MPDC also invested in increasing ferro-chrome storage capacity by 1 million tons per year as well as in a diverse range of forklifts, tractors and trailers to ensure smooth and efficient cargo handling.

The MPDC is a private, national company, resulting from a partnership between Mozambican state port and railway company CFM, South Africa's Grindrod group, DP World of the United Arab Emirates and Mozambique Gestores.

The Port of Maputo was granted under concession by the government to the MPDC in 2003 but gained new momentum in 2008 when Grindrod and DP World acquired a majority stake in Portus Indico, the largest shareholder (51 percent) and sponsor of the project. **MDT/Macauhub**

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Chinese investors monitor displays of stock information at a brokerage house in Beijing

Stock volatility rattles investors

CHINA'S volatile stock market is taking shareholders on a white-knuckle ride, threatening to drive out the small investors Beijing hopes will help pay for reforms of state industry.

After falling 6.1 percent on Tuesday, the market benchmark declined another 5 percent yesterday

before rebounding in the final minutes of trading to close up 1.2 percent.

China's main Shanghai stock index was the main focus following a big slide during the previous session when investors sold Chinese stocks on fears that the country's currency, the yuan, would fall further. The yuan has been

stable for a few days after a series of surprise devaluations by Beijing last week. Though a cheaper yuan is expected to boost exports, it has underscored concerns over the state of the Chinese economy.

Beijing's multibillion-dollar intervention over the past month helped to mitigate the situation. But

authorities say they will avoid taking action every day, which could allow wide daily swings in a market filled with rumors and anxiety.

Zhang Yang, a market strategist for Sinolink Securities, said, "Maybe sharp volatility is becoming the new normal."

"The Chinese equity market may have ended on a positive note, but the erratic swings should be viewed with caution, and such a wide trading range tells us that China will not be stable for some time," said David Madden, market analyst at IG. **AP**

HONG KONG

Pro-democracy students charged a year after Occupy protests

THE Reuters news agency has reported that two key figures in Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement have been charged with illegal assembly almost a year after students staged huge democracy protests against Chinese rule, one of the activists said yesterday.

Alex Chow, 25, the former leader of the Hong Kong Federation of Students, one of the main groups leading protests that became known as the Occupy movement, told Reuters he and teenager Joshua Wong had been formally charged. Wong, 18, is leader of the student group Scholarism.

Students forced their way through a gate and scaled high fences surrounding government headquarters in central Hong Kong on Sept. 26 last year in protest against Beijing's decision to rule out free elec-



Student Protest Leaders Alex Chow & Joshua Wong

tions for the former British colony's next leader in 2017.

That triggered Occupy protests that lasted for more than two months. More than 100,000 people took to the streets at the height of the demonstrations, blocking major arteries and bringing large parts of the financial hub to a halt.

According to Reuters, Wong was

also charged with inciting others to gather for an illegal assembly, Chow said. The thin teenager with dark-rimmed glasses and a bowl-cut hairstyle became one of the most-recognized faces of the protest movement.

Wong wrote on his Facebook page on Tuesday he had no regrets about taking part in the protests and called the charges a "joke" because the area was considered a public space, the news agency stated.

Reuters tried to contact Wong but he could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Chow said he and Wong had been told to report to police headquarters on Aug. 27.

Police declined to confirm the charges but said investigations were ongoing and there could be further arrests.

Gov't to give tax breaks to more small companies as growth slows

CHINA will provide tax breaks to more small companies as policy makers seek ways to spur domestic consumption and boost an economy growing at the slowest pace in more than two decades.

The companies will benefit from a preferential policy on corporate income taxes following an expansion of the program, the State Council, or cabinet, said in a statement yesterday. The preferential policy, under which corporate income taxes will be cut by half, will be extended to small companies with annual taxable income of no more than 300,000 yuan (USD46,907), compared with 200,000 yuan previously, the cabinet said.

Pressure is growing on the government to bolster growth after data showed exports falling in July, while industrial production, investment and retail sales all missed analysts' estimates. The central bank devalued the yuan by the most in two decades this month.

Small businesses "are a main source of employment and a key driver of development," the cabinet said. The tax breaks will "provide further tax support to small and micro businesses and allow the government's proactive fiscal policy to have a greater impact."

The tax breaks will take effect from Oct. 1 and continue through 2017, it said. **Bloomberg**

Cathay misses estimates on USD482m fuel hedging loss

CATHAY Pacific Airways Ltd., Asia's largest international airline by passengers, reported net income that lagged behind analyst estimates after it had losses from fuel hedging and passenger yields dropped. Shares plunged.

Profit jumped almost sixfold to HKD1.97 billion (USD254 million) in the six months ended in June, Hong Kong-based Cathay said in a statement yesterday. Sales in the first six months declined 0.9 percent to HK\$50.4 billion.

Cathay shares fell the most in more than six years after the results, which included a HK\$3.74 billion loss from fuel hedges. Last year's slump in the crude oil market had left several Asian carriers holding hedges placed when oil prices were higher, adding to the challenges for Chief Executive Officer Ivan Chu.

"It's a mixed set of earnings," said Mohshin Aziz, a Malayan Banking Bhd. analyst in Kuala Lumpur. "On the revenue side things were very weak, much weaker than expected. Fortunately on the cost side, they seem to be making a lot of improvements."

The airline had an unrealized fuel hedging loss of HK\$7.42 billion at the end of June, Cathay said in the statement.

Cathay's shares fell 7.7 percent, the biggest decline since April 27, 2009, to close at HK\$15.38 in Hong Kong. The stock dropped for an eighth consecutive day, the longest losing streak in more than two years. **Bloomberg**

Paul Traynor, Tianjin

State media: Tianjin firm used connections for hazmat permit

THE son of a former police chief is one of two silent owners of the warehouse for hazardous materials in Tianjin where explosions killed at least 114 people, and used his connections to help obtain licenses despite safety violations, Chinese state media reported yesterday.

The other owner is a former executive at a state-owned chemical company who also used his connections to smooth the way for approval for the facility, the official Xinhua News Agency said in a lengthy report on the warehouse company Ruihai International Logistics.

The report supports the common perception that well-connected private Chinese companies use personal relationships with people in the government to override rules, a practice that can lead to disastrous consequences.

It also shed light on the murky ownership structure at Ruihai, which had been the focus of rampant rumors of potential high-level connections and cover-up since the Aug. 12 blasts, which also left 65 people missing and 674 hospitalized.

The report follows an announcement that the head of the government body in charge of industrial safety, Yang Dongliang, was under investigation for corruption. Yang had previously worked for 18 years in Tianjin in state industry and local government, rising to executive vice mayor. His son has also reportedly been taken in for questioning.

State media reports had featured the senior Yang accompanying Premier Li Keqiang on an inspection of the damage on Sunday, suggesting that his fall from grace was sudden and possibly precipitated or hastened by the explosions.

Owners of damaged residences continued their daily protests yesterday demanding the government buy back apartments.



Residents demand compensation for damages to their homes after the explosion at the Tianjin port

“There’s no way we can go back to live there. Apart from all the chemical pollution, they have been incredibly badly damaged,” said Ma Tao, a resident of Vanke Harbor City who was injured in the blast.

While the blast zone remains contaminated, no unsafe chemical levels have been found in the surrounding area, Bao Jingling, chief engineer of the Tianjin Environmental Bureau, told reporters yesterday.

He said technicians also tested water samples from city streets taken after rainstorms Tuesday and found no dangerous contamination. Some residents had reported an unusual foamy substance after the rain.

Officials have said there have been no substantial leaks of sodium cyanide. They say they

have sealed all waterways leading into the sea from the blast site and built retaining walls to prevent any runoff.

Nationwide safety inspections and a high-level investigation for the blast have been launched. Media reports say at least 10 people have been taken into custody, including top officials of the warehouse’s management company.

The two men named in the Xinhua report, identified as former SinoChem executive Yu Xuewei and the late Tianjin port police chief’s son, Dong Shexuan, are among those detained, authorities said.

It was not immediately clear why Yu wanted to camouflage his involvement, but Dong told Xinhua he wanted to avoid any appearance of conflicts of inter-

■ The son of a former police chief, Dong Shexuan used his connections to help obtain licenses despite safety violations

est, especially because his father was then under investigation for possible corruption.

“The public perception may not be good, given my father’s position with the police,” Dong told Xinhua.

The state news agency interviewed both men in detention.

Yu said he enlisted Dong into the company in late 2012, because of his family background, and that Dong was easily able to obtain a fire certificate for the hazmat business. “I brought all the materials for the renovation plans, and the fire certificate was soon issued,” Dong was quoted as saying.

The fire certificate apparently nudged local planning officials to issue Ruihai the building permit for hazmat storage, even though its location would be less than the required 1,000 meters from homes and public roads — a clear violation of state safety rules.

Dong said Ruihai also had to clear another seemingly impossible obstacle. A safety evaluation firm had told Ruihai that a satisfactory report was out of question because of the non-compliance with safety distance.

“Yu Xuewei asked me not to worry but leave the matter to him. So he changed the safety evaluation firm and got the report,” Dong told Xinhua.

The evaluating company that endorsed Ruihai is approved by the State Administration of Work Safety, Tianjin officials said.

Another report on the project’s environmental impact has not been made public, although it should have been, local authorities said.

Yesterday, Tianjin Mayor Huang Xingguo said the disaster affected more than 170 companies and 30,000 people.

“As the chief of Tianjin’s party commission and municipal government, I cannot shirk responsibility,” Huang said. **AP**

Hyung-jin Kim, Seoul

Shanghai-led group starts work to lift sunken S. Korea ferry

A Chinese-led consortium began preliminary work yesterday to salvage a South Korean ferry that sank last year, killing more than 300 people, officials said.

South Korea awarded a USD73 million contract earlier this month to the consortium led by China’s state-owned Shanghai Salvage Co. to raise the ferry Sewol. The company was involved in raising a cruise ship that sank in China’s Yangtze River in June, killing more than 400 people.

The consortium has sent a barge and a tug to the area to be used as a base where about 150 di-



vers, engineers and other workers will stay for the salvage project.

A diver worked underwater yesterday to examine conditions at the site, South Korea’s Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries said. Divers plan to do more underwater work such as photographing the ship in the next 10 days or so to help develop a salvage plan, ministry officials said.

Most of the victims were high school students who

were on a field trip to a southern resort island. The bodies of 295 people have been recovered but nine others are still missing.

Raising the ship is a key demand by bereaved families, who hope it will help locate the missing bodies and reveal more details about the sinking.

South Korean officials said they want the ship to be raised by next July.

The sinking was South Korea’s deadliest maritime disaster in decades and caused a rare bout of national soul-searching on public safety. The disaster was blamed on overloaded cargo, improper storage, botched rescue efforts and other negligence. **AP**

CONGESTION

Asia's 'infrastructure gap' threatens to hamper growth



Filipino workers arrange metal rods at a government road project in suburban Quezon City, north of Manila, Philippines

Teresa Cerojano and
Joe McDonald, Manila

LOOKING out at bumper-to-bumper Monday morning traffic crawling along the Philippine capital's main avenue, taxi driver Ranilo Banez shook his head in frustration.

Congestion has gotten so bad as the economy grew, he said, that a 10-kilometer trip that once took 30 minutes can stretch to two hours.

"We lose so much," said Banez, 64. "We waste a lot of gasoline and time."

The Philippines is far from alone. The outpouring of support for a Chinese-led bank to finance infrastructure highlights a gap in Asia's success story: From power-starved India to Thailand's overburdened railways, developing economies face a shortage of basic facilities so severe that it threatens to hold back growth and living standards.

Manila and other cities are choked with construction sites for office and apartment towers. But spending on roads, railways and other unglamorous but essential infrastructure collapsed after the 1997 financial crisis and has yet to recover.

"The catch-up they need to do is still considerable," said Ramesh Subramaniam, deputy

director general of the ADB's Southeast Asia department.

If spending fails to pick up, "then this could possibly have an impact on future growth," he said. "Certainly it is going to reduce the competitiveness of the countries in the region."

From power-starved India to Thailand's overburdened railways, developing economies face a shortage of basic facilities

That gap has given Beijing a chance to assert its ambition to be a regional leader and fueled a diplomatic arms race.

On top of its planned infrastructure bank, which 57 countries want to join, the government of President Xi Jinping has launched initiatives to improve road, rail and sea links.

Japan joined Washington in staying away from the Chinese bank. Instead, Tokyo responded in June by announcing its

own credit package of USD110 billion for the region.

The Asian Development Bank has estimated developing Asian economies need to invest \$8 trillion in the decade through 2020 or some 80 times the planned \$100 billion capital of Beijing's bank.

India is set to pass China this year as the world's fastest-growing big economy. To keep that up, its government says, the nation of 1.2 billion people needs to spend \$1 trillion on infrastructure in the five years through 2017.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi called in May for India to speed up building "all projects that will ensure a modern infrastructure backbone."

India's most ambitious initiative is the \$100 billion Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor Project. It calls for creating seven industrial cities, high-speed railways, six airports and three sea ports.

Nationwide, the government says India needs 450 new coal-fired power plants. It also plans a \$10.2 billion high-speed train to link Mumbai, the financial capital, with Ahmedabad, an industrial city to the north.

In Vietnam, the ruling Communist Party in June approved a proposal for a \$15.8 billion second airport for its business

capital, Ho Chi Minh City.

To meet power demand that rises by 10 percent a year, state media say Vietnam needs to spend \$50 billion in the decade through 2020 and another \$75 billion over the next decade. They put Vietnam's spending needs for highways at \$22.5 billion in 2015-20.

Thailand has a 3 trillion baht (\$92 billion) building plan for 2015-22 that includes high-speed train routes that eventually will stretch from China in the north through Malaysia in the south to Singapore. It calls for expanding seaports and Bangkok's commuter trains.

In the Philippines, President Benigno Aquino III in May approved \$1.4 billion in spending for commuter rail in Manila and other projects. That brought the total for infrastructure investment to \$31.8 billion since Aquino took office in 2010.

Bjorn Pardo, founder and CEO of Xend, a delivery company in the Philippines with 250 employees, said it copes with congestion by using custom-outfitted motorcycles instead of trucks.

"The traffic situation will not get significantly better anytime soon," said Pardo in an email.

The Philippines ranks 95th

out of 144 countries on a World Economic Forum survey of infrastructure quality. Its 2011-16 development plan promises to reduce the number of homes without access to power and running water and build ports, railways, power plants and cargo terminals.

"Our priority will be energy," said Benjamin Diokno, an economist at the University of the Philippines and former Cabinet secretary. "The urban rail system is also pressing. The railway system from north to south is pressing. Everything is pressing."

The Asian Development Bank says if the required facilities are built, the region's people could get an extra \$4.5 trillion in income in the decade through 2020 and another \$8.5 trillion after that.

Many have yet to work out how to pay for those projects.

Before the 1997 crisis, public works spending in many developing Asian economies was equal to 6 to 8 percent of annual economic output.

Post-crisis, that tumbled to as little as 2 percent. It dipped below 1 percent in the Philippines in 2010. Today, it is below 3 percent in Indonesia, Pakistan and other economies — less than half the level the ADB says is needed to support growth at current levels.

In the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, courier Yusuf Abdillah complained he loses two hours a day in traffic jams that can stretch up to eight kilometers.

"I'm fed up," said Abdillah, 28. "The government is being irresponsible."

Many governments want to draw in money from pension funds, insurance companies and other private investors.

The Philippines hopes encouraging private investment will help boost infrastructure spending from 3.4 percent of gross domestic product this year to 5 percent next year, according to Economic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan.

But many projects have yet to be structured as profit-oriented ventures to repay investors. And investors are wary of political interference and potential delays over environmental and other concerns.

China has pledged to supply most of the initial \$50 billion in capital for its Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

In June, governments including Britain, New Zealand, France, Australia and South Korea signed an agreement on the bank's basic principles.

Still, the ADB's Subramaniam said the region's total spending is likely to be less than half the amount required.

"The continuing unmet needs clearly indicate we need more resources and different ways of structuring projects," he said. **AP**

THAILAND

Police chief says Bangkok bombing carried out by 'a network'

Jocelyn Gecker and
Nattasuda Anusonadisai, Bangkok

THAILAND'S national police chief said yesterday that a deadly bombing at a central Bangkok shrine was carried out by "a network," as police released a sketch of the man they believe carried out the attack, and offered a 1 million baht (USD28,000) reward for help leading to his arrest. But apart from a rough portrait, authorities have few solid leads — they don't know the bomber's motive, where he's from or if he's still in the country.

Police chief Somyot Poompanmoung made the comment as he headed into a meeting of national police commanders, saying he was carrying orders from the prime minister who "is worried about the security of people and tourists in Thailand."

The sketch was released after grainy security video footage showed the man leaving behind a backpack just 15 minutes before the blast at a popular downtown shrine. Police said the picture was also partly based on a description provided by a motorcycle taxi driver believed to have given him a ride on the night of the Monday blast.

Two days after the attack, which authorities have called the worst in Thai history, the open-air Erawan Shrine reopened to the public. But little is known about who carried out the blast that left 20 people dead and more than 120 injured, and no one has claimed responsibility.

But authorities said they were certain that the man seen in the video — with shaggy dark hair, wearing a yellow shirt and carrying a large, dark-colored backpack — was responsible.

"He didn't do it alone, for sure. It's a network," said Somyot. He did not elaborate.

The sketch released yesterday showed a young man in eyeglasses with bushy, dark hair that is cropped at the sides.

"If citizens or anyone can give us information or clues that leads to the arrest of this man I have set a reward of 1 million baht," Somyot told reporters, adding that police believe the bomber worked with accomplices.

Police spokesman Lt. Gen. Prawut Thavornsiri said the

AP PHOTO



This image released by the Royal Thai Police yesterday shows a detailed sketch of the main suspect in the bombing

security footage appears to show two possible accomplices who are also considered suspects.

On Tuesday, police released still photos of the man seen in the video, wearing a yellow T-shirt and shorts. His hair appears shaggier in the video than the police sketch. The photographs show him both with and without a large, black backpack. A video posted separately on Thai media showed the same man sitting on a bench at the shrine, taking off the backpack and leaving it behind as he stood up to fiddle with his phone and then walked away. Time stamps on the footage show that he left the shrine 15 minutes before the Monday night explosion, which struck just before 7 p.m.

The attack has raised concerns about safety in a city that draws millions of tourists and had never experienced an attack of this magnitude.

Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha has called the attack "the worst incident that has ever happened in Thailand" and vowed to track down those responsible.

The site of the blast, the

Erawan Shrine, is a revered spot among Thais and tourists that transcends religion. It is dedicated to the Hindu god Brahma, but is extremely popular among Thailand's Buddhists as well as Chinese tourists.

Although Thailand is pre-

Police released a sketch of the man they believe carried out the attack, and offered a 1 million baht (USD28,000) reward

dominantly Buddhist, Hinduism has an influence on its religious practices and language. The shrine's location adds to its popularity, offering an open-air place for prayer amid the capital's gleaming shopping malls and five-star hotels.

Yesterday morning, a stream of people arrived at the Erawan Shrine, kneeling in prayer, lighting incense and placing flowers at the site where 36 hours earlier an explosion scattered body parts across one of the capital's busiest intersections. Buddhist monks in saffron robes joined members of the public to chant prayers at the popular Hindu shrine.

Among those who paid respects was an office worker, Nuansupha Sarunsikarin, who expressed shock and sadness over the attack, which no one has claimed responsibility for. Authorities say it came by sur-

prise, with no clear motive.

"I'm depressed for those innocent people who had to pay for something they're not involved with and now have no chance to live their lives," Nuansupha said.

Thai authorities identified six victims as Thai and four Malaysians, along with four Chinese, two people from Hong Kong, one Indonesian and one Singaporean. Two victims remain unidentified.

Bangkok was rattled by a second blast Tuesday at a popular ferry pier, which exploded in the Chao Phraya River and caused no injuries. Prawut said Tuesday's blast at the Sathorn Pier frequented by river ferries and tourist boats also was caused by a pipe bomb and could be related to the shrine attack. Security video showed a sudden blast of water over a walkway at the pier as bystanders ran for safety.

Thailand has seen many violent attacks in recent years, particularly in a more-than-decade-long insurgency by Muslim separatists that has killed over 5,000 in the country's south. Those attacks have never reached the capital, however.

Bangkok has seen politically charged violence in the past decade; the deadliest, in 2010, killed more than 90 over two months and was centered on the same intersection where Monday's bomb went off. But none of those attacks included a bomb that seemed intended to produce mass casualties. **AP**



Buddhist monks hold a prayer at the Erawan Shrine at Rajprasong intersection in Bangkok

SYRIA

Islamic State beheads leading antiquities scholar in Palmyra

Albert Aji and Bassem Mroue, Damascus

ISLAMIC State militants beheaded one of Syria's most prominent antiquities scholars in the ancient town of Palmyra, then hung his body from one of the town's Roman columns, Syrian state media and an activist group said yesterday.

The killing of 81-year-old Khaled al-Asaad was the latest atrocity perpetrated by the militant group, which has captured a third of both Syria and neighboring Iraq and declared a self-styled "caliphate" on the territory it controls.

Since IS overran Palmyra in May, there have been fears the extremists, who have destroyed famed archaeological sites in Iraq, would demolish the 2,000-year-old Roman-era city at the edge of the town — a UNESCO world heritage site and one of the Mideast's most spectacular archaeological sites.

The Sunni extremist group,

which has imposed a violent interpretation of Islamic law, or Shariah, believes ancient relics promote idolatry. IS militants claim they are destroying ancient artifacts and archaeological treasures as part of their purge of paganism. The destruction IS has wreaked adds to the wider, extensive damage it has inflicted on ancient sites, including mosques and churches across Syria and Iraq.

According to Syrian state news agency SANA and the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, al-Asaad was beheaded on Tuesday in a square outside the town's museum. The Observatory, which has a network of activists on the ground in Syria, said dozens of people gathered to witness the killing. Al-Asaad had been held by the IS for about a month, it added.

His body was then taken to Palmyra's archaeological site and hung from one of the Roman columns, Maamoun Ab-

dulkarim, the head of the Antiquities and Museums Department in Damascus, told SANA.

Al-Asaad was "one of the most important pioneers in Syrian archaeology in the 20th century," Abdulkarim said. IS had tried to extract information from him about where some of the town's treasures had been hidden to save them from the militants, the antiquities chief also said.

SANA said al-Asaad had been in charge of Palmyra's archaeological site for four decades until 2003, when he retired. After retiring, al-Asaad worked as an expert with the Antiquities and Museums Department.

Al-Asaad, who held a diploma in history and education from the University of Damascus, wrote many books and scientific texts either individually or in cooperation with other Syrian or foreign archeologists, SANA said. Among his titles are "The Palmyra sculptures," and "Zenobia, the Queen of Palmyra and the Orient."



Prominent Syrian antiquities scholar Khaled al-Asaad

He also discovered several ancient cemeteries, caves and the Byzantine cemetery in the garden of the Museum of Palmyra, the agency added.

"Al-Asaad was a treasure for Syria and the world," Khalil Hariri, al-Asaad's son-in-law who works at the Palmyra's archaeological department told The Associated Press, speaking over the phone from the central Syrian city of Homs. "Why did they kill him?"

"Their systematic campaign seeks to take us back into pre-history," he added. "But they will not succeed."

Hariri, who is married to al-Asaad's daughter, Zenobia, said his father-in-law had been a member of President Bashar Assad's ruling Baath party since 1954. Hariri added that al-Asaad is survived by six sons and five daughters.

Since falling to IS, Palmyra's ancient site has remained intact but the militants destroyed a lion statue in the town dating back to the 2nd century. The statue, discovered in 1975, had stood at the gates of the town museum, and had been placed inside a metal box to protect it from damage. **AP**

Kirsten Grieshaber and David Rising, Berlin

GERMANY'S parliament overwhelmingly approved a third bailout for Greece yesterday, removing a key hurdle to providing new loans to the country and keeping it from defaulting on its debts in as little as 24 hours.

The vote's result also seemed to dispel any speculation that Chancellor Angela Merkel would have difficulty getting her conservative bloc to sign on. Lawmakers voted 454-113 in favor, with 18 abstentions.

The approval is among the last due from parliaments across Europe, with the Dutch scheduled to vote later yesterday, after which Greece is expected to get the first installment of its new 86 billion euro (USD95 billion) loans package.

The country needs the cash to make a debt repayment today. The board of the European bailout fund that will disburse the money was set to hold a teleconfe-

GREEK FINANCIAL CRISIS

German parliament overwhelmingly approves third bailout



German Chancellor Angela Merkel attends a debate at the German parliament prior to a vote on another bailout package for Greece, in the German Bundestag in Berlin

rence yesterday night to discuss the matter.

The German approval was never in doubt but in a similar vote last month, 60 members of Merkel's conservative bloc voted against and some local media had speculated that even more could rebel this time as Germans are increasingly skepti-

cal about giving Greece more money.

Though a party-breakdown of the vote was not immediately available, the result suggested that if anything, more of Merkel's lawmakers voted in line with her recommendation.

German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeu-

ble, a senior member of Merkel's Christian Democratic Party who has been one of the harshest critics of Greece, may have helped the cause as he lobbied hard ahead of the vote for the passage of Greece's third bailout in five years.

Schaeuble told lawmakers that approval of the three-year loan package is "in the interest of Greece and the interest of Europe." He noted that the Greek government has taken big steps over the past few weeks to restore trust with its creditors.

Schaeuble conceded that voting in favor of the bailout wasn't an easy one for him, but that "it would be irresponsible to not use the chance for a new beginning in Greece" in light of the fact that the Greek parliament has already backed

a large chunk of reform measures demanded by creditors.

Germany is the largest single contributor to the bailouts and many in Schaeuble's party remain skeptical. Merkel's coalition partner, the

Social Democrats, and the opposition Greens also backed the deal.

Under the terms of the deal, Greece has to make further spending cuts and tax increases and implement big reforms to its economy. **AP**

GERMAN ASYLUM APPLICATIONS MORE THAN DOUBLE THROUGH JULY

GERMANY SAYS the number of migrants entering the country has increased dramatically this year, with more than 360,000 arriving to date. Because of the influx, the Interior Ministry says it is taking longer for new arrivals to apply for asylum. Through the end of July, Germany has seen 218,221 asylum applications, an increase of nearly 125 percent. The ministry said yesterday

Germany remains the top destination in Europe for refugees, with 43 percent of a total of 400,000 asylum applications through the end of June. Germany is struggling to provide housing for newcomers, with room for 45,000 in temporary facilities while awaiting the outcome of their applications. It estimates it needs at least 100,000 to 150,000 places total to cope with the influx.

USA

Clinton seeks distance from Obama on climate change issues

Josh Lederman and Ken Thomas, North Las Vegas

AP PHOTO



Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton speaks while touring the Carpenters International Training Center yesterday, in Las Vegas

HILLARY Rodham Clinton is opposing President Barack Obama's authorization for oil drilling in the Alaska Arctic and his delays on the Keystone XL pipeline, in some of the clearest signs of the Democratic front-runner distancing herself from the president.

Having agreed with him on most issues so far in her 2016 race, Clinton edged to Obama's left on climate change yesterday (Macau time). In the course of a few hours, she announced her disapproval of his move to allow Royal Dutch Shell to drill in the Arctic Ocean and her impatience for a decision on the Keystone XL pipeline Alberta in Canada to Texas.

Clinton remains the overwhelming favorite for the Democratic presidential nomination but growing enthusiasm for Ver-

mont Sen. Bernie Sanders has been pushing her further to the left in recent weeks in an attempt to widen her appeal with the party's liberal base.

Sanders and other primary opponents are opposed to Keystone, Arctic drilling and other projects deemed risky for the en-

vironment.

Clinton argued on Twitter that the Arctic is a unique treasure and "not worth the risk of drilling." Then as she took questions from reporters later in Nevada, she said the U.S. should be focusing on cleaner sources of renewable energy, rather than

risking "potential catastrophes" in the search for more oil.

"I think the very great difficulties that Shell encountered the last time they tried to do that should be a red flag for anybody," Clinton said, referring to a setback that beset the oil giant when it tried to drill there in 2012, including a rig that ran aground.

In the early months of her campaign, Clinton has rarely disagreed publicly with Obama, who remains popular among core Democratic voters but much less so among the broader American public. Her biggest rebuff came in June when she declined to support giving Obama expedited negotiating authority on trade. Even then, she characterized her position as more of a wait-and-see approach than outright opposition to the trade deals he's pursuing.

Clinton's comments on Arctic drilling came less than a day after the Obama administration, in a long-expected move, gave

Shell the final permits needed to drill for oil off Alaska's northwest coast, drawing consternation from environmentalists.

Unsurprisingly, the same groups that had criticized Obama praised Clinton for stating her opposition. "We applaud Secretary Clinton for standing up for what science, the will of the American people and common sense demand," said Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune.

Clinton's Republican opponents pushed back.

"Wrong," former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush responded on Twitter. "Being more-anti energy than Obama is extreme."

Clinton has said she won't take a stance on whether to approve the Keystone XL pipeline unless the decision is still pending if and when she's elected. Keystone supporters and opponents alike have questioned her refusal to say what she believes about an issue important to voters. **AP**

AD

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what's ON



MACAU HANDOVER HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS
DONATED BY LAU SIN PENG
TIME: 10am-7pm
(Closed on Mondays, No admission after 6:30 pm)
UNTIL: December 31, 2015
VENUE: Multi-function Hall,
Handover Gifts Museum of Macao
ADMISSION: MOP5
(Free on Sundays and public holidays)
ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

PHOTOGRAPHS OF MACAU OLD SHOPS
TIME: 10am-7pm
(Closed on Mondays, No admission after 6:30 pm)
UNTIL: December 31, 2015
VENUE: Macau Museum of Art,
Av. Xian Xing Hai, s/n, NAPE
ADMISSION: MOP5
(Free on Sundays and public holidays)
ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

FASHION POP-UP SHOP
TIME: 10am-8pm
(Closed on Mondays, open on public holiday)
UNTIL: August 30, 2015
ADMISSION: Free
ADDRESS: Macau Fashion Gallery / No. 47,
Rua de S. Roque, Macau
ENQUIRIES: (853) 2835 3341

THE CALLING OF SPIRITUALITY
- XIAO YAWEN ARTWORK EXHIBITION
TIME: 10:30am-6:30pm (Closed on Mondays)
UNTIL: August 31, 2015
VENUE: 10 Fantasia - A Creative Industries Incubator,
10, Calçada da Igreja de S. Lázaro, Macau
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 2835 4582

PATH AND ADVENTURE
- WORKS BY MIO PANG FEI
TIME: 10am-7pm
(Closed on Mondays, no admission after 6:30 pm)
UNTIL: November 22, 2015
VENUE: Macau Museum of Art,
Av. Xian Xing Hai, s/n, NAPE
ADMISSION: MOP5
(Free on Sundays and public holidays)
ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

HABITUAL WORLD - KOREAN DRAWING EXHIBITION
OF CHA YOUNG SEOK
TIME: 10am-6pm
UNTIL: September 6, 2015
VENUE: Temporary Exhibitions Gallery,
Taipa Houses Museum, Avenida da Praia, Taipa
ADMISSION: MOP5 (Adult); MOP2 (Student or Group);
Free (Under 12 or above 65)
ENQUIRIES: (853) 8988 4100 / 2882 7103

Offbeat

THIEVES UNCAP 1,200 BEERS IN
GERMAN STORE SEEKING PRIZE

Police in western Germany are looking for thieves who broke into a store selling alcohol and stole the caps off 1,200 bottles of beer — presumably to collect points for a prize contest — yet left the suds themselves untouched. Essen police said Tuesday the thieves broke into the shop in Muelheim an der Ruhr overnight Sunday and stole the caps from the popular Koenig Pilsner. They kept those with points toward prizes like Bose speakers or a Black & Decker cordless drill, left dozens of “good luck try again” caps on the ground and didn’t drink a single beer. Given the number of caps removed, police say they assume that more than one person was involved in the operation. So far they have no suspects.

TV canal macau

13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:30	RTPi Live
18:50	The Presence of Anita (Repeated)
19:40	Soap Opera
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	TDM Talk Show
21:40	Miscellaneous
22:10	The Presence of Anita
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Television Film
00:05	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
00:40	RTPi Live

cinema

CINETEATRO

20 Aug- 26 Aug



HITMAN: AGENT 47

ROOM 1

2.15, 4.05, 5.55, 9.30 pm

Director: Aleksander Bach

Starring: Rupert Friend, Hannah Ware, Zachary Quinto

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 96min

ATTACK ON TITAN

ROOM 1

7.45 pm

Director: Shinji Higuchi

Starring: Haruma Miura, Kiko Mizuhara

Language: Japanese (English and Chinese)

Duration: 90min



PIXELS

ROOM 2

(2D) 2.30, 4.30, 9.30 pm

(3D) 7.30 pm

Director: Chris Columbus

Starring: Adam Sandler, Kevin James,

Michelle Monaghan

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 106min

DORAEMON THE MOVIE:

NOBITA AND THE SPACE HEROES

ROOM 3

2.15 pm

Director: Yoshihiro Osugi

Language: Cantonese (Chinese/English)

Duration: 100min

WILD CITY

ROOM 3

4.05, 5.55, 7.45, 9.45 pm

Director: Ringo Lam

Starring: Louis Koo, Shawn Yue, Tong Liya

Language: Cantonese/Mandarin (Chinese/English)

Duration: 105min

MACAU TOWER

20 AUG - 9 SEPT

PIXELS

2.30, 4.45, 7.15, 9.30 pm

Director: Chris Columbus

Starring: Adam Sandler, Kevin James,

Michelle Monaghan

Language: English (Chinese)

this day in history

1992 DUCHESS OF YORK
IN PHOTOS ROW

Intimate photographs of the Duchess of York and a Texan businessman, John Bryan, have been published in a tabloid newspaper.

The pictures, run by the Daily Mirror over 10 pages, show a topless Duchess of York and Mr Bryan embracing by a swimming pool in the south of France.

Other photographs appear to show Mr Bryan kissing the duchess' foot.

The duchess is currently separated from her husband Prince Andrew.

However, she has always maintained that Mr Bryan was merely her “financial adviser”.

The pictures were taken by an Italian freelance photographer using a telephoto lens.

Buckingham Palace said in a statement that the Queen was dismayed by the decision of the Daily Mirror and other tabloids to publish the photographs.

A palace spokesman said: “We strongly disapprove of the publication of photographs taken in such circumstances.”

However, the editor of the Daily Mirror is defending its action.

Richard Stott said the pictures revealed the hypocrisy surrounding the duchess' relationship with Mr Bryan.

The Duchess of York has spent the day at Balmoral in Scotland with other members of the Royal Family.

John Bryan was in London with an army of reporters and photographers besieging his flat.

Mr Bryan made no comment as he left at lunchtime.

The Texan had asked the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) to intervene before the publication of the photos.

But the PCC said it would not censor a newspaper in advance of publication.

It would also not decide whether publication was in the public interest unless it got a formal complaint, the PCC added.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The romance with John Bryan came after rumours in 1990 that the Duchess of York was involved with another American, oil tycoon Steve Wyatt.

John Bryan later sold a ‘kiss and tell’ account of his time with the duchess for £250,000.

The Duke and Duchess of York divorced in April 1996.

They lived in separate apartments at their former marital home, Sunninghill Park for some years, after financial difficulties forced the duchess to move back in.

They both dated other people but in 1999 Fergie told a newspaper “there was no reason for Andrew and I to get divorced” and hinted that they might one day remarry.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Not sure how to handle the season and balance your checkbook at the same time? Remember the most obvious maxim possible today: it's the thought that counts.

Taurus April 20-May 20 It's a good day to spend on yourself because it will be the last one for a while. As long as it doesn't include spending money on yourself, enjoy.

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 Do you want to see an action movie or a romance? Remember when the choices in your life were that simple? Let them be again, if only for the day. Block out all thoughts of money.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 It's hard to stick to your budget, but if you don't, domestic bliss will be seriously challenged. If that isn't enough incentive for you, imagine the interest rate.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 You need help, and don't be afraid to ask for it. If you feel the overwhelming urge to buy computer equipment, share your feelings. You'll be put back on track.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 Avoid impulse buys by knowing what motivates you. Some minor setbacks to your budget are acceptable. Don't let them make you feel like giving up altogether and making a major splash.

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 Which gives you a bigger boost of energy, balancing your checkbook or getting attention from others? If you must choose, go the practical route and take out your calculator.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 Some decisions are harder than others. Luckily for you, you're only dealing with the easy ones. What to buy, for whom and for how much are just a sampling.

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 Others look to you for answers, but you wish you had someone to ask. Life isn't always fair. If you take a step back and tune in to the big picture, you'll have an easier time adjusting.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 Look at the bright side as you round out your year. You might not be getting a pay raise or a bonus, no matter how much energy you focus on work, but your boat is still afloat.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 You're being forced to experience something new, but you can do it voluntarily in other ways. Connect with others instead of being aloof. You'll find there's a lot of truth to the old saws about money.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 Feeling insecure? Out with the old and in with the new. Just make sure it's only your shopping habits that are changing... hopefully for the best.



SUDOKU

Sudoku puzzles: Easy and Easy+. Each puzzle is a 9x9 grid with some numbers pre-filled.

Sudoku puzzles: Medium and Hard. Each puzzle is a 9x9 grid with some numbers pre-filled.

WEATHER

Table with columns: MIN, MAX, CONDITION. Rows include CHINA (Beijing, Harbin, Tianjin, etc.) and WORLD (Moscow, Frankfurt, Paris, etc.).

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Tiny particles; 6- Pillar; 10- "Barton Fink" director; 14- Mother of Perseus; 15- Wife of Zeus; 16- Writer Sarah Jewett; 17- The "E" of "E-mail"; 19- Starchy food grain; 20- Paris possessive; 21- Baum barker; 22- Aim; 24- Choir voice; 25- Khartoum's river; 26- Declares; 29- Undiplomatic; 33- Pole thrown by Scottish athletes; 34- Caucus state; 35- Smell; 36- Small brook; 37- Let's Make; 38- South American monkey; 39- "A Death in the Family" author; 40- Workers' rights org.; 41- Puerto; 42- Coheir; 44- Scholar; 45- General chicken; 46- Novel ending; 47- Moist with perspiration; 50- Future doc's exam; 51- Sorrowful; 54- Lukas of "Witness"; 55- Use of ideograms; 58- Play opener; 59- Seasonal song; 60- Make for oneself; 61- One of the Cartwrights; 62- Movable barrier; 63- Languishes with longing;

DOWN: 1- Summer coolers; 2- Story; 3- Change for a five; 4- It's not PC; 5- Pioneer; 6- Pic; 7- Vintner's prefix; 8- Hindu honorific; 9- Pertaining to tactics; 10- Mutually related; 11- Not a dup.; 12- Suffix with exist; 13- Nair rival; 18- Decomposes; 23- High-pitched; 24- Collapse of the lungs; 25- Governor in Mogul India; 26- Deep-six; 27- Coniferous evergreen forest; 28- More competent; 29- is human...; 30- Author Jong; 31- The devil; 32- Tour of duty; 34- Runs without moving; 37- Irritating; 41- Dump; 43- Superlative suffix; 44- Male deer; 46- French school; 47- Ayatollah's predecessor; 48- Baylor's city; 49- Breaks bread; 50- Bump into; 51- Bridge; 52- Alas!; 53- Stains; 56- 1950 film noir classic; 57- Tropical cuckoo bird

Yesterday's solution crossword grid with filled-in words.

Large crossword puzzle grid with numbers 1-63.

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
S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
IACM 28 387 333
Tourism 28 333 000
Airport 59 888 88



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JML property logo and '卓雅物業' text.

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- 120 Horsepower
- R.S. Drive Mode
- Day time running light
- 17" GT wheel



*Image for reference only

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RENAULT
Passion for life

Pistorius to be moved to house arrest, still faces appeal

Gerald Imray, Lynsey Chutel, Johannesburg

AFTER being locked up for 10 months for killing his girlfriend, double-amputee runner Oscar Pistorius is scheduled to be released from prison and go into house arrest tomorrow.

What his steps after that will be are less clear. The first amputee to run at the Olympics might race again. Or he might wind up behind bars again if he is found guilty of murder. Prosecutors are seeking that verdict, saying his manslaughter conviction was insufficient. They appealed to the Supreme Court, which is to consider the case in November.

For killing girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp on Valentine's Day in 2013, Pistorius got a five-year sentence.

With a big chunk of his prison time suspended for good behavior, he is set to spend four years and two months under house arrest — some media reports have called it "mansion arrest" — at his uncle's luxurious home. It boasts a large, cross-shaped swimming pool and is located in an upmarket suburb of Pretoria, the capital.

The Department of Justice yesterday cast doubt on an early release, saying it is checking to see if a parole board decision was correct and "in compliance with the law."

Justice Minister Michael Masutha is receiving legal advice on whether he has the authority to "intervene" to prevent Pistorius' release if proper procedure was not followed. His decision will be announced before Friday, the department said.

If put under house arrest, the Department of Correctional Services will consider allowing him to train on the track, but international and South African sports bodies have already said Pistorius will not be allowed to compete during the remaining period of his sentence. Pistorius will be nearly 33 when that sentence is over.

At the Supreme Court, the second-highest in South Africa, a panel of judges will review Pistorius' trial and decide whether Judge Thokozile Masipa made an

AP PHOTO



Oscar Pistorius

Pistorius is set to spend four years and two months under house arrest — some media reports have called it 'mansion arrest'

error in acquitting him of murder in September last year. If the panel finds Pistorius guilty on appeal, he will face a minimum sentence of 15 years in jail. South Africa doesn't have the death penalty.

Prosecutors argue that he should have been found guilty of murder for shooting Steenkamp multiple times through a toilet door in his home. Pistorius said he mistook her for an

intruder and fired in self-defense. Prosecutors, in appeal papers filed Monday, said Pistorius intended to kill whoever was behind the door. During his trial, the prosecution accused the runner of shooting Steenkamp during an argument.

The family of Steenkamp, a 29-year-old model and reality TV personality, has said "incarceration of 10 months for taking a life is simply not enough." Family lawyer Tania Koen told The Associated Press that Steenkamp's parents, Barry and June, are concentrating this week on marking what would have been their daughter's 32nd birthday yesterday.

"We are still struggling with coming to terms with losing our precious daughter Reeva and her loss is felt even more this week," Barry and June Steenkamp said in a statement.

Pistorius family spokeswoman Anneliese Burgess said they wouldn't comment, but confirmed Pistorius would live with his uncle, Arnold,

while under correctional supervision. Pistorius will still have to live under "strict conditions," according to the corrections department. He won't have to wear an electronic device, department spokesman Logan Maistry said, but will be monitored by a probation officer.

The department would not provide other details of Pistorius' probation conditions, but they would likely include periods of compulsory community service, being allowed to leave the house only at specific times, and a ban on consuming alcohol. Pistorius will have surprise spot-checks to ensure he is not breaking the terms. If it's found he is, he could be sent back to prison.

Pistorius' track career will also become a focus again now.

Peet van Zyl, who manages Pistorius' track career, has not conceded that it is over, saying it's up to Pistorius if he wants to pursue running again.

Van Zyl said they will discuss his future when he is out. **AP**

CRICKET

South Africa team's secret plans end up on Facebook



AP PHOTO

The papers outlining secret tactics were meant to be slipped under South African cricketer Dale Steyn's hotel room

door on the eve of a game against New Zealand. Instead, they went to the wrong room and are now there for the world — and the New Zealand players — to see after the occupant posted them on Facebook. The South African team acknowledged that papers listing apparent weaknesses of New Zealand's batsmen were put in the wrong room. Although they don't contain any startling insights, the tactics — titled "Plan / Strategy Handouts" — outline team management's suggestions on how Steyn and his fellow fast bowlers could get the New Zealanders out in yesterday's game. For one, middle-order batsman Colin Munro is susceptible to "bouncers into rib cage."

FOOTBALL

Chung slams 'cynical' FIFA ethics probe of charity money



AP PHOTO

FIFA presidential contender Chung Mong-joon says any ethics committee investigation of his disaster relief donation to Pakistan would be "cynical." The South Korean lawmaker launched his FIFA election campaign Monday

with strong criticism of outgoing president Sepp Blatter. In 2010, as FIFA vice president, Chung pledged USD400,000 for football projects in Pakistan after floods there. In June, the Asian Football Confederation sent FIFA ethics investigators details of unspent donations, according to a letter to the Pakistan Football Federation seen by The Associated Press. Chung says in a statement he would condemn any probe as "a cynical and unethical effort by FIFA to misrepresent even charitable donations for political manipulation." All FIFA contenders must pass an integrity check by the ethics committee to be candidates in the Feb. 26 election.

Barcelona defender Pique banned 4 matches for outburst



AP PHOTO

Barcelona defender Gerard Pique has been given a four-match ban for insulting a linesman during the second leg of the Spanish Super Cup, which his club lost 5-1

on aggregate to Athletic Bilbao. A Competition Committee judge yesterday ordered the sanction having studied the case after Pique was sent off for the offense during the match. Barcelona presented arguments in defense of its player, but was unable to shorten the punishment, and the decision means Pique will not be able to play against Bilbao, Malaga, Atletico Madrid and Levante at the beginning of the La Liga season. Referee Velasco Carballo's match report said Pique used foul and abusive language while shouting at the assistant referee. Earlier, Pique had apologized and insisted he did not insult the official.

opinion

HK Observer
 Robert Carroll



TAXI RULE. HK'S UBER-FREE MARKET TO BE UBER-FREE?

On the one hand, we have a high-tech startup officially encouraged and supported by the government body that has been set up to boost investment in Hong Kong. On the other hand, the same company is soon after raided by the authorities for, apparently, providing unwanted competition. The guilty parties: Invest Hong Kong, for helping to bring in an alternative taxi service, Uber; and Uber, for operating here at all. OK, that's simplistic. But if taxis are regularly flouting the law by picking and choosing customers, and can be driven by anybody upon production of a driver's license, why do Uber drivers have to be uber-regulated?

And hang on a moment – isn't the chief executive's currently stalled pet project, the Innovation and Technology Bureau, intended to support innovative companies like Uber? We could also ponder why a supposedly uber-free market like Hong Kong wants to be Uber-free? What happened to the hallowed, much-vaunted, so-called laissez-faire capitalism that earns the city a top ranking year after year from the Heritage Foundation, the world's greatest champion of business freedom? Is the government doing an about-turn on Uber because taxi drivers protested? Maybe not.

Taxis aren't owned by taxi drivers. Taxi drivers don't make the big profits that rich, successful people do. Granted there are a few owner-operators, but at nearly USD1 million a piece, it's not surprising there aren't more. So who are these owners and would they be able to influence regulations regarding taxis and their competition? For a start, several are politicians, along with various other local bigwigs.

Oh and while we are on the subject, let's put something to rest: Maria Tam Wai-chu comes to mind. Tam is the chairwoman of the Independent Commission Against Corruption's operations review committee, having been appointed by CY Leung. That's the part of the commission that decides which investigations should go ahead.

Now Tam is someone who has historically been uber-pro-taxi licenses, and has formerly been an executive councillor and overseer of public transport regulations, including taxis. It was famously reported that her family owned hundreds of taxis while she was in charge of taxi license issuance rules. Fewer licenses meant bigger return on investment; more meant less for licensees. It can now be once again put on the record at least from this correspondence that a woman of such high moral caliber, a barrister at law, a former Exco member and NPC member, and now a key figure heading anti-corruption activities, should surely be a woman above suspicion.

What's odd about all the Uber bashing, and the 'taxis versus Uber' battle, is that Uber is not competing with taxis but rather with up-market cars and limousines. In the US and elsewhere, Uber has taken business away from taxis by undercutting prices; here prices can be 50 percent more than the cost of a cab.

If taxis and limo hire companies are not providing the service that customers want, and Uber is filling a gap in the market in a free market, why shouldn't they be allowed to do so?

As anyone who has tried to get a cab late at night in tourist-popular districts knows, there are always taxis but their "for hire" signs are often covered with "on assignment" covers until taxi drivers see someone who looks like they'll pay a generous rate. That's illegal and it's done in front of patrolling police officers.

The law will be enforced if a spurned taxi customer makes a complaint at the police station and then appears in court as a witness for the prosecution. However, shouldn't it be the police taking the initiative, not the public?

THE BUZZ UN WARNS OF RISK OF ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN ESCALATION

The U.N. political chief says the risk of escalation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict "is palpable." Jeffrey Feltman told the U.N. Security Council yesterday that the past month has seen "unconscionable crimes of hatred by extremist elements, reprehensible retaliatory violence, provocations at Jerusalem's holy sites, and a worrying increase in rockets launched from Gaza towards Israel." His comments follow Tuesday's warning by

Israel's opposition leader Isaac Herzog that a new Palestinian uprising could be looming after the recent spate of violence. Herzog called on both sides to reduce tensions and restart peace talks. Feltman appealed to political, military, community and religious leaders on all sides "to work together to reduce tensions, reject violence and prevent extremists from escalating the situation and hijacking the political agenda."

Els and Hend to compete for Venetian Macao Open title



Ernie Els

FOUR-TIME Major champion Ernie Els and six-time Asian Tour winner Scott Hend have confirmed their return to the Macau Golf & Country Club to compete for the Venetian Macao Open title from 15 to 18 October, according to a press release from the organizers.

Coordinated by the Macao Sport Development Board and sanctioned by the Golf Association of Macau and the Asian Tour, and with The Ve-

netian Macao as the title sponsor for the fourth year, the 17th edition of the tournament will see Els challenge for the title for the third successive year. The South African finished in tied 26th position last year after a tied-v3rd finish in his debut in 2013.

"I am looking forward to playing at the Venetian Macao Open for the third time, which is now a regular stop on my fall schedule", the 45-year-

old Johannesburg native commented, as reported in the media release. "I have been practicing well and I stand a great chance to bring the trophy back to South Africa for the first time," he added.

Hend also won the title in 2013 and came close to repeating that feat a year later. The 42-year-old Australian won by three shots over current Asian Tour Order of Merit leader Anirban Lahiri two years ago, but was dethroned by the same player after a final-day shootout saw him settle for tied second place last season.

José Tavares, President of the Macao Sport Development Board, likewise enthusiastically commented on the return of the three fan favorites: "Ernie, Anirban and Scott have provided us with so much excitement over the last few years, and helped put the Venetian Macao Open on the world stage in terms of sporting events. The buzz they create as a result of their battles on the course here in Macau is something we can't wait for and we look forward to hosting them once again this year."

Station	Air quality
Roadside	20-40 Good
High Density Residential Area	20-40 Good
Ambient	20-40 Good

WORLD BRIEFS



ISRAEL'S Supreme Court is hearing a petition to immediately release a high-profile Palestinian detainee who has been on a hunger strike for 65 days. Mohammed Allan's lawyer says the state has proposed a compromise under which Allan would be released in November, if he agrees to end his hunger strike.



YEMEN The United Nations says the war in Yemen has pushed the country to the brink of famine, with both commercial food imports and aid deliveries held up by the fighting and millions of hungry women and children facing possible starvation.



USA Hackers say they've leaked the massive database on millions of spouses who signed up to the cheating website Ashley Madison to the Internet. A message posted by the hackers alongside a massive trove of leaked files accused Ashley Madison's owners of deceit and incompetence and said the company had refused to bow to their demands to close the site. "Now everyone gets to see their data," the statement said.



USA Federal health officials yesterday approved the first-ever prescription drug intended to treat women suffering from a lack of sexual desire, ending a vigorous debate over the drug's fate. The daily pill, called Addyi, is a milestone long sought by a pharmaceutical industry eager to replicate the blockbuster success of impotence drugs for men.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/Phil Nijhuis



Russian tall ship the Kruzenshtern, center right, arrives in Amsterdam, yesterday, to participate in SAIL Amsterdam 2015, a five-yearly festival celebrating the Dutch capital's maritime history.