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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'"

WORLD BRIEFS

CHINA Communist leaders allow China's biggest corporate bond default yet in a fresh sign of wrenching economic change as growth slows and Beijing gives market forces a bigger role in its financial system.

AFGHANISTAN Protests calling for better security in Afghanistan break out in several cities a day after a crowd estimated at 10,000 descended on the presidential palace in Kabul in response to the brutal killings of seven people from the minority Hazara ethnic group.

AP PHOTO



INDIA-UK Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrives in Britain for a visit that will see him address Parliament, lunch with Queen Elizabeth II and sign billions in business deals with India's former colonial ruler, now an eager economic suitor.

AUSTRALIA Apple faces accusations of racism in Australia after a group of black teenagers was asked to leave a store in Melbourne when a staffer expressed concern they would shoplift.

AUSTRALIA Seven men blamed for a riot that caused 10 million Australian dollars (USD7 million) damage to a remote Australian immigration detention camp have been flown to a mainland prison.

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AL gives initial green light to **rent control** mechanism P2



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INTERVIEW WITH FRANCIS LUI

'Non-gaming elements will take up a larger share of the market'

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Renato Marques

AL gives initial green light to rent control mechanism

THE Legislative Assembly (AL) approved a joint proposal by nine of its lawmakers to establish a new rental control mechanism alongside an arbitration center for rent-related disputes.

The amendment to the Civil Code to introduce new rent regulations is aimed at market stabilization. One of the measures proposed will be a rental control mechanism with a rate based on a coefficient set by the Chief Executive according to the consumer price index and housing market conditions. The amendment was approved at first reading with 28 votes in favor. It will now be subject to an article-by-article discussion by an AL standing



Song Pek Kei presents the joint rent control proposal to the plenary

Developed places like Germany and New York have practiced rental control.

SONG PEK KEI

committee.

The debate was lengthy, with multiple interventions from several legislators, most of them sharing worries regarding the possibility of this new mechanism interfering with Macau's established free market rules.

Chan Chak Mo was one of the legislators who raised questions, namely regarding prospective article number 999, about rent updates based on the coefficient approved by the Chief Execu-

tive. "How large is the impact of the rental control to the free market economy? Looking at the cons, will this measure hinder the development of the real estate [sector]? Will it decrease foreign investment, and developers may construct fewer buildings?" he asked.

On the other hand several lawmakers recalled that rent control laws and mechanisms are common procedures everywhere in the world and especially in

countries that have market-based economies. Legislator Song Pek Kei, who presented the proposal to the plenary, said, "Developed places like Germany and New York have practiced rental control. We may learn that the free market is compatible with rental control."

Replying to the questions of the legislators Ms Song clarified that "these measures do not mean taking control of everything. It is just a establishment of a higher limit" that aims to "stabilize the market".

Leonel Alves also took the use of the word to explain that rent controls are not new in Macau and that successive governments and governors in the past have used them in order to input dynamism in the market when needed. He cited the example of the measure that allowed residency authorizations to non-residents based on real estate investments, an opinion also shared by the le-

BUDGET EXECUTION REPORTS PRESENTED

THE COMMISSION of Audit's Budget Execution Report and the Report of the General Account for 2014 were presented to the AL. The first highlighted that despite the fall registered in the Q3 of 2014 the government's ordinary integrated account registered a very positive balance of MOP94.8 billion. The Aggregated accounts from the Special Entities likewise reached an amount of MOP17.5 billion, continuing to show a healthy performance. The Commissioner of Audit, Ho Veng On, also presented the General Account Report that presents revenues, expenses and assets of MOP161.9 billion, MOP67.1 billion, and MOP246.9 billion respectively.

Lawmakers want taxi service adapted to smartphone era

THE taxi service was one of the topics most highlighted during the spoken enquiries period. Regarding Uber and other similar ride sharing services, Chui Sai Peng stated that "the smartphone applications that have been revolutionizing the taxi service around the world, allowing a totally new experience for customers, have been collecting a lot of positive feedback", and although the operation model has caused a lot of concerns and discussion, the Uber "application aims to provide an alternative to customers" that have a need for it.

Although referring to the positive side of such a service, Mr Chui said, "In order to operate in Macau, this system must comply with the local laws" and "adjust itself to the local reality."

"We must admit that the current taxi service has room for improvement and the emergence of applications for taxis results from the actual market demand," he concluded, urging the taxi service to modernize itself in order to follow market demand. "The sector cannot close upon itself, fleeing from technological applications and modernization," he said.

Ella Lei also picked up the topic, saying, "Recently, the Uber application for transportation hiring generated conflicts in the interpretation of the law, but the majority of the population supports this model. The community even wants government to legalize this type of service and include it in the regulation of the special taxi license, introducing greater market competitiveness and travel options in order to promote the reform of taxi services." She gave the example of a similar system, currently in use in mainland China, that is fully regulated and very popular.

g legislator Pereira Coutinho.

Another related measure covers the establishment of an arbitration center that will try to provide mediation of rent related disputes in order to avoid such cases filling the courts.

In order to increase transparency and avoid some "rent scams," an article that includes the need for a notarization of signatures when signing rental contracts aiming to prevent illegal immigrants and criminals from renting and using residential flats was also added.

The bill was approved with 28 votes and 1 abstention, and will now proceed for further detailed discussion.

Coutinho criticizes gov't 'lack of communication skills'

LAWMAKER Pereira Coutinho yesterday afternoon criticized the way the government communicates in sensitive cases, such as the recent case of the death of the director general of the Customs Service.

At the AL plenary Mr Coutinho said that the explanations of several

political leaders, who promptly announced the alleged suicide of Lai Man Wa, were confused and carried different information, which contributed to the rumors about the case.

"The responsible person in charge of the official communication showed nervousness, lack of pre-



Pereira Coutinho

paration and planning in their communication," said the legislator.

"It was clear to all the fail in the perception of how the news broke, causing mistrust and subsequent discredit by the local and international media, and the general public; nobody believed in the explanation from the govern-

ment," he added.

The lawmaker explained that the fact that the authorities were too worried in presenting the suicide theory as a "fait accompli" also did not help. In his opinion the government officials' initial statement "should be confined to express their pain and sympathy for the deceased and her family." Mr Coutinho added that this lack in communication skills was also previously revealed when a Commission Against Corruption staff member was also involved in a case of unusual death, in "which the motives continue to be explained." RM

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Jamey Keaten, Geneva

Joseph Lau buys USD48.5m diamond at auction for daughter

AN exceptionally large blue diamond sold Wednesday for 48.6 million Swiss francs (USD48.5 million) — a record price for any jewel at auction, Sotheby's said, culminating two Geneva auctions in which a convicted Hong Kong tycoon bought rare colored diamonds for his daughter.

The 12.03-carat 'Blue Moon' diamond, set in a ring, was said to be among the largest known fancy vivid blue diamonds and was the showpiece gem at the Sotheby's jewelry auction. A packed room broke into applause after the hammer came down at a price of 43.2 million Swiss francs, excluding fees — within the pre-auction estimate range of about 34 to 54 million francs.

The Blue Moon — so-called in reference to its rarity, playing off the expression "once in a blue moon" — topped the previous record of \$46.2 million set five years ago by the Graff Pink, Sotheby's said. The diamond also set a new record of more than \$4 million per carat, capping the daylong high-end jewelry sale that reaped roughly \$140 million.

On its Twitter account, Sotheby's said the jewel was purchased by a Hong Kong private collector



A Sotheby's employee displays the rare Blue Moon Diamond

and was promptly renamed 'The Blue Moon of Josephine' — a similar name to one given to a pink diamond ring that sold for \$28.5 million at Christie's in Geneva a day earlier: 'Sweet Josephine.'

The auction house didn't identify the buyer but in both cases it was Hong Kong billionaire Joseph Lau, his office said Thursday.

"Yes, the two diamonds are bought by Joseph Lau," said a spokeswoman, who hung up without identifying herself.

At a Sotheby's Geneva auction In 2009, Lau bought another blue diamond, paying a then-record \$9.5 million for the 7.03 carat "Star of Josephine". The gem was reportedly named after his 7-year-old daughter, the youngest of his five children.

Lau is a property developer with a fortune estimated by Forbes at \$9.8 billion. Last year he was convicted in a Macau court on corruption charges and sentenced to more than five years

■ Lau was convicted in a Macau court on corruption charges. He has remained free by avoiding travel here

in prison. But Lau, who didn't attend the trial, has remained free by avoiding travel to the former Portuguese colony, which doesn't have an extradition treaty with nearby Hong Kong. Both cities are specially administered Chinese regions.

"Tonight we set a new world record, a new auction record for any diamond, any jewel, any gemstone, with the sale of the Blue Moon Diamond," said auctioneer David Bennett. He specified the price as \$48,468,158.

"For me, the blue moon was always the blue diamond of my career. I have never seen a more beautiful stone. The shape, the color, the purity — it's a magical stone."

The polished blue gem was cut from a 29.6-carat diamond discovered last year in South Africa's Cullinan mine, which also yielded the 530-carat Star of Africa blue diamond that is part of the British crown jewels, and the Smithsonian Institution's "Blue Heart" discovered in 1908.

Sotheby's says experts took five months for an "intense study" of the original Blue Moon diamond, and a master cutter took another three months to craft, cut and polish the stone. The auction house said in a video that the Cullinan mine was the "only reliable source in the world for blue diamonds," and only a tiny percentage of those found in it contain even a trace of blue.

Blue diamonds are formed when boron is mixed with carbon when the gem is created. **AP**

AD

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THE PULSE EVER

VICE chairman of Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG), Francis Lui, believes that the next “wave of visitors” in Macau will “not merely look for a gaming experience but a more holistic experience including leisure and tourism.”

In an email interview with the Times, Mr Lui, 59, forecasts that in ten years’ time Macau will maintain its role as the world’s largest gaming hub while also becoming – as the government intends – the world’s “greatest and most well-equipped” center of tourism and leisure.

Macau Daily Times - It was recently reported that Galaxy Macau took the largest share of the gaming market in October. Is this the result of the Phase 2 expansion?

Francis Lui - We never looked at the market share as the only goal; instead, we think ROI [Return On Investment], margins, and non-gaming offerings are all equally important. Delivering healthy rates of investment return and seeking to further drive returns by focusing on attracting higher quality customers, maximizing utilization of assets, and increasing the length of stay have also been our objectives. We believe that the fluctuation of monthly results is subject to a series of market conditions, and as we have always said, we manage our business for the longer term and not on a monthly or quarterly basis. GEG’s strategy has always been to provide the best in terms of offerings as well as services, and we will continue to spare no effort in diversifying our products and to assist Macau’s development into becoming the ‘World Center of Tourism and Leisure.’

Galaxy Macau and Broadway Macau offer the most exciting and diverse attractions in Macau, which appeal to every member of the family. Our

Regarding inaccurate criticism of GEG and our business by one of the gaming operators, we regret that this has happened due to immaturity and arrogance.

**Q&A FRANCIS LUI
VICE CHAIRMAN OF GEG**

Galaxy’s upcoming phases to focus



Francis Lui

products have been well-received by the market; having been greatly encouraged by initial feedback expressing guests’ exceptional enjoyment regarding the concept of Broadway Macau, which consists of Macau’s first-ever street vendor style area with food and entertainment. We are also proud to have brought in many local food and beverage outlets while partnering with various local SMEs. Our performances at Broadway Theatre have also been well received, where tickets were fully sold out.

MDT - October was also the 17th consecutive month of gaming revenue contraction. The market in Macau is obviously going through a lot of changes and relying less on the VIP market. What is GEG’s strategy for coping with these changes?

FL - Focusing on active yield management, we continue to allocate tables to the highest and best use to enhance profitability. We allocate tables to various segments so long as they are able to push yields up, no matter whether they are in junket VIP, direct VIP, premium mass or mass business. We recently opened more tables at the premium mass and they have proven very successful. There might be a short-term

correction in the industry with less reliance on the VIP market, but we are already well positioned for the next wave of growth in mass and family entertainment. With an unrivalled range of shows, retail outlets, restaurants and the highly popular Grand Resort Deck, our focus is on growing a segment of customers who are looking for fun and entertainment.

MDT - Melco Crown just opened Studio City, and new gaming resorts are expected to reshape Cotai in the near future. Do you think that the competition between gaming operators is increasing?

FL - We always welcome healthy competition provided that it is new and innovative to the market, which is good for Macau. Regarding some inaccurate criticism of GEG and our business by one of the gaming operators, we regret that this has happened due to immaturity and arrogance. We hope that one day we will all learn to be respectful towards others and do what’s best for Macau instead of bad-mouthing other people. We believe that all visitors are wise and can judge for themselves who is doing the right thing, offering superior products and contributing to bettering Macau – for visitors as

“ We believe that non-gaming elements will take up a larger share of the market.

a tourist destination, and for locals as a harmonious city.

By providing elements that are suitable to the current Macau environment, we pride ourselves on continually exhibiting respect and humility while remaining focused on our business operations with clear goals in mind. We continue to proactively invest in diversified non-gaming elements and help promote the development of Macau as the ‘World Center of Tourism and Leisure,’ and our results have been proven successful. (...)

Achieving satisfactory performance, we will continue to ramp up the properties and open the remaining facilities, as we believe that the emerging Chinese middle class is rapidly growing, which would support the longer-term growth of Macau. Therefore, we have further diversified our non-gaming products in Galaxy Macau Phase 2 and Broa-

dway Macau, so as to be best positioned for the next growth wave of visitors, who do not merely look for a gaming experience but a more holistic experience that includes leisure and tourism.

We believe that non-gaming elements will take up a larger share of the market and we will strive to further enhance Macau’s positioning as the world’s favorite travel destination. Our non-gaming and family-oriented entertainment offerings are very popular, with Q3 non-gaming revenue for Galaxy Macau up by 92 percent year-on-year and 60 percent quarter-on-quarter. No new supply of similar scale and quality was available in Macau for the past few years. We will continue to refine our products to enhance our appeal and drive new visitations to Macau. The market is encountering strong headwinds; therefore, it is particularly important for all of us to pull together and contribute to ensure the continued success of Macau.

MDT - The Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lionel Leong, announced that Galaxy Macau Phase 2 and Broadway Macau will get 100 new-to-market mass gaming tables. The allocation of gaming tables has been controver-

on non-gaming elements

sial and Steve Wynn's remarks criticizing the system caused a stir. What's your take on this issue?

FL - GEG is grateful for the allocation of an additional 100 gaming tables granted by the Macau SAR government, which has always been helpful, understanding and transparent. We are very appreciative that we have been able to collaborate quite closely with them. We have been constantly committed to promoting the diversification of Macau's economy; the opening of Galaxy Macau Phase 2 and Broadway Macau in May has injected numerous non-gaming elements into Macau. At the same time, we have been proactively partnering with local SMEs, and are well-recognized and supported by both the government and the community.

MDT - **How do you envisage Macau in twenty years' time? Will the region continue to be massively reliant on gaming revenue?**

FL - The gaming industry is a main pillar of Macau's economy and I believe, under "one country, two systems", this position is unlikely to change in the coming twenty years and beyond. I am very optimistic about the future of the gaming industry in Macau. As the only legal gaming destination in China, Macau is the largest gaming entertainment market in the world that attracts both foreign and mainland customers. With the tremendous growth of middle-class purchasing power, we are very optimistic about the future of Macau's

With the tremendous growth of middle-class purchasing power, we are very optimistic about the future of Macau's growing tourism industry.

growing tourism industry, where there will be more diversification - not just in gaming - as customers will want a more holistic leisure, tourism and travel experience.

With this, our Phases 3 and 4 are expected to start soon and will mainly focus on developing non-gaming elements and on MICE, performing arts, and family entertainment. We hope to share more details with you in due course.

Compared to neighboring cities, there are around 60,000 to 70,000 hotel rooms in Hong Kong, 40,000 to 50,000 in Singapore and only about 30,000 in Macau, which shows that there is room for further development. I truly believe that 10 years down the road, Macau will not only be the largest gaming and entertainment city, but also the greatest and most well-equi-

pped 'World Center of Tourism and Leisure.'

To assist Macau's transformation, we have to add new elements to our existing offerings. The current market has numerous potential and opportunities, where there will be a boost in the development of the domestic market and cultural industry.

MDT - **Galaxy recently bought 5 percent of the shares of Societe des Bains de Mer et du Cercle des Etrangers a Monaco (SBM). What do you expect from this investment, bearing in mind that Monaco and Macau share similar characteristics?**

FL - SBM is a world-renowned operator of hotels and casinos in the Principality of Monaco, with a number of iconic hotel and casino brands. GEG is very excited to be making this strategic investment in partnership with one of the world's most respected, prestigious and globally recognized brands. This is a strategic investment into SBM shares and is the first step in an exciting partnership with SBM, and we look forward to working closely with SBM to our mutual benefit. We will be able to share more details on the potential scope for future collaboration in due course. We will also look at international opportunities, so long as they can enhance shareholder value.

MDT - **With the widely anticipated opening of the Hengqin border to Macau residents and drivers, the**

neighboring island will become more accessible. How does GEG see possible investments in Hengqin and what kind of projects do you think are appropriate to develop in the area?

FL - We are extremely excited about the potential of Hengqin. Our 2.7 square kilometer Hengqin project, located just across the river from Cotai, will complement and assist the growth of Macau. We will continue to work on our development master plan for Hengqin, where our project will meet the changing tastes of future consumers.

The Hengqin land, with approximately 2.5 kilometers of waterfront coastline, has great potential for GEG to build a world-class, low-rise and low-density integrated resort, suitable for the whole family without any gaming elements. We want to develop a truly world-class non-gaming resort to complement our high-energy Macau-based properties, and support Macau as it diversifies its economy and develops as a global tourist destination. We will share the details of the project in due course.

The Hengqin land consists of great potential for GEG to build a world class, low-rise and low-density integrated resort.

MDT - **In terms of corporate social responsibility, what are GEG's plans for 2016?**

FL - Since the launch of GEG, we have been striving to uphold our corporate social responsibility to our community. We are a Chinese-owned enterprise, advocating the philosophy that "what is taken

from the community is to be used for the good of the community" and hope that in developing our business, we will also care for the needs of our local society and our country.

We are actively involved in various charity initiatives financially, and participate in areas such as education, culture and sports, environmental protection, and promoting team members' well-being and volunteer spirit. With a focus on areas of need in Macau and our country, the HKD 1.3 billion GEG Foundation was established last year to reciprocate the support we have received from our country and the people of Macau. The GEG Foundation focuses on giving back to society by helping young people develop positive moral and life values, foster patriotism and ethnic identity, and enhance their understanding of the country and Macau.

We also see our involvement in sports development as part of our continual effort to promote Macau's social and cultural diversity. We have been title-sponsoring Macau Galaxy Entertainment International Marathon and FIVB Volleyball World Grand Prix Macau for twelve and ten consecutive years, respectively. (...)

One of the proudest things I can say is that our team members have also been affected by GEG's commitment to our society: we started a volunteer team in 2011 and now we have more than 1,100 members who allocate and sacrifice their personal time to participate in many of the charity and volunteer activities in the city, and have contributed over 6,500 hours to help those in need. In September, the 'Lui Che Woo Prize - Prize for World Civilization' was established to promote this optimistic attitude and to mark the 60th anniversary of KWah Group.

My father is a staunch supporter of traditional values that promote benevolence and peace; these tenets and his deep compassion for humanity inspired him to establish the Prize to extol those individuals or organizations who have selflessly dedicated themselves to the nurturing and enrichment of world civilization. **PB**

NEW OPENINGS 'VERY WELL RECEIVED'

THE EXPANDED Galaxy Macau and Broadway Macau have "created a new buzzing entertainment hub for Macau where the occupancy rates of Galaxy's six hotels were near full capacity," Francis Lui says. Galaxy's deputy chairman stresses that the new openings "have been very well received" and "visitation has increased significantly." "Our offerings are very differ-

ent from those of other existing properties; we have many unique features that are first in Macau and even in the world. Additionally, our new family-friendly offerings not only attract a new and varied profile of visitors to Macau, but our existing customers keep returning to experience more of what we have to offer - both at the product and service level," he adds.



Hengqin installs electricity grid to power port and theme park

The Zhuhai Power Supply Bureau of China's Southern Power Grid has set up three power transformer substations in Hengqin in recent years, while the company's 35 transmission lines have been connected to form a 20-kilovolt electricity grid. Hengqin's substations power the island's Chimelong Ocean Kingdom theme park, as well as the 24-hour customs clearance system used by Hengqin Port. "Considering grid planning and power supply services, Hengqin has carried out many innovations. Our workers often visit the projects in Hengqin and provide quality services for them door to door. Also, we work closely with the neighborhoods and help the local residents," noted a bureau official.

Luk Fook second retailer to issue profit warning



Hong Kong jeweler Luk Fook Holdings yesterday became the second retailer in the SAR to issue a profit warning. It said that its profits from the first half of the year may have slipped by as much as 40 percent, in advance of their official announcement on November 26. Luk Fook, which posted a first-half profit of HKD 804.6 million last year, said that declining revenues and margins were the primary reason for the plunge. Group Chairman Wong Wai-sheung said that higher rental costs also contributed to the decline. The seventh month of consecutive decline in retail sales also hit rival Chow Tai Fook Jewellery Group, who two days earlier announced that its April-September profits had halved due to low consumer spending. Sales of jewelry, watches, clocks and valuable gifts in September were 22.9 percent lower than the same period last year, the steepest year-on-year decline measured since June 2014.

Macau Legend announces staff cuts due to weaker earnings

Casino operator Macau Legend Development Ltd reported an 18 percent drop in its third quarter revenue on Wednesday, citing factors such as the local gaming industry's lower revenues, as well as China's anti-corruption measures and subsequent growth slowdown. The Hong Kong-listed company said that revenue for the third quarter was HKD 370.5 million, down from HKD 452 million a year earlier. In the same period, gaming revenue alone fell by 29 percent. A year-on-year comparison of revenues from the first nine months of 2015 showed a 22 percent slip, with revenues falling from HKD 1.37 billion to HKD 1.07 billion. In response to the weaker earnings, Macau Legend Development has announced that it will cut a total of 132 employees between October and November, equivalent to 3.9 percent of its workforce.

China-compatible e-money cards to launch in early 2016

Aries Un

Local smart card service provider Macau Pass is slated to issue a new range of cards next January, having joined the mainland authorities' ongoing initiative to unify all public transportation payments under a universal pass.

The company, formerly the issuer of the Transmac IC Card, said the new cards will require another month to enter circulation, as the relevant transport terminals will only be ready to process the new smart cards in February.

The cards will also make shopping easier for mainland tourists in the region. Cards bearing the City Union logo can be issued and used in any of the 72 cities participating



David Lao

We have taken care of locals' needs and now aim for mid-to-high-end tourists.

DAVID LAO
MACAU PASS

in the fast-growing initiative.

"It's now unnecessary to change currencies, and worries about [finding] change could also be reduced while shopping," said David Lao, Macau Pass executive deputy general manager, on the sidelines of yesterday's forum on the service and its benefits.

"We have taken care of locals' needs and are now aiming for mid- to high-end

tourists," he added.

Like the company's existing products, the planned electronic service will also extend to car parking, venue booking, dining, shopping and entertainment. After February, the company will modify terminals in other sectors in line with the new service model.

Lao also believes that the profitable market could bring

in more partnerships with other local firms and stores that may covet mainlanders' purchasing power.

City Union cardholders from across the border can now use renminbi to pay their bills in the territory.

In addition, the company aims to extend the service to locals frequenting the mainland, who need only pay the price of a standard Macau Pass in order to obtain the new card.

Shen Feifei, an official from the mainland regulator of digital techniques, told the media that China's move to unify payment methods could also create job opportunities, as the service requires skilled computer engineers to support operations and maintenance.

The authorities are also targeting Hong Kong for the collaboration. However, Shen said that it may take some time for the systems to merge, as the former British colony has already developed its own e-money card service – the Octopus card – which has been in use for years.

Beijing's network, planned as early as 2008, has been admitting cities in phases since 2012.

DSEJ to revise private school subsidy law following Audit report criticism

Aries Un

Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEJ) director Leong Lai, also the head of the supervising body for funds to private schools, said she would bear the responsibility to overhaul regulation and tighten oversight after a report by the Commission of Audit laid bare the bureau's oversight shortages in monitoring private school subsidies.

During a press conference at the public hospital yesterday, Leong Lai was asked if the bureau had any solutions to stop cases of eventual misappropriation of public funds by schools.

"Whether the bureau's management or members of the fund, we have always asked our colleagues to carry out [duties] according to the guidelines," said Leong in response to one highlight in the report that points to official negligence in allowing submission of documents for subsidies in the absence of receipts.

However, the authorities have already received all overdue receipts, the bureau head revealed, insisting that it



RENATO MARQUES

was a matter of "timeliness" since the schools were untimely in submitting their receipts. Leong also acknowledged that the law governing educational institutes' declaration of financial standing, which was introduced in 1993, was falling far behind the situation today.

She pledged to tighten a grip on governance and beef up training for her subordinates while overhauling the outdated ordinance and related guidance to make up for the misconduct.

Asked if she herself ought to bear a certain level of responsibility, the official stated: "As a public servant in whatever role, there's [my] own responsibility to

take. As a director, I firstly have to know how to face the incident in order to optimize the works in the future."

Leong strongly dismissed allegations that the bureau has taken a penalty-free approach to schools, explaining that punishment has previously been imposed on "educational institutes." However, she also said that only one school has ever suffered rejection of subsidies as a penalty.

IP PENG KIN TO SUCCEED LAI IENG KIT

THE CHIEF of the Secretariat for Social Affairs and Culture, Lai Ieng Kit, will leave his current position after his mandate ends on December 19. The official, who was appointed by the Secretary, hoped his departure would give him more time with his family. Ip Peng Kin, head of the Social Security Fund's administrative committee, will become Lai's successor.



MGM Lion Dance Championship Macau International Invitational 2015

14-15/11

The action-packed MGM Lion Dance Championship is celebrating its fifth anniversary amidst roaring cheers and claps! Following the success of the "Beijing International Invitational 2015" held on September in Beijing, the "Macau International Invitational 2015" will be held on November 14 and 15 at MGM MACAU Grande Praça. Watch in awe as 15 world-class lion dance troupes battle it out for the championship! Also keep an eye on the exhilarating "Women's Lion Dance Performance Competition" as well as the energetic performance by the graduates of the "Junior Lion Dance Training Program"!

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REAL ESTATE MATTERS

Who's looking after your staff ?

Renting a property can be a traumatic experience at the best of times

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



JULIET RISDON

www.JMLProperty.com info@JMLProperty.com

When we consider that many people arriving in Macau are also experiencing a high degree of culture shock, the stress levels go off the charts. It's hardly surprising that some people have such a difficult experience that they make an immediate decision to leave Macau ASAP. From the moment they set foot in Macau they are already applying for jobs elsewhere. The cost of finding, enticing, hiring, re-locating and training new staff is phenomenal, and very few companies in Macau are able to discuss staff retention with a smile on their face. Minimizing the stress associated with housing will not solve the problem of course. However, it does go a long way to making people feel more comfortable in their environment. If you have lived here for a

while, you may have already forgotten the amount of anxiety and stress caused by property related matters. The main complaints from new arrivals are:

- 1. We don't have anyone to communicate with who speaks our language.
2. We don't have bank accounts set up, making it impossible to pay rent, bills and transfer money easily.
3. We don't know who to contact to arrange repairs or improvement work in the property.

Of course there are many more issues, but these top 3 themes seem to re-occur in almost every conversation with new arrivals. Many employers have a

liaison person now who can help with these issues, but they may still fall short when it comes to property administration issues. Along with a few other companies, we started offering Tenant Administration services some years ago, helping companies and individuals pay rents and bills and offering an administration back up service. Despite putting the message out constantly, we still find that corporates and individual tenants are sometimes surprised to find these services exist, and whilst there are not many companies taking care of the administration and bill payments, they are out there. If you would like more information, let us know by e mail and we will be happy to share what we have with you.

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Tom Redmond and Yuko Takeo

LONDON isn't the only city with an iconic bus.

In Tokyo it's yellow, named after a pigeon, and should be a welcome sight to stock investors. That's because Hato Bus Co.'s seats are increasingly filled with Chinese sightseers, giving the company reason to be optimistic that the slowdown in Asia's largest economy will do little to stem the record visitors to Japan under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. While Hato Bus isn't listed, traders have flocked to tourism shares, a bright spot in a struggling economy.

"Chinese customers are still increasing," said President Yasushi Nakamura from company headquarters, hidden in a sprawl of factories and warehouses on land reclaimed from Tokyo Bay. Rows of lemon-colored buses stand outside the window. "It's not so affected by the economy."

Sales of Chinese-language tours surged 77 percent last quarter, six times the growth pace of ones in English, and bookings are up compared with the same time last year, Nakamura says. Hato Bus has been running tours around the capital since after the second world war, when its target market was western dignitaries with access to gasoline. Now Nakamura sees Asian visitors as its future.

Tourism is one of Abe's clearest successes, spurred by a weaker yen and relaxed rules on visas. The government's so close to achieving a target of 20 million visitors by 2020, the year of the Tokyo Olympics, that it's decided to set a new goal this fiscal year. In the nine months through September, 14.5 million people entered the country, already beating last year's record.

Stock investors have taken notice. Shares of Isetan Mitsukoshi Holdings Ltd., which operates department stores including in the famous Ginza shopping

All aboard Tokyo's famous yellow bus as China tourists surge



Hato Bus' sightseeing tour bus

district, soared 149 percent under Abe through Wednesday, against a 90 percent gain for the benchmark Topix index. Laox Co., a Chinese-owned operator of duty-free stores, surged more than 1,000 percent. A gauge of airlines has more than doubled, helped also by cheaper oil, as has Imperial Hotel Ltd., which provides high-end accommodation in the capital and Osaka. The Topix slid 0.1 percent yesterday in Tokyo.

Hato Bus, part owned by the Tokyo metropolitan government, was founded in 1948 amid the Allied occupation of

Japan. The word hato means pigeon or dove, and according to Nakamura, the company picked it to symbolize a peaceful Japan and the speed and reliability of a carrier pigeon. More than 90 percent of customers today come from within Japan, many from the regions.

Still, Nakamura sees Asian tourists as the company's biggest growth area. He says the company aims to more than double foreign passengers to 200,000 a year by 2020, and to focus more on Asia after the Olympics. Hato Bus started Chinese-language tours in 2006 and now has 26

such routes, according to the company's website.

"They really like Mount Fuji," said Nakamura, 61, previously a bureaucrat with the Tokyo government. He notes that more courses for Chinese tourists go outside the capital compared with those guided in English. "Shopping is also part of these tours and we have a dedicated shopping course for them," he said. "Part of our quality is we don't push them into shopping, but they request it."

Tourist cash is especially welcome as economists predict Japan will fall back into recession

Japan is ranked seventh in Asia for tourism, behind Malaysia, Macau and South Korea

when it reports quarterly gross domestic product on Nov. 16. Foreign visitors spent a record 1 trillion yen (USD8.1 billion) in the three months through September, the Japan Tourism Agency said last month, with Chinese visitors accounting for 47 percent of that.

"The reasons to favor the tourism theme remain in place: a durably weak currency, rising wages in emerging Asia, and active promotion of tourism by the Abe administration," Societe Generale SA equity strategists led by Frank Benzimra wrote in a note to clients on Nov. 6.

Societe Generale says the Japan tourism story is just starting. Government data also suggest room for further growth. Japan ranked 22nd in the world for foreign visitors last year, despite having the third-largest economy. It was seventh in Asia, behind Malaysia, Macau and South Korea.

In fact, if anyone thinks there are too many tourists from China in Japan, it might be the Chinese themselves.

Some of them moan that "Japan is full of Chinese," Nakamura says. "They ask to go to places with none. That's a difficult one to handle." **Bloomberg**

corporate bits

TURNTABLE VIRTUOSO HARDWELL TO PLAY AT THE VENETIAN

World famous DJ Hardwell will bring his decks and his high energy sets to the Cotai Arena at The Venetian Macao on Saturday Dec. 19 for one night only with the "I AM Hardwell - United We Are" show. Tickets went on sale yesterday.

Robbert van de Corput, better known as Hardwell, is a DJ producer and record label owner and has twice been crowned the best DJ in the world. The tour is to support his debut album "United We Are" which was released in January this year. It is his biggest tour to date and has seen the 27-year-old Dutch DJ play to sold out arenas across the globe as well as at every ma-



for electronic music festival. His weekly radio program "Hardwell on Air" is broadcast on more than 105 international radio stations and he has almost three million subscribers on YouTube.

MGM CHINA DONATES MOP500,000 TO TUNG SIN TONG

For the eighth consecutive year, MGM has supported the annual fund-raising activity organized by Macau Tung Sin Tong Charitable Society. On November 9, a delegation from Tung Sin Tong, headed by Mr. Chui Sai Cheong, President; Mr. Lei Loi Tak, Vice President and Mr. Charles Choy, Director, visited MGM Macau and were welcomed by Mr. Grant Bowie, Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director of MGM China Holdings Limited; Ms. Sarah Rogers, MGM China's

Senior Vice President of Strategy and Corporate Responsibility, and Ms. Irene Wong, Vice President of Public and Community Relations.

A donation check for MOP500,000 was presented to Tung Sin Tong by Mr. Bowie on behalf of MGM China, to support the society's community activities and charitable causes. During the visit, they exchanged their visions and expressed the ideas to help create a better society and future for Macau.

CITY OF DREAMS BECOMES FIRST MACAU HOTEL AWARDED THE OHSAS CERTIFICATION

City of Dreams said in a press release that it is the first hotel and integrated resort in Macau to be awarded the OHSAS 18001 Occupational Health and Safety Management Certification by the worldwide international certification body - British Standards Institute (BSI Hong Kong). City of Dreams was also the first in Macau to have received the HACCP food safety certification in 2011 and the ISO 14064 Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions Inventories and Verification in 2014. And Melco Crown Entertainment is the first resort-hotel company in Macau to receive the ISO14001:2004 Environmental Management Certification and Indoor Environmental Quality Certificate in 2012.

"I wish to dedicate this astounding success to all the team members

who have put tremendous effort in making all these possible. It took colleagues from 16 departments seven months of hard work from documentation, trainings to certification audit," said Mr David MacKay, Senior Vice President of Asset Protection from Melco Crown Entertainment.



Louise Watt, Beijing

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mainland gray smog has a blue lining: Air improves this year

LAWYER Wu Congsi has asthma and keeps air purifiers whirring away in his office, home and car to counter Beijing's hazardous smog. He prefers to stay inside unless the sky is blue. But this year, he's been able to regularly walk the 15 minutes or so to work.

That's because of some good news that so far has gone little noticed outside of China: The air in Beijing — and across the rest of the country — has improved so far this year.

Some experts, officials and observers see the improvement as the start of a long-term upward trend in air quality

"I just feel generally better in terms of the air quality," said Wu, 26. "At least so far, this summer and this fall, it's actually better than last year — just more clear days than previously. I might go out hiking or maybe just stroll around the parks."

Chinese official sources have cited the improvement, and U.S. Embassy readings have corroborated the findings.

China's polluted air is still largely hazardous to health — killing 1.4 million people a year, according to one recent study — and officials won't even guess when air will finally reach levels that could be considered healthy. But some experts, officials and observers see the improvement as the start of a long-term upward trend in air quality resulting from central and local government measures to lower pollution.



An air intake device collects air samples for monitoring pollution at the Beijing Municipal Environmental Protection Monitoring Center

"It's not just Beijing or one region," said Lauri Myllyvirta, who campaigns on air pollution for Greenpeace. "It's really widespread reductions in (levels of particulate matter and pollutants) across all of eastern and central China."

Myllyvirta said data on average levels of aerosols, or tiny particles, for the past 15 years from NASA satellites backed up the improvement in official readings.

"The fall from 2014 to 2015 was the biggest in that entire time series — and by a pretty wide margin at that," he said.

"So it's definitely been a very exceptional year for air quality."

The early success gives China a credibility boost ahead of a climate change conference beginning late this month in Paris, where countries are to hash out a global agreement intended to slow down global warming. Many are hoping that China, the world's top emitter of carbon emissions, plays a leading role in the negotiations, particularly as an example to other developing nations.

Yi Bo, an engineer at Beijing Environmental Protection Bu-

reau's air management office, said the capital had seen a drop in all major pollutants in the first three quarters of this year. That includes a 40 percent decrease in sulfur dioxide and a 19 percent decrease in PM2.5 — small inhalable particles that can penetrate deep into the lungs and are considered to be a good gauge of air quality.

"People make an effort and the heavens help," Yi said, evoking a Chinese idiom to describe what he said were the two reasons for the improvement: government efforts to reduce emissions and more favorable

weather conditions compared with last year, including more winds from the north.

Beijing sits in one of the most heavily polluted regions. Its main sources of pollution are vehicles, coal-burning, industry and dust from construction sites. The city government has been replacing coal-fired boilers with natural gas-powered facilities, raising exhaust emission standards and forcing older, more polluting vehicles off the road. It plans on closing or moving 300 polluting factories this year.

Yi said coal-fired power plants will disappear next year from the capital as its switch to gas power generation is completed, which should both reduce pollution and lessen the city's greenhouse gases blamed for global warming.

There is a long way to go. Beijing officials say the average PM2.5 figure for the first 10 months of the year was 70 micrograms per cubic meter — down 20 percent from the same period last year. But that's still double China's own standard of 35 and seven times higher than an annual mean of 10 that the World Health Organization gives as its guideline.

Daunting challenges also remain elsewhere in China. This week, the northern city of Shenyang had levels of PM2.5 particles that were more than 40 times the safety level set by WHO.

Yi said he expects Beijing to meet the central government-imposed goal of a 25 percent drop in the 2012 level of PM2.5 by 2017. Asked when city residents can expect to breathe clean air, Yi said: "I can only say that the air we breathe will be better and better." AP



Nancy Pelosi, left, speaks with Zhang Ping in Beijing

TIBET

Pelosi on rare visit by US congressional delegation

U.S. House of Representatives Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi has led a delegation on a rare trip by foreign politicians to Tibet, during a visit to China that included meetings with officials in Beijing.

Pelosi, the former House speaker, has been a frequent critic of China's human rights record, including in the remote Himalayan region where Beijing is accused of suppressing demands for

greater religious and cultural freedoms.

She was asked about her Tibet trip during a meeting yesterday with Zhang Ping, a vice chairman of the Chinese parliament, but her response was inaudible to journalists in the room. The Tibet visit was not announced in advance.

Pelosi made no direct reference to Tibet in her opening comments at the meeting with Zhang at the Great Hall of the People,

the seat of the legislature in the heart of Beijing.

"We consider (the meeting) an important one, to be with your distinguished colleagues, as we increase our relationship between the two Congresses and we'll talk about our two countries as well and the success of the presidents' meetings," Pelosi said.

The visit by Pelosi and six other Democrats was intended to focus on boosting trade ties, along

with talks on national and cyber security, climate change and human rights.

Pelosi has been outspoken on the issue of human rights throughout her nearly 30 years as a Democrat representing California in Congress. She last traveled to China in 2009.

Details about the length of the delegation's visit to Tibet and its agenda were not immediately available. AP

Amnesty: Use of torture uncurbed by legal reform

Didi Tang, Beijing

HIS arms were forcibly bent backward behind the back of a chair, and his wrists were so tightly cuffed that his hands grew swollen.

For 99 days in police detention, Beijing-based lawyer Yu Wensheng was interrogated about 200 times — often late into the night while he was in pain.

“It was so painful I thought it would be better to die than to live,” said Yu, who has represented civil activists and was detained last year by Chinese police on the charge of causing troubles.

The lawyer’s case is one example of how China has failed to live up to its obligations to comply with an international convention against torture, as documented by the human rights group Amnesty International in a report released yesterday — just days before a United Nations panel is scheduled to meet in Geneva to review whether



A Chinese paramilitary policeman stands guard underneath a surveillance camera at an entrance to the Number Two Detention Center in Beijing

China has followed through on its promises against the use of torture.

While Beijing is expected to tout how it has fulfilled its promises, Amnesty International says the country’s deep-rooted use of torture to extract confessions from suspects has seen little improvement despite measures introduced since 2010 to reform the legal system.

The report has echoed the same findings by the Human Rights Watch group in a May report, as both reports say the unlawful and inhumane practice

remains routine in China and that China’s efforts to reform its criminal justice system have done little to curb it.

Amnesty International came to the conclusion after interviewing 37 lawyers throughout China, analyzing 590 court decisions, and parsing judicial rules and procedures.

“For the police, obtaining a confession is still the easiest way to secure a conviction,” said Patrick Poon, a researcher at Amnesty International.

While torture is commonly used to force confessions from

common criminals, it becomes more brutal against political dissidents, social activists and religious practitioners, said Yu, who was released after he confessed to being a troublemaker.

“The practice of torture is commonplace and deep entrenched,” he said. “It fundamentally lies within a political system that has no checks.”

Despite regular accounts by victims, reports by international human rights groups and exposes in state media, Chinese authorities say the practice is waning or now non-existent.

In April 2014, Zhao Chunguang, a senior public security official overseeing police detention facilities, said there had not been a single case of coercing confessions through torture at the country’s detention centers following new rules aimed at preventing the use of torture.

When responding to the report by the Human Rights Watch in May, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying

told reporters that Chinese law prohibits torture during interrogations and that anyone found responsible would be punished.

Ministry of Public Security and Ministry of Justice did not respond to faxed requests about the use of torture.

In the report, Amnesty International says forms of torture include beatings, long periods of restraining the victims with handcuffs and leg-cuffs, sleep deprivation, withholding food and water, and denial of medical treatment.

In June, Peter Humphrey, a British man convicted of illegally obtaining information and later released on medical grounds and deported from China, told the media that Chinese authorities withheld medical treatment for his prostate problems to pressure him to make a televised confession in 2013.

Chinese journalist Liu Hu told The Associated Press in September that he was deprived of sleep when he was locked up in a detention center in Beijing. Liu never confessed to any wrongdoing.

In a written statement, Sophie Richardson, China director at Human Rights Watch, urged Beijing to be open about the routine use of torture at the upcoming review by the UN Committee Against Torture. **AP**

AD

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SOUTH KOREA

Court upholds life sentence for ferry captain

Kim Tong-Hyung, Seoul

SOUTH Korea's top court yesterday upheld a life sentence for the captain of a ferry that sank last year, killing more than 300 people, most of them teenagers on a school trip.

The Supreme Court upheld a lower court that sentenced Lee Joon-seok, 70, to life imprisonment for charges that included homicide, the court said in a statement. The court ruled that Lee committed homicide by "willful negligence," concluding he fled his ship without giving an evacuation order, although, as captain, he is required by law to take measures to save his passengers.

The court also upheld prison terms of 18 months to 12 years for 14 other crew members who faced similar charges of negligence and passenger abandonment, but weren't found guilty of homicide or avoided such charges because they were subject to Lee's orders.

A total of 304 people died when the ferry Sewol sank off South Korea's southwest coast in April 2014 in one of the country's deadliest maritime disas-



In this April 17 2014 file photo, S Korean Coast Guard personnel search for missing passengers aboard the sunken ferry Sewol in the waters near Jindo

ters. Most of the victims were from a single high school.

Lee and his crew members have been the targets of fierce public anger because they were among the first people rescued from the ship when it began badly listing.

Lee has said he issued an evacuation order, but many survivors have said they were repeatedly ordered over a loudspeaker to stay on the sinking ferry and didn't remember any evacuation orders before they escaped.

The court ruled there was stronger evidence showing that

Lee did not issue an evacuation order, and that he abandoned his duties as captain.

Lee's failure to take measures to save his passengers made it impossible for many to escape, the court said, meaning it was as if he had drowned them himself.

Divers recovered 295 bodies from the ship's wreckage and nearby seas before the government stopped underwater searches in November last year. Nine victims remain missing.

The tragedy touched off an outpouring of national grief and soul-searching about public sa-

fety. The relatives of the victims, angry that higher-level officials haven't been held accountable, have been calling for a stronger investigation into the government's responsibility for the disaster, which was blamed in part on official incompetence and corruption.

South Korea is paying \$74 million to a consortium led by

China's state-run Shanghai Salvage Co. to handle the difficult job of raising the 6,800-ton Sewol. The government expects the ship to be salvaged by about next July.

The relatives of the victims hope that raising the ship will help find the nine missing bodies and reveal what caused the ferry to sink. **AP**

HK JUDGES MAINTAIN TRAGIC FERRY CAPTAIN'S JAIL TERM

HONG KONG'S Court of Appeal has upheld the eight-year prison term imposed on one of the captains responsible for the fatal ferry collision off Lamma Island in 2012, local media reported yesterday. Lai Sai-ming, coxswain of the Sea Smooth, had been convicted of the manslaughter of 39 people in the National Day tragedy three years ago. His lawyer earlier asked for a shorter prison term, saying the judge had overstated Lai's negligence, and that he hadn't given sufficient consideration to other factors that contributed to the crash. But the court disagreed and concluded that the defendant's

conduct was a substantial cause for the deaths. The two-judge panel also said the lawyer had "rather missed the point" when she said Lai did not foresee or intend such terrible consequences. Anybody who pilots a heavy vessel with hundreds of passengers on board in the busy waters of Hong Kong must appreciate that any negligence on his part could run the "serious and obvious risk of loss of life." Chow Chi-wai, the coxswain of the Lamma Four, which sank minutes after the collision, was jailed for nine months in February for endangering the safety of others at sea.

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MYANMAR

Suu Kyi's party on verge of landslide win in polls



A street vender holds a calendar featuring Myanmar's opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi in a Yangon street

Vijay Joshi and Esther Htusan, Yangon

NOBEL laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's opposition party was on the verge of a formal victory yesterday, as continuing results from Myanmar's historic polls pointed to a landslide win for the pro-democracy crusader and a resounding rejection of military rule.

Attention was riveted on what has been called the "magic number" for Suu Kyi's party. The election commission announced more results showing the National League for Democracy party needs just 38 more seats to achieve the 329 seats it needs for a majority in the 664-member, two-house Parliament.

Elections were not held in seven constituencies, meaning a simple majority can be reached at 329. The NLD has won 196 seats in the lower house and 95 in the upper house for a total of 291. More results from Sunday's voting were to be announced later yesterday.

A party with a combined parliamentary majority is able to select the next president, who can then name a Cabinet and form a new government.

The military establishment has not formally conceded defeat but has acknowledged the massive success of Suu Kyi's party, and has pledged it will respect the final

election results.

Suu Kyi's party said Wednesday it received a message from Information Minister Ye Htut on behalf of President Thein Sein congratulating it for leading the race for parliamentary seats.

Ye Htut said the government will pursue a peaceful transfer of power "in accordance with the legislated timeline." He was not immediately available for comment.

Thein Sein is a former general who has led the military-backed government for the past five years.

The message helps ease lingering concerns that the military, which has a large influence over the ruling party, might deny the NLD power, as it did after elections in 1990.

It also means that Myanmar is likely to soon have its first government in decades that isn't under the military's sway. But while an NLD victory virtually assures it of being able to elect the president as well, Suu Kyi remains barred from becoming president by a constitutional provision inserted by the military before it transferred power to a quasi-civilian government in 2011.

Suu Kyi has declared, however, that she will become the country's de facto leader, acting "above the president" if her party forms the next government. **AP**

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AP PHOTO



Members of the PAME Communist-affiliated union protest outside the Greek parliament during a 24-hour nationwide general strike in Athens

GREECE

Clashes briefly break out at general strike march

Elena Becatoros, Athens

CLASHES briefly broke out yesterday between riot police and youths in central Athens during the first general strike since the country's left-led government initially came to power in January.

Youths broke away from a protest march by thousands as it passed outside parliament and threw Molotov cocktails at police who responded with tear gas and stun grenades.

Nearly 25,000 people had

been participating in three separate demonstrations in central Athens, according to police figures, protesting a new round of bailout-related tax hikes and spending cuts.

The 24-hour general strike has caused widespread disruption across Greece, with numerous public services shutting down.

Public transport was severely disrupted. The Athens metro and suburban railway shut down while bus and trolley routes were reduced and ferries remained tied up in port, severing connections between islands and the main-

land. More than a dozen domestic flights were also cancelled.

A march in Athens by a Communist-backed union gathered around 15,000 people, while 4,000 or so participated in a labor union demonstration and another 5,000 joined in a protest organized by anti-establishment and anarchist groups.

The clashes prompted demonstrators to scatter but calm soon returned after a few running scuffles through central avenues in the capital. So far, they are a far cry from the more violent and extensive

clashes that broke out in the recent past during general strikes and other protests in Athens.

Another 10,000 marched through the country's second largest city of Thessaloniki.

The main party in the governing coalition — Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras' left-wing Syriza — has shown sympathy for the strike. The party's department that deals with labor policy called for mass participation in the walk-out to protest "the neoliberal policies and the blackmail from financial and political centers within and outside Greece." **AP**

Bram Janssen and Susannah George, Sinjar

KURDISH Iraqi fighters, backed by the U.S.-led air campaign, launched an assault yesterday aiming to retake the strategic town of Sinjar, which the Islamic State group overran last year in an onslaught that caused the flight of tens of thousands of Yazidis and first prompted the U.S. to launch airstrikes against the militants.

Hours into the operation, the Kurdish Regional Security Council said forces were in control of a section of Highway 47, of one of IS's most active supply lines, completely isolating Sinjar from militant strongholds in Syria and northern Iraq. The Kurdish fighters also said they had secured the villages of Gabarra, on the western front, and Tel Shore, Fadhelya and Qen on the eastern front.

Some 7,500 peshmerga fighters were closing in on Sinjar from three fronts, the security council said in a statement. In addition to taking the town and the highway, Operation Free Sinjar aimed to establish "a significant buffer zone to protect the city and its inhabitants from incoming artillery."

IRAQ

Kurds reach Sinjar road, cutting IS supply line

AP PHOTO



Smoke believed to be from an airstrike billows over the northern Iraqi town of Sinjar

Heavy gunfire broke out early yesterday as peshmerga fighters began their approach amid aerial bombardment. An Associated Press team saw a small American

unit at the top of a hill along the front line calling in and confirming airstrikes.

The coalition said 24 airstrikes were carried out yesterday, striking nine militant tactical units, nine staging areas and destroying 27 fighting positions, among other targets.

"(Peshmerga) troops are holding their position, waiting for reinforcements and more airstrikes so they can then move into the center of the town. Airstrikes have been very important to the operation getting to the point where it is now," said Maj. Gen. Seme Busal, commander of one of the front lines.

Sinjar was captured by the Islamic State group in August 2014 shortly after the extremists seized Iraq's second-largest city, Mosul, and blitzed across northern Iraq. **AP**

RUSSIA

Kremlin-controlled TV airs 'secret' plans for nuclear weapon

AP PHOTO



President Vladimir Putin's spokesman says plans for a new submarine-launched nuclear torpedo shown on Kremlin-controlled television were secret and should never have been aired. The video broadcast on NTV and Channel One — shot over a military officer's shoulder during a meeting with Putin — showed a document describing a weapons system called Status-6, which it said would cause radioactive contamination to make coastal areas unsuitable for military or economic activity "for a long time." The channels later removed the footage. Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said late Wednesday: "It's true that some secret information was caught by the camera and therefore it was subsequently removed. We hope this will not happen again." The appearance of the video on Kremlin-controlled channels raised suspicions it was done intentionally to alarm the West.

MALTA

Saving Schengen travel zone a race against time

AP PHOTO



European Union leader Donald Tusk says saving Europe's Schengen passport-free travel zone is going to be a "race against time" after Germany, Sweden, Slovenia and other EU nations acted unilaterally. Sweden — with the highest number of migrants per capita in Europe — was reintroducing border controls yesterday. Tusk spoke yesterday at the end of a European-African summit in Malta to find ways to send migrants who don't qualify for asylum back to their homelands and discourage more from leaving Africa. Tusk warned: "Without effective control of our external borders, Schengen will not survive." He added "We must hurry, but without panic." Tensions were also high yesterday in the Balkans, as Slovenia continued to erect a razor-wire fence on its border with Croatia to hold back the migrant influx.

TV canal macau



FRIDAY

13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:30	RTPi Live
18:00	Trail of Lies (Repeated)
18:50	TDM Talkshow (Repeated)
19:20	Soap Opera
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:15	News
21:45	Miscellaneous
22:10	Trail of Lies
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Portuguese Movie
01:40	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)

SATURDAY

10:45	Boonie Bears S.2
11:35	Young Adult
12:00	Miscellaneous
12:30	Cooking
13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:30	Soap Opera
18:00	Non-Daily Portuguese News
18:30	Contest
19:20	Miscellaneous
19:50	Macau 360° (Repeated)
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	Drama
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Shorts

SUNDAY

10:30	Young Children
11:00	Sunday Mass
12:00	Miscellaneous
13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:30	Zig Zag
16:30	Young Adult
17:20	Documentary Series
17:50	Miscellaneous
18:45	Action
19:40	Comedy
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	Contraponto
22:00	Killing Christianity
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Non-Daily Portuguese News
23:45	Miscellaneous
00:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report

offbeat

INDONESIA USES TRAINED ELEPHANTS TO CONTROL FOREST FIRES

Forest fires difficult to control? Call in the pachyderm patrol. Officials in Indonesia are using trained elephants outfitted with water pumps and hoses to help control fires that have claimed vast amounts of forest while sending thick haze into neighboring countries.

For nearly three months, Riau province in East Sumatra has been blanketed by smoke from forest fires and land clearing, especially in peat-rich areas where flames are difficult to contain.

At the elephant conservation center in Siak district, 23 trained elephants are being used as "forest watchdogs."

Carrying water pumps and other equipment, elephants and their crews patrol burned areas in the national forest to ensure that fires don't reappear after smoldering beneath the peat lands.

Supartono, the head of the Riau Forestry Division, who uses one name, said the elephants had earlier been trained to help patrol forests to find people encroaching illegally, as well as to resolve frequent conflicts between wild elephants and people by driving the wild elephants that enter human settlements back to their habitats.

So far, Indonesia has been unable to put out the raging fires this year because of intentional burning and a rain shortage.

Much of the forest land that was burned in the past 17 years was converted into oil palm and pulp plantations. Data from the Riau Forest Fire Prevention Taskforce show more than 10,000 hectares of forests and land have been burned in the province.

Environment and Forestry Minister Siti Nurbaya says about 1.7 million hectares of forests and plantation land have been razed by fires throughout Sumatra and Borneo. AP

cinema



CINETEATRO

12 Nov - 18 Nov



007 - SPECTRE

ROOM 1

2.00, 4.45, 9.30 pm

Director: Sam Mendes

Starring: Daniel Craig, Christoph Waltz, Léa Seydoux

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 148min

SHE REMEMBERS, HE FORGETS

ROOM 1

7.30 pm

Director: Wong Say Ping

Starring: Miriam Yeung, Jan Lamb

Language: Cantonese (Cantonese/English)

Duration: 110min

RETURN OF THE CUCKOO

ROOM 2

2.30, 4.30, 9.30 pm

Director: Patrick Kong

Starring: Chi Lam Cheung, Chairmaine Sheh

Language: Cantonese (Chinese and English)

Duration: 86min



ARE YOU HERE

ROOM 2

7.30 pm

Director: Jill Wong

Starring: Nina Paw, Helena Law, Susan Shaw

Language: Cantonese (Cantonese/English)

Duration: 86min

OUR TIMES

ROOM 3

4.15, 7.00 pm

Director: Ding Sheng

Starring: Andy Lau, Liu Ye, Wu Ruofu, Wang Qianyuan

Language: Mandarin (English/Cantonese)

Duration: 134min

GO AWAY MR. TUMOR

ROOM 3

4.45, 9.30 pm

Director: Hang Yan

Starring: Fay Bai, Daniel Wu

Language: Mandarin (Cantonese and English)

Duration: 86min

MACAU TOWER

05 Nov - 25 Nov

007 - SPECTRE

2.30, 4.45, 7.15, 9.30 pm

Director: Sam Mendes

Starring: Daniel Craig, Christoph Waltz, Léa Seydoux

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 148min

this day in history



1985 VOLCANO KILLS THOUSANDS IN COLOMBIA

About 20,000 people are feared dead after a volcanic eruption in northern Colombia. Four towns in the Andes region are reported to have been buried when ash spewed out of the volcano, Nevado del Ruiz, causing a mudslide.

The worst-affected was Armero, the province of Tolima's second largest city, about 50 miles from the Colombian capital, Bogota. Armero, which lay in a valley below the 16,200-foot high (4,937m) volcano, was virtually destroyed - buried by mud and rubble swept down on to it.

The fatal eruption happened during the night when most of the town's 27,000 residents were in bed. Nevado del Ruiz, known locally as "the Sleeping Lion", had not erupted for nearly 150 years.

Even though it is located only 500 km from the equator, the volcano's summit is covered with snow. It had given some warning of increased activity - in recent months there had been some rumblings from the crater - but the authorities had told Armero residents it was safe to remain in the city.

The initial blast began on Wednesday afternoon when ash came showering down. An evacuation was ordered but abandoned when the volcano went quiet at about 1900 local time.

However, just after 2100 a more serious eruption began causing the summit's icecap to melt and carry mud and debris down the mountain at speeds of up to 50 km per hour.

The town of Armero lay in the so-called "Ring of Fire", an unstable area of the earth's crust encircling the Pacific Ocean which includes most of the world's active volcanoes. The Colombian government has appealed to the United Nations for help. However, rescue efforts are being hampered by fallen bridges and impassable roads.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The final death toll was estimated at 23,000. It was the second most deadly eruption in the 20th century after the 1902 eruption of Mont Pelee on the Caribbean island of Martinique which killed 29,000 people.

Following the 1985 eruption, Nevado del Ruiz remained active for several more years, culminating in eruptions in 1991 and 1992.

It was not the first time the volcano had caused deaths. In 1595, 636 people were killed after a mudflow swept down the mountainside. Another eruption in 1845 led to 1,000 deaths.

Around 50 years later settlers began to build the city of Armero directly on top of the hardened mudflow deposits. After the 1985 disaster the government declared the site of the buried city to be "holy ground".

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Use your sweet nature to help get your way today...

Taurus April 20-May 20 Too much of a good thing is still too much, so try not to overdo it!

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 This is a good time to collect your thoughts - things are just about to get crazy!

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Just when you think you've got it all planned out, an outsider wanders by and wrecks everything.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Your softer side is fully engaged, so you should find it easier to show your partner how you feel about them...

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 You need to keep your wallet - or at least your credit cards - at home today.

Libra Sep. 23-Oct. 22 You need to share your feelings of artistic appreciation with the community as a whole.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 You need to deal with information that only you seem to have noticed.

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 You need help understanding some complex information, possibly a legal contract.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 Bump yourself up to the front of the line today - as long as you can do so without riling up an angry mob.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 Your social life opens up in a big way. Maybe you hit it off with someone new and unusual at a party...

Pisces Feb. 19-Mar. 20 You have got to try something new today - you need to balance your friends, family, career and community.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Sudoku puzzles categorized by difficulty: Easy, Easy+, Medium, and Hard.

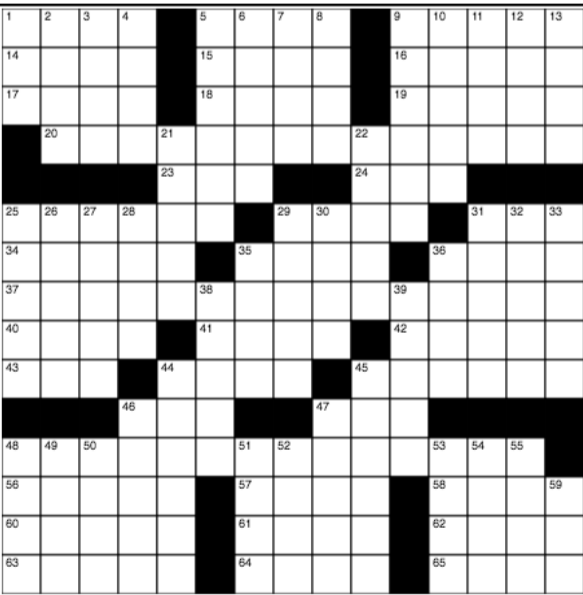
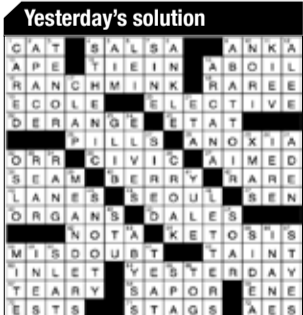
WEATHER

Weather forecast table for China and World locations, including temperature ranges and conditions.

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Small blemish; 5- Earn; 9- Steak order; 14- Humorist Bombeck; 15- "A Death in the Family" author...

DOWN: 1- Cinque follower; 2- Senior moment?; 3- Prefix with present; 4- Soviet news service; 5- Talkative person...



USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999; Fire department 28 572 222; PJ (Open line) 993; PJ (Picket) 28 557 775; PSP 28 573 333; 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



FOR SALE and FOR RENT advertisement for JML Property.

Real estate listings for Jou Fai Kuok, St Pauls Ruin's Macau and Tai Nin Macau.

Real estate listings for Dahlia Court Ocean Gardens, Taipa and Manhattan F Unit, Central Taipa.

Real estate listings for Va Fu, Old Taipa Village Taipa and One Oasis, Tower 3, Unit B Coloane.

Real estate listings for THE STUDIO Macau and Soi Cheung Taipa Village.

JML Property logo and contact information.

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DOPING

Russian Sports Minister Mutko rules out Olympic boycott

James Ellingworth, Moscow

RUSSIA has no intention of boycotting the Olympics. Russian Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko, speaking to The Associated Press yesterday in a telephone interview, said there will “not in any case... never” be a boycott.

The governing body of track and field is expected to rule today on whether to suspend Russia from competition because of the country’s doping scandal. That could be the first step in excluding Russia’s track and field team from the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

“Russia is against a boycott. Russia is against political interference in sport,” Mutko said. “Understand that Russia is a dependable partner of the international Olympic movement.”

Three days after a report commissioned by the World Anti-Doping Agency accused Russia of state-sponsored doping, Mutko also appealed for Russia’s track team to be allowed to compete, arguing that a blanket ban would unfairly punish clean athletes.

“It will be painful for those athletes with clean consciences who could compete, that’s the first thing. And the second thing is that it goes against the spirit of the WADA code,” Mutko said. “The commission itself writes about it in its report. It’s about protecting the athletes with clean consciences.”

During the Cold War, the United States and allies boycotted the 1980 Moscow Olympics in protest at the Soviet Union. Four years later, there was a Soviet-led boycott



Russian Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko

of the Olympics in Los Angeles.

On Wednesday, Russian President Vladimir Putin asked Russian sports officials to carry out an internal investigation into the allegations made in the doping report. Mutko said Russia would provide constant updates about its investigation.

“Practically every day, at the end of the day, we release some kind of information message about the steps we’re taking and we will continue to do that,” Mutko said. “We’re prepared to inform international society about the steps we’re taking, the investigation, the decisions.”

Also, Russian state-owned bank VTB said yesterday it would not extend its sponsorship contract with the IAAF, which expires this year, but denied it was because of the fallout from the doping report.

“We think that all the goals have been achieved regarding this. We have not planned to extend (the contract),” VTB first deputy president Vasily Titov told the RIA Novosti news agency. “No, it’s not linked to the doping scandal in any way.” AP

FIFA passes Sheikh Salman as election candidate

SHEIKH Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa was listed as an official FIFA presidential candidate yesterday, while Musa Bility of Liberia was left out after failing an integrity check.

FIFA announced the five declared candidates for the Feb. 26 election, with Michel Platini a potential sixth man. Platini’s candidature was not judged at this stage by the FIFA election committee pending his ethics case.

The five candidates are: Sheikh Salman of Bahrain, Prince Ali bin Al-Hussein of Jordan, Jerome Champagne



Asian Football Confederation President Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa of Bahrain

of France, Gianni Infantino of Switzerland and Tokyo Sexwale of South Africa. They are in the running the replace Sepp Blatter, who announced in June he would step down as president after FIFA was plunged into cri-

sis following U.S. and Swiss corruption investigations.

Sheikh Salman passed an integrity check by FIFA’s election panel despite protests filed by rights groups in Bahrain. Activists claimed Sheikh Salman took part in a process of abusing rights of athlete protesters during pro-democracy events in 2011.

The integrity check weighed “human rights violations” among “potential red flags,” which also included fraudulent behavior and match-fixing, FIFA said in a statement. AP

AD



澳門特別行政區政府
Governo da Região Administrativa Especial de Macau
澳門格蘭披治大賽車委員會
Comissão do Grande Prémio de Macau

Barrier Gates Closing Schedule for the Macau Grand Prix

The 62nd Macau Grand Prix will be held from November 19 to 22 this year. This major international motorsport event attracts thousands of visitors to Macau each year. The event plays an important role in the promotion of the local tourism industry, as well as enhancing the image of Macau as an international city. To a great extent, the success of the Grand Prix depends on the support and cooperation of the local residents.

To minimize disruption to traffic due to the closure of some roads, the Macau Grand Prix Committee has increased the number of the barrier gates along the circuit this year, to a total of 123. However, due to certain constraints, some roads will remain closed throughout the event. The Committee seeks the understanding of motorists and asks for attention to be given the closing schedule for all barrier gates, as well as to respect the temporary signage and instructions from the Traffic Authorities.

16th November (Mon)

Time	Street	Location	Access
15 : 00	Av. da Amizade	Exit from the garage of Hotel Grand Lapa	No Access
		Entrance and exit from the World Trade Center	
	Est. de Cacilhas	Depósito de Pólvora	
	Est. D. Maria II	Exit from the garage of Correios de Macau	
	Rua dos Pescadores	Exit from Macau Water	
	Av. da Amizade	Corner near the Casino Oceanus (Av. da Amizade - Avenida do Dr. Rodrigo Rodrigues)	
Exit from former Casino Macau Palace			
Est. de Cacilhas		Exit from the garage of the Chong Tou San Chong Garden	
		From the flyover near the Reservoir to Hoi Fu Garden	

17th November (Tue)

Time	Street	Location	Access
10 : 00	Est. de Cacilhas	Exit from the garage of the Cheng Pek Kok (Approx. 60m)	Limited Access
	Av. da Amizade	Exit from the garage of Edifício Seng Vo and Edifício Jubilee Court (Approx. 110m)	
15 : 00	Est. dos Parses	Exit from the garage of the Monetary Authority of Macao	No Access
	Av. da Amizade	Rua de Nagasaki (PJ)	Limited Access
		Corner next to the Hotel Landmark Plaza (Av. da Amizade - Alameda Dr. Carlos d'Assumpção)	
	Av. Ramal dos Mouros	Est. de Ferreira do Amaral (upper top of the pavement behind Hou Kong School)	No Access
Exit from work shop			

18th November (Wed)

Time	Street	Location	Access
10 : 00	Av. da Amizade	Amizade Bridge - exit to Av. de Amizade (100m)	No Access
	Est. de S. Francisco	Exit from the garage of the Public Security Forces Affairs Bureau	
15 : 00	Av. Ramal dos Mouros	Exit of the Reservoir overpass to Bagueio Court	Limited Access
	Est. de Cacilhas	Entrance to the opening of Seaview Garden	No Access
19 : 00	Est. D. Maria II	Main entrance of CEM	

Closing times and locations of the barrier gates on 19th - 22nd November:

- All barrier gates installed at the access to any public road will be closed from 00:00 until the end of the races every day.

The Committee seeks the understanding of motorists for the inconvenience caused by the construction, as well as to respect the temporary signage and instructions from the Traffic Authorities. For further information, please call: 2872 8482.

opinion

Bizcuits
Leanda Lee



HOPES FOR THE POLICY ADDRESS

Next week will see the start of the delivery of Macau's 2016 Policy Address by the CE followed by various sessions over subsequent days to explain the programme and answer questions. After that, the secretaries will take their turns to explain guidelines in their respective areas of responsibility through into December.

There has been a concerted effort to reach out into the community to offer easy access to the information about the SAR's direction: we can expect live broadcasts through TDM on both television and radio, numerous government websites, a mobile app produced by the CE's office and one produced by the Government Information Office. Being where we are, information would not be complete without WeChat. For the luddites among us, hard copies of the address will be made available and just to make sure that every household is aware that it's Policy Address time, we should also see brochures delivered to our mail boxes. The form looks functional.

As a resident, parent, investor, home and business owner and one that rides buses, drives the roads, walks the pathways and breathes the air, as another year goes by I have hopes, rather than expectations, of the Policy Address. The first hope is that it shall not be merely form over function or substance.

The policy address interests me because I want to know how the government intends to remove any obstacles to help me in my various life quests: to live sustainably in a clean and less wasteful fashion in a secure and safe environment; to have government and departmental decisions transparent so that I know where to place my efforts (or not). You will have your own list but gossamer clear criteria and timeframes for applications for blue-card quotas, residency, financial grants and various licenses would really help; to know that the playground of business will run on the same rules as yesterday or at least not be hit with too many surprises – the big boys in town have the means and methods but I am privy to only some of the ways to navigate the arbitrariness and reflexive decisions in Macau's bureaucratic environment. SMEs need a bit more guidance.

I hope to gain an understanding of the government's vision on the nature and size of the segments of our economy. By 2020 what proportion of taxation income do they see will be provided by mass/VIP/non-gaming offerings by concessionaires? What of the size of education, health-care, other entertainment, services, technology, creative and new industries...? More importantly, why these goals and how can both the SMEs and Macau's income tax cash-cows assist with the vision? I want to see a plan, a real one, not generalisations about "joining hands to weather the changes": numbers, timelines and a blueprint because with this I will understand where I fit in, where I can contribute and whether I still want to.

I hope to hear from the management team of our SARs how it all fits together because we don't make decisions in a vacuum. Macau's size and inter-relatedness means that significant changes in almost any area of our lives impacts upon something else – cross-over and spill-over effects are immediate and life-changing.

Most of all, I hope to hear how Macau managed to achieve the broad vision of last year, and the year before and 5, even 10, years before that. How are we going with the population policy, or the reviews of the public housing policy, the transportation network and reclaimed areas? Are we on track? Why, why not? What are the measures of success and evidence of efficacy of implemented policies? What of other research and studies; how have the findings informed policy decisions? And instead of detailing the meal allowances, subsidies and governmental largess to the needy, what are we doing to eliminate the underlying reasons for such need?

For me, more than the inputs, it is substantiated and enumerated evidence of success and failure in the review document that is key. Accountability and track record are important: through these we shall know how much of the 2016 address we can count on.

THE MACAU YEARBOOK
BUZZ ENGLISH EDITION LAUNCHED

The English edition of the Macau Yearbook 2015, published by the Government Information Bureau, will launch today. The 2015 edition is divided into four sections: the government's administrative priorities, event calendar, yearly review and appendices. The English edition has 609 pages and 196 photographs.

The bureau says that "meticulous efforts" have been made to ensure accurate translations of the names of organizations and locations in the edition. The yearbook is priced at MOP 120, or HKD 120, per copy. It will be available in

local bookstores and the Government's Public Information Centre at Rua do Campo from today.

The bureau said that the Chinese, Portuguese and English print editions would not be available starting from 2016. Instead, they will supplement the digital edition with new pictures and video content.



Station	Air quality
Roadside	25-45 Good
High Density Residential Area	50-70 Moderate
Ambient	45-65 Moderate

SOURCE: DSI/MG

WORLD BRIEFS



THAILAND Fourteen orangutans that were smuggled out of Indonesia and believed to have been put to work at tourist attractions in Thailand are sent home.

PORTUGAL Socialist leader Antonio Costa says he is available to take power immediately following the center-right government's collapse and promises to comply with the fiscal discipline required of countries like Portugal that use Europe's shared euro currency.

SPAIN The leader of a Catalan secessionist alliance promising to break away from Spain by mid-2017 failed again yesterday to get the backing of regional lawmakers for his re-election as president, posing a setback for the economically powerful region's independence drive.

S KOREA's top court upholds a life sentence for the captain of a ferry that sank last year, killing more than 300 people, most of them teenagers on a school trip. [More on p12](#)

VENEZUELA Two nephews of Venezuela's powerful first lady are facing arraignment in New York after being arrested in Haiti on charges of conspiring to smuggle 800 kilograms of cocaine into the U.S., people familiar with the case said. The arrest of Efrain Campos and Francisco Flores is likely to exacerbate already tense relations between the U.S. and Venezuela.

BURUNDI International leaders urgently called yesterday for a meeting of Burundi's government and opposition as fears continued that the African nation is at risk of a Rwanda-like genocide. The joint statement by the UN, EU and African Union came as the U.N. Security Council was set to vote on a resolution condemning increasing killings, torture and human rights violations in Burundi and threatening sanctions against those contributing to the violence.

THIRD-LOWEST AFTER HONG KONG AND MACAU

Korea steps up efforts to tackle declining birth rate

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A school group rests in the Olympic Park, Seoul

SOUTH Korea is planning to release a five-year plan in December with the aim of increasing the country's low birth rate. As part of this plan, the government intends to raise the average number of babies per woman to 1.5 by 2020 and 2.1 by 2045. Korea's fertility rate was 1.2 in 2013, the third-lowest in the world after Hong Kong and Macau, according to data from the World Bank.

Korea's rapidly aging population and low fertility rate have resulted in mounting pressure on officials in Seoul into putting together 200 pages of proposals on how to increase the birth rate. Some of the options being considered include providing public housing for young couples, campaigning in favor of marriage, and providing more support for

people seeking fertility treatment. One proposal even suggested local authorities arrange matchmaking gatherings for singles.

"The low birthrate could become a national catastrophe unless the government really acknowledges the significance of the issue," said Kang Hye-ryun, a professor of business administration at Ewha Womans University.

Fertility and ageing populations are common problems in many Asian economies as they develop. Japan, which enacted similar policies to Korea's proposals in the past, has been unsuccessful in tackling its population decline. Hong Kong and Macau top the list of the world's lowest fertility rates, turning increasingly to non-resident labor in order to boost their economies.

Meanwhile, in China yes-

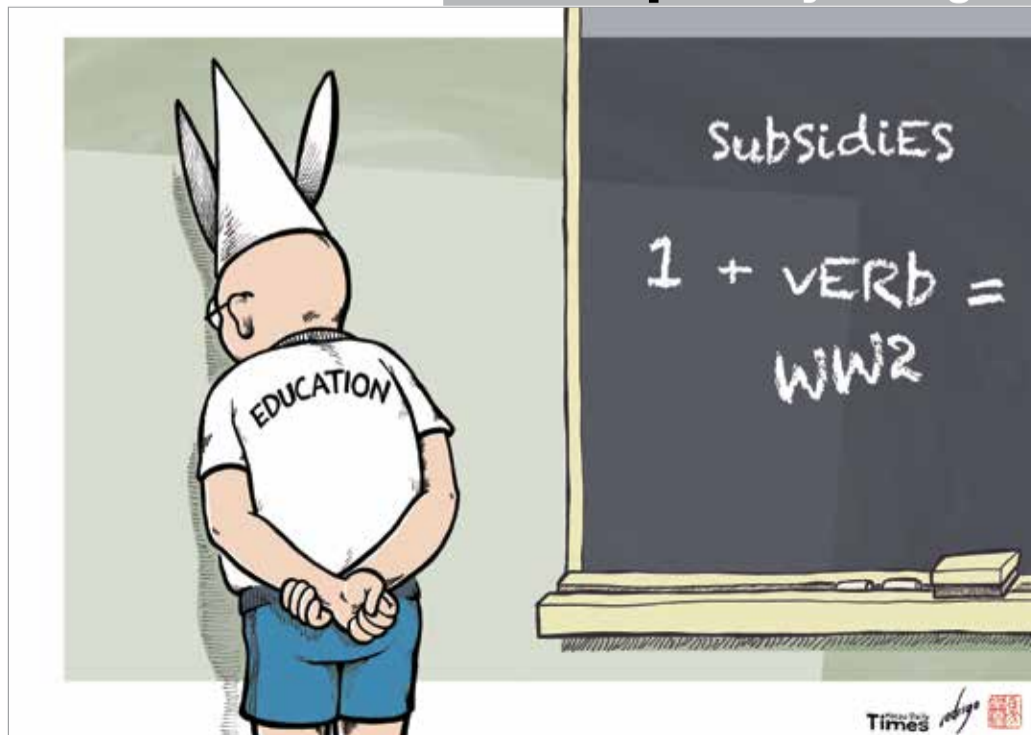
terday the State Council Information Office held a briefing on how to implement its new two-child policy. Authorities said at the briefing that the new policy could increase economic growth by around half a percent and provide China with an additional 30 million laborers by 2050.

Previous attempts by the South Korean government to boost the birth rate have been unsuccessful, despite the equivalent of USD 70 billion injected into government-sponsored programs since 2006. The birth rate (the number of births per 1,000 people) has fallen consistently since the 1980s, and in 2014 the BBC reported that the birth rate at the time was the lowest recorded in Seoul.

According to South Korea's largest daily newspaper, Chosun Ilbo, the government has struggled to boost the birth rate because most of the money is allocated to subsidizing childcare providers, instead of encouraging Koreans to have more children.

"Raising the birthrate is especially hard in Korea because of a corporate culture that does not support a work-life balance," said Lee Jong-wha, Professor of Economics at Korea University. **AP**

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