



CUSTOMS, MARINE OFFICIALS FACE GRAFT ACCUSATIONS

P5



MONEY LAUNDERING CASES UP

The Financial Intelligence Office found 910 cases of suspected money laundering transactions

P6



FOSUN CHAIRMAN REAPPEARS

Guo Guangchang spoke at Fosun's previously scheduled annual meeting, according to Chinese newspapers

P10

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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'"

WORLD BRIEFS

CHINA The reprieved death sentence of former railways minister Liu Zhijun was commuted yesterday to life in prison by the Beijing Higher People's Court. The Second Intermediate People's Court of Beijing sentenced Liu to death with a two-year reprieve in July 2013 for bribery and abuse of power. Liu has been incarcerated in Qincheng Prison since August 2013. The penitentiary last month proposed that his sentence be commuted to life in prison for good behavior during the two-year period.

CHINA-SWITZERLAND The World Intellectual Property Organization says China cranked out patent applications at a record pace last year. Its total of just under a million outstripped the U.S. and Japan combined. WIPO Director-General Francis Gurry marveled at China's "extraordinary" numbers. The Geneva-based body stopped short of drawing firm conclusions about China's 12.5 percent increase from 2013, to 928,000 patents.

AUSTRALIA An Australian court yesterday ordered Nurofen's owner to stop selling several versions of the popular painkiller that were identical to its standard ibuprofen pills but nearly twice as expensive. *More on p12*

PHILIPPINES Thousands of residents have been evacuated as Typhoon Melor slammed into the eastern Philippines, where flood- and landslide-prone communities are bracing for destructive winds, heavy rains and waves up to 4 meters tall. *More on p12*

More on backpage



FORBES CONRAD

WILFRED WONG EXCLUSIVE

'Competition is going to be very keen'

Paulo Coutinho

THE St Regis Hotel is opening without a casino this week in Cotai and Sheldon Adelson will be coming to town for the occasion. This will be the first major event over which the new President and Chief Operating Officer (COO) of Sands China, Wilfred Wong – the well-connected man from Hong Kong – will be supervising.

At first one may think Mr Wong, who has been recently introduced to Macau and to the gaming industry, is new to both. Not quite.

"I think my entry into this industry came as a surprise to many people. I don't have a background in the gaming industry, but when Mr Adelson and the management team talked to me, they convinced me that there are so many elements and components in this industry that I'm familiar with - the hospitality, the construction, the development, the F&B, entertainment, MICE."

Mr Wong is also currently Chairman of the Arts Council (HK), Chairman of the Inter-

national Film Festival of Hong Kong, and Chairman of the Asian Film Awards Academy. "So of all the components in the industry, the gaming part is the only part in which I have not had experience. The rest of them, I have been doing for the last 20 years as a developer, as a construction company, as owner of properties," Mr Wong explains.

Wilfred Wong has served in a variety of senior business roles, including chairman and CEO of Hong Kong-listed Hsin Chong Construction Group Ltd. A unit of that group – Hsin Chong Engineering (Macau) Ltd – is a key contractor on Sands China's USD2.7-billion Parisian Macao project. Wong has also held top management positions in a number of other companies in the property development and construction business sectors, including Henderson China Holdings Ltd, Shui On Group and K. Wah International Holdings Ltd – the latter a company linked to competitor operator Galaxy Entertainment.

Continues on page 2

Lawyer Pu Zhiqiang on trial in Beijing as police scuffle with protesters

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Continued from front page

"From Venetian to Cotai Central to St Regis to now the Parisian, everything is built by Hsin Chong," his own property development company, which at the peak had 1,000 workers on Cotai. It's a "long association" with SLC, but "I'd never met Adelson or Rob Goldstein then."

For Adelson, he's the right man for the job. "Wilfred has a unique combination of private and public sector experience which we think will be invaluable to the company at this point in our history."

Many saw this as political play giving the connections Wong has in Beijing and greater China - he was elected a member of the NPC 15 years from 1997 to 2012 and was also a reader of HK's Basic Law.

Mr Wong may have those "guanxi", but as it happens with every relationship, "it has to be cultivated, it doesn't come naturally. I know people in Beijing, but they may be doing different things, not in this area. I may know [some] government officials in Macau, but I don't know them well enough... Any relationship has to be proven. You have to show your commitment. You have to work. There's a lot of interaction and loyalty before you can have any relationship."

Mr Wong is looking forward to meeting the new "gaming boss," the head of the Gaming Inspection Office, Paulo Martins Chan. "I just read in the news about his background and his legal background. I think, he will probably have some strategy that will be slightly different from the past and we're looking forward to it, yes, and we're really looking forward to working with him."

Besides, Macau "is very good because I have started visiting different government departments and the China Liaison Office and all that and really just to give the message that, as one of the largest business entities in Macau, we want to play our part as a good corporate citizen."

Mr Wilfred Wong served top management posts both in the public and private spheres for over 40 years, and his tenure at Sands starts in difficult times, although the company still produces a robust return for investors "well over 20% for this year."

Sands properties, which comprises almost half of the global offer in Macau, are achieving occupancy rates of 80% in times of "crisis". That's why for the billionaire executive, the cap on visitation is worse than the cap on tables, "although all deterrent measures

MDT INTERVIEW | WILFRED WONG PRESIDENT AND COO, SANDS CHINA

'I think next year the overall pie



have their impact on operations."

Macau Daily Times had the opportunity to better learn about Mr Wong during an exclusive interview last week at his Venetian office, an austere but generous space with a personal touch: his paintings, his Silver Bauhinia medal and pictures of his two "kids". "They are always kids for us, right?" comments the paternal Wilfred pointing at the pictures of two young adults. Center stage in his office, he proudly exhibits a porcelain bust of Christopher Columbus. "He's always behind me.

Once you procrastinate, once you delay a decision, people panic.

Every time I move to a new land the bust comes along with me." And this is a new land, alright, that Wilfred Wong is sitting in.

MDT - How are you adapting to Macau and to the gaming industry?

WW- I'm lucky because I've always liked Macau. Even when I was in Hong Kong. I came very often. I like the heritage, I like the food, I like Portuguese food and I like Macau's. So that makes life

easy and also - I think so far - the people I've met from different sectors have welcomed me warmly and every visit to a government department has been very comfortable, very friendly.

MDT - And how are you adapting to the gaming business?

WW - I'm lucky, I have close to 27,000 people, very solid professionals in the field, particularly with the corporation based in Vegas, with a lot of experience and many of the people in charge here were from Vegas. So I have a very good team on the ground. I feel very comfortable. Every day I receive tonnes of reports covering different segments and analysing different data, which made my coming into this area very easy.

MDT - How often do you confer with Adelson and Goldstein?

WW - As often as needed. Probably once or twice a week. Goldstein probably more often, but Mr Adelson, not less than once a week. So I would be talking to him on what happened in the last few days, on what are the problems that we're encountering because he's the Chairman and CEO so I need to talk to him and let him know that everything is running fine on the ground.

MDT - You took the helm at a difficult time, in a downturn of revenues. How good

are you at crisis management? Do you understand this as a crisis in the industry?

WW - No, we live in a world of crisis. So when you live through this, it becomes a non-issue. Every day you see all this news in the world and everybody is trying to handle crises. The best way to look at crises is to look at them as part of life and that has always been my philosophy in my 40 years of working life. I have actually worked for 40 years: 17 in the public sector in Hong Kong, [with the] British Hong Kong government, and 23 in the private sector in Hong Kong and China. So 40 years of experience taught me that whatever happens, I am the one who has to remain calm and stable. As the top man in any organisation, when there is a crisis, you are the one who will inspire confidence if you remain calm and you go through all the problems and try to find the solution and the solution has to be immediate. Once you procrastinate, once you delay a decision, people panic. So I keep telling everybody that I'm here to make decisions. I know the buck stops here and I would like people to know that they can always come to me with a problem.

MDT - Your predecessor here, Mr Tracy, he had this vision (and I quote) "to put out the good word about Macau" to the world, by bring-

ing over to the Venetian, world class acts and celebrities. From the Rolling Stones to Kevin Spacey, Nick Cage; from Beckham to Manny Pacquiao... So in a downturn, is this still your vision, knowing non-gaming entertainment is not a great contributor to the bottom-line?

WW - No, I think as an international tourist attraction, we need to continue bringing world class acts to the property. This is not just for our own benefit, but really for Macau, for our publicity overseas, and [for] all that in a downturn of the economy one has to be more budget conscious. So we are now examining all acts and the bottom-line more carefully. I'm not saying that we were not, but we would be very careful. We'll still work with big names, but maybe with more people who appeal to the population, who appeal to the masses. For example, Korean performers, Cantopop singers or Beijing, China singers. So these are the people that we would be staging more because of the visitors. They're mainly from China so, we need to adapt more to their taste, but we're also bringing in, for example, next year, the Philadelphia Philharmonic Orchestra with Lang Lang. So those are the world-class performers we'll continue to bring in... We are going to open the Monkey King in one of our theatres on a long running basis. It's a resident show, one of the best original resident shows.

MDT - But do you agree the money is not there? It's at a cost.

WW - Well, in the entertainment you don't look to make a lot of money. I think it's really the impact. For us, it's neutral. We're at least trying to make it neutral overall. So it's not coming at a cost to us.

MDT - Do you intend to continue with the boxing, because Macau turned into "the capital of boxing" every time the likes of Manny Pacquiao came here?

WW - If the opportunity is there, we will look at it... Boxing is a big expense item and we will have to look at the pros and cons of doing it.

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is not going to shrink'

MDT - Is Macau's government being helpful to the industry? In the sense that the gaming industry is the engine of everything else and is the major part of this economy, do you think the Macau policies are helpful?

WW - I think the Macau government is undoubtedly fully aware of the contribution of the gaming industry and that's why, in the latest Policy Address the Chief Executive, despite what everybody said, he still puts the revenue at about MOP200 billion. What the government needs to do and is hoping to do now of course, is to try to promote Macau more as a tourist destination to diversify the economy away from the predominant gaming industry. We as concessionaires [have to ask] how we work with the government. When the policy is there, when the strategy is there, they are for the overall good of Macau. We as concessionaires who are operating in this environment, have to consider how we work with it. I think that's the approach I would adopt.

MDT - And the profits are still there. The expected net income for 2015 is USD1.5 billion. So what is your message in terms of return of investment to the shareholders and investors?

WW - I think we're still looking at a reasonable and healthy return to the investors. The return on investment is still above the 20% mark, well above. Of course, we're not as good as maybe two years ago when we hit the peak. It's now 18 months on a downward trend, but together with the other concessionaires, we believe that we are reaching the bottom because all the figures are telling us that it's stabilising and even the analysts are predicting that next year is not going to see a dramatic decrease in the revenue, and judging from the visitations we have, judging from our own figures, I think next year the overall pie is not going to shrink, but the competition is going to be very keen. So next year is going to be a real challenge for all of us because so many new properties are coming to completion. Now, it has its challenges because we each have to put in our best, but it also means that we are trying to improve Macau as an attraction with more new properties. So hopefully, if the government and we all do the right thing, do the right promotion, we could bring in more visitors to grow the pie.

MDT - There are some issues, for instance the cap on tables, limits on visitation, the full smoking ban. Which

of the three affects Sands China's interests the most? Adelson was very critical of the cap on visitation when he was here last time.

WW - I think cap on visitation is definitely the most important because if you have more people, the pie is bigger, and it's easier for everyone. I think on the cap on the tables, we can always redeploy some tables from here and there. All of us are trying to do that when we open new properties and less tables are given. We will try to look at our own stock and see what we can do.

MDT - So that's what you're going to do if you get 250 tables or so for the Parisian?

WW - Of course, we are hoping that the government would help

“ [St Regis] has no casino. So it's a pure 5-star hotel and we hope that there will be more families coming.

us by giving as many as possible, but we understand there's a limit to how many the government can allow. So we're looking at how we can rationalise everything with the opening of the operation. In terms of smoking lounges, I think if there is a complete ban, it will be a serious hit and that's why all the concessionaires are now trying to work with the government on improving the standards of smoking lounges to the highest level and that would be to protect all the clients and the workers. So this is our goal. So I think it's right now going through the Legislative Assembly. All the six concessionaires have worked together and the Legislative Assembly is looking at it.

MDT - Gone are the days of the 'build it and they will come'. How many years do you expect the so-called Cotai 2.0 will take to break even and return a profit? Two, three, five years? I mean as a whole, and in particular the Parisian.

WW - I think we are probably the best covered, in terms of segments of the market. So we have at the top, Four Seasons and St Regis now. Then we have Conrad, we have Holiday Inn, Sheraton

and we'll have Parisian. The Parisian is really trying to cover the more demised market, the big groups that are coming in because the rooms are smaller, but it also adds another 200 retail shops. So hopefully this will create another destination in itself. Depending on the economy, I would have hoped that the Parisian will be another success for us.

MDT - Also, you're not exactly in a hurry considering the market condition...

WW - No, it's not like that. We look at things as 'business as usual'. Whatever pace it should take, it should just be natural. We're not forcing it, we're not delaying it, we're just [taking it as] work as usual. That's the approach we have adopted so far.

MDT - We are a week away from the St Regis opening. So what are your expectations for this?

WW - St Regis is going to be one of the top brands in our whole portfolio together with Four Seasons. So we will probably see many of our high rollers and mass premium clients coming to stay there, but it's not a big number. It's about 400 rooms. So basically, this adds a very interesting dimension to our whole portfolio. This hotel has no casino. So it's a pure five star hotel and we hope that there will be more families coming in because of that and really, people who can afford top end. [People] who can afford to spend money in our retail shops, the F&B, the entertainment, they would use this hotel.

MDT - Speaking of that, the VIP segment has been hit more than the mass. Sands China has more of a balanced operation between mass and VIP, but do you foresee that the VIP model of the past is gone?

WW - No, I think it would stay for a while.

MDT - Junkets are saying that they can only collect 30% of their debts in China, against 70% before.

WW - Yes, I think depending on individual operators. There are obviously people who can collect better and people who are less comfortable, but as a whole, we are very prudent in extending our credit to these operators. So we adopt a very prudent approach. We have been reducing the exposure.

MDT - Using due diligence?

WW - Yes, we do due diligence. Even with our top operators, we have been reducing their ex-

posure. Basically because of the downturn in the market, they don't need that much credit. So on a mutual basis, we have been reducing our exposure. I think the junket operator is a unique feature of Macau and it will stay for some time. It would not be healthy if they all disappeared overnight. So it will be an adjustment in the balance.

MDT - What is Sands China's promotional strategy for the mainland?

WW - We can never promote the gaming element in China and therefore, any promotion in China, even for our other properties is non-gaming: it's the retail, it's the hotel. So I think for the Parisian right now, our promotion is that we're adding another very attractive tourist attraction, an Eiffel Tower, which is half the size of the real one and that we will have a French restaurant at the top of the Eiffel Tower. This becomes a must-see because recently, I was told that the Venetian is the second most recognisable attraction in Macau - the first is the St Pauls Ruins - and I am hoping that Parisian will become number three.

MDT - The Eiffel Tower, yes. But you don't want to surpass the St Paul's Ruins?!

WW - They've been there for hundreds of years. Let's be modest. [Laughs]

MDT - Do you feel that Xi Jinping's leadership supports gaming in Macau? Do you agree that Mr Chui Sai On has a clear mandate to lower the weight of gaming and the visibility of gaming in Macau?

WW - I think Mr Xi Jinping has a full understanding of the

operations of Macau. Of course, really the whole central government knows. So the mandate for the gaming industry in Macau will stay and that's why even though now they are trying to shift to other areas of economic activity, they are still looking at the gaming industry as a main pillar. That will not change, that will not change. But I think what the Macau government wants to do, is to make sure that over time, they are less reliant on the gaming industry and I think that's the right thing to do.

MDT - Yet, that never happened.

WW - You must remember, Macau only started to become very prosperous in the last ten years. So in the past, many years ago they didn't have the resources to do it. Now, I think the government has a lot more resources at their disposal and by talking to the government departments, I can see a stronger sense of direction in where they are going, what they are trying to do and they really have the resources to do it.

MDT - Hengqin. Do you have any plans to invest in Hengqin?

WW - We have no plans in Hengqin at the moment, although it is close. I think it's going to be, in time, with the limitation in space in Macau. And of course, even though Macau may reclaim some land from the sea, it's going to take time. So Hengqin will be a very good support base for Macau in its back-office operations or for the spill-over of tourists. Now we see some very attractive tourist facilities there.

MDT - Do you think Macau will benefit?

WW - Overall, yes. Because if you look at tourist patterns, normally when people come to the Pearl River Delta, they don't want to just stay in one place, especially if you've come with a family, you travel from destination to destination. So the more Hengqin develops, the better it will be for Macau.



Consulasia to review LRT depot project



The LRT trains are currently stored in Japan because of the depot construction delay

The firm Consulasia, which was established in Macau back in 2002, will review the troubled LRT depot project. According to the contract, published yesterday in the Official Gazette, the company will be paid around MOP35 million for the works to be performed between 2015 and 2019. About MOP14 million are related to this year, with the bigger slice (MOP17.5 million) to be delivered during 2016. In 2019 the government will deliver a final payment of MOP3.5 million. It was announced last week that given the major delays on the construction of the LRT depot, the government has reached an agreement with Mitsubishi, the manufacturer of the trains. The Japanese company will store and maintain the "Ocean Cruiser" trains, which will run on the LRT railway after its completion. The delay will cost local authorities up to MOP700 million.

SECRETARY for Security Wong Sio Chak said that local police will continue talks with their mainland counterparts about the details of a new entry-exit system initially planned exclusively for the future Duck Channel checkpoint.

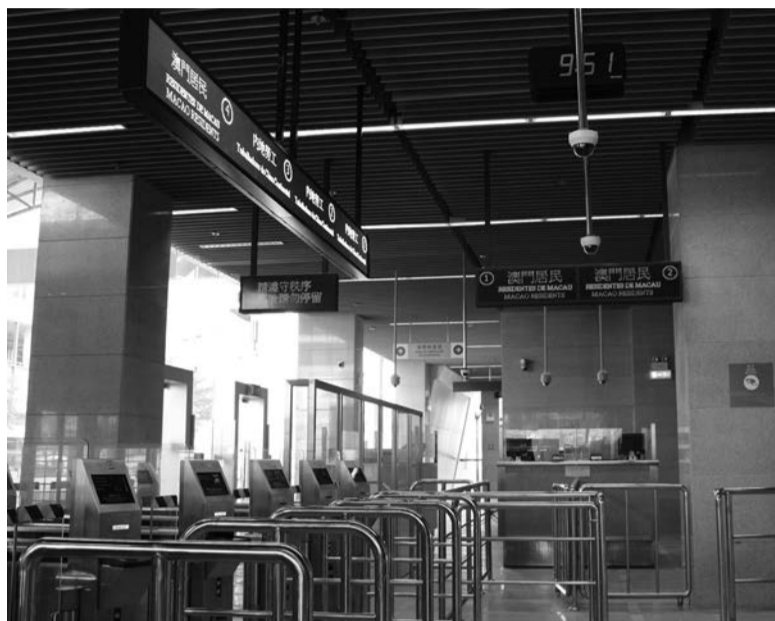
Wong added that the government would ensure that the new system will comply with the Macau Basic Law and that no mainland law enforcement officers will be allowed to operate on the Macau side.

The new system is informally known as 'two borders, one check'. The Public Security Police (PSP) announced earlier this year that the two sides would set up automated immigration facilities straddling the land border at the future 'Duck Channel' checkpoint, as well as "one or two traditional immigration clearance counters".

The PSP also said the local government had been in talks with the central government about the new system, which would only require one immigration check for Macau residents of Chinese nationality when travelling to, or returning from, the mainland via the checkpoint. Residents now need only to show their Home Visit Permit when entering the mainland, and their local ID (BIR) when returning to Ma-

BORDER SECURITY

Mainland law enforcers barred from MSAR side



cau. Local residents without a Home Visit Permit, such as foreign nationals who have acquired local residency status, cannot use the automated clearance facilities.

Community leaders, lawyers and academics have raised con-

cerns about potential privacy issues and grey areas resulting from the differences in both sides' legal systems.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the 'March of a Million' charity event, Wong said that the local police wou-

ld discuss further details of the system implementation with their mainland counterparts today.

"We will consider the possible problems associated with the legal implementation and the Macau Basic Law," Wong said, adding that law enforcement officials from the mainland would be barred from enforcing mainland laws on Macau's side of the checkpoint, and vice versa.

Probed by reporters about locals' personal data being unprotected – as the system will automatically record data on both sides of the border – Wong pointed out that some private information is already given to the mainland authorities upon application for the Home Visit Permit.

However, he added that both parties would give due consideration to the nature and amount of personal data that will be accessible from either side. **MDT/Macauhub**

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CCAC

Customs, Marine officials face graft accusations

RENATO MARQUES



A Macau Customs Service (SA) inspector was found to have accepted bribes from an individual who was allegedly active in casinos and who requested that the inspector use

his powers to set his client free from detention.

According to a press release from the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC), the Customs inspector had allegedly facilitated the release of an in-

coming passenger at the Cotai checkpoint, who had been intercepted for carrying cash exceeding the statutory amount.

The suspect, surnamed Lok, then made contact with the requester through a middleman

and the chief officer of the Macau Prison. Having accepted the bribe, he released the detainee under his authority.

The Macau Prison chief, surnamed Wong, also faces prosecution. The Times reported

in March that Wong was taken into custody and was later suspended from public duties whilst under investigation from the CCAC.

CCAC yesterday uncovered another case involving a Marine and Water Bureau official, who had allegedly committed passive corruption to perform illicit acts and abuses of power.

During its investigation into the case involving a leader of the Marine and Water Bureau, the CCAC discovered that yet

A Macau Prison chief also faces prosecution

another bureau chief had, between 2012 and 2015, repeatedly abused his powers to solicit and receive illicit benefits from a person in charge of a ferry services company. The second chief's benefits included free ferry tickets, hotel accommodation and food and beverages. He had allegedly asked the company to secure jobs for his relatives and friends, and to reserve shops at the Outer Harbor Ferry Terminal for them to ply their trade.

CCAC said the suspect had abused his position on multiple occasions to conceal the ferry services company's irregular practices, as the latter did not comply with the regulations set by the Marine and Water Bureau.

ARTS

US collection features photo of Macau-style structure

WASHINGTON D.C.-based photographer Mark Parascandola is currently presenting his new photography collection, "China Film," at the BlackRock Center for the Arts in Washington D.C., U.S., as part of an exhibition entitled "Washington Produced Artists."

The collection features a photograph of an Iberian-style structure that some believe may represent Portuguese-ruled Macau.

Parascandola is known for his photographs of abandoned film sets in Spain's southern Almeria area. His latest exhibition has taken him to Chinese movie studios near Shanghai, where the busy content of his images – populated this time with human presence – contrasts with the barren and empty shots of Almeria's film sets.

According to the Washington Post, the exhibition features a range of interesting shots of film sets. One picture shows a real building poised behind hollow, fake structures, which are widely used in filming locations.

Another photograph features an im-



"Places!, Hengdian World Studios," 2015 photography

perial palace, while a third shows a drawing of Chairman Mao.

A photograph of a Westernized mid-century Shanghai film set, thought to depict a 1930s-style Nanjing Road, is also included in the collection. The Nanjing Road construction consists of several blocks of Shanghai's famous shopping district, with a histo-

rical street signs in English.

The Washington Project for the Arts (WPA) is holding the exhibition to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the group's inaugural exhibition. The collaborating artists consist of individuals from the D.C. metro area who have previously worked in conjunction with the WPA on significant artistic creations.

Gov't unwilling to revise Land Law

THE Secretary for Administration and Justice, Sonia Chan, said last Saturday that, without an evaluation of the legislation, the government is not considering a review of the existing Land Law. The secretary recalled that the current law only recently came into force in March 2014.

Asked to comment on topic as it relates to the "Pearl Horizon" case, Sonia Chan stressed that, "Considering the legal framework of the Land Law and other legislation, the government has already taken a decision on the case, and in the short term has no plans to revise the Land Law."

The secretary reiterated, "The government will follow the current law on this and other potential cases of land lease expiration."

However, Ms Chan said that the administration is open to cooperating, in case the legislators at the Legislative Assembly decide to present a project for revising the law.

Questioned on the possibility of some lawmakers being in the process of preparing a project for a legal review, lawmaker Fong Chi Keong admitted that issuing a proposal to change the law is a possibility, since several other legislators are of the same opinion.

RENATO MARQUES



Suspected money laundering on the rise

MACAU authorities registered 910 cases of transactions between parties suspected of money laundering, as well as of financing terrorism, up to June this year.

This figure represents a year-on-year raise of 3.8% compared to 2014, according to data from the Financial Intelligence Office (GIF). Lusa reported that a total

of 60 cases were sent to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) for investigation.

The gaming industry is the sector responsible for the most cases (682 or 74.9% of the total), followed by the financial sector, banking and insurance companies (219 or 24.1%).

This figure has been rising since 2007, having peaked in 2012 when 1,840 cases were registered. The number di-

pped in 2013, only to rise again with a total of 1,812 cases.

Sectors such as the casino industry are required to report to the authorities any transaction equal to or more than MOP500,000.

In order to effectively enforce the law on this matter, the US Department of State has proposed that the above amount be increased to USD3,000 in order to com-

ply with international standards.

The local government already stated in the 2016 Policy Address that it has plans to review the Law for Prevention and Suppression of the Crime of Money Laundering, which has been in force since April 2006. However, no proposals related to the lowering of this "ceiling" have been brought forth.

Authorities unveil locations of flats for civil servants

THE government announced yesterday the locations of its housing units available for rent to civil servants. However, the Macau Chinese Civil Servants' Association expects that the offered flats will not see great enthusiasm from bidders.

It was previously announced that the authorities would launch a tender for the 110 apartments they currently have and their details would be available by the end of the year. 24 flats are reserved for civil servants classified as "technical staff", while the remaining ones are for those below that level.

The criteria set for applicants may explain the possible low enthusiasm as the tender only accepts civil servants regarded as "employed staff" who do not own properties, nor their family members.

Three years ago, up to 160 flats had already been rented out through a similar tender. It remains unknown when exactly this year's process will be initiated. A lack of land available for development in the territory also makes it hard for the authorities to introduce more accommodation for public servants, although there has always been sufficient demand.

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Yuan declines to four-year low as new index signals weakness

Fion Li

CHINA'S yuan fell to a four-year low after the central bank said the currency shouldn't be measured by its moves against the dollar alone, a statement that is being interpreted as a sign it will allow further declines.

Exchange rates are a reflection of trade and investment with multiple countries and the market has to take into account the yuan's fluctuations against a basket of currencies, the People's Bank of China said on Friday. The China Foreign Exchange Trade System, which is run by the PBOC to facilitate interbank trading, published a new yuan index composed of 13 currencies, with the dollar accounting for 26.4 percent.

The yuan dropped 0.06 percent yesterday to close at 6.4591 a dollar in Shanghai, according to CFETS prices. It earlier declined to 6.4665, the weakest since July 2011. While the currency has retreated 3.9 percent against the greenback this year, it has advanced against 11 of 16 major currencies tracked by Bloomberg. The PBOC yesterday cut its reference rate by 0.21 percent to a four-year low of 6.4495.

"The latest move suggests the PBOC will allow weaker yuan fixings," said Tommy Ong, managing director for treasury and markets at DBS Hong Kong Ltd. "The yuan is also under pressure as the U.S. is likely to hike rates this week."

The central bank has lowered the reference rate, which limits the onshore currency's mo-



ves to 2 percent on either side, on eight of the 10 trading days since winning reserve-currency status at the International Monetary Fund on Nov. 30. This fueled speculation that the authority is trying to release pent-up depreciation pressure before the Federal Reserve meets Dec. 15-16.

In Hong Kong's offshore market, the yuan dropped 0.27 percent to 6.5497 a dollar as of 4:46 p.m. yesterday local time, extending a six-day decline to 1.6 percent, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. That took its spread to the onshore spot rate to 906 pips, above an average of 511 pips in the past month. The PBOC has been seen propping up the yuan's exchange rate in Hong Kong

periodically to narrow the difference.

The yuan's one-month implied volatility, a gauge of expected price swings, surged 68 basis points yesterday to 6.72 percent, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. It earlier rose to 6.76 percent, the highest since August.

"With the wider spread between onshore and offshore yuan, the intervention risk in the offshore market is now higher and will be more likely to happen after the Fed meeting this week," said DBS's Ong.

The PBOC on Friday also released guidelines on free trade zones in the provinces of Guangdong and Fujian as well as Tianjin city, granting companies registered in the area

up to USD10 million in capital-account convertibility quotas. In the Guangdong zone, individuals can borrow yuan funds from Hong Kong and Macau for property purchases within the area, the central bank said.

The introduction of a multi-currency index helps guide the public view of the yuan's exchange rate, which will contribute to keeping the currency "basically stable at an adaptive and equilibrium level," the PBOC said on Friday. That reinforces other recent statements suggesting an increased focus on broader moves rather than just against the dollar, according to a Goldman Sachs Group Inc. note. It forecast that the yuan will weaken to 6.6 a dollar in a year.

Referencing the yuan to a list of currencies doesn't mean the exchange rate is pegged to that basket, according to an article published on the PBOC website and written by an unidentified CFETS commentator. China's ample foreign exchange reserves and trade surplus should keep the yuan reasonably stable at a reasonable level, it said.

"This underscores how China's authorities are increasingly looking at the curren-

In the Guangdong FTZ, individuals can borrow yuan funds from Hong Kong and Macau for property purchases within the area

cy in a much broader context, moving away from a focus on the dollar, and so too should market participants," HSBC Holdings Plc analysts included Paul Mackel wrote in a note dated Dec. 12. "But this does not mean China is going to formally target a currency basket like Singapore does. We see the yuan at 6.50 by end-15 and 6.70 end-16, amid greater two-way volatility." **Bloomberg**

corporate bits

OVER 40 TRAINEES COMPLETE 'CEM BRIGHTENING STARS' INTERNSHIP PROGRAM IN SIX YEARS



Companhia de Electricidade de Macau (CEM) and Macau Special Olympics (MSO) held the closing ceremony for the "CEM Brightening Stars" internship program, jointly organized by the two parties for six consecutive years, at Hotel Royal on Friday after-

noon. Eight trainees successfully completed the program and obtained graduation certificates from CEM. They also shared their experiences and feelings about the program. Their family members were also invited to the graduation ceremony.

CHRISTMAS AT CITY OF DREAMS, STUDIO CITY AND ALTIRA MACAU

To celebrate Christmas and New Year's Eve this year, Studio City has numerous offerings for the holiday season.

Festive ideas include a family outing experiencing a 4D adventure with Batman, or taking the kids to meet their favorite Warner Bros and DC Comics characters; spending Christmas Eve on the figure-8 Golden Reel 'Ferris wheel'; or enjoying the magic shows at the 'House of Magic'. As a grand finale, the New Year's Eve countdown features international and local stars.

Christmas decorations and the Mechanic Christmas Trees in the grand lobby provide a festive atmosphere. Times Square Macau offers photo opportunities, and guests can even record a



Christmas blessing video in the 'Christmas Blessing Video Booth', with selected videos broadcasted on the two huge LED screens.

Holiday cuisine is also available at City of Dreams, Studio City and Altira Macau. A Michelin-starred feast; Christmas buffet dinner; Italian and Japanese cuisine and seafood hotpot, and Christmas turkey to take home are some of the choices. At the same time the 'shop like a star' promotion is on at The Boulevard at Studio City.

SANDS CHINA SHARES FESTIVE CHEER WITH COMMUNITY GROUP

The Sands China Care Ambassadors shared the holiday spirit with members of the Against Child Abuse (Macau) Association (ACAM) Saturday, hosting 15 families for a gingerbread house decorating competition at Sands Cotai Central.

The 20 Care Ambassadors and their 40 invited guests gathered at Urumqi Ballroom,

venue for the Shrekfast Character Breakfast, part of the DreamWorks Experience at Sands Resorts Cotai Strip Macao. There they joined Giggly's Gingerbread Decorating Party - working together to decorate gingerbread houses, while enjoying desserts and refreshments from the Shrekfast Character Breakfast along the way.



SÃO Tomé and Príncipe will be able to become the benchmark marine platform in West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea, with Chinese investment in the archipelago's deep-water port, according to researcher Gustavo Plácido dos Santos.

In the commentary "São Tomé and Príncipe: A central piece of Beijing's chessboard" for the Portuguese Institute for International and Security Affairs (IPRIS), the researcher argues that China and the United States are both acutely aware of the strategic importance of the archipelago for trade and security in Africa.

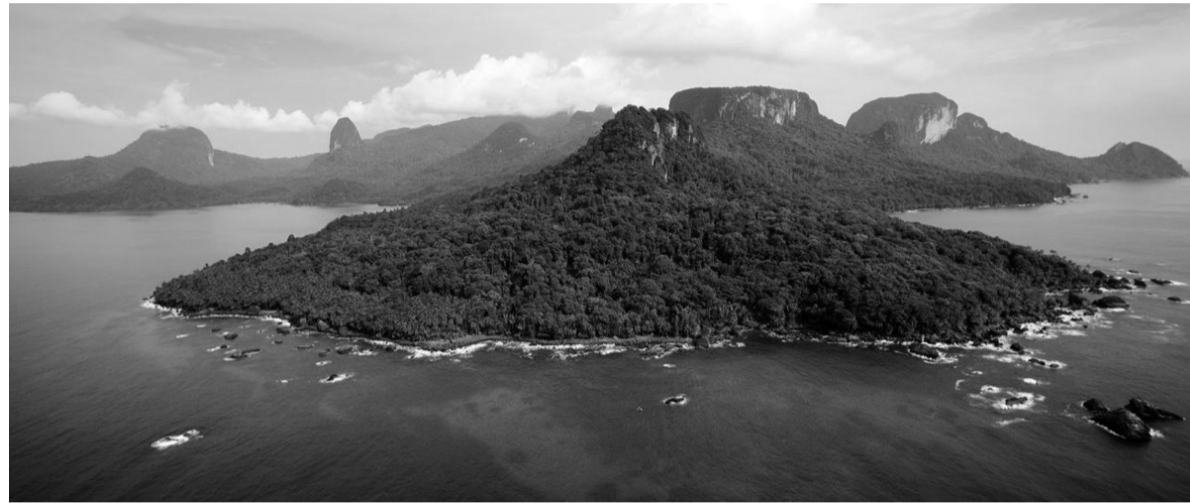
The deep-water port, an investment of about USD800 million, "has the potential to make São Tomé and Príncipe a transshipment port for large ships, allowing the small archipelago to serve the region's economies" when "there is not yet a natural platform in West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea," said Plácido dos Santos.

In favor of its ability to take on this role, São Tomé has its geographical location, low frequency of pirate attacks and political stability and the authorities are keen to diversify sources of revenue at a time when cocoa and coffee represent more than 80 percent of total exports, with oil potential still unclear.

The prime minister of São

COOPERATION

China invests in São Tomé and Príncipe



Islet in São Tomé and Príncipe

Tomé, Patrice Trovoada, aims to refocus the country's economy on trade, following the model of Dubai as a "platform offering services to neighboring countries."

"This is a vital region for trade and global energy security and composed of countries with high levels of economic growth. The archipelago's geographical location allows it to be an advanced monitoring and mariti-

me safety surveillance station in the heart of the Gulf of Guinea," said Plácido dos Santos.

According to the researcher, the project in São Tomé is also relevant in the light of China's "Silk Road economic belt" and "Maritime Silk Route," strategies, which will benefit several ongoing projects in Africa.

China has actively contributed to the development of ports in the region and concluded the

railway line linking the Atlantic coast of Angola (Lobito) to the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo, which will later connect to the Angola-Zambia and Tanzania-Zambia lines, connecting the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean.

"São Tomé and Príncipe positions itself in this context as an important transit point for maritime trade between the Atlantic, Africa and the Indian Ocean,"

said the IPRIS researcher.

The transcontinental link, he argued, makes it possible to direct natural resource flows obtained in Africa to interconnection points, where they will be sent directly to China.

In addition to the resources, the Chinese interest in the Gulf of Guinea is justified to ensure the security and stability of maritime trade routes in a region

China and the United States are both aware of the strategic importance of the archipelago

that has deepened and expanded its economic and political presence.

"A presence in São Tomé and Príncipe allows Beijing to have greater capacity to monitor and control a maritime trade route with high and growing potential as well as monitoring the progress its increasing presence in the South Atlantic," said Plácido dos Santos.

"São Tomé and Príncipe is presented in this context as a piece of immense strategic value in a changing global chess game," he said. **MDT/Macauhub**

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Reports: Fosun tycoon Guo appears at event after disappearance

Joe McDonald, Business Writer, Beijing

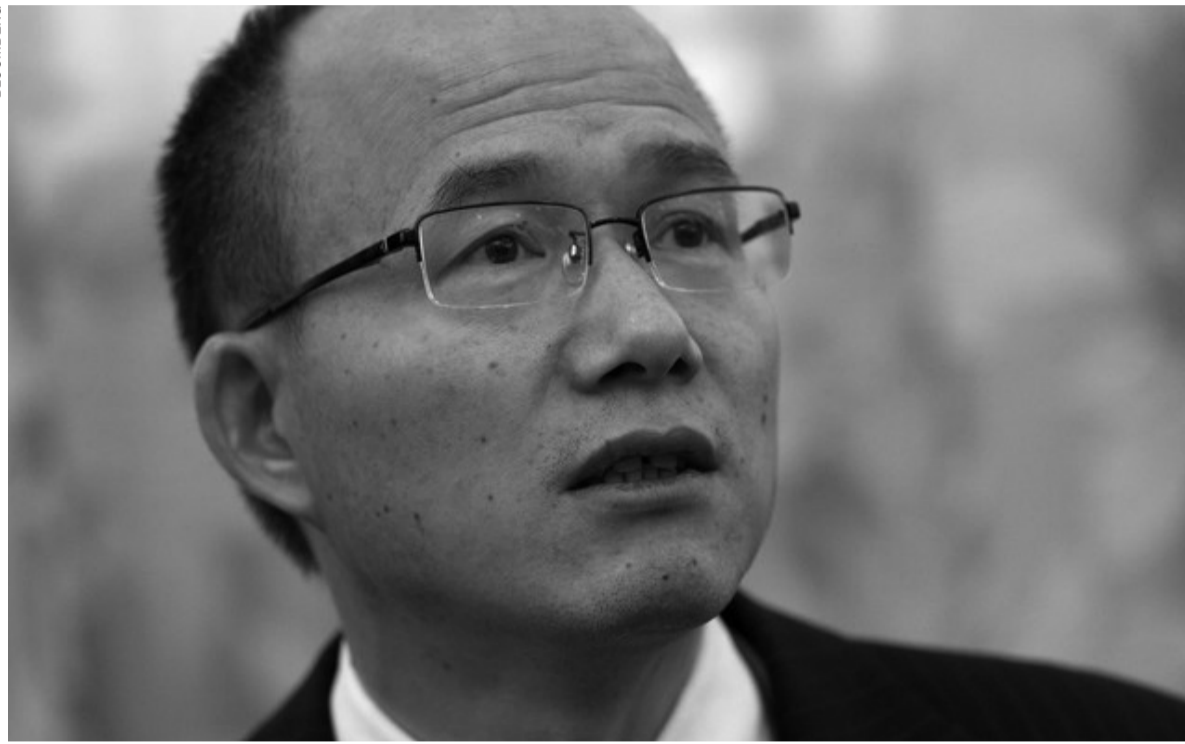
THE chairman of the Chinese conglomerate that owns Club Med and whose company said he was assisting an official investigation after he disappeared for a day last week, appeared yesterday at a corporate meeting, two newspapers reported.

The government has released no details about Fosun chairman Guo Guangchang and Fosun has yet to say whether he was under investigation or was being questioned about other people.

A 3-year-old anti-corruption crackdown led by President Xi Jinping that has snared dozens of executives at state companies. A series of securities executives have disappeared or been detained since regulators launched an investigation after Chinese share prices plunged in June.

Yesterday, Guo spoke at Fosun's previously scheduled annual meeting, according to the newspapers China Business News and The Paper. Both quoted identical comments from him saying Fosun needs to expand globally but gave no indication whether he mentioned

BLOOMBERG



Fosun Chairman Guo Guangchang

the investigation.

Photos on the papers' websites showed Guo, 48, in a gray business suit and open-necked white shirt speaking at a podium and sitting with other executives.

Fosun suspended trading of its shares Friday after a business magazine reported the company was unable to contact Guo. The company issued a

statement later that day saying Guo was "currently assisting in certain investigations carried out by mainland judiciary authorities."

Employees who answered the phone yesterday at Fosun's headquarters said no one was working in the public relations department.

Guo was cited by a Shanghai court in August as being linked

to the chairman of a state-owned supermarket chain who was sentenced to 18 years in prison on corruption charges. Fosun denied any wrongdoing in its dealings with the chairman.

Guo is one of China's biggest investors abroad. Fosun, which he co-founded in the 1990s, has businesses in real estate, steel, mining and retailing.

The Financial Times dubbed him "China's Warren Buffett" for following the legendary American investor's approach of using the cash flow from insurance operations to buy other businesses.

Fosun won a bidding war this year to take over Club Mediterranean, the French resort operator. Last year, it paid 1 billion euros (USD1.1 billion) for Portugal's biggest insurance company, Caixa Seguros. In the United States, it owns Meadowbrook Insurance Group Inc., 20 percent of insurer Ironshore Inc. and the 60-story office tower at 1 Chase Manhattan Plaza in New York City.

Guo has a net worth of \$7.8 billion, according to the Hurun Report, which follows China's wealthy.

In other cases, China's biggest brokerage, state-owned Citic Securities Co., said last week it could not contact two of its top investment bankers. In September, the police ministry announced Citic's general manager and other executives were suspected of insider trading and leaking sensitive information.

Last month, Citic and two other brokerages, Guosen Securities Ltd. and Haitong Securities Ltd., said separately they were under investigation. A star Chinese fund manager, Xu Xiang, was detained Nov. 2 on suspicion of insider trading, according to the official Xinhua News Agency. **AP**

Alibaba pays USD266m for SCMP

Kelvin Chan, Business Writer, Hong Kong

E-COMMERCE company Alibaba is buying Hong Kong's South China Morning Post for HKD2.06 billion (USD266 million), it said yesterday, in a deal that's stirred concern the English-language paper's reporting may be softened under new Chinese owners.

The Chinese e-commerce giant is paying cash for the newspaper and the SCMP Group's other media assets, including magazines, outdoor advertising and digital media, the company said in a filing to the Hong Kong stock exchange. The deal was announced on Friday but no amount was given for the transaction.

The sale of the 112-year paper, which has a wide international following for its China coverage, has raised fears that its reporting would be watered down under the ownership of a mainland Chinese company. The Post, whose current owner is Malaysian sugar tycoon Robert Kuok and his family, has won awards for coverage of political scandals and human rights in China, topics that are off-limits to mainland media.

The deal is the latest media-related

AP PHOTO



A man walks past a newspaper stand featuring the South China Morning Post logo in Hong Kong

acquisition for Alibaba as it diversifies beyond its core business of online shopping.

The SCMP said in its filing that traditional publishing has an "uncertain" future and Alibaba "will be able to unlock greater value from the content and brand than a traditional media business."

Alibaba Executive Vice Chairman Joe Tsai said in a letter to readers last week that the company wants to build a China-focused media brand with an expanded international audience. He dismissed concerns that

editorial independence would be compromised, promising that coverage would "objective, accurate and fair."

Hong Kong news outlets have wider freedom to report than those in mainland China because the former British colony is guaranteed civil liberties such as freedom of the press thanks to a mini-constitution. However, there's rising concern press freedom is shrinking as Beijing, which took control of Hong Kong in 1997, tightens its grip on the city. **AP**

Beijing smog to ease after last week's red alert amid cold wave

A cold wave was predicted to clear up smog in Beijing later yesterday after the city issued warnings on the weekend for children and the elderly to stay inside as pollution levels rose again in the wake of its first-ever red pollution alert earlier this month.

The Chinese capital issued its lowest-level blue pollution alert on Saturday evening, predicting hazardous air quality to hover for 24 hours, according to the Beijing Municipal Environmental Monitoring Center. Residents were told to take public transport instead of driving because of "heavy" pollution. A cold spell with windy air will gradually clear up the smog after noontime yesterday and "good weather" will persist through Thursday, Beijing Times reported, citing local authorities.

The concentration of PM2.5 - particulates considered the most dangerous to people's health - was 267 micrograms per cubic meter at 10 a.m. near Tiananmen Square, according to the Beijing Municipal Environmental Monitoring Center. The World Health Organization cautions against 24-hour exposure to PM2.5 at concentrations higher than 25.

Beijing issued its most severe smog warning last week for the first time, a so-called red pollution alert, limiting industrial production, banning outdoor construction and halting classes at primary schools and kindergartens. **Bloomberg**

Aritz Parra, Beijing

POLICE scuffled with protesters and journalists at a Beijing courthouse yesterday as a prominent rights lawyer stood trial on charges of provoking trouble and stirring ethnic hatred with online commentary critical of the ruling Communist Party.

Chinese protesters and foreign rights groups said Pu Zhiqiang's trial at the No. 2 Beijing Intermediate Court amounted to political persecution, and foreign governments including the U.S. called for his release. Pu denied the charges and the trial concluded about midday, with Pu's lawyer Shang Baojun saying a verdict and sentence would be delivered at a later date.

"Pu Zhiqiang is a lawyer with a conscience," activist Yang Qiuyu said in a brief interview outside the courthouse while a policeman tried to grab him. "This is why he is now under arrest. We support him, and that means that we are also defending our own rights."

Pu was active in defending free speech and represented dissident artist Ai Weiwei in a tax evasion case that Ai's supporters said was politically motivated. He also was instrumental in pushing for the eventual abolishment of the labor camp system, which allowed police to lock up people for up to four years without a trial.

About 50 protesters had gathered at the courthouse along with two dozen journalists and about a dozen Western diplomats, but all of them were denied entrance. In noisy scuffles, police and plainclothes security officers wearing yellow smiley-face stickers pushed journalists and protesters away from the court entrance area. They threw one of the protesters to the ground and took away several others.

At least one foreign journalist

also was slammed to the ground, the Foreign Correspondents Club of China said in an open letter of complaint about the rough treatment.

The charges against Pu relate to a number of posts on China's Twitter-like Sina Weibo that questioned the party's policies toward the Tibetan and Uighur ethnic minorities in the Tibet and Xinjiang regions, and mocked political figures.

Mo Shaoping, another defense lawyer, said that Pu pleaded not guilty, and that prosecutors had not demonstrated that any of Pu's postings had provoked troubles or incited ethnic tensions.

■ Pu went on trial yesterday on charges of provoking trouble with commentaries on social media that were critical of the Party

"This is really a case of freedom of expression, in which no harm to anyone has been proven," Mo said in an interview after the trial.

Pu's lawyers asked for bail, arguing that he was no danger to the public and had medical ailments that needed attention.

The court did not answer phone calls, and prosecutors could not immediately be reached for comment.

Since coming to power in 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping has spearheaded crackdowns on civil activists, rights lawyers and online freedom of expression, in moves aimed at snuffing out any potential

Lawyer Pu Zhiqiang on trial in Beijing as police scuffle with protesters



Police officers push away supporters of rights lawyer Pu Zhiqiang and foreign journalists near the Beijing Second Intermediate People's Court in Beijing

threats to the Communist Party's grip on power.

Pu was detained shortly after attending a May 2014 meeting to discuss commemorating 25 years since the Tiananmen Square massacre, at a time when authorities were keeping a lid on any public commemorations of the event. Hundreds, possibly thousands, of protesters were killed in the crackdown, and the topic remains taboo in China.

Rights groups have said Pu faces up to eight years in prison.

Dan Biers, a diplomat with the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, told reporters outside the courthouse that the U.S. urges Chinese authorities to release Pu and uphold China's constitution.

"Lawyers and civil society leaders such as Mr. Pu should not be subject to continued repression but should be allowed to contribute to the building of a prosperous and stable society," Biers said, reading from a statement.

Patrick Poon, China research

er at Amnesty International, called Pu's trial an act of political persecution. "He is being punished solely for standing up to the Chinese government in his courageous defense of human rights," he said.

Amnesty International says there have been "repeated procedural irregularities" in his prosecution, including a prolonged pre-trial detention, denial of adequate medical care and prosecutors refusing to disclose evidence against him to his defense lawyers. AP



Gu Kailai and Bo Xilai

Wife of ex-Politburo member Bo Xilai gets reduced life term

A Beijing court has commuted the death sentence for the wife of fallen Politburo member Bo Xilai to life in prison, winding down one of the biggest scandals to rock China's political elite in recent years.

Gu Kailai has been serving a suspended death sentence since 2012 after being convicted of the murder of British businessman Neil Heywood. In a statement dated Nov. 16 but

released online yesterday, a Beijing high court said Gu has shown good behavior during prison labor and during "thought, cultural and technical study."

A reduced sentence for the 56-year-old Gu, a former lawyer, has been widely expected but represents another milestone in the fall of one of China's most prominent political families. Gu's husband Bo, once considered a contender

for a top post in China's ruling Communist Party, is now serving a life term for corruption and abuse of power.

Bo's political career crashed in 2011 after Heywood, a family friend who had extensive business dealings with the couple, was found dead in a hotel in the southwestern mega-city of Chongqing where Bo served as party secretary. Gu later admitted to poisoning Heywood

following a business dispute, while Bo sought to cover up her role in the murder, according to state media.

Bo and Gu's trials were particularly fraught due to their timing shortly before the once-in-a-decade leadership transition at the 18th Party Congress in 2012, when some political analysts had expected Bo to be elevated to the all-powerful Politburo Standing Committee. AP

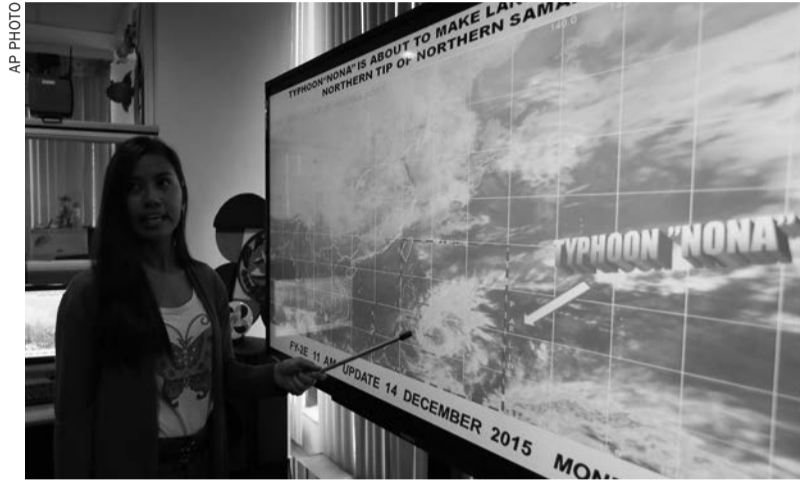
PHILIPPINES

725,000 people evacuated as typhoon Melor makes landfall

ABOUT 725,000 people fled their homes and communities braced for heavy rain and coastal floods of up to 4 meters as Typhoon Melor slammed Monday into the eastern Philippines, officials said. Classes, flights and ferry trips were suspended.

The government's weather bureau said the typhoon was packing winds of 150 kilometers per hour with gusts of up to 185 kph, and heavy to intense rain within its 300-kilometer diameter. It made landfall yesterday morning on tiny Batag Island in the eastern Philippines, and a second landfall was expected in Sorsogon province.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council said 724,839 residents



Government weather forecaster Loriedin De La Cruz briefs the media on Typhoon Melor at the weather bureau center in suburban Quezon city, northeast of Manila

of three eastern provinces were evacuated Sunday and early yesterday before the storm's arrival.

The largest numbers of eva-

cuees were in Sorsogon and Albay provinces.

Bernardo Alejandro, a regional civil defense official, said many residents of Sorsogon

voluntarily went to shelters Sunday night, but the provincial governor then ordered evacuations yesterday for residents who had refused to leave their homes despite the risk of floods and landslides.

Edgar Posadas, a civil defense official in the Eastern Visayas region, said parts of Allen town in Northern Samar province were flooded, and strong winds tore off roofs and felled coconut trees.

He said no casualties had been reported even in the northern tip of the province, where the typhoon first made landfall, and that the evacuation of residents and preparedness of local officials had so far proved effective.

About 20 storms and typhoons hit the Philippines each year. In November

■ The typhoon was packing winds of 150 kilometers per hour with gusts of up to 185 kph

In Albay, about 590,000 residents were evacuated as a precaution, including tens of thousands from around Mount Mayon volcano, where volcanic mudflows are an added threat, the national council said.

2013, Typhoon Haiyan, the strongest typhoon on record to make landfall, left more than 7,300 people dead and missing as it leveled entire villages and swept walls of seawater into parts of the central Philippines. **AP**

Kristen Gelineau, Sydney

AUSTRALIA

Court: UK company misled consumers over painkiller

AN Australian court yesterday ordered Nurofen's owner to stop selling several versions of the popular painkiller that were identical to its standard ibuprofen pills but nearly twice as expensive.

The Federal Court ruled that British consumer goods company Reckitt Benckiser deceived Australians by selling Nurofen painkillers that were marketed to relieve specific ailments, such as back pain, when all of the products contained an identical amount of the same active ingredient, ibuprofen lysine.

Australia's consumer watchdog launched the court



Packets of Nurofen ibuprofen pain relief tablets, produced by Reckitt Benckiser Group Plc, sit displayed for sale inside a supermarket

action in March, arguing that consumers were being tricked into thinking that the four products — Nurofen Back Pain, Nurofen Period Pain, Nurofen Mi-

graine Pain and Nurofen Tension Headache — were designed to treat a specific type of pain, when in fact, they were all the same.

"None of the four pro-

ducts is any more or less effective than the others in treating any of the particular symptoms," Justice James Edelman wrote in his judgment.

Edelman gave Reckitt Benckiser three months to remove the products from Australian stores. The company markets a variety of health and household goods in Australia.

Reckitt Benckiser referred calls requesting comment to its Nurofen unit, which

said it would comply with the order and replace the products with new packaging that clearly states the drugs are equally effective at treating other forms of pain.

"The Nurofen specific-pain range was launched with an intention to help consumers navigate their pain relief options, particularly within the grocery environment where there is no health care professional to assist decision making," Nurofen spokeswoman Montse Pena said in a statement. "Nurofen did not set out to mislead consumers."

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, which started the court action, said the price

of Nurofen's specific pain products was nearly double that of Nurofen's standard ibuprofen painkiller and other general pain relief products sold by competitors.

"Truth in advertising and consumer issues in the health and medical sectors are priority areas for the ACCC, to ensure that consumers are given accurate information when making their purchasing decisions," ACCC Chairman Rod Sims said in a statement. "Any representations which are difficult for a consumer to test will face greater scrutiny from the ACCC."

A separate court hearing will be held to determine any fines the company may face. **AP**

AD

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Margie Mason, Robin McDowell,
Martha Mendoza and Esther Htusan,
Samut Sakhon

THAILAND

Global grocer supply chains tied to slave-peeled shrimp

Poor migrant workers and children are being sold to factories in Thailand and forced to peel shrimp that ends up in global supply chains, including those of Wal-Mart and Red Lobster, the world's largest retailer and the world's largest seafood restaurant chain, an Associated Press investigation found.

At the Gig Peeling Factory, nearly 100 Burmese laborers were trapped, most working for almost nothing. They spent 16 hours a day with their aching hands in ice water, ripping the guts, heads, tails and shells off shrimp. One girl was so tiny she had to stand on a stool to reach the peeling table. Some workers had been there for months, even years. Always, someone was watching.

"They didn't let us rest," said Eae Hpaw, 16, her arms a patchwork of scars from shrimp-related infections and allergies. "We stopped working around 7 in the evening. We would take a shower and sleep. Then we would start again around 3 in the morning."

More than 2,000 trapped fishermen have been freed this year as a result of an ongoing Associated Press investigative series into slavery in the Thai seafood industry. The reports also have led to a dozen arrests, millions of dollars' worth of seizures and proposals for new federal laws.

Pervasive human trafficking has helped turn Thailand into one of the world's biggest shrimp providers. Despite repeated promises by businesses and government to clean up the country's USD7 billion seafood export industry, abuses persist, fueled by corruption and complicity among police and authorities. Arrests and prosecutions are rare. Raids can end up sending migrants without proper paperwork to jail, while owners go unpunished.

"I was shocked after working there a while, and I realized there was no way out," said Tin Nyo Win, 22, another former Gig factory worker, who routinely peeled 175 pounds of shrimp with his wife for just \$4 a day.

Hundreds of shrimp-peeling sheds are hidden in plain sight in Samut Sakhon, an hour outside Bangkok, some with slaves locked inside. Last month, AP journalists followed and filmed trucks loaded with freshly peeled shrimp from the abusive Gig shed to major Thai exporting companies. They also traced similar connections from another factory raided six months earlier, and interviewed more than two dozen workers from both sites. In all, several companies received tainted shrimp, including Thai Union, one of the



In this Sept. 3 photo, female workers, wearing a yellow-white cosmetic paste known as *thanka* on their cheeks, sort shrimp at a seafood market in Mahachai

world's biggest seafood companies, and a subsidiary.

The farmed shrimp can mix with different batches of seafood as it is packaged, branded and shipped, making it impossible to determine where any individual piece was peeled. But because at least some of the Thai exporters' shrimp was processed by forced labor, all of it is considered associated with slavery, according to United Nations and U.S. standards.

U.S. customs records show the shrimp made its way into the supply chains of major U.S. food stores and retailers such as Wal-Mart, Kroger, Whole Foods, Dollar General and Petco, along with restaurants such as Red Lobster and Olive Garden. It also entered supply chains for some of America's best-known seafood brands and pet foods, including Chicken of the Sea and Fancy Feast. AP reporters went to supermarkets in all 50 states and found shrimp products from supply chains tainted with forced labor.

Import and export records from Europe and Asia are confidential, but the Thai companies receiving shrimp tracked by the AP all say they ship to those continents. AP reporters in Germany, Italy, England and

Ireland found several brands sourced from Thailand in supermarkets in those countries.

The businesses that responded to AP's findings condemned the practices that lead to these conditions. Many asked for details and said they were launching investigations.

"I want to eliminate this," said Dirk Leuenberger, CEO of Aqua Star, a leading seafood supplier. "I think it's disgusting that it's even remotely part of my business."

Wal-Mart, Red Lobster and other companies said they stri-

said in a statement.

Red Lobster, Whole Foods and H-E-B Supermarkets were among the companies that said they were confident — based on assurances from their Thai supplier — that their particular shrimp was not associated with abusive factories. That Thai supplier admits it hadn't known where it was getting all its shrimp and sent a note outlining corrective measures to U.S. businesses demanding answers last week.

Responding to U.S. business

■ Pervasive human trafficking has helped turn Thailand into one of the world's biggest shrimp providers

ve to ensure the shrimp they receive is not tainted by slavery.

"As the world's largest seafood restaurant, we know the important role we play in setting and ensuring compliance with seafood industry standards, and we're committed to doing our part to make sure the seafood we buy and serve is sourced in a way that is ethical, responsible and sustainable," Red Lobster

demands for answers to AP's findings, Thai Union CEO Thiraphong Chansiri acknowledged "that illicitly sourced product may have fraudulently entered its supply chain."

Susan Coppedge, the U.S. State Department's new anti-trafficking ambassador, said problems persist because offenders aren't held accountable — though the U.S. itself hasn't

punished Thailand, an important Southeast Asian ally. She said American consumers "can speak through their wallets" by avoiding slave-produced products.

Thailand passed laws this year to crack down on fishing-industry abuses and is working to register undocumented migrant workers, who often are lured from home by brokers with promises of good-paying jobs. They are then sold to shrimp sheds such as the Gig factory, where Tin Nyo Win and his wife learned they would have to work off what was considered their combined worth: \$830, an insurmountable debt.

"There have been some flaws in the laws, and we have been closing those gaps," said M.L. Puntarik Smiti, the Thai Labor Ministry's permanent secretary.

Critics argue, however, that changes have been largely cosmetic. Former slaves repeatedly described how police took them into custody and then sold them to agents who trafficked them again. They say police are paid to look the other way and that officers frequently do not understand labor laws.

Tin Nyo Win escaped the Gig factory and was helped by a labor rights group, which pressured authorities to act. On Nov. 9, dozens of officers and military troops burst into the shed. Frightened Burmese workers huddled on the dirty concrete floor. One young mother breast-fed a 5-month-old baby, while children were taken to a corner.

But no one at the shed was arrested for human trafficking. Instead, migrants with papers, including seven children, were sent back there to work. Ten undocumented children were taken from their parents and put into a shelter. Twenty-one other illegal workers were detained, including Tin Nyo Win and his wife, but all have since been moved to government shelters for human-trafficking victims.

Local authorities have been ordered to reinvestigate the factory, which is now closed. Police said workers were moved to another shed linked to the same owners. A Gig owner reached by phone declined to comment.

Meanwhile, the AP informed labor rights investigators who work closely with police about another shed where workers said they were being held against their will. It is being examined. **AP**



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2015 TEAM EVENT POOL TOURNAMENT
8-9 & 10 BALL

Results after Round 1				
GROUP A				
Team No.	Team Name	Games Played	Games Won	Points
A2	JACKASS	1	19	8
A3	SUPREME	1	17	7
A4	TEAM OF BEER	1	9	3
A1	ROCKET	1	9	2
GROUP B				
Team No.	Team Name	Games Played	Games Won	Points
B2	NOYPI	1	18	7
B4	THE HEROES	1	16	6
B3	THE POOLISSONS	1	13	4
B1	THE ALL BLANKS	1	12	3

FOR MORE INFORMATION READ THE FLYER SITUATED BESIDE

Times After 5 bar

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COP 21 CLIMATE DEAL

World praises France's diplomatic efforts

Sylvie Corbet, Le Bourget

JUST a month after the Paris attacks, France has surmounted that atrocity to help achieve a seemingly unachievable triumph: uniting the world to seal a global climate pact.

The Paris climate agreement, adopted on Saturday, was the culmination of more than a year of intense diplomatic efforts by France. Delegates and foreign dignitaries cheered Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, the host of the two-week talks, and gave him a standing ovation.

"It's rare in life to be able to move things forward at the planet level," Fabius said, visibly moved after coming out of the plenary room.

France is seen as the inventor of the concept of modern diplomacy, and this conference proved that the coun-

try is still a master of the art. Foreign officials highlighted Fabius' role in the success of the talks, heaping praise on him and France, which has a smaller diplomatic corps than the U.S. and China.

"You have done a superb job as everybody has said," U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry told Fabius on Saturday, expressing the Obama administration's "deepest gratitude to France."

EU climate chief Arias Canete said "France has united the world. This deal embodies the strength of the French nation." U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon praised Fabius' "leadership."

Maldives Foreign Minister Thoriq Ibrahim, who chairs the Alliance of Small Island States, said the French made several smart moves, including having world leaders come in at the beginning of the talks — not at the end like

in Copenhagen.

The 2009 conference in Denmark, which failed to deliver a climate deal, was on the minds of all negotiators as the worst case scenario.

"From the very beginning the French were conscious of the Copenhagen failure," Ibrahim said.

In a unique gathering, 151 heads of state headed to Paris to give a political push on the first day of the conference — just over two weeks after attacks claimed by Islamic State killed 130 people in Paris.

"I think the French have been playing this incredibly well," said Jennifer Morgan, global climate program director for the World Resources Institute. "It took hard work, grit and guts, but countries have finally united around a historic agreement that marks a turning point on the climate crisis." AP



UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, right, watches French President Francois Hollande hugging UN climate chief Christiana Figueres after the final conference of the COP21 in Paris

EGYPT

No sign yet of 'terrorist act' in Russian plane crash

Maamoun Youssef, Cairo

A preliminary investigation into the crash of a Russian passenger plane has found no indication yet of any "illegal or terrorist act," Egypt's chief investigator said in a statement released yesterday.

The vaguely worded statement by Ayman el-Muqadam said the investigation committee so far has not found "any evidence" indicating foul play in the Oct. 31 downing of the plane, killing all 224 people onboard, mostly Russian vacationers returning home from the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh. The committee is "continuing its work," it said.

Russia has said an explosive device had been placed onboard the Airbus A321-200 and the Sinai branch of the Islamic State group has claimed responsibility. The crash led Russia to suspend all flights to and from Egypt, dealing a heavy blow to the country's vital tourism industry.

El-Muqadam said the



In this Nov. 1 file photo, debris of a Russian airplane is seen at the site a day after the passenger jet bound for St. Petersburg, Russia, crashed in Hassana

investigating committee completed its preliminary report Sunday evening, which contained all available information that will be further investigated.

He said the search for wreckage extended more than 16 kilometers from the main crash site and that the committee provided all parties that are part of the investigation, including the insurance company and Russian working teams, the chance to examine the wreckage.

The investigators analyzed the plane's 38 computers and two engine computers and is currently checking the technical details

of the plane and repairs carried out since it was manufactured in May 1997.

El-Muqadam said the investigation committee made 15 visits to the crash site, and the team was coordinating with the air force to move the wreckage to a safe location in Cairo for further study.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov declined to comment directly on the Egyptian statement, but told reporters in a conference call, "I can remind you of the conclusion of our experts from the special services, who came to the conclusion that it was a terrorist action." AP

FRANCE

Far right collapses in regional runoff elections

Elaine Ganley and Angela Charlton, Paris

MARINE Le Pen's far-right National Front collapsed in French regional elections Sunday, failing to take a single region after dominating the first round of voting, pollsters projected. The conservatives surged against the governing Socialists, changing the political map of France.

The failure of the National Front to gain any of the six regions where it was leading didn't stop the anti-immigration party from looking to the 2017 presidential election — Le Pen's ultimate goal.

Le Pen had been riding high after extremist attacks and an unprecedented wave of migration into Europe, and the party came out on top in the voting in France's 13 newly drawn regions in the first round a week ago. But projections by France's major polling firms suggested the party lost in all of the regions Sunday, including decisive losses for both Le Pen and her popular niece.

"Here we stopped the progression of the National Front," said conservative Xavier Bertrand, who was projected to beat Le Pen in the Nord-Pas de Calais region.

Le Pen supporters in a hall in the gritty northern town of Henin-Beaumont booed his image on a big screen as he spoke. The atmosphere was



Far Right National Front party leader Marine Le Pen

grim, in stark contrast to a week earlier when Le Pen won more than 40 percent of the vote — and was more than 15 points ahead of Bertrand.

The tables turned on Sunday as Bertrand beat Le Pen by nearly 15 points. Le Pen struck an upbeat tone despite the rout, pledging to keep fighting to expand support for her party. She said she would in the coming weeks "rally all the French, of all origins, who want to join us."

"Nothing will stop us," she told cheering supporters.

Le Pen won 42.8 percent compared with Bertrand's 57 percent, according to the Interior Ministry. Le Pen's niece, Marion Marechal-Le Pen, took 46 percent in the southern Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur region, compared with 53.7 percent for conservative Nice Mayor Christian Estrosi. AP

what's ON



MANUEL CARGALEIRO-PINTURA: 1954-2006
TIME: 10am-7pm (Closed on Mondays)
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VENUE: Casa Garden Orient Foundation
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MACAU LIGHT FESTIVAL 2015 - JOURNEY OF LIGHTS
TIME: 7pm-10pm
UNTIL: December 31, 2015
VENUE: Senado Square; Lou Kau Mansion; Cathedral Lane, Cathedral Square; St. Dominic's Church; Ruins of St. Paul's; Holy House of Mercy & A-Ma Temple.
ADMISSION: Free
TOURISM HOTLINE: (853) 2833 3000

ARTIFACTS OF EXCELLENCE – SEAL CARVINGS BY LUO SHUZHONG FROM THE MAM COLLECTION
TIME: 10am-7pm (Closed on Mondays, No admission after 6:30 pm)
UNTIL: February 28, 2016
VENUE: Macau Museum of Art, Av. Xian Xing Hai, s/n, NAPE
ADMISSION: MOP5 (Free on Sundays and public holidays)
ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

CONCERT – YAO JUE, SHARON CHOA
TIME: 8pm
VENUE: Grand Auditorium, Macau Cultural Centre, Avenida Xian Xing Hai, s/m, NAPE
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: 2855 5555

Offbeat

VIOLINIST PERLMAN WINS 'JEWISH NOBEL'



Itzhak Perlman

Israeli-American violinist Itzhak Perlman has been awarded this year's "Jewish Nobel" for his accomplishments as a musician, teacher and advocate for the disabled, organizers of the USD1 million prize announced yesterday.

The Genesis Prize is given each year to an individual who has achieved professional success, contributed to humanity and shown a strong commitment to Jewish causes and the state of Israel.

Perlman said he was "humbled" to be recognized not only for his personal accomplishments, but also his commitment to his Jewish identity.

"I have always been very proud of my Jewish heritage, which has greatly influenced my music, my world view, and my work as an advocate for individuals whom society often leaves behind," he said in a statement issued by the prize organizers.

Perlman, 70, has won 16 Grammys, including a lifetime achievement award in 2008, and played the violin solo in John Williams' Oscar-winning soundtrack for the 1993 film "Schindler's List." He has performed with or conducted the world's top symphony orchestras, and has been a regular guest at White House events. Last month, he received the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor.

Perlman has shared his love of music with diverse audiences, appearing on late-night comedy programs, Sesame Street and in special programs on American public television. With his wife Toby, he helps run the Perlman Music Program for talented young musicians. Treated for polio as a child, Perlman, who walks with crutches, has also been a vocal advocate for the disabled.

TV canal macau

13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:30	RTPi Live
17:40	Trail of Lies (Repeated)
18:30	TDM Sport (Repeated)
19:30	Soap Opera
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	TDM Interview
21:40	Non-Daily Port. News
22:10	Trail of Lies
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Miscellaneous
00:25	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)

cinema

CINETEATRO

10 DEC - 16 DEC



POINT BREAK

ROOM 1
 (2D) 2.30, 4.30, 9.30 pm
 (3D) 7.30 pm

Director: Ericson Core
Starring: Teresa Palmer, Luke Bracey, Édgar Ramírez
Language: English (Cantonese)
Duration: 113min

KEEPER OF DARKNESS

ROOM 2
 2.30, 4.30, 7.30, 9.30 pm
Director: Nick Cheung
Starring: Nick Cheung, Kuo Tsai Chieh, Louis Chueng
Language: Cantonese (Cantonese/English)
Duration: 105min



INITIATION LOVE

ROOM 3
 2.30, 4.30, 9.30 pm
Director: Yukihiro Tsutsumi
Starring: Shota Matsuda, Atsuko Maeda
Language: Japanese (English and Cantonese)
Duration: 110min

THE CROW'S EGG

ROOM 3
 7.30 pm
Director: M. Manikandan
Starring: Ramesh, J. Vignesh, Iyhwarya Rajesh
Language: Tamil (Cantonese/English)
Duration: 91min

MACAU TOWER

26 Nov - 16 Dec

KEEPER OF DARKNESS

ROOM 3
 2.30, 4.45, 7.15, 9.30 pm
Director: Nick Cheung
Starring: Nick Cheung, Kuo Tsai Chieh, Louis Chueng
Language: Cantonese (Cantonese/English)
Duration: 105min

this day in history



1974 NEW SPEED LIMIT TO CURB FUEL USE

British drivers must adhere to reduced speed limits from midnight tonight as the government tries to save fuel.

Speed limits on motorways will remain 112kph, but on dual carriageways they will become 96kph, and on all other roads 80kph.

Motorists could previously drive up to a limit of 112kph. Anyone breaking the new restrictions will be reported, though not necessarily summoned. The maximum penalty for speeding has been doubled to £100.

Police patrols in unmarked cars will be looking for drivers not observing the new restrictions and will also be using speed traps. A major publicity campaign informing drivers of the new restrictions was launched last week and so road signs will not be changed.

Police expect the new speed restrictions to lead to a rise in the number of speeding offences but a fall in the number of road accidents.

The measures have been introduced indefinitely by Energy Secretary, Eric Varley, as part of a 12-point package of energy conservation measures aimed at saving £700m in imports annually.

The Ministry of Transport said even a speed reduction of 5mph would save about £10m a year in fuel costs. Mr Varley unveiled the package six days ago to the House of Commons as the landed price of imported oil is now five times higher than a year ago. Prices rose after the Middle East oil embargo during the Arab-Israeli war last year.

The plan includes restrictions on heating levels and on the use of electricity for outdoor display and advertising. There will also be loans to industry for energy-saving investment and a doubling of the standards of thermal insulation for new homes.

The strict controls on energy consumption will form the British way of life for the foreseeable future, he said.

Last November petrol ration coupons were introduced and in February 1972 a three-day working week was imposed on British industry to conserve power supplies due to the coal miners' strike.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

In the wake of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, the Arab oil-producing countries (OPEC) imposed an embargo on supplies to the US on 20 October 1973.

For the wider world, oil prices went through the roof, from around \$3 a barrel before the war to over \$11 by early the following January.

The crisis led to a recession in 1975, the first of four world downturns where oil price increases caused by events in the Middle East played a key role.

The finger of blame was also pointed at Opec when prices spiked in the second half of 2000 and prompted fuel protests across much of Europe.

But in recent years, Opec has been trying to ensure market stability through a price range mechanism and, as more sources of oil come to market, consumer countries are also less reliant on oil from Opec countries.

In 1974, the US Congress imposed a nationwide 89 km/h speed limit - it was estimated that a speed of 88 km/h used 17% less fuel per mile than a speed of 120 km/h.

The limit was unpopular, especially in Western states and in 1987 states were allowed to raise speed limits to 104 kmh on rural interstate highways.

All federal speed limit controls were lifted in 1995, leaving speed setting to the states.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Communication is important today - but keep it short and sweet.

Taurus April 20-May 20
Focus on today as much as possible - long-term thinking is best put off.

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21
You are in motion today, which is just how you want it.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22
You need to deal with a few extra elements you hadn't counted on.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22
You're torn between two equally appealing options - which is a pretty good problem to have!

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22
You can't let your heart make decisions today - it's all about your head.

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22
You need to try new things today - even if you'd rather poke around in the garden.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21
You can't stop thinking about some weird little detail that seems to be popping out from a spreadsheet.

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21
You are thinking hard about things, but you're not really sure what you need to do next.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Today is all about communication, and even your quiet wisdom is much in demand now.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Something small but meaningful could spark a new romance today - if you're looking for one.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20
Your creative mind is much more active today, so you may need to find a way to capture all the great ideas.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy

9 5 1 6 3 2 5 2 6 9 7 2 5 2 8 3 4 2 9 6 1 7

Easy+

1 9 7 9 3 1 7 3 6 4 2 8 5 6 7 1 2 4 1 6 8 9 5 2 8 5 4 2 9

Medium

9 5 8 1 6 8 5 1 7 8 4 6 3 6 3 1 9 3 7 2 7 1 5 3 2 4 2 3 8

Hard

6 4 7 1 2 9 4 1 5 3 8 2 7 3 1 2 6

WEATHER

MIN MAX CONDITION

CHINA

Beijing -3 7 flurry/clear Harbin -12 -7 smoggy/flurry Tianjin -3 5 flurry/overcast Urumqi -5 -7 clear/foggy Xi'an 1 6 overcast/cloudy Lhasa -4 12 cloudy/clear Chengdu 9 9 overcast Chongqing 11 10 drizzle Kunming 8 18 clear Nanjing 3 10 overcast Shanghai 6 10 drizzle/overcast Wuhan 1 10 cloudy/drizzle Hangzhou 5 9 drizzle/overcast Taipei 18 24 cloudy/overcast Guangzhou 14 19 drizzle/overcast Hong Kong 18 23 cloudy

WORLD

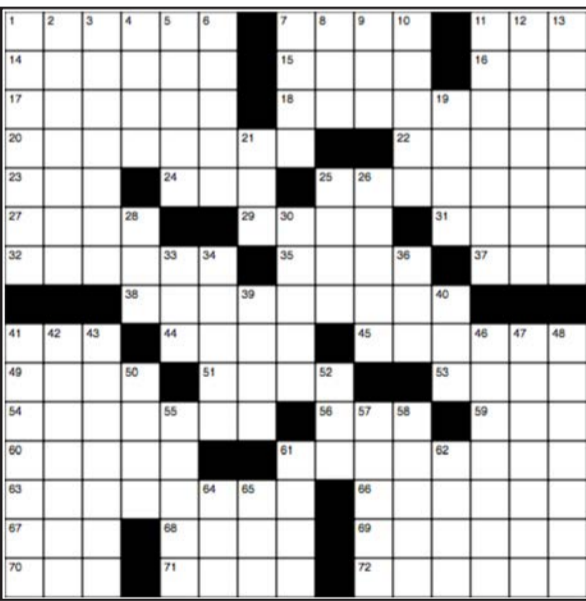
Moscow -1 0 sleet/overcast Frankfurt 3 8 drizzle Paris 3 8 drizzle London 11 9 drizzle New York 8 19 moderate rain/drizzle

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Figure of speech with "like" or "as"; 7- On; 11- Queue after Q; 14- Rubs out; 15- Drop of water expelled by the eye; 16- Shoebox letters; 17- Hammerlike tool; 18- Tries; 20- Concern; 22- Old sailors; 23- Chart shape; 24- Religious sch.; 25- Not friendly; 27- Tabula; 29- D-Day beach; 31- Super server; 32- Be right with ya; 35- According to the Bible, he was the first man; 37- Southern constellation; 38- Headlong; 41- Batman and Robin, e.g.; 44- Willingly; 45- Flammable gas; 49- Begrudge; 51- Beams; 53- Novelist Hunter; 54- Leading; 56- Blood-typing letters; 59- Addams family cousin; 60- "Our Gang" girl; 61- Stretch; 63- Grandeur; 66- Tidy up; 67- Prefix with center; 68- Capital of Calvados; 69- Detract; 70- Answer to a sea captain; 71- Fictional Jane; 72- Actually existing;

DOWN: 1- Part-time player; 2- Shah, e.g.; 3- The ___ Falcon; 4- Archipelago part; 5- Sly looks; 6- First name in cosmetics; 7- Rat-___; 8- Asian holiday; 9- Bran source; 10- Squeeze; 11- Reproduction; 12- Pioneer; 13- Mosaic piece; 19- ___ Hari; 21- The Mustangs' sch.; 25- ___ but known...; 26- Chicago hub; 28- Bat wood; 30- Chewy candy; 33- It's a moray; 34- Capital of Egypt; 36- Colo. clock setting; 39- Unhearing; 40- Common article; 41- Salty Mideastern body; 42- Sad; 43- Blanket; 46- Flies; 47- Chats; 48- Understanding; 50- Ivy League school; 52- Mineo of "Exodus"; 55- Move rhythmically; 57- Actress Beulah; 58- a million; 61- Sea eagle; 62- Donated; 64- Calendar box; 65- Not 'neath;

Yesterday's solution



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999 Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
Fire department 28 572 222 Water Supply - Report 1990 992
PJ (Open line) 993 Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775 Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333 Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944
S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
IACM 28 387 333
Tourism 28 333 000
Airport 59 888 88



AD

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FOR RENT

Wai Son Macau 1,000 sq ft / HKD 4.5M HKD 4,500sq ft Near Senado Square Ref: 15105458

Ieng Kok, Unit A Macau 1 Bedroom Apartment Close to St Paul's ruins HKD 9,000 / 756 sq ft Ref: 14070426

Roof Top (Investment Apartment) - Macau 799 sq ft / HKD 4.99M HKD 6250sq ft Viewing by Appointment Ref: 15055441

Car Park Space Chun Leong-Taipa Parking Car Park for Rent HKD 1,700 / 0 sq ft Ref: 15050514

Va Fu, Old Taipa Village Taipa 670 sq ft / HKD 3.5M HKD 5,223sq ft Centrally Located Ref: 15085449

Houston Court, Coloane Village Coloane 1 Bedrooms Apartment Upgraded in Sept 2015 HKD 13,500 / 800 sq ft Ref: 15090532

Meng FUNG St Paul Macau 1,570sq ft / HKD 9.8M HKD 6,242sq ft Walk up Building in St.Paul Ref: 15095453

Soi Cheung Taipa Village 1 Bedroom sApartment Furnished with Private Terrace HKD 13,800 / 700 sq ft Ref: 15090530





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Barcelona to play Arsenal again in Champions League

THE Champions League draw produced some familiar pairings yesterday with defending champion Barcelona facing Arsenal and Paris Saint-Germain again taking on Chelsea.

Barcelona eliminated Arsenal in the 2010 quarterfinals and in the round of 16 in 2011, and beat the English club in the 2006 final.

French champion PSG and Chelsea will be meeting for the third consecutive season in the knockout phase. Chelsea won in the quarterfinals in 2014 but PSG advanced from the round of 16 last season.

Also, five-time champion Bayern Munich will play away first against 2015 runner-up Juventus, while record 10-time champion Real Madrid will face Roma.

In other pairings, it was: PSV Eindhoven vs. Atletico Madrid; Dynamo Kiev vs. Manchester City; Gent vs. Wolfsburg; and Benfica vs. Zenit St. Petersburg.

The first legs will be played on Feb. 16-17 and 23-24, with the second legs scheduled for March 8-9 and 15-16.

City's first leg in Kiev will be played in an empty stadium because Dynamo has been sanctioned by UEFA for racist incidents involving fans.

Japan gets peek at new proposed Olympic stadium designs

Elaine Kurtenbach, Tokyo

TWO groups competing for the lucrative contract to build the new Tokyo Olympic stadium have disclosed their design proposals.

The Japan Sports Council released the designs yesterday and said the winner will be chosen this month. It did not identify which companies have proposed which designs.

The two designs are more understated than the original plan by British-Iraqi architect Zaha Hadid, which was scrapped due to controversy over its cost and scale.

"We will work to ensure a stadium that will be loved by all," Kazumi Daito, president of the Sports Council, said in announcing the plans, which he said would put "Athletes First" and also emphasize accessibility for the handi-



This artist rendering provided by the Japan Sports Council yesterday shows Design "A" proposed by one of two groups competing to build the new Tokyo Olympic stadium



This artist rendering shows Design "B"

capped, elderly and children. Work on the 158 billion yen (USD1.3 billion) stadium intended to accommodate up to 80,000 people was delayed by the difficulties over its design, which proved a major embarrassment for local Olympics organizers.

Design "A" has a relatively flat roof and fits in with surrounding greenery, with shrubbery along its outer

concourses. The combined steel and wood structure seems to echo traditional temple designs, and stands only 50 meters tall, with a center sports ground sunk below the surface.

Its construction cost is listed at a total of 153 billion yen (\$1.26 billion).

The 54.3-meter-tall Design "B" is more ethereal, with outer glass walls that blend with the sky and are meant to

reflect the traditional Asian concepts of the Five Elements of wood, fire, earth, metal and water. It would cost 153.7 billion yen (\$1.26 billion).

Both plans call for construction to be done, apart from landscaping and surrounding work, by Nov. 30, 2019.

The stadium will replace the razed National Stadium, which was built in the late 1950s and hosted the 1964 Olympics. **AP**

AD

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opinion

World Views

Nisha Gopalan, Bloomberg

ALIBABA SHOPPING SITE POINTS THE WAY TO SCMP PROFITS

With its first foray into the troubled world of newspapers and magazines, Alibaba got a good deal. If it can get the South China Morning Post read around the world, on mobile, the Chinese e-commerce giant's acquisition of the only officially uncensored newspaper in China could turn out to be an even smarter bet.

Alibaba bought the Hong Kong company's media assets, including the 112-year-old South China Morning Post newspaper, for HKD2.06 billion (USD266 million) - about 1.8 times revenue. Axel Springer in September paid \$343 million, or six times projected revenue, for most of the online financial-news site Business Insider, while the \$1.32 billion purchase of the Financial Times by Japan's Nikkei, in July, was for 2.5 times revenue.

Only the \$250 million purchase of the Washington Post by Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos was a better deal by that measure: a 60 percent discount to revenue at the iconic but unprofitable U.S. newspaper. In profit terms, he paid more - 17 times Ebitda, against 10 times for the SCMP.

Alibaba is hoping to weather the storm hitting the SCMP and its peers by making the content free to broaden readership. The Chinese company promised to bulk up the newspaper's offerings in digital, and especially mobile, while expanding the staff after a spate of departures. At the same time, Alibaba says it doesn't want to sacrifice editorial freedom.

There's no doubting the scale of the SCMP's challenges.

Profit has been declining for the last three years at the group, with a \$2.7 million loss at the newspaper offset by an operating profit of \$32 million at the magazines in the first half. Circulation has been flat.

But China's biggest e-commerce company, flush with cash from its \$25 billion New York IPO last year, probably can pull this off.

Alibaba's foray into newspapers marks a rare move into an asset with overseas potential, rather than one to feed its growing Chinese customer base. This year alone, Alibaba spent more than \$10 billion for all or part of companies including a bricks-and-mortar rival, the electronics retailer Suning Commerce Corp.; the handset maker Meizu; and the video site Youku Tudou.

The SCMP purchase, as Alibaba Vice Chairman Joe Tsai said in a letter to shareholders, gives "readers around the English-speaking world, from New York to London to its home in Hong Kong," a way to better understand the world's second-largest economy. Or put another way, Alibaba needs to reassure its foreign shareholders - Yahoo, Softbank of Japan and U.S. institutions - and the many luxury brands that sell products on its sites, that there's still room to grow as China's economy slows.

If Alibaba is right about demand for news on China, the SCMP could even be a money-maker. Alibaba has already succeeded in exploiting online advertising in ways that most media firms can only dream of. Its Taobao platform, which connects buyers and sellers of everything from bicycles to handbags, was free when it was launched in 2003. Four years later, after building up a critical mass, Alibaba monetized the site by keeping Taobao free while allowing sellers to pitch for prime advertising space.

While Alibaba doesn't break down how much Taobao generates for the firm, surging advertising on the back of growing traffic has been one of the company's biggest sources of profit growth. In September 2013, Alibaba got 4 percent of online-retailing revenue from mobile. By September 2015, the share was 61 percent.

THE BUZZ BELJING TO BUILD UNESCO CENTER FOR CREATIVITY

Beijing will build a UNESCO international center for creativity and sustainable development, the first of its kind, a senior official said yesterday, cited by Xinhua. The center will include establishment of a "network for creativity, culture and sustainable development," said Yan Aoshuang, head of the Beijing Science and Technology Commission.

Francesco Bandarin, assistant director-general for culture with UNESCO, said at a seminar on Sunday that the center will promote cultural and creative industries and the global flow of cultural products and services. In November, the 38th session of the UNESCO General Conference approved the founding of the center in Beijing.

Scholars ask if Beijing will adopt Madeira-style rule for SARs



Cruise ships berthed in the port of Funchal, Madeira

Atop Beijing official's research mission to the Portuguese island of Madeira last month has prompted scholars to question whether the central government intends to learn from the Portuguese Autonomous Regions (PARs) when revising the constitutions of Hong Kong and Macau.

Li Fei met the president of Madeira's autonomous government, as well as the head of its Legislative Assembly, as part of a six-member mainland delegation. According to the South China Morning Post, the senior official was on a mission to study the PARs' relationship with the central government in Lisbon.

In his post as chairman of the Hong Kong Basic Law Committee, Li holds considerable sway in determining

the future of Hong Kong's constitution.

Jason Buhi, a lecturer at Peking University's School of Transnational Law in Shenzhen, wrote in the SCMP that Portugal's administrative regions - Madeira and the Azores - could inspire Beijing when deciding the constitutional future of the SARs.

Wang Yu, an associate professor at the One Country Two Systems Research Centre at the Macau Polytechnic Institute, said that Li's visit signals Beijing's possible intentions to "use [Portugal's] system as a reference for 'one country, two systems'."

It is uncertain to what degree Beijing could replicate Madeira's model of governance in Hong Kong or Macau. However, an examination of the constitutional di-

fferences between the PARs and SARs may shed more light on a possible constitutional revision.

"In terms of external policy, Macau and Hong Kong - like Madeira - don't have specific powers," said Tranquada Gomes, President of Madeira's Legislative Assembly. Speaking to SCMP, he added that Madeira enjoys universal suffrage but "doesn't have as much autonomy as Macau or Hong Kong."

Macau and Hong Kong enjoy far greater economic autonomy than the PARs in terms of legislative power. The Chinese territories can set independent taxes and customs, as well as fiscal and monetary policies, whereas Madeira and the Azores remain subject to Lisbon's monetary and fiscal laws.

"It is easy to assume why Beijing would be interested in the Portuguese model, but no international practice is suitable to be copied [exactly] per se," writes Jason Buhi, before adding that he personally "remains confident [that] Hong Kong and Macau will continue to enjoy a high degree of autonomy in their next constitutional iterations." Staff reporter

MACAU

Wells Cathedral Choir performance inspires students

Renato Marques

MORE than 400 students and members of the Macau Anglican College (MAC) community witnessed the Wells Cathedral Choir perform yesterday afternoon.

The school auditorium was full as the choir launched an unorthodox introduction to their performance, with the all-girl choir first onstage to warm the audience up.

The concert included full choral performances as well as solos. Some choir members also shared some insights into their experience as performers.

One choir member, Johanna, commented that being part of the all-girls choir was a unique experience. Her duties, she said, include twice-daily performances during weekday services in the cathedral, which are doubled to four on the weekend. Johanna is often rostered on for more performances during Easter and Christmas.

The choir conductor explained that besides vocal performances, choir members play



RENATO MARQUES

several musical instruments and are deeply dedicated to their practice.

The Wells Cathedral Choir was ranked by Gramophone magazine as the sixth greatest choir in the world with the highest ranked children choristers. At MAC, they presented a mixed repertoire comprising popular carols and traditional songs, celebrating MAC's 1,100-year history.

The concert was followed by a meeting with the school's musically-inclined Form 6 students - as well as some from Form 5 - to exchange ideas and share common interests.

Station	Air quality
Roadside	40-60 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	35-55 Moderate
Ambient	40-60 Moderate

SOURCE: DSMG

WORLD BRIEFS



AP PHOTO

TURKEY withdrew some of its soldiers stationed at a camp in Iraq as part of a "rearrangement" of its troops, the country's state-run news agency reported yesterday, days after Iraq demanded that Turkish troops immediately pull out from Iraqi territory.



AP PHOTO

SAUDI ARABIA Voters elected 20 women for local government seats, according to results released to The Associated Press, a day after women voted and ran in elections for the first time in the country's history.



AP PHOTO

YEMEN Security officials say heavy fighting is underway between the country's internationally recognized government and Shiite rebels, hours ahead of the start of an agreed-on, weeklong truce. The officials say there are clashes in Yemen's southern, central and western provinces despite the agreement by the warring factions to lay down their weapons at five minutes to midnight yesterday - the eve of planned peace talks in Geneva.

ARGENTINA At least 41 police officers were killed yesterday when a bus in a convoy in northern Argentina went off the side of a bridge and fell 20 meters. The bus was one of three carrying police near Salta, a city about 1,500 kilometers north of Buenos Aires.

SWEDEN A Swedish court has convicted two Swedish men of terror crimes in connection with killings in Syria in 2013 and handed them life sentences.

ISRAELI police say a Palestinian driver rammed into pedestrians near the western entrance to Jerusalem, wounding nine people before he was killed.