



GOV'T MEETS WITH CASINO CHIEFS

P3



TEN LOCAL HERITAGE SITES TO BE LISTED

A public consultation session on the inclusion of ten iconic buildings in Macau's heritage list will kick off on Dec 28

P4



PACKER'S BID TO TAKE CROWN ASSETS PRIVATE

James Packer is in talks to return some of Crown Resorts Ltd.'s casino assets to private ownership

P6



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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN' "

WORLD BRIEFS

US-TAIWAN The Obama administration is planning its first arms sale to Taiwan in four years, congressional aides said, a move that typically draws stiff criticism from Beijing but is unlikely to derail US-China relations. The planned USD1.8 billion sale would include two decommissioned frigates, minesweepers, Stinger missiles, anti-armor and anti-tank missiles and other equipment.

More on p11

NORTH KOREA The Supreme Court sentenced a Canadian pastor to life in prison with hard labor for what it called crimes against the state. Hyeon Soo Lim, who pastors the Light Korean Presbyterian Church in Toronto, was given the sentence after a brief trial.

More on p12



USA Republican presidential candidates sought to cement - or improve - their standings in a debate yesterday (Macau time) that comes less than two months before the first votes of the election season are cast. The CNN debate in Las Vegas marked the first time the White House hopefuls shared a stage since terror attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, California. They flashed their foreign policy credentials and targeted each others' weaknesses in the debate that lasted more than two hours and focused exclusively on foreign policy and national security.

More on p14

SYRIA In a major policy change, Secretary of State John Kerry accepts Russia's longstanding demand that Syrian President Bashar Assad's future be determined by his own people. Meanwhile, dozens die in airstrikes on fuel markets.

More on p15

More on backpage

China grants 85 sq km of coastal waters to Macau

P4



Xi Jinping calls for cooperation on Internet regulation

P11

Daniela Wei, Cindy Wang
and Moxy Ying

GAMING

Short-sellers target MGM as downturn for casinos persists

AS 2015 draws to a close, investors are shunning the advice of analysts by increasing their bets against casinos in Macau, the world's largest gambling hub.

For example, short interest in MGM China Holdings Ltd. is nearing the record reached on Nov. 20, data compiled by Bloomberg and research firm Markit Ltd. showed. That's as analysts predict the company, a unit of the largest casino operator on the Las Vegas Strip, will deliver the best return among its beleaguered peers in Macau.

The fallout has spread beyond Macau's borders, hitting global gambling magnates such as Steve Wynn and Australian billionaire James Packer, who is said to be considering taking some of his casino assets in Crown Resorts Ltd. private [see page 6]. Despite China's relentless crackdown on corruption and slowing economy, some investors have taken the advice of analysts calling a bottom to Macau's gambling downturn - now in its 18th month - only to get largely burned, with the exception of the occasional rally.

Investors "are still shorting, because they think the analysts are wrong. They don't believe we are close to the bottom," Linda Csellak, head of Asia Pacific Equities at Manulife Asset Management, said in an interview. "The short side probably believes the worst is not over yet."

Share prices of Macau casinos have seen brief rallies since

the slump started in early 2014, only to collapse again as signs of optimism proved to be unsustainable, according to Karen Tang, an analyst in Deutsche Bank AG. For instance, a 15 percent rebound in Bloomberg Intelligence's index of Macau stocks in October 2014

I think it's probably a better buy than sell at this level

LINDA CSELLAK
MANULIFE ASSET MANAGEMENT

was cut short after the government imposed a smoking ban on casino floors that was more stringent than operators had expected.

Part of the reason why Macau is so unpredictable is because casino executives and analysts struggle to anticipate policy changes. Some have turned to frustration, with Las Vegas tycoon Steve Wynn blasting Macau's government in October for their lack of clarity. Others have just gotten busier:



Vehicles drive past the MGM Macau casino resort

Daiwa Securities Group Inc. analyst Jamie Soo, the top Macau analyst tracked by Bloomberg, switched his investment ratings on Sands China Ltd. three times in two months.

Macau's high-stakes gambling industry will continue to be squeezed by restrictive policies on capital outflow including a crackdown on underground banks and illicit use of debit-card transaction terminals from China UnionPay Co., Eddie Tam, Chief Executive Office of Hong Kong-based Central As-

set Investment, said in an interview. Other headwinds include the depreciation of the yuan, which will increase the costs for mainland Chinese to gamble in Macau, he said.

"The industry lacks a growth engine," Tam said.

MGM China is seen as particularly vulnerable among the city's six casino operators due to its lack of exposure to the Cotai Strip, the latest gaming area being developed in the Macau peninsula. Newer properties such as Melco Crown's Stu-

dio City, which opened in late October, have taken market share from older casinos.

For its part, MGM China's \$3 billion project in Cotai is scheduled to open in the last quarter of 2016. Wynn Macau Ltd.'s first Cotai project won't open until mid-2016 and SJM Holdings Ltd.'s first project in the district, Lisboa Palace, is slated to open in 2017.

Still, analysts expect MGM China shares to gain about 43 percent in 12 months, according to the average target of 22 analyst estimates compiled by Bloomberg, after plunging more than 70 percent from their January 2014 peak. That's the best return potential among its peers as analysts again expect the industry to start recovering - this time from next year. MGM isn't immediately available to comment.

Manulife, for one, thinks the worst is over and the Canadian insurer's \$86 million fund focusing in Asia Pacific stocks has started investing in Macau casino companies since November.

"I just can't see things getting a lot worse," said Csellak, who expects Macau casino stocks to recover next year after the sell-off. "I think it's probably a better buy than sell at this level." **Bloomberg**

Short-film premiere to uplift casino employees

Aries Un

GAMING Employees Home has produced a casino-set "microfilm" in an effort to encourage optimism and positivity among gaming practitioners. Two premieres of the short film were held at Studio 8 in Studio City this week. According to Melco Crown, over 600 people were in attendance.

The 40-minute film, entitled "The Lost Winner II," features the daily life of croupiers along with



Alexis Tam (center)

the dilemmas that they encounter at work. It was made by the Free Dream Production Studio.

"Every industry has its own [set of] pressures, we don't want to see the croupiers labeling their job as

more difficult than others," said Leong Sun Iok, president of the Gaming Employees Home. "Every industry has its own difficulties."

The production, which cost around MOP300,000,

is also part of the government's efforts to further develop the cultural and creative industry. Melco Crown also underwrote part of the film's cost and furnished a venue for shooting.

"This one is completely local, regardless of the setting, cast and crew," said the group's head, referring to the film. "I also wish that the youth [population] could receive more support from gaming operators over their local work."

According to Leong, the group produces videos

every year to boost the morale of people working in the gaming industry. This year, they further wish to recognize the industry, given the economic transition it has been undergoing.

Leong also believes that the workers' "attitudes towards their careers depend on their attitudes at work." "If these employees could be more active at work, it would lead to better career development," he stated.

Another of the group's objectives is to draw at-

tention to gaming practitioners, many of whom, he claimed, carry an extensive burden on their shoulders. In 2013, the group rolled out their very first gaming-themed film.

Many high-level government officials attended the premiere. One of them was the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Alexis Tam, who voiced his support for the "microfilm" and said that the government will continue to financially support home-grown productions.

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O Tin Lin to head MSAR delegations

O Tin Lin was yesterday announced, via the government's Official Gazette, as the director of the Economic and Commercial Delegation of Macau in Lisbon, and the head of Macau's Permanent Representation to the European Union in Brussels. O Tin Lin has been working for the MSAR delegation in Lisbon since 2000. The post was previously held by the Secretary for Public Works and Transport, Raimundo do Rosário.

Cheong U advises Sonia Chan



Cheong U

The former Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Cheong U, has been appointed to the position of advisor to the Secretary for Administration and Justice, Sonia Chan. Cheong U was currently deputy president of the Macau Foundation. The news of this appointment was published yesterday in the government's Official Gazette.

Secretary and regulator head meet gaming operators

THE Secretary for Economy and Finance, Leong Vai Tac, has urged all sectors of civil society to contribute to existing initiatives alongside the government's efforts to transform and diversify the SAR's economy.

The Secretary drew comparisons between the transitional challenges currently facing the Macau economy and surviving a war of attrition in which one or more sides are gradually worn down. Leong called for society to view the transition as if they were "fighting a prolonged war."

Leong made the remarks during an unannounced meeting with representatives from Macau's six gaming operators. On Tuesday night, the policy secretary's office released a statement about the meeting without revealing its time and location.

According to the statement, Leong said that the "orderly and healthy development of the gaming industry" would benefit Macau in the transition and diversification of its economy.



He also thanked the six gaming enterprises for adhering to government policies and for promoting the development of non-gaming attractions.

The newly-appointed Gaming Inspection and Co-ordination Bureau Director, Paulo Martins Chan, was also present at the meeting. A statement revealed that, during the meeting, Chan made his first official contact with representatives from the six operators. Chan noted that the gaming sector is a promi-

nent pillar of Macau, adding that there is a partnership between the government and the gaming operators. He also explained that the adjustment of the sector will create a sustainable future that is both "sophisticated and robust."

Chan added that the government would continue to improve the laws and regulations pertaining to the gaming industry, pledging to ensure that the gaming sector operated with "honesty and regulation." In

return, the six operators pledged to closely co-operate with the gaming inspectorate in developing the industry in an "orderly and sound" fashion. According to the statement, the representatives of the six gaming enterprises said the gaming industries in neighboring regions are developing rapidly and that Macau is facing fierce competition. They also said that it is important to keep Macau's gaming industry internationally competitive.

AD

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5
MICHELIN STARS

3
CHEFS

1
HOTEL

CITY OF DREAMS
MACAU

新濠天地

Left to right:
 Chef Toru Osumi, Shinji by Kanesaka
 Chef Guillaume Galliot, The Tasting Room
 Chef Tam Kwok Fung, Jade Dragon

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Beijing green lights sea waters jurisdiction

will come under local control following an official grant that will be effective from next Sunday, said O Lam, who heads the chief executive's office, in a press conference at the government headquarters.

"In response to the economic development of Macau, it's necessary to make applications to the central government if the local government wants reclamation," she explained, while stressing the need to obtain a green light from the state over the expansion of the SAR's territory.

The specifics of the boundary markings will only be

available on the day of the official announcement.

The Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, who also serves as the acting head of the Macau Customs Service, said that his cabinet was prepared to meet all the demands accompanying the new policy in terms of personnel deployment and the provision of hardware equipment.

The new marine rights ownership will lead to necessary revisions to regulations and international treaties, according to Wong Soi Man, director of the Marine and Water Bureau.

The major three adminis-

trative laws subject to future amendments involve: the clarification of the traffic in waterways contained within the new territory demarcation; the problems associated with dredging in the new territory; and the regulation outlining the public department's service.

In December last year, the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, disclosed his intention to let the region manage its surrounding waters. He made this declaration while visiting Macau on an occasion marking 15 years since the region's return to Chinese sovereignty.



Aries Un

AUTHORITIES announced last night that Beijing has finally granted legal

rights to Macau to manage activities in its surrounding sea area, as well as providing a clear mapping of the land.

A marine area of 85 square kilometers around the region

Authorities reveal ten heritage sites to be listed



FOR the first time, the Cultural Affairs Bureau has launched an evaluation of a group of cultural heritage sites. The future development of these ancient buildings will be legally binding if consensus over their cultural significance is reached, according to a media briefing yesterday afternoon. Some of the buildings were previously slated to be demolished or were even partially destroyed.

Four temples dedicated to the god of land in Chinese culture, scattered across the central part of the Macau peninsula towards the Inner Harbor, are on the list for the appraisal that involves a public consultation to take place later this month.

Chong Sai Pharmacy, said to be Sun Yat Sen's former workplace, is another Chinese-style relic to be evaluated. The remaining buildings are western constructions, including three different sections of remaining city

wall from the past, General Ye Ting's Former Residence, a municipal horse stable and the adjacent kennel, Social Welfare Bureau (IAS)'s current headquarters and a house that has already been partially torn down.

The prospect of demolishing the three-story yellow house, situated at the intersection of the R. da Barca and R. de Manuel de Arriaga has always generated controversy. The building has lost its attic section due to an error last year when the architectural authorities approved the owner's request for the attic to be demolished. However, the demolition was eventually forced to a halt due to public opposition.

If it were listed as a building to be protected after the one-year appraisal, the proprietor would be obligated to restore the lost part with the cultural authorities' technological support if necessary, the bureau's president, Ng Vai Meng, said.

The bureau will not offer any funding, except for a scenario in which the property owner objects to restoration on his own, in which case the related expenditure would be pursued afterwards.

The pharmacy, in which Sun Yat-Sen allegedly spent part of his life, cost the government MOP36 million in its acquisition in 2011.

In 2006, The IAS's chief office, known as "Blue House" in Cantonese, almost got torn down after the then-president, Ip Peng Kin, voiced his strong support for the building's demolition, arguing that it was not among the official cultural heritage sites at the time. However, the desire to tear it down was later quelled following a surge of public objection.

From December 28 until February 25 citizens will be able to share their opinion in a public consultation session on the inclusion of ten iconic buildings in Macau's cultural heritage list. **AU**



Blue House, currently the IAS headquarters



Building on Manuel de Arriaga Street, n.º 28



Former horse stable and municipal kennel



Chong Sai pharmacy



General Ye Ting former residency



Foc Tac Chi Temple, Bairro da Horta da Mitra

Money laundering charges linger for couple with links to Macau



East Timor's capital Dili

PORTUGUESE citizen and former Macau resident Tiago Guerra, who had been unable to leave East Timor since October 2014, was recently visited by his two sons, who had not seen their parents for over a year.

Mr Guerra and his wife Chan Fong Fong have been accused of money laundering. The couple's bank accounts in East Timor, Macau and Portugal were reportedly frozen unbeknownst to them.

Portuguese news agency Lusa reported that the children traveled from Portugal to spend Christmas in Dili, the country's capital, where Tiago Guerra has remained in preventive custody for eight months.

No formal accusation has been filed by the Public Prosecutor's Office. However, the couple – who were released from custody in June – has been ordered to present themselves to the Dili police every week.

Mr Guerra and his wife still do not have their documents, and live on assistance from family and friends.

"At the moment it's all very confusing. I'm very happy to be able to hug my children, but still very anxious," Tiago Guerra told Lusa.

"We have no idea if and when there will be a formal charge or when there will be any progress in the process. We are talking about 14 months and the only development was the Court of Appeal that recognized some of the things that we had claimed," he said.

The family was reunited in the VIP room of the Dili airport, where the children and their grandmother had travelled with the help of the former President of the Republic, José Ramos-Horta, who was traveling on the same flight from Portugal.

"It is with great joy that I see these parents meet with the

children. I have followed this process for over a year. I have known Mr Guerra from long ago. He is an honest person who has always worked to help East Timor," said Ramos-Horta.

"In that sense I am concerned with this case, especially when it involves children traumatized by these situations. I hope the Attorney General's Office and the courts do what they have to do fast, [in order] to reach a conclusion in this case," he added.

While living in Macau during

■ The couple was planning to return to Macau at the time of their arrest

the 1990s, Tiago Guerra worked for Portugal Telecom and owned a consulting company named Olive Consultancy. According to Portuguese newspaper Expresso, the couple's legal troubles are linked to the company, which served as the intermediary in a deal for Bobby Boye, a former advisor to the Timorese government. In June 2014, the U.S. citizen was arrested in America and accused of stealing USD3.5 million from East Timor in oil-related deals. Guerra, Boye's former neighbor in Dili, resorted to an escrow account to transfer USD860,000 to the U.S. from a lawyer's office in Norway. Through Olive Consultancy, Guerra had allegedly held money on behalf of transacting parties upon completion of the agreed-upon conditions.

According to Expresso, the couple was planning to return to Macau at the time of their arrest, having lived in East Timor for many years.

ADVERTORIAL

Wynn makes talents shine

Wynn employees get all the three top awards from the Diploma in Casino Management course launched by the University of Macau's Institute for the Study of Commercial Gaming. The company offered the opportunity to over 20 of its local staff, all of whom managed to complete the course and grow in the process.

IT was not until she devoted herself to Wynn Macau eight years ago that she found the gaming industry a fulfilling place to be in. Maria Ng, currently working as a table games supervisor at Wynn, recalled how her whole perspective on the region's leading industry has dramatically changed.

"I repeatedly told my family that I was adamant that I would never work in casinos," she said.

Nevertheless, Ng eventually found herself fortunate enough to become part of a company that prioritizes the nurturing of talents. She was encouraged to return to school and complete a casino management diploma during her employment.

Surprisingly, the lady who once found it hard to even pick up a pen managed to top the class.

"I couldn't believe I could have done this," said Ng,

pleased at how far she had come from croupier to being awarded for academic excellence as "outstanding graduate."

Speaking of how she felt ending up on the gaming floor, she voiced her appreciation for the opportunity given to her by the best employer in Macau.

"It allows me to interact with people from different backgrounds from whom I learn so much. It's not only about work but also about how to deal with people," she said.

Ng was among the more than 20 nominees singled out of the around 300 employees in the company eager to complete the Diploma in Casino Management, whose program attracts hundreds of gaming practitioners from the six gaming operators annually.

Another "outstanding graduate," Sky Wong, also a father, found his gratitude for his employer indescribable by words. He has been part of the Wynn family since it was established in Macau. "There wasn't as much training in the past," said the main floor gaming pit manager who witnessed the decade-long gaming boom.

Wong managed to juggle work and study for a year thanks to the significant support from his colleagues and management team. His thirst for knowledge explains his perseverance and excellence in class.



Sky Wong Pak Wai
Pit Manager - Main Floor Gaming

Despite the economic transition the region is going through, Wong is still hopeful about the industry's prospects. Now equipped with expertise, he has already braced himself for the emerging challenges. "With more gaming projects coming up in the future, we will see a new landscape," he said.

It did not take much of the company's table games supervisor Derrick Lei to complete the year-long program as "distinction graduate" – the best student in the course. The avid learner is now further honing his gaming management skills through an advanced course at the same institute. Lei also wishes to utilize his potential in response to the new scene.

"Macau shifted from being just another gaming city, to actually leading the world in terms of its gaming industry," he stated.

A university degree holder in Finance, expressed his desire to be given the opportunity to practice what he has learnt from the course to his job. He believes such an experience would give him a glimpse into what the region needs in order to continue to prosper.

The top three of the class strongly believe that it takes continuous learning to excel at their careers, a feat that would not have been possible, if not for their employer which has offered full assistance and support all along the way.



Maria Ng Wai Han
Supervisor - Table Games



Derrick Lei Kin Chong
Supervisor - Table Games



The group of 20 nominees singled out to complete the Diploma in Casino Management at Wynn

Brett Foley, Dinesh Nair
and Nabila Ahmed

Packer said in talks to take Crown resorts assets private

JAMES Packer, Australia's third-richest man, is in talks to return some of Crown Resorts Ltd.'s casino assets to private ownership, people with knowledge of the matter said. Crown Resorts shares surged the most in almost seven years.

Packer's Consolidated Press Holdings Pty has been speaking with private equity firms and pension funds about a possible joint bid for some assets of his publicly traded Crown Resorts, which has a market value of A\$8.6 billion (USD6.2 billion), according to the people. A deal hasn't been finalized, and the talks may still fall through, the people said, asking not to be identified because the information is private.

Shares of Crown Resorts, which runs casinos in Melbourne and Perth, have fallen 33 percent from a February high in Sydney trading through Tuesday. The company's resorts in the southern Chinese territory of Macau, which it operates through the Melco Crown Entertainment Ltd. joint venture, have been hurt by government curbs on illicit money flows and a campaign against corruption that deterred VIP players.

"Macau has been a massive issue. Melco Crown has been part of the reason Crown has suffered so badly," Evan Lucas, a market strategist at IG Ltd. in Melbourne, said by phone yesterday. "He's risk-mitigating the current situation. It's an interesting move and clearly the



James Packer

market likes it."

Teaming up with private equity firms would help Packer strip out costs and ride out the tougher periods away from the glare of public markets, Lucas said.

Crown shares rose 11 percent, the biggest gain since March 2009, to close at A\$11.77 in Sydney yesterday.

Consolidated Press, Packer's closely held investment vehicle, owns a controlling stake in Melbourne-based Crown Resor-

ts, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. The billionaire stepped down as chairman of Crown Resorts in August to focus on developing the company's new projects, which include a casino under development in Las Vegas and a hotel for high rollers on the Sydney harbor. Packer remains a director of the company.

The company's Macau venture, which is part-owned by billionaire Lawrence Ho, in October opened the Hollywood-

themed \$3.2 billion Studio City resort that features a giant Ferris wheel and virtual Batman ride. In October, Crown Resorts bought a 20 percent stake in the Nobu restaurant and hotel chain for \$100 million.

Macau has been a massive issue. Melco Crown has been part of the reason Crown has suffered so badly.

EVAN LUCAS,
MARKET STRATEGIST

Consolidated Press did not respond to an e-mail seeking comment. Crown Resorts Chief Financial Officer Ken Barton didn't immediately respond to an e-mail and a message left at his office seeking comment.

Consolidated Press has been tightening its grip on Crown in recent weeks. According to a November filing, it bought

about 22 million more shares to take its stake to 53 percent.

Crown's profit in the 12 months ended June slumped 41 percent to A\$385 million, dragged down by slimmer contributions from Macau, which has seen casino revenue falling for the 18th straight month in November.

In Sydney, Crown is building a luxury hotel and gaming resort at Barangaroo near the Sydney Harbor Bridge in a bid to attract the world's richest travelers and gamblers. Crown has said it expects to spend about A\$657 million on the project in the next three years.

Days before Studio City opened, Crown said any focus on the slowdown in Macau was "short sighted" and the company had "great faith in its long-term development."

Bashed by investor concerns over Macau, Crown shares are now undervalued, said Brian Han, an analyst at Morningsstar Inc. in Sydney. Any plan by Packer to buy them back would have "economic logic," he said.

"We are long-term believers," Han said by phone. "Macau will be a big and very sustainable mass market. Right now, it's dominated by VIPS - and we all know why they're not gambling these days. They just don't want any attention." **Bloomberg**

OPINION | ANALYSIS

Crown Resorts shareholders should beware a stacked deck

David Fickling

PROFESSIONAL gamblers know the house always wins, but markets are meant to be a bit more balanced. Minority shareholders in Crown Resorts, the casino company controlled by Australian billionaire James Packer, should resist any attempts to stack the deck.

Packer is in talks to return some of his casino assets to private ownership, people with knowledge of the matter told Bloomberg [see above]. Crown Resorts' shares surged as much as 15 percent, presumably on expectations of a nice special dividend should the buyout eventuate. Longer-term investors should think hard

about what they'll be left with afterward.

There are parts of Crown's portfolio that would be well suited to a life out of the limelight. The company has a 34 percent stake in Melco Crown Entertainment, operator of Macau's City of Dreams and Studio City resorts. Melco Crown should have staying potential as Macau continues to develop into China's very own Las Vegas, but there's no denying it's struggling at the moment amid a 32 percent downturn in casino revenue.

Then there are Crown's plans to develop a A\$2 billion (USD1.4 billion) casino targeting high-rollers on the shores of Sydney Harbour by 2019, and to contribute another \$400 million to \$500

million to a \$1.6 billion to \$1.9 billion resort on the dicier, less-trafficked northern fringes of the Las Vegas Strip. And let's not forget the 20 percent stake in the Nobu luxury restaurant chain the company picked up for a cool \$100 million in October.

These are the sorts of businesses -- potentially attractive in the long term but ugly in the short term -- that could shelter quite happily away from public markets. Cashflow from Melco Crown could be used to help fund the development projects, perhaps with some contribution from continuing equity stakes in the Melbourne and Perth casinos.

What's odd about Packer's current plans is that he appears to have

precisely the opposite idea. If he's planning to take Crown's casino assets private, he can only be thinking about the Melbourne and Perth resorts that contribute the overwhelming majority of group earnings.

What would Crown Resorts look like without those two units? A fat sheaf of bills, and a more slender pile of invoices. Shareholders in the stub will continue to receive dividends equivalent to about 10 percent of Melco Crown's net income, thanks to their 34 percent stake in the company and its 30 percent dividend payout policy. But the A\$159 million that's being spent on Crown Sydney in the current fiscal year alone represents a larger slice of cash than

they'll receive from Melco between now and 2019, based on analyst estimates of \$1.41 billion in net income over the period:

The Melbourne and Perth casinos may be somewhat less exciting than Crown's development projects, but dullness is a big part of their appeal. High-rollers bet a lot of money (Packer's father Kerry was a legendary whale over four decades), but the margins on their wagers are thin and highly volatile. Much better to depend on the little guys: Australians are the world's biggest gamblers with about A\$1,000 of annual gambling losses per capita, and more than two-thirds of Crown's revenue last year was provided by the main gaming floor and non-gambling activities such as restaurants and shows. Gambling is an addictive activity like smoking, so tends to be a highly defensive business.

Bluntly, a Crown Resor-

ts without its two main casinos would be so implausible as a business model that it's probable Packer has something else up his sleeve, if only to protect the value of his own 50 percent shareholding against a wave of selling by irate minority shareholders. Credit investors are already forking out more to protect against non-payment of Crown's debt, spooked by the slowdown in Macau and Packer's decision to step down as group chairman in August.

Packer is known for being somewhat media shy - understandable, given the wide coverage of his brawl last year with a television executive outside his Bondi pad and a relationship with songstress Mariah Carey that's regularly splashed across magazine covers. A take-private deal might be an attractive way for him to stay away from the paparazzi. Shareholders should make sure it doesn't happen at their expense. **Bloomberg**

NG LAP SENG BRIBE SCANDAL

Diplomatic immunity remains thorn in prosecutor's side



U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara announces an indictment against six United Nations individuals during a news conference, Tuesday, Oct. 6, 2015 in New York

THE issue of diplomatic immunity is likely to remain a thorn in the side of prosecutors attending to the alleged United Nations bribery scandal unearthed in October, which involved local real-estate developer and billionaire Ng Lap Seng.

One of six individuals facing charges in connection with the alleged bribery activities of the former UN General Assembly president has claimed that diplomatic immunity prevents him from having to entertain the indictment.

The obstacle of "diplomatic immunity" has troubled prosecutors, who, to date, have only been able to lay charges of tax fraud to former UN official John Ashe.

Assistant US Attorney Janis Echenberg said that prosecutors were "looking carefully" at the issue of diplomatic immunity at a court hearing in late October, according to the news agency Reuters.

Brian Bieber, a lawyer acting on behalf of former diplomat Francis Lorenzo, asked Manhattan court judge Vernon Broderick to dismiss the ac-

cusations of bribery and money laundering. He argued that his client was entitled to immunity at the time of the alleged activities and the subsequent arrest.

"As such, Lorenzo is protected from prosecution by virtue of his diplomatic agent immunity," Bieber wrote.

Francis Lorenzo served as the deputy UN ambassador for the Dominican Republic until he was recently suspended. He is now facing charges for his alleged involvement in the suspected USD1.3 million bribery case relating to John Ashe.

Prosecutors accused the former deputy ambassador of having extensive connections within the bribery network.

Lorenzo is suspected to have received tens of thousands of dollars per month from Ng Lap Seng's organizations in return for supporting the creation of a United Nations South-South Cooperation Center in Macau, to be built by Ng's real-estate companies.

Lorenzo, Ashe and Ng have all been released on bail while they await trial proceedings. **Staff reporter**

ENVIRONMENT

Forum encourages regional cooperation for green economy

Aries Un

APPEALS for regional collaboration have spilled over into an annual forum held to promote the application of renewable energy and innovative efforts. Ideas discussed in the forum were aimed towards achieving a sustainable environment in the future and cutting carbon emissions.

On the sidelines of the fourth edition of the International Forum for Clean Energy, held yesterday at the Sands Cotai Central, the event's director-general, Ambrose So, urged the government to jump on the global bandwagon of developing clean energy by expanding cooperation with mainland authorities.

"We have been talking about regional cooperation in recent years, so why not expand it into the clean energy realm as well?" he stressed.

His advice came after a brief talk with the mainland scholar He Zuoxiu, an experienced researcher at the Chinese Academy of Sciences who has introduced a concept that combines wind, solar and hydraulic technologies in order to produce power. The concept is already being adopted across China, He Zuoxiu noted.

However, the use of such technology has yet to take hold. The scientist noted that the forum allowed the Chinese representatives in attendance to interact with their European counterparts on enhancing the model, which will require cooperation be-



Ambrose So

tween government departments in the long run. According to He, currently each natural resource application is separately governed by different Chinese agencies on the mainland.

"And now it's time for them to come together to complement one other and make it work better," he mentioned.

The scholar's appeal appears in the 2015 Blue Book of Clean Energy, a compilation of updated findings from research conducted by experts on an ongoing basis. It is one of the main features of the annual event, which takes place every year, and its contents were handed in to the mainland policymakers for their reference.

With China recently pledging to lower its carbon emissions at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris, He said that the nation has gravitated away from nuclear power in favor of natural sources of power.

Apart from that, it was said that Macau should increase its

reliance on electricity-powered vehicles in order to align with the nation's strategic vision. The forum's director, who also serves as the head of the SJM Holdings Limited, promised to exchange his casinos' shuttle coaches for more environmental-friendly vehicles if they are available for rent in the market despite increased operational costs.

"You have to give up a bit to achieve the idea of environmental protection, but it would do good for the environment in return," Ambrose So said, while citing a mainland model that travels 180 kilometers on a 20-minute-recharge battery. He also called on the government to push for the adoption of green vehicles.

In addition, So claimed that, for the time being, all gaming operators have already made considerable headway in cutting down on carbon emissions, which is reflected in their lighting of choice and overall architectural design.

corporate bits

750 SANDS EMPLOYEES REACH A DECADE

Sands China Ltd congratulated 750 team members on Monday and Tuesday, presenting them with awards for having reached their ten-year anniversaries with the company. The company says that most of the 750 team members who are celebrating a decade with Sands China are Macau locals, with some 235 of them currently serving in managerial roles.

More than 2,500 employees have so far been with the gaming operator for more than ten years, representing a total of 11 percent of Sands China's existing workforce. "Our success is founded on the dedication and excellence of amazing team members like you, who have helped this great



company reach higher heights year after year," said the newly-inaugurated president of Sands China, Wilfred Wong. Sands China offers its employees a number of training programs and professional opportunities, such as the Sands China Academy – a platform that seeks to improve the training of Macau locals at the company and with the company's partners.

MGM & BNU LAUNCH TRIPLE CURRENCY CARD

To celebrate the eighth anniversary of MGM Macau, which opened on December 18, 2007, MGM has announced a new initiative for its employees, organized in cooperation with Banco Nacional Ultramarino (BNU).

MGM is set to offer its employees a "BNU MHM UnionPay Triple Currency Credit Card," which would donate a percentage of all eligible card spending to local charity organizations each year. The credit card allows users to spend within Macau, Hong Kong and mainland China in the respective local currencies. Foreign transactions fees are not applied to purchases made outside of these three territories.



At an event marking the launch, Pansy Ho, co-chairperson and executive director of MGM China Holdings, thanked the company's employees "for actively participating in a range of community programs for the past eight years" and for serving those in need.

STUDIO CITY TO RECREATE NYC ON NEW YEAR'S EVE

Melco Crown Entertainment's Studio City casino resort will host a New York City (NYC)-themed New Year celebration from 10 p.m. on December 31 to usher in 2016. The "Big Apple" celebration, entitled "I ♥ NEW YORK," seeks to recreate the famous Times Square mirror ball drop that occurs each year in NYC.

The event will feature New York-themed culinary treats, unique shopping experiences and a spectacular snowfall and virtual fireworks show.

The night will culminate in a countdown for the 150-meter descent of a mirror ball. To complement the countdown event, which is free of charge, Studio City is offering special one-night accommodation pa-



ckages at the resort, which will permit guests to gain VIP access to the celebration.



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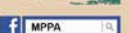
Results after Round 1

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

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S Korea lowers growth outlook for 2016

SOUTH Korea lowered its growth outlook for 2016 yesterday, citing headwinds for exports from China's slowdown. The finance ministry said Asia's fourth-largest economy will expand 3.1 percent next year. It previously forecast 3.3 percent growth.

The lower number would still be an improvement from 2015's forecast growth of 2.7 percent. This year's growth was much slower than the ministry's forecast of 3.8 percent, due to slumping exports and a deadly respiratory syndrome that battered consumption.

Next year, South Korea's government plans to introduce policies to boost exports, consumption and birth rates.

It will increase assistance to consumer products companies with big demand from China, such as cosmetics, food and baby products.

The country's traditional export heavyweights, mainly shipbuilders, automakers and electronics companies, had a tough year in 2015.

To stimulate domestic spending, department stores and traditional markets nationwide will offer bargains every November, akin to Black Friday for American shoppers.

LUXURY-GOODS MARKET

Prada hits record low after missing forecasts on poor sales

Andrew Roberts and Stephanie Wong

PRADA SpA plunged to a record low in Hong Kong trading after the company reported third-quarter profit that missed analyst estimates as sales in the HKSAR and Macau continued to weaken.

The shares fell 7 percent to HKD24.75 by the end of trading yesterday, the lowest close since their Hong Kong debut in 2011. The benchmark Hang Seng Index rose 2 percent.

Prada reported Tuesday net income fell to 46.5 million euros (USD51.1 million) in the three months through October from 74.5 million euros, lower than the average estimate of 60 million euros from six analysts compiled by Bloomberg.

The luxury-goods maker's poor third-quarter results considerably under-performed global peers and "signify Prada's structural problems are likely to be more intense than



Pedestrians walk past a Prada SpA store in the Tsim Sha Tsui area of Hong Kong

expected," Bocom International analyst Phoebe Wong wrote in a note Wednesday, citing in particular the company's loss of market share to younger and more affordable rivals.

Wong downgraded the stock to a "sell" from "neutral" rating, and cut the target price to HK\$20, from HK\$28. The company also said it will increase prices in Europe to compensate for slumping sales in Asia and the U.S., and will continue to seek savings without sacrific-

ing spending on products and marketing. Price increases in Europe are designed to narrow a gap with China, where luxury goods are more expensive, partly because of import duties.

In making changes to its pricing, Prada follows Chanel and Swiss watchmaker TAG Heuer, which said in March they will adjust the amounts they charge globally because of currency fluctuations. At the time, a weakening euro had widened the gap between the price of items sold in China and Europe to a record high, with soft luxury goods such as handbags costing as much as 70 percent more in the Asian country, according to Exane BNP Paribas.

"We want to flatten the spread as much as possible," Co-Chief Executive Officer Patrizio Bertelli said on a conference call. The gap between Europe and China will narrow to 10 percent to 15 percent from 35 percent, he said. The policy will also apply to markets including Ja-

pan and the Middle East. "If we have buyers in Hong Kong or China, we don't want them to go to Korea," Bertelli said.

Prada is struggling to deal with the weakest market for luxury goods in six years. Less than 1 percent of its revenue is generated online, where most of this year's industry growth will come from, and Prada's lineup of handbags has struggled to attract shoppers from New York to Nanjing. To make matters worse, the luxury-goods maker has to contend with fewer tourists in Europe following the terror attacks in Paris last month.

Prada posted revenue fell 5.3 percent to 758.1 million euros, also missing estimates. Sales in Prada's own stores fell in all main markets, except Italy and Japan, in the quarter. In Hong Kong and Macau, the situation worsened and the weakening of the yuan in August and September weighed on spending by Chinese travelers. **Bloomberg**

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Eric Talmadge, Tokyo

CHINA – NORTH KOREA

The show must go on, unless divas say otherwise

BEFORE it all fell apart, a visit to Beijing by North Korea's most popular all-female pop group was touted by Pyongyang as the perfect chance to warm up relations with its biggest and most important ally. Things haven't been going all that great lately and sometimes instead of taking the thorny issues head on it's best to explore other options.

Like miniskirts and sequins.

But the much-anticipated international debut of the Moranbong Band at Beijing's National Theater last weekend was nixed just hours before it was to begin and the ladies hopped the first flight back to Pyongyang.

Though the deeper significance of it all is hard to gauge — neither country is offering any insight — the cancellation is particularly surprising because it had been highly publicized, almost hyped, by North Korea's state-run media. The band had also recently done several performances that suggested it was being groomed for a broader push into the world spotlight.

Kim Jong Un's divas have become so popular with the North Korean people that it has long been seen as inevitable Pyongyang would turn them loose on the world stage. What better soft culture ambassadors could there be for as regime seen by many around the world as one of the most oppressive and brutal on the planet?

"Performances given by the all-female band are fresh and innovative in vocal and instrumental music, stage structure and other aspects. Its singers are full of vim and vigor and they have strong personalities," said one report in the North's



Members of North Korea's Moranbong Band perform with the State Merited Chorus in Pyongyang

Korean Central News Agency, which also called the women a "national treasure."

Another KCNA report quoted a Chinese researcher as saying the tour proved that China and the North Korea have made substantial progress in high-level cultural exchange. After quoting a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman saying the tour would benefit regional peace and stability, it went on to note media in South Korea, Japan and Britain were sending out reports "drawing the attention of the world."

The Moranbong Band, which has about 20 members, has a lot going for them: sexy and yet wholesome looks, undeniable musical talent, unmatched popularity at home and the blessing of North Korean leader Kim himself, who made turning them into his official pop icons one of his first pieces of business after assuming power in late 2011.

Their songs, nearly all of which are paeans to Kim, are played on virtually every flight into and out of the North on its national airline. Women wat-

ch them for fashion tips, their tunes are karaoke staples and their concerts — though rather infrequent — are broadcast over and over and over again on state-run television. They sing and dance and play electric guitars, keyboards and drums in a fairly conventional pop ensemble, save for the electric violins.

During North Korea's elaborate Oct. 11 ruling party foundation day anniversary celebrations, performances of the band were featured prominently and opened to the drove of foreign visitors and journalists allowed into the country for the event, even though such concerts had been extremely hard to get into previously.

China, despite some bumps recently, would have seemed like the safest place for their global debut. And for good measure, all three concerts were to be by invitation only.

The Moranbong Band's music may be seen by many North Korea watchers in the West, and its admittedly small overseas fan base, as kitschy and weird, but for many Chinese it represents a nostalgic throwback to days gone by, when patriotic hymns to hardworking peasants and factory workers toiling happily in the name of the Party were part of the Communist Chinese norm.

Had the show been held, they certainly would have gotten a hea-

vy dose of old school propaganda.

"We have entered our prime in these rewarding times, there is nothing that we cannot do. Let's run toward the future. A new century is calling for us," go the lyrics to one of the songs the band was scheduled to sing, "Dash Toward the Future." "Let's build our land into a rich country and paradise, let's use these times to educate ourselves, staying up all night learning, creating new miracles through invention and accomplishments."

North Korea watchers have offered any number of suggestions about why the tour's plug got pulled.

Among the various guesses: Pyongyang wanted more Chinese VIPs on the guest list, the two sides couldn't agree on the playlist, Beijing was angry over Kim Jong Un's recent talk of building an H-bomb, Pyongyang was upset over Chinese social media chatter about how Kim might have had a romantic liaison with one of the band members (whom, by the way, South Korean media had previously speculated was executed).

Officially, the only word coming out of Beijing is that the concerts fell through because of a "miscommunication." As of Wednesday, Pyongyang had made no comment at all.

Next stop, Russia? AP

TAIWAN

'Star Wars' fan's dream job: Crafting realistic lightsabers

THIS is not your father's lightsaber, Luke. This is not the weapon of a Jedi Knight, but the handcrafted replica of a Taiwanese man who disliked the official "Star Wars" products, started making his own blades and now sells them for up to USD400 each.

It's a booming business for Tsai Jung-chou, enough for him to quit his optical engineering job three years ago and make models of the iconic sci-fi weapon full-time. He says his mailbox is flooded with orders from fans around the world.

The 32-year-old says his model, a metal hilt attached to a glowing poly-

carbonate tube, is the brightest and strongest on the market, strong enough to use in gentle duels. He even offers to replace or fix those that break in mock combat.

And while it won't cut metal, his lightsaber certainly sounds like the real thing when it's turned on, with a motion-sensor soundboard that generates the humming and buzzing heard in the movies.

Producing a realistic replica of the fictional weapon was a decade-long quest for the Tsai, who is better known by his alias Makoto Tsai.

He was smitten when he first saw "Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clo-

nes" in 2002. But he was sorely disappointed with the lightsaber he bought from the franchise. The light was dim and the blade seemed wimpy.

So he decided to build his own. He enrolled in an optical engineering school at a Taiwanese university and asked professors for advice.

"I was just a student. I didn't have lots of money," he said. "So I thought I should just make one myself because I like to make things myself anyway."

Tsai went on to work as an engineer for a high-power laser design company.

After years of experimentation, he came up

with a design using an LED light strip that lights up in sequence, giving a scrolling effect as it powers up.

Tsai posted video clips of his handicraft on YouTube and other Internet sites, which were then reposted on Star Wars fan websites. Soon he had people contacting him and offering to pay for what he calls "Makoto's lightsaber."

Each model takes two to three days to finish, Tsai says. Prices range from \$200 to \$400 for the top models. He also provides upgrades to any current or older models. He hasn't kept track of how many he has made, but



32-year-old Tsai Jung-chou, also known as "Makoto Tsai", compares his upgrade of a replica Star Wars lightsaber, left, with his personally designed LEDs and sound card at his home workshop

produces about 10-15 a month since he went full-time in 2012.

In the days leading up to the premier of the newest installment, "Star Wars: The Force Awakens," Tsai hung out with his friends dressed in Star Wars character costumes — and was busily making more lightsabers.

"I am actually happy that Disney has bought this movie franchise. They brought all the old characters — Luke, Prin-

cess Lea and Han Solo," he said. "I watched the trailer so many times and every time I cry. I get so emotional."

As for now, Tsai has no plan to expand his business. For him, becoming a master lightsaber maker is a dream come true.

Does he ever worry what he would do for a living if lightsabers faded in popularity?

"That's just not going to happen," he said. "Never." AP



A man surfs Internet on his laptop computer at a Starbucks cafe in Beijing

Xi calls for cooperation on Internet regulation

Joe McDonald, Beijing

CHINESE President Xi Jinping called yesterday for governments to cooperate in regulating Internet use, stepping up efforts to promote controls that activists complain stifle free expression. Xi's government operates extensive Internet monitoring and censorship and

has tightened controls since he came to power in 2013.

Speaking at a government-organized conference attended by executives of global and Chinese Internet companies, Xi called for creating a global "governance system" to reflect the "wishes and interests of all countries." He said that would help fight online crime and terrorism and promote "healthy

development" of the Internet.

Xi's comments reflect the growing assertiveness of China's ruling Communist Party in promoting its own vision for how to regulate global finance, technology, news media and other matters.

Yesterday's gathering was the second annual World Internet Conference in the southeastern city of Wuzhen in Zhejiang pro-

vince, where Xi once was provincial party secretary. It was organized by the Cyberspace Administration of China, the Cabinet agency that enforces Internet controls.

Cyberspace shouldn't be a battlefield.

XI JINPING

Organizers said some 2,000 people were due to attend including representatives of Apple Inc., Microsoft Corp., Lenovo Group and Baidu Inc., President Mamnoon Hussain of Pakistan and officials from Russia and Kazakhstan.

On the eve of the conference, the human rights group Amnesty International appealed to technology companies to resist Chinese initiatives that might curb freedom of expression or worsen human rights abuses.

"Under the guise of sovereignty and security, the Chinese authorities are trying to rewrite the rules of the Internet so censorship and surveillance become the norm everywhere," said the group's East Asia research director, Roseann Rife, in a statement. "This is an all-out assault on Internet freedoms."

The Communist Party promotes Internet use for business and education but tries to block material deemed obscene or subversive. It tries to prevent

users in China from seeing foreign websites run by human rights groups and news outlets, the Google search engine and social media such as Facebook.

Early this year, Chinese academics and entrepreneurs complained Beijing had tightened filtering to unusually high levels, preventing them from seeing materials abroad needed for work.

Xi called for cooperation to fight crime and terrorism online. "Cyberspace shouldn't be a battlefield," Xi said. "There should be no double standards in safeguarding network security."

Security experts say China is the biggest source of hacking attacks aimed at governments and companies. Last year, U.S. prosecutors charged five Chinese military officers with stealing secrets from American companies.

In September, Xi and American President Barack Obama agreed to refrain from conducting or supporting online theft of trade secrets or competitive business information.

Yesterday, Xi also called on other governments to respect "network sovereignty," a reference to efforts by leaders of China, Russia, Iran and some other nations to enforce controls over once-borderless cyberspace.

At last year's Wuzhen conference, organizers tried unsuccessfully to persuade global Internet companies to endorse a call for the world community to "respect Internet sovereignty" and "spread positive energy." **AP**

US plans 1st arms sale to Taiwan in 4 years

Matthew Pennington, Washington

THE Obama administration is planning its first arms sale to Taiwan in four years, congressional aides said yesterday (Macau time), a move that typically draws stiff criticism from Beijing but is unlikely to derail U.S.-China relations.

The planned USD1.8 billion sale would include two decommissioned U.S. Navy frigates, minesweepers, Stinger missiles, anti-armor and anti-tank missiles and other equipment, one of the aides said. The administration is seeking to expedite preliminary approval from the House and Senate foreign affairs committees for the proposed package so it can formally notify Congress of the sale as early as today.

The aides who were briefed on the sale requested

anonymity because they were not authorized to comment before the formal notification.

In December 2014, Congress passed legislation authorizing the transfer of up to four of the guided-missile frigates to Taiwan, and there's been mounting bipartisan pressure for the administration to follow through, amid concern Taiwan is inadequately armed to defend itself against an increasingly powerful mainland China.

The administration has announced more than \$12 billion in arms sales to Taiwan since 2010, but none since \$5.9 billion in sales in September 2011 that included upgrades for Taiwan's F-16 fighter jets. That drew a diplomatic protest from the authoritarian government in Beijing, which regards Taiwan as part of China. Beijing suspended

some military exchanges with the United States, but did not seriously impair ties.

The United States is legally obligated to sell weapons to Taiwan for its self-defense. The four-year hiatus in sales has drawn congressional criticism, with both senior Republicans and Democrats urging the administration to announce a new arms package, even if it risks tensions with China.

"China objects to all U.S. arms sales to Taiwan and will certainly denounce this sale. But in a break from the past, Beijing is not likely to suspend military-to-military exchanges with the U.S.," said Bonnie Glaser, an expert on China at the Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank. She said the arms package doesn't contain any advanced weapons, and China has



In this Dec. 8, 2015 photo provided by the U.S. Air Force, soldiers deliver a package to the island of Mog Mog in the Federated States of Micronesia as part of Operation Christmas Drop

also come to value the military exchanges with the U.S. more than in the past.

President Barack Obama has sought greater cooperation with China on issues such as climate change, and the two sides have increased military exchanges to reduce the

risk of conflict. But at the same time, relations have been roiled by China's construction of artificial islands in the South China Sea and allegations of Chinese cybertheft.

Taiwan, however, has weighed less on the U.S.-China relationship, as tensions between Taiwan

and the mainland have eased in recent years, notwithstanding the growing gap in military capabilities across the Taiwan Strait.

The proposed U.S. sale comes ahead of Taiwan's presidential and legislative elections next month. The presidential candidate for the ruling Nationalist party, which has promoted economic ties with Beijing, is forecast to lose by a wide margin to the candidate from the main opposition party, which has traditionally advocated for Taiwanese independence.

David McKeeby, spokesman for the State Department's bureau of political-military affairs, said Tuesday that as a matter of policy, the department doesn't comment on proposed defense sales or transfers until Congress has been formally notified.

Kamran Haider and Faseeh Mangi

PAKISTAN

Viral videos show army power after child slaughter

HUNDREDS of students, some who look as young as six years old, pump their fists in unison on the Pakistan school grounds where Taliban gunmen massacred 134 of their classmates a year ago.

"O mother, those who stole your dreams from you," they sing. "O mother, I have to go and take revenge from them: I have to go and educate the children of my enemies."

The 4.5-minute video released by Pakistan's military is playing on almost every television station to mark the first anniversary of the slaughter yesterday. The catchy tune does more than induce patriotism in a wounded nation: It also underscores how the armed forces have reasserted their power since the killings.

The very public resurgence of the military, which has ruled Muslim-majority Pakistan for more than half of its history, has further reduced the power of weak civilian leaders. Analysts see Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif increasingly sticking to economic affairs, with army chief Raheel Sharif holding sway over internal security and foreign policy.

While that arrangement has stabilized Pakistan for the moment, it carries risks just as the nation's economy appears poised to take off on a wave of Chinese investment. Upcoming decisions on whether to grant Raheel Sharif an extension or curtail powers granted to the military after the massacre could trigger a crisis for Nawaz Sharif, who was ousted by a coup in 1999. Facing a similar dilemma, past prime ministers have granted extensions rather



Pakistani children hold candles during a demonstration in connection with first anniversary of the school attack

than risk a standoff with the military.

"Anything that is perceived as a threat to the interest and power of the security establishment will bring tension," said Faisal Bari, associate professor of economics at Lahore University of Management Sciences. "Whenever the civilians try to push, then there will be trouble."

Optimists see Pakistan's economic growth accelerating as new power plants end crippling power shortages and China pours USD45 billion into infrastruc-

ture. That will buoy spending from a burgeoning middle class in the nation of 200 million people that has prompted the country's main stock index to double since 2012.

TERRORISM FIGHT

Pessimists say that the government hasn't done enough to raise revenues and tackle corruption, leaving the nation's finances vulnerable as a \$6.6 billion International Monetary Fund loan program concludes next year.

No matter what, security re-

mains the foundation for growth. More than 50,000 people have been killed in terrorism-related violence since 2001 - including the sons and daughters of army officers at the school in Peshawar last year.

After the massacre, the armed forces and lawmakers agreed on a 20-point plan to curb terrorism. Measures included the creation of military courts, registration of religious seminaries and a renewed effort to end violence in Karachi, Pakistan's biggest city.

A year in, it's having an effect: Militant attacks this year from July to September fell by more than half since the same period in 2013, according to the Centre for Research and Security Studies. Some 302 people have been executed since the school killings, almost as many as in the previous decade combined.

DRAMATIC FOOTAGE

At the same time, the military has stepped up its propaganda efforts. Last week's music video is a follow up to one released right after the massacre that is played routinely on television and radio stations. Another one featured dramatic footage of soldiers risking their lives to free a group of women and children from militants.

And it's not just music videos. Army-backed television dramas, theatrical plays and feature-length films all boost the image of Pakistan's military. Asim Bajwa, the army spokesman, has 1.6 million followers on Twitter - more than the prime minister.

The propaganda is creating a generation of Pakistanis with a "deficiency of democracy and politics in their veins," said Ayesha Siddiqi, a defense analyst in Islamabad and author of "Military Inc.," a book that examined the military's business interests. **Bloomberg**

NORTH KOREA

Supreme Court sentences Canadian pastor to life in prison

NORTH Korea's Supreme Court sentenced a Canadian pastor to life in prison with hard labor yesterday for what it called crimes against the state.

Hyeon Soo Lim, who pastors the Light Korean Presbyterian Church in Toronto, was given the sentence after a 90-minute trial. He had been in detention since February.

Lim entered and left the court in handcuffs flanked by two public security officers in uniform. The handcuffs were removed in court during the trial. He kept his head bowed most of the time and answered questions in a subdued tone.

The crimes he was char-

ged with included harming the dignity of the supreme leadership, trying to use religion to destroy the North Korean system, disseminating negative propaganda about the North to the overseas Koreans, and helping U.S. and the South Korean authorities lure and abduct North Korean citizens, along with aiding their programs to assist defectors from the North.

State prosecutors sought the death penalty.

Lim's lawyer asked the court to take into account the fact that Lim is a fellow Korean and that he had frankly confessed to everything the prosecution had brought up. Lim pleaded to be given

a chance and said if the court gave him a chance he would not do anything bad again.

Lim had earlier appeared at a news conference organized by North Korean authorities in Pyongyang in July and admitted to plotting to overthrow the North Korean state, but other foreigners detained in North Korea and then released have said they were coerced into making similar statements and confessing guilt during their detention.

Lim's relatives and colleagues have said he travelled on Jan. 31 as part of a regular humanitarian mission to North Korea where he su-

ports a nursing home, a nursery and an orphanage. They said Lim, who is in his early 60s, has made more than 100 trips to North Korea since 1997 and that his trips were about helping people and were not political.

North Korea has very strict rules against any missionary or religious activities that it sees as threatening the supremacy of its ruling regime. Merely leaving a Bible in a public place can lead to arrest and possibly severe punishment.

Both the U.S. and Canadian governments warn against travel to North Korea.

Last year, the North released Kenneth Bae, a



Hyeon Soo Lim, center, who pastors the Light Korean Presbyterian Church in Toronto, is escorted to his sentencing in Pyongyang

Korean-American missionary who was convicted of "anti-state" crimes and had been serving a 15-year sentence.

Bae, whose detention received worldwide attention, suffered medical issues in detention. He was freed along with one other American detainee after a secret mission to the reclusive commu-

nist country by James Clapper, the top U.S. intelligence official. He is reportedly planning a book about his 2-year-ordeal in detention.

An Australian missionary detained for spreading Christianity was deported last year after he apologized for anti-state religious acts and requested forgiveness. **AP**

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Julie Pace, Julie Bykowicz, Las Vegas

IN a presidential race reshaped by national security concerns, Republican front-runner Donald Trump defended his provocative call for banning Muslims from the United States yesterday as the candidates debated their plans for fighting Islamic State militants and keeping Americans secure.

Struggling former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush found his footing in trying to discredit Trump's qualifications for the White House, chiding the brash billionaire for trying to "insult your way to the presidency."

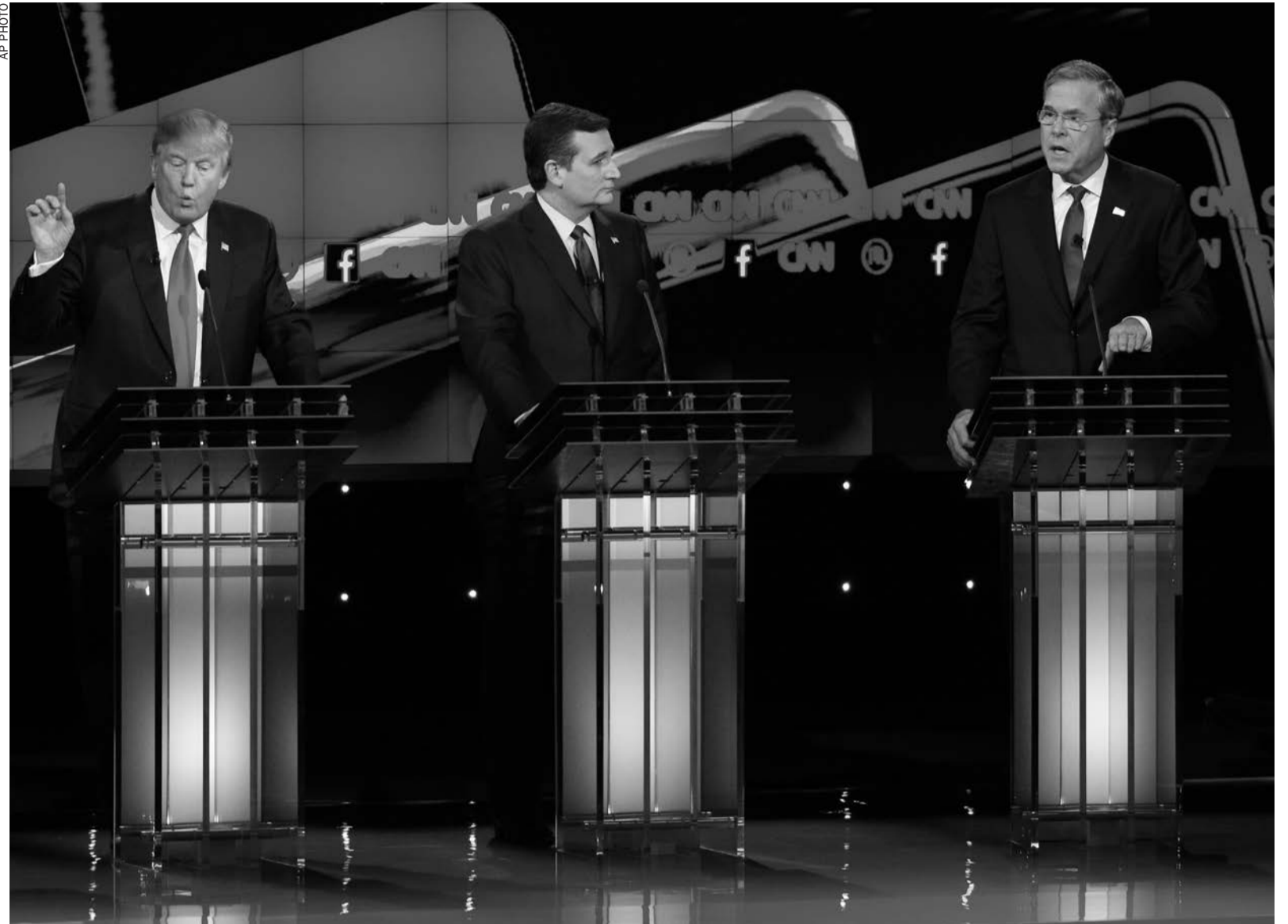
Yesterday's debate was the first for Republicans since the attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, California, which heightened fears of terrorism in the United States. The attacks have ignited a political debate about President Barack Obama's campaign to defeat the Islamic State in the Middle East and the nation's security posture in preventing attacks in the U.S.

The debate comes at a time when Texas Sen. Ted Cruz is on the rise, challenging Trump's months-long lead in Iowa, whose Feb. 1 caucuses lead off the state-by-state nominating contests. Cruz is trying to pitch himself as a more electable alternative to Trump, but some Republican leaders believe his hard-line conservative positions and prickly demeanor would put him at a disadvantage in a general election contest against Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton. Florida Sen. Marco Rubio has also entered the top tier in the crowded field by seeking to straddle the divide between his party's establishment and more conservative wings.

Trump's call for temporarily banning Muslims from the U.S. — a proposal roundly criticized by his rivals — dominated much of the discussion heading into the debate. He said he wasn't seeking to discriminate against Muslims. "We are not talking about isolation; we're talking about security," he said. "We are not talking about religion, we are talking about security."

Bush dismissed the proposal as unserious, saying "Donald is great at the one-liners, but he's a chaos candidate and he'd be a chaos president." In a moment that might help ease anxiety among Republican leaders, Trump pledged he would not seek to run as an independent. If he should lose the nomination, some fear he would make such a move, possibly preventing the nominee from defeating the Democratic challenger.

Trump was largely spared from criticism by Cruz and Rubio, who said they understood why he had raised the idea of banning Muslims. Instead, the two first-term senators — both Cuban-Americans in their 40s



Donald Trump, left, and Jeb Bush, right, both speak as Ted Cruz looks on during the CNN Republican presidential debate at the Venetian Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas

USA

Clashes over national security mark 5th Republican debate

— engaged in lengthy exchanges over their differences on national security and immigration, one of the most contentious issues in the Republican primary.

Their rivalry could become one of the dominant forces in the race as the first voting contests in February draw near. Rubio defended his support for eventually providing a pathway to citizenship for some people in the U.S. illegally, an unpopular position within the Republican Party. Rubio was a co-author of comprehensive bipartisan Senate legislation in 2013 that would have created that pathway, but he has since said the nation's immigration crisis must be addressed in piecemeal fashion, with legalization only an option after the U.S.-Mexico border is secured.

Seeking to draw a sharp contrast with Rubio, Cruz went further than he has previously in opposing legalization for people in the U.S. illegally. He declared: "I have never supported legalization and I do not intend to support legalization."

Rubio positioned himself as the hawk on national security, defending American efforts

to oust dictators like Syria's Bashar Assad in the Middle East. He also accused Cruz of weakening the government's ability to track terrorists because he voted in favor of legislation to eliminate the National Security Agency's bulk phone-records collection program and replace it with a more restrictive effort to keep the records in phone companies' hands.

Cruz argued that his vote helped "reform how we target bad guys" by allowing the government to search more phone numbers to uncover terrorists. Beginning after the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks, the NSA secretly collected the daily calling records — but not contents of conversations — for most Americans, including people never suspected of any crime. A new law, called the USA Freedom Act, passed in June with broad, bipartisan support. It ordered the NSA to end bulk collection after a six-month transition that expired last week.

The senators also displayed differences in their strategies for targeting the Islamic State. The extremist group claimed

responsibility for the Nov. 13 attacks in Paris, and one of the shooters in California pledged allegiance to the group on Facebook shortly before she and her husband shot and killed 14 people at a holiday party.

Cruz called for using "overwhelming air power" to destroy the Islamic State, while Rubio said airstrikes would have to be supplemented by ground troops, including American special operations forces. Obama has largely relied on

airstrikes to target the militants in Iraq and Syria. However, he's also sent troops to Iraq to help train and assist local forces and recently approved sending special operations forces into Syria.

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, who has been on the rise in the early voting state of New Hampshire, sought to assert himself in the national security discussions. He called for a no-fly zone over Syria and vowed to shoot down a Russian plane if it were to violate that space.

"We would shoot down the planes of Russian pilots if, in fact, they were stupid enough to think that this president was the same feckless weakling that the president we have in the Oval Office is right now," Christie said.

The debate's focus on national security was a detriment for retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson, who has struggled on complex international matters. Also on the main stage Tuesday night were former business executive Carly Fiorina; Ohio Gov. John Kasich and Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul. Four lower-polling candidates appeared at an earlier debate. AP

■ Trump was largely spared from criticism by Cruz and Rubio, who said they understood why he had raised the idea of banning Muslims

USA

NY, LA schools receive same email threat; LA cancels classes

Christine Armario, Colleen Long, Los Angeles

THE nation's two biggest school systems — New York City and Los Angeles — received threats earlier this week of a large-scale jihadi attack with guns and bombs, and LA reacted by shutting down the entire district, while New York dismissed the warning as an amateurish hoax and held classes.

It's extremely rare for a major U.S. city to close all its schools because of a threat and it reflected the lingering unease in Southern California following the terrorist attack that killed 14 people at a holiday luncheon two weeks ago in San Bernardino.

In LA, the threat came in the form of an email to a school board member. Authorities in New York reported receiving the same "generic" email and decided there was no danger to schoolchildren. Mayor Bill de Blasio concluded the threat contained "nothing credible."

"It was so outlandish," he said. New York Police Commissioner William Bratton agreed, quipping that it looked like the sender of the threat had watched a lot of the Showtime cable TV terrorism drama "Homeland."

The shutdown abruptly closed more than 900 public schools and 187 charter schools attended by 640,000 students across Los Angeles.

LA officials defended the move,



A gate to Birmingham Community Charter High School is locked with a sign stating that school is closed

with that city's police chief dismissing the criticism as "irresponsible."

"It is very easy in hindsight to criticize a decision based on results the decider could never have known," Police Chief Charlie Beck said at a news conference.

Southern California, he added, "has been through a lot in the recent weeks. Should we risk putting our children through the same?"

LA officials announced that schools would reopen today and said more than 1,500 buildings were searched. Police patrols outside the campuses will be increased. Mayor Eric Garcetti said the FBI concluded that the threat wasn't credible.

The threatening 360-word email sent to the New York City

school superintendent warned that schools would be attacked with pressure cooker bombs, nerve agents and machine guns. It claimed the writer and "138 comrades" would carry out the attack.

Students "at every school in the New York City school district will be massacred, mercilessly. And there is nothing you can do to stop it," the message said.

A law enforcement official with access to the document provided the email to The Associated Press. The official was not authorized to disclose details of an ongoing investigation and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The anonymous writer claimed to be a student at a district high school who had been bullied. The person also claimed to be

a jihadist but made errors that suggested the writer was really a prankster, including spelling the word "Allah" with a lowercase "a" and making no reference to the Quran.

The threats came in simultaneously to New York and LA school officials at about 1:20 a.m. EST Tuesday, or about 10:20 p.m. Monday in Los Angeles.

In LA, the school board member who received the threat immediately contacted school district police, Det. Rudy Perez said.

Across the country, a New York schools superintendent who received the threat was asleep and did not notice the email until 5:08 a.m. By 6:30 a.m., the message was sent to the New York Police Department.

An hour later, New York stu-

dents began arriving at school, and by about 9:30 a.m. investigators had ruled the threat a hoax.

The decision to close Los Angeles schools was announced around the same time, at 6:25 a.m. PST.

Los Angeles Superintendent Ramon Cortines said every campus would be searched before schools reopened.

Bratton called the closure in Los Angeles a "significant over-reaction."

"We cannot allow ourselves to raise levels of fear," said Bratton, who once ran the LA Police Department.

White House spokesman Josh Earnest said he would not second-guess the decisions made in Los Angeles or New York.

The sudden, complete closure disrupted the routines of many Los Angeles families.

Lupita Vela, who has a daughter in the third grade and a son who is a high school senior, called the threat "absolutely terrifying" in light of the San Bernardino attack.

"I know the kids are anxious," she said.

The LA schools commonly get threats, but Cortines called this one rare and said the San Bernardino attack influenced his decision to close the entire district.

The threat "was not to one school, two schools or three schools," he said at a news conference. "It was many schools, not specifically identified. ... That's the reason I took the action that I did."

The person who sent the threat used an "anonymizer," which uses a proxy server to mask the origin of Internet traffic, and the email was routed through a German IP address, according to a law enforcement official briefed on the investigation. The official, who was not authorized to discuss an ongoing investigation, spoke on condition of anonymity. **AP**

SYRIA

Dozens killed, hurt in airstrikes on fuel market

AIRSTRIKES on a fuel market in a rebel-held village in northern Syria killed and wounded dozens destroyed several tanker trucks, two Syrian opposition monitoring groups reported.

Opposition activists said warplanes also struck a popular market in the northern village of Maskaneh that is under the control of the Islamic State group, killing at least 18 people and wounding many others.

It was not immediately clear whose warplanes carried out the strikes, although the monitoring groups said the Russians targeted both markets.

The fuel market in the village of Maaret al-Naasan mostly sells diesel brought from areas under the control of the Islamic State group. The airstrikes on the market are likely part of a campaign to target the oil trade that is a major source of income for IS. The extremist group controls nearly half of Syria.

Russian warplanes as well as those of the U.S.-led coalition have destroyed hundreds of tanker trucks that are used to ferry oil from fields under the control of IS in eastern Syria to other parts of the country. The warplanes have also struck

oil facilities in the eastern province of Deir el-Zour in recent weeks.

The Local Coordination Committees said the airstrikes on Maaret al-Naasan were carried out by Russian warplanes and that they killed and wounded dozens of people.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the airstrikes killed 16 and wounded dozens more. The Observatory's chief Rami Abdurrahman said the warplanes were believed to have been Russian.

"This is part of the campaign against Daesh," Abdurrahman said, using the Arabic acronym for

the Islamic State group.

An amateur video posted online showed firefighters extinguishing the blaze in the market. Another video taken from outside Maaret al-Naasan showed thick black smoke billowing from the area shortly after the airstrike.

The video appeared genuine and corresponded to other AP reporting of the events.

Although other insurgent groups in Syria have been fighting against IS, fuel has been flowing from areas controlled by the extremists into rebel-held territory in return for other commodities such as vegetables and



fruits.

Demand for diesel has been on the rise in northern Syria to fuel heaters during the winter; the attacks on oil facilities and tanker trucks have sharply increased the price of diesel.

The other airstrikes targeted a popular market in the village of Maskaneh in the northern province of Aleppo. The Observatory said 18 were killed and dozens wounded while the LCC said 25 people perished. **AP**

what's ON



2015 STAMP FESTIVAL – THE ‘FESTIVE STAMPS’ SPECIAL EXHIBITION
 TIME: 9:30am-5:30pm (closed on Mondays)
 UNTIL: January 10, 2016
 VENUE: Communications Museum of Macau, No.7, Estrada de D. Maria II, Macau
 ADMISSION: MOP10
 ENQUIRIES: (853) 2871 8063 / 2871 8570

‘MR. BANANA’ - LOK 4 FRAMES COMICS EXHIBITION
 TIME: 10:30am-6:30pm (Closed on Mondays and public holidays)
 UNTIL: December 31
 VENUE: Calçada da Igreja de S.Lázaro ,10, Macau
 ADMISSION: Free
 ENQUIRIES: (853) 2835 4582

MACAU PRINTMAKING TRIENNIAL
 TIME: 10am-7pm (Closed on Mondays, No admission after 6:30 pm)
 UNTIL: February 14, 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

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

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

Offbeat

POLISH GEOLOGY EXPERTS: NO HIDDEN NAZI TRAIN



Experts with an earth-penetrating radar check the area where, according to two explorers, a secret tunnel is allegedly hiding a World War II Nazi train

Polish geology experts said they have found no traces of a train at a site allegedly hiding a World War II Nazi train. Experts from the University of Science and Technology in Krakow examined the site in Walbrzych, in southwestern Poland, last month using magnetic and gravitation equipment. But the head of the team, Janusz Madej, said “according to our examination, there might be a tunnel there but there is no train there.”

The conclusion concerns only one of a number of sites in the Walbrzych area, where explorers claim war-time installations and even a train may be found. During the war, the Nazis built a system of underground tunnels in the mountains surrounding the city. Historians vary in opinion whether they were intended as shelters or secret weapons factory.

According to local lore, the Nazis hid a train with gold in a secret tunnel nearby while fleeing the Red Army in 1945, at the end of the war. The area was in Germany at the time but became part of Poland when borders were redrawn after the war.

TV canal macau

13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:30	RTPi Live
18:10	Trail of Lies (Repeated)
19:00	Montra do Lilau (Repeated)
19:30	Soap Opera
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	TDM Talk Show
21:40	Comedy
22:10	Trail of Lies
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Television Film
00:10	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
00:45	RTPi Live

cinema



CINETEATRO

17 DEC - 30 DEC

STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS

ROOM 1
 (2D) 2.15, 4.45, 9.45 pm
 (3D) 7.15 pm
 Director: J.J. Abrams
 Starring: Teresa Palmer, Luke Bracey, Édgar Ramírez
 Language: English (Cantonese)
 Duration: 135min

POINT BREAK

ROOM 2
 (17 DEC) (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

SNOOPY: THE PEANUTS MOVIE

ROOM 2
 (19-23 DEC) (2D) 2.30, 4.30 pm
 (18-23 DEC) (3D) 7.30 pm
 Director: Steve Martino
 Language: Cantonese (English and Cantonese)
 Duration: 88min

IP MAN 3

ROOM 2
 (19-20 DEC) 9.30 pm
 (24-30 DEC) 5.45, 9.30, 11.30 pm
 Director: Wilson Yip Wai Shun
 Starring: Donnie Yen, Lynn Xiong, Max Zhang
 Language: Cantonese (English and Cantonese)
 Duration: 110min

LOVE THE COOPERS

ROOM 3
 2.30, 4.30, 7.30, 9.30 pm
 Director: Jessie Nelson
 Starring: Aalan Arkin, John Goodman, Ed Helms, Diane Keaton
 Language: Cantonese (English and Cantonese)
 Duration: 105min

YO-KAI WATCH THE MOVIE

ROOM 3
 (24-30 DEC) 2.15, 5.50 pm
 Director: Shigeharu Takahashi
 Language: Cantonese (English and Cantonese)
 Duration: 91min

THE LITTLE PRINCE

ROOM 3
 (19-20 DEC) (2D) 4.30 pm
 (23 DEC) (2D) 7.30 pm
 (24-30 DEC) (2D) 2.00, 7.30, 9.30 pm
 Director: Mark Osborne
 Language: English (Cantonese)
 Duration: 108min

MACAU TOWER

17 DEC - 6 JAN
 STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS
 2.30, 4.45, 7.15, 9.30 pm
 Director: J.J. Abrams
 Starring: Teresa Palmer, Luke Bracey, Édgar Ramírez
 Language: English (Cantonese)
 Duration: 135min

this day in history



1942 BRITAIN CONDEMNS MASSACRE OF JEWS

The British Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, has told the House of Commons about mass executions of Jews by Germans in occupied Europe. Mr Eden also read out a United Nations declaration condemning “this bestial policy”.

He said news of German atrocities sent in by the Polish Government and widely reported in the press this month would only serve to strengthen allied determination to fight Nazism and punish all those responsible.

After his announcement the House rose and held a one-minute silence in sympathy for the victims.

Mr Eden described how the German authorities, who have already stripped the Jews of their basic human rights, were now carrying out “Hitler’s oft repeated intention to exterminate the Jewish people in Europe”.

He described how hundreds of thousands of men, women and children were being transported from all German-occupied territory “in conditions of appalling horror and brutality” to Eastern Europe.

In Poland, Jewish ghettos were being “systematically emptied” except for the able-bodied who were being sent to labour camps.

“None of those taken away are ever heard of again,” he said. Those who are sick or injured are left to die of exposure or starvation or killed in mass executions.

The House then heard him read out a declaration made by the governments of Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, the United States, the UK, the USSR, Yugoslavia and the French National Committee.

It condemned “in the strongest possible terms this bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination” and made a “solemn resolution to ensure that those responsible for these crimes shall not escape retribution”.

He said the United Nations would try to give asylum to as many refugees as possible but that there were “immense geographical difficulties” as well as security procedures to overcome.

James A De Rothschild, Labour MP for the Isle of Ely, made an emotional speech on behalf of British Jewry thanking Mr Eden and the United Nations for their declaration.

He said there were many first-generation Jews living in England who believed they had had a lucky escape from the concentration camps.

Four days ago, synagogues all over Britain held a day of mourning as a mark of concern for the massacre of the Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe.

The Chief Rabbi Dr J H Hertz called on all Jews to commemorate “the numberless victims of the Satanic carnage”.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has also expressed his outrage in a letter to The Times earlier this month condemning “a horror beyond what imagination can grasp”.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

From 1933 when Hitler came to power, German Jews were deprived of civil rights, persecuted, physically attacked, imprisoned, and murdered. As Germany took over Europe many more thousands were shot in Russia and other Eastern European countries, by mobile killing squads or Einsatzgruppen.

In January 1942 leading SS leader Reinhard Heydrich announced to the Wannsee conference plans for the so-called “final solution to the Jewish problem”, a systematic massacre designed to create a “Jew-free” Reich. Jews were transported to concentration camps, slave-labour camps and extermination camps. There they were herded into gas chambers and their bodies burned in crematoria.

By the end of the war in 1945, more than six million Jews had been murdered in those countries occupied by the Nazis.

Three million of them were from Poland. Other minorities such as gypsies, political and religious opponents, the handicapped, and homosexuals were also killed.

Nazi war criminals were tried at Nuremberg and 12 men were sentenced to death in 1946.

Some of those involved in the Holocaust managed to escape - most notably Adolf Eichmann, once chief of the Gestapo’s “Jewish section”. He was abducted by Israeli agents in Argentina, tried and hanged in Israel in 1962.

The name “United Nations” was coined by US President Franklin D Roosevelt in the Declaration by United Nations on 1 January 1942 when representatives of 26 nations pledged to continue fighting together against the Axis Powers.

But the United Nations was not officially founded until 24 October 1945.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Your values are out in the open today -- and are likely being tested!

Taurus April 20-May 20 Indulge your whims today, no matter how decadent they may seem to you -- or to others, for that matter!

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 Take care of your bookkeeping today -- if that's a need of yours, of course.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Go wild today -- the crazier, the better! Your ideas shouldn't be measured against reality just yet.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 You have a brush with the law, though it may be as minor as a speeding ticket or even just a need to pore over the fine print.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 Dig a little deeper into the history of your family, company or some other topic of personal interest -- your great mental energy ensures that you dig up something lovely!

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 Try to be skeptical of first impressions today -- they are sure to lead you astray!

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 You may have bitten off more than you can chew -- so get ready for some discomfort!

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 The details of today's big business may get a little spooky -- but you can handle them!

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 You are feeling more conscientious today -- so make the most of this great energy and take care of some tasks that have fallen by the wayside.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 Your parents or other older relations are important figures today -- even if you don't ever hear from them directly.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 You're inspired to create something beautiful tonight -- maybe a four-course dinner for friends or family.



SUDOKU

Easy and Easy+ Sudoku puzzles. Each puzzle is a 9x9 grid with some numbers pre-filled. Easy puzzle: 5, 2, 8, 6, 3, 5, 4, 9, 1, 2, 6, 8, 1, 7, 5, 4, 9, 6, 3, 7, 8, 2, 6, 9, 8, 5, 3, 9. Easy+ puzzle: 5, 6, 8, 9, 6, 3, 2, 2, 9, 1, 8, 4, 2, 1, 7, 3, 9, 8, 9, 4, 8, 3, 7, 9, 7, 5.

Medium and Hard Sudoku puzzles. Each puzzle is a 9x9 grid with some numbers pre-filled. Medium puzzle: 5, 9, 1, 8, 5, 7, 3, 5, 9, 2, 4, 7, 8, 6, 1, 3, 1, 6, 2, 5, 8, 2, 9, 9, 2, 1, 6, 4. Hard puzzle: 6, 5, 1, 7, 2, 1, 6, 4, 7, 5, 2, 7, 3, 8, 8, 1, 5, 4.

WEATHER

Table with columns: MIN, MAX, CONDITION. Rows for CHINA cities: Beijing, Harbin, Tianjin, Urumqi, Xi'an, Lhasa, Chengdu, Chongqing, Kunming, Nanjing, Shanghai, Wuhan, Hangzhou, Taipei, Guangzhou, Hong Kong.

WORLD

Table with columns: MIN, MAX, CONDITION. Rows for WORLD cities: Moscow, Frankfurt, Paris, London, New York.

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Old French expression meaning "goodbye"; 6- Indian garment; 10- Burrows and Vigoda; 14- Ancient Greek city-state; 15- Old Testament book; 16- Crooked; 17- Bridge bid, briefly; 18- Brouhaha; 19- "The Thin Man" dog; 20- Some wines; 21- Imperative; 23- Seesaws; 25- In groups; 26- "Hold On Tight" group; 27- Unborn child; 29- Spokes; 32- Conductor Solti; 33- Weeding implement; 36- New driver, often; 37- Fluffy; 38- Legumes; 39- Ending for legal or Japan; 40- Mends a shoe; 41- Major artery; 42- Time off; 43- Battleship letters; 44- Richards of "Jurassic Park"; 47- Aids; 51- Incapable of functioning; 54- Chinese weight; 55- Lazy, inactive; 56- Technical sch.; 57- One of Chekhov's "Three Sisters"; 58- Activist; 59- Off-Broadway theater award; 60- Man of many words?; 61- Tolkien tree creatures; 62- Tenn. neighbor; 63- Maternally related;

DOWN: 1- Opposite astarboard; 2- Gift recipient; 3- ___ France; 4- German physicist; 5- R&R provider; 6- Satisfies; 7- Latin love; 8- Got on; 9- Equality of measure; 10- Barbed-wire barricade; 11- Intoxicate; 12- ___ nous; 13- Remains; 21- Debate side; 22- Stop up a hole; 24- Inventor Whitney; 27- Not as many; 28- Seemingly forever; 29- Numbered hwy.; 30- Loser to DDE; 31- Actress Ruby; 32- Olympian's quest; 33- That woman; 34- Cereal grass; 35- Conductor ___-Pekka Salonen; 37- Contribution; 38- Elementary particle; 40- Sensible; 41- Balaam's mount; 42- Gardeners, at times; 43- Employ, utilise; 44- Put up with; 45- Radioactive gas; 46- Dot in the ocean; 47- Fall flower; 48- Goatlike antelope; 49- Belief; 50- Roofing stone; 52- "Power Lunch" network; 53- The most heavily populated continent on Earth; 57- Anger;

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

Large crossword puzzle grid with numbers 1-63.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999
Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
Fire department 28 572 222
Water Supply - Report 1990 992
PJ (Open line) 993
Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333
Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
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S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
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Enquiry: 2871 9838

Michel Platini refuses to attend FIFA ethics case hearing

Michel Platini will not attend his FIFA ethics committee hearing tomorrow in protest because he believes his case has been pre-judged. Platini's lawyers said in a statement Wednesday that the verdict "has already been announced last weekend in the press."

Though FIFA investigators have asked for a life ban to be imposed, Platini could reportedly escape with a ban of several years that would still effectively exile him and end his FIFA presidential ambitions.

"By this decision Michel Platini means to express his deepest indignation with a process he regards as solely political and intended to prevent him from standing for the FIFA presidency," the former France great's lawyers said.

Platini seemed to have lost the presumption of innocence and would be represented only by his lawyers, the statement said.

The decision was annou-



Michel Platini of France is surrounded by media after a hearing at the international Court of Arbitration for Sport, CAS, in Lausanne, Switzerland

nced less than 90 minutes after FIFA ethics committee judges promised Platini a fair trial even if he carried out a threat to boycott the hearing.

"We would like to clearly stress that the adjudicatory chamber of the ethics com-

mittee will deal with the present case in the same way as with any other procedure independently and in an unbiased manner," the ethics panel's statement said.

The case centers on a potential rules-breaking conflict of interest when Platini

got a \$2 million payment from FIFA approved by Sepp Blatter in 2011 as back-dated salary.

Blatter, who also risks a life ban, has said he will appear in person for his hearing on Thursday before the panel of four judges. It will be Blatter's return inside FIFA's home after an enforced absence of more than two months.

Platini's lawyers and Blatter himself have questioned the integrity of the ethics committee which suspended both of them ahead of the hearings during a period of intense legal trouble for scandal-hit FIFA.

Verdicts on Platini and Blatter are expected next Monday or Tuesday.

Any sanctions can be challenged at the FIFA appeal committee and then CAS.

The cases are expected to be resolved in January, at least one month before the FIFA election congress on Feb. 26 in Zurich. **AP**

FIFA reports 1.01 billion viewers for 2014 WC final

More than 1 billion people watched the 2014 World Cup final, according to FIFA figures published yesterday. A total of 1.013 billion saw at least one minute of Germany's 1-0 win over Argentina in extra time at Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro, according to research by FIFA and Kantar Media. Television audiences at home and people watching in public spaces are counted, but not online viewers and mobile phone users. FIFA reported a seven percent rise in a TV rating that is often seen as the broadcasting industry's most accurate. The 2014 final had an "average in-home global audience" of 570.1 million. It was 530.9 million for the 2010 World Cup final.

River Plate reaches final of Club World Cup after 19 years



South American champion River Plate booked a place in the Club World Cup final for the first time in 19 years by beating Sanfrecce Hiroshima 1-0 yesterday. River was matched for large spells by the J-League champion, but Lucas Alario scored in the second half with a header after Hiroshima goalkeeper Takuto Hayashi could only half-punch away a Carlos Sanchez free kick. "We knew Hiroshima would be an organized team," River coach Marcelo Gallardo said. "But we tried to adjust and be persistent, and were able to score from the free kick."

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Box Office

Jake Coyle, AP Film Writer

As 'STAR WARS' RETURNS, A NEW GENERATION QUAKES

Long before I was a movie writer and critic, I was a teenager driving up the Garden State Parkway in a Storm Trooper helmet, inquiring toll booth attendants if they had seen two droids.

I don't know what this means for my relationship with "Star Wars" and the coming sequel, "The Force Awakens," which is some mix of boyish excitement and adult despair. I do know that it's difficult to operate a stick shift with a Storm Trooper helmet on and that New Jersey toll booth attendants are a hard bunch to faze.

As "The Force Awakens" makes its way into theaters, moviegoers and critics of generations old and young will again have to wrestle with a cultural force as colossal as the Death Star, whose cinematic firepower is alternatively seen as the vile source to today's franchise-mad blockbuster-crazy Hollywood or the ultimate expression of a glorious movie passion that spans time, galaxies and dreadfully disappointing prequels.

For a fairly impersonal epic of corny characters, "Star Wars" inspires curiously personal reactions. It drives some people to don Wookiee costumes and others to curse an entire industry as infantile. Since the 1977 debut of "A New Hope," it's become a generational rite of passage not just to experience the saga, but also to form one's relationship with movies around it, whether in happy lockstep or rebel opposition.

"Star Wars" didn't, by itself, change movies. But more than any other film, it heralded the blockbuster era that would follow the maverick filmmaking of the '70s — a continuing chapter in movies that swells with every new superhero movie.

Lucas, himself, straddled the divide he came to be the poster boy of. Coming off the success of "American Graffiti," which he wrote, his pal Francis Ford Coppola wanted him to direct "Apocalypse Now." (Take a moment to contemplate THAT parallel universe.) Lucas was instead busy with his script for "Star Wars," a project that few expected much of and that Universal Studios passed on before 20th Century Fox paid Lucas to develop it.

But to the astonishment of everyone, including Lucas (who fortuitously negotiated for the sequel and merchandising rights), the movie he called "The Sting" in outer space" was a smash that was still No. 1 at the box office more than 40 weeks after opening.

Many critics watched its rise warily. Pauline Kael called the movie "a box of Cracker Jacks which is all prizes." John Simon fretted: "O dull new world!"

All the profits fueled the multiplexes erected through the 1980s.

Many of the forces Lucas unlocked — the merchandizing power, the franchise building, the super-fandom — now define the modern movie business. Paul Schrader, writer of 1976's "Taxi Driver" and 1980's "Raging Bull," once called "Star Wars" "the film that ate the heart and soul of Hollywood."

"Star Wars," though, was part of a broader and perhaps unstoppable trend. It followed James Bond films and Steven Spielberg's "Jaws" (the first movie to open in wide release). "Superman: The Movie" arrived the year after.

"The Force Awakens" now finds itself in a more competitive blockbuster environment, just one of the prime assets in the stable of the Walt Disney Co., which purchased Lucasfilm for USD4.05 billion — a fitting home for "Star Wars" considering Lucas considered it "a Disney movie."

Inheriting Lucas' empire, director J.J. Abrams — one of those kids transfixed by "Star Wars," now grown up — isn't trying to redefine moviegoing. His "The Force Awakens" is more like a restoration project: a blend of new and old; old-school special effects with a more diverse cast.

"Star Wars" ultimately belongs to the young. The saga's new chapter will be written by a franchise-savvy generation of moviegoers who can pre-order tickets without standing in line, and critics who grew up in the shadow of "Star Wars" — some of whom even know how fast Han Solo can make the Kessel Run.

"12 parsecs!" exclaims this one, with more pride than shame.

THE GLOBAL STOCKS POSTING BIG GAINS AHEAD OF EXPECTED FED HIKE

Investors around the world have one clear focus yesterday (today) — the Fed. The central bank is expected to raise interest rates from near zero percent, which would be its first hike since June 2006.

Fed Chair Janet Yellen and other officials have signaled that they are likely to raise rates. They've also hinted that they'll keep the

pace of any further increases gradual to ease any worries in financial markets, which have become accustomed to easy and cheap credit.

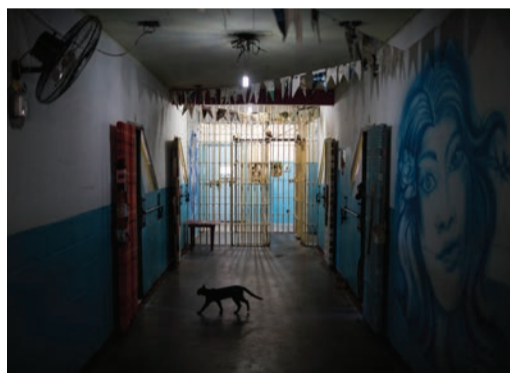
The decision highlights the world economy's two-speed nature. As the U.S. economy comes back to full strength, other big central banks are opting to keep the stimulus taps open to revive flagging growth in their economies.

Station	Air quality
Roadside	65-95 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	65-95 Moderate
Ambient	65-95 Moderate

SOURCE: DSMG

Inside one of Brazil's packed prisons

AP PHOTO



IT'S the same prison — but the different wings are worlds apart.

Violent drug gangs rule in most of the sprawling Central Prison in the southern Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, bursting with over twice its capacity of fewer than 2,000 inmates. Members commit crimes via cellphones, traffic drugs and lure other prisoners to join their ranks.

One only catches glimpses of what goes on inside from behind tall metal fences topped with razor wire, where guards keep an anxious eye on inmates, packed 10 to a cell that should sleep only four.

Putrid garbage is strewn beneath the barred windows, with inmates peering out and flashing gang signs between sheets, shirts, shoes and shower towels hung out to dry.

Yet elsewhere the cells are neater, tidier, the violence less.

These are the few cells for inmates on work programs, those voluntarily

detoxing from drugs and for those in the LGBT community at high risk of being attacked, but their special protection is unquestionably an exception.

With more than 600,000 inmates behind bars, Brazil has the fourth-largest prison population in the world after the United States, China and Russia, according to Brazil's Justice Ministry.

As with many nations in Latin America, the penitentiary system is chaotic and cruel, with violent uprisings across Brazil breaking out frequently as prisoners rebel against horrific conditions.

The Central Prison in Porto Alegre has been called out in Human Rights Watch reports for its particular brutality, both prisoner-on-prisoner and for how inmates are treated.

Prisoners are housed in different cells according to which gangs they belong to in an effort to tamp down violence.

Eugenio Terra, president of the Porto Alegre

Association of Judges, denounced the prison's conditions before the Human Rights Commission of the Organization of American States in 2013.

"We want incarceration to take place with dignity," he said, "because the way it is done today favors the gangs and the power they hold at the prison."

Since that denunciation, some improvements have been made to areas such as the clinic, which mainly treats outbreaks of tuberculosis, a disease common inside prisons.

But with more and more inmates arriving each day, attempts at bettering this brutal place just seem to fall further behind.

Diego Henrique, who is packed into a cell with 10 other men while serving a second time prison on drug trafficking charges, said he has scant hope of improvements.

"For me, prisons are all the same," he said. "The only thing that changes is the color of the bars." AP

WORLD BRIEFS



AUSTRIA Authorities are investigating two men arrested several days ago for possible links to last month's attacks in Paris that killed 130 people, officials said yesterday. State Prosecutor Robert Holzleitner said the two — arrested during the weekend in a migrants' shelter in Salzburg (pictured above) — are suspected of "participation in a terrorist organization," with investigations focused on their possible connection to the Nov. 13 attacks.

SAUDI ARABIA Projecting its ambition for regional leadership, Saudi Arabia says it has lined up most of the Arab world, NATO member Turkey and several African and Asian countries behind a vaguely defined "Islamic military alliance" against terrorists.

RUSSIA Russia's top security agency says it has been investigating 1,600 individuals and legal entities suspected of aiding the Islamic State group. Alexander Bortnikov, director of the Federal Security Service also said that his agency has identified 2,900 Russian citizens suspected of involvement in extremist groups in Syria and Iraq. 198 of them have been killed in fighting and another 214 have returned to Russia.



USA If the youngest giant panda cub at the National Zoo is stressed out about appearing in front of crowds for the first time, he isn't showing it. Keepers were expecting Bei Bei to squawk and squirm during an audience with a small news media contingent this week. Instead, under bright television lights with cameras clicking, he quickly fell asleep on an examination table, leaving a small puddle of drool on the tablecloth. Panda biologist Laurie Thompson explained that before he went in front of the cameras, Bei Bei was playing with a piece of bamboo and trying to walk. Just like a newborn human, he tires easily.