



VIETNAMESE MAN RUSHED TO HOSPITAL BY ANONYMOUS

The police are investigating the suspicious injury of a Vietnamese national who was left on the verge of death Tuesday night

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Environmental authorities are seeking public opinions over their new policy to curb citizens' and tourists' use of plastic bags

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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'"

WORLD BRIEFS

SOUTH KOREA The Health Ministry declared yesterday a formal end to an outbreak of the MERS virus that killed 38 people and sickened dozens of others since May. The announcement by South Korea's Health Ministry came a month after the last infected patient in the country died. Since the outbreak started in May, 186 people in South Korea were infected. More than 16,000 people were isolated at hospitals or homes as authorities struggled to stop the disease's spread.



MALAYSIA Rayani Air took to the skies over the weekend with a clear bailiwick. It is the country's first Islamic airline, offering flights that adhere to Islamic rules, including prayers, no serving of alcohol or meals with pork, and a strict dress code for Muslim female flight attendants. *More on p7*

RUSSIA-INDIA Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is coming to Moscow for a summit with President Vladimir Putin that is expected to focus on defense, nuclear and space cooperation. Indian Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar says an array of agreements are being prepared for signature, but did not give details. Modi is to arrive today and have a private dinner hosted by Putin in the evening. Russia and India have shared close ties since the Cold War.

AFGHANISTAN Acting defense minister says reinforcements have been rushed to a besieged southern district threatened for days with takeover by Taliban fighters. Masoom Stanekzai said yesterday fighting in the Sangin district of Helmand is continuing as army and police arrive to help security forces who have been pinned down for days.

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ADELSON EXCLUSIVE

'My gaming license is a privilege'

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Crowd control in force on Xmas eve

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HOLIDAY TIMES

Macau Daily Times will not be published tomorrow. The Times will be back on the stands on December 28. However the MDT website will be updated with breaking news during the recess period. We wish our readers, advertisers and friends the best of times.



Extra

times
weekend Guide
INSIDE

Paulo Coutinho

MDT INTERVIEW | SHELDON ADELSON

SHELDON Adelson, 82, is grateful to the MSAR because he understands that his license to operate here is “a privilege.” That is why he also plays along with the cap on tables: “As long as everybody is being treated fairly.” We met Mr Adelson for an exclusive interview at a presidential suite on the 37th floor of St Regis Macao a few hours after he optimistically forecast that Macau gaming revenues are at, or close to, the end of a steep decline.

The topic would dominate our discussion with one of the 20 richest individuals in the world. “I think we’re reaching the bottom right now. If we haven’t already reached the bottom, it will reach the bottom in a short time.” Why, we asked.

“I have 70 years of being in business. I have 70 years, since I was 12, and I have a broad range of experience to tell me when this cycle is changing... Everything [works] in a cycle so you have peaks and valleys, peaks and valleys,” he said while repeatedly gesticulating up and down. “So this is the cycle and I feel that the cycle is changing now. It’s been 18 consecutive months of GGR decline and I think now it’s time to turn around.”

Adelson, the visionary, the tough businessman, the intre-



pid investor, the fearless boss, was in a cheerful mood the day he opened his most recent addition to the interconnected Sands China properties network on the Cotai Strip - St Regis, his place of choice when in NYC.

Although without casino floor space, “the connection between the St Regis Hotel and the casino is integral to the whole complex,” he explained to make clear that St Regis “is not a ho-

tel without a casino.”

Together with the Four Seasons, St Regis will have serviced apartments. Both hotels are aimed at top-end clientele, “they are what I’d call six star or five star deluxe brands.”

The LVS grand plan for Cotai is coming closer to completion.

When The Parisian Macao is completed “in 8 to 10 months,” Sands China will have almost 13,000 hotel rooms in four interconnected resorts and over

1,000 retail stores. “Where can you find 1,000 retail stores? There’re no shopping malls like that anywhere else in the wor-

“We will have, when we open the Parisian, a total of over 1,000 retail stores.”

ld,” Adelson said.

“The government wanted a three star hotel, but I built four star rooms and we have MICE space there too and that connects to the exhibition centre, which is one of the largest exhibition centres in all of China. The only one larger, I think, is Canton Fairgrounds in Guangzhou.”

And that is central to his bet for economic diversification: “MICE is key. It’s the basis [of non-gaming activity].” The ove-

rall Macau industry grew from 1.2 million attendees in 2009 to 2.6 million in 2014. According to the casino boss, “Sands China accounted for 80 percent of that growth, as we increased from 614,000 attendees in 2009 to 1.8 million in 2014.”

Last year, 31 million people visited Macau and 62 million visited Sands properties. “Mathematically each person that visited Macau visited 2 of our properties,” Sheldon Adelson said last Friday.

Macau Daily Times – Macau gaming has only just tapped the huge Chinese market. Most of the gamblers are from the Guangdong province. Do you plan to expand the inbound markets from China and other countries?

Sheldon Adelson (SA) - Well, we cannot promote in China. So we can’t take steps specifically to bring in more Chinese. We have different events at the arena - at the 15,000 seat Cotai Arena - that’s able to be transmitted throughout China and so, there is some indirect promo-

Vegas newspaper editor stepping down after sale

THE editor of the Las Vegas Review-Journal capped more than a week of turmoil sparked by the sale of Nevada’s largest newspaper to the family of casino magnate and Republican party kingmaker Sheldon Adelson with an announcement yesterday (Macao time) that he’s stepping down.

Mike Hengel stunned the newsroom with word that he had accepted a voluntary buyout, according to several staff members who took to Twitter after the announcement. Hengel didn’t immediately respond to messages seeking com-

ment.

A “message from the new owners about the future of the Las Vegas Review-Journal,” due for publication on the front page on Wednesday, also announces Hengel’s departure, along with “other R-J employees.”

Photographer Kevin Cannon and reporter Bethany Barnes each confirmed their postings to The Associated Press, along with longtime columnist Jane Ann Morrison. She posted a message saying Hengel “leaves the RJ with his integrity intact.”

“I think my resignation

probably comes as a relief to the new owners,” Hengel said, according to an audio recording obtained by the AP.

The owners’ statement was released to AP by Mark Fabiani, a hired communications specialist, in response to messages to Las Vegas Sands spokesman Ron Reese.

It comes two days after an unsigned front-page editorial on Sunday declared in headlines, “Every newspaper has conflicts, and we’ll be open about ours,” and an inside editorial about how Adelson might change the editorial

page headlined, “He’s the boss.”

Review-Journal Publisher Jason Taylor also didn’t immediately respond to messages.

Adelson’s family ended days of speculation when it revealed last week that it was part of the recently incorporated News + Media Capital Group LLC, which bought the Review-Journal and some affiliated publications on Dec. 10 for USD140 million.

It said Gatehouse Media LLC, a subsidiary of the former owner New Media Investment Group, would continue to run the publication.

New Media Investment bought the newspaper in February from longtime former owner Stephens Media LLC for \$102.5 million.



A sign for the Las Vegas Review-Journal is seen in Las Vegas

The statement released this week cites the two sales within a year and pledges “new investments necessary for the Review-Journal to succeed,” including “services such as enhanced fact checking” and a reader advocate or ombudsman role.

“We pledge to publish a newspaper that is fair, unbiased and accurate,” the statement says. “We decided to buy the Review-Journal to help create a better newspaper — a forward thinking newspaper that is worthy of our Las Vegas community.” AP

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MDT’s Website has logged over 94 million page views since January 1st, 2012 up to today.

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tion of Macau. Years ago, when I first opened the Venetian, the government said: no communication, you can't promote Macau at all. So we get the attendance by word of mouth and by the IVS (the individual visa scheme) and beyond that, we're promoting in different countries in the Pacific region - Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, India, Malaysia, Indonesia... But Malaysia and Indonesia are very close to Singapore and they go to our properties there (Marina Bay Sands). We have what is arguably the most beautiful building in the world, in Singapore.

MDT - Gaming is off the books in the mainland, although there were some attempts in the past...

SA - I don't think there will ever be gaming [in mainland China].

MDT - Not even in Taiwan...

SA - Taiwan is [still] possible and that's one of the places where we promote Macau.

MDT - Also, you showed interest in the operations in Japan and Korea. Are you still interested?

SA - We're still very interested ... It's not going to compete with Macau.

MDT - They have their own markets, I believe.

SA - They have their own markets. And even some of the northern Chinese areas, I mean north of Beijing, Harbin, Dalian, Shenyang, maybe those places will send some people into Korea and Japan, if Korea and Japan legalize gaming [for locals]. We don't want to go to Japan and Korea with foreigners-only casinos - that's not our business model.

MDT - Coming back to Macau, the smoking ban, the smoking law, the cap on tables. How can you manage these with the new properties coming?

SA - As long as everybody is being treated fairly. I can manage with the 250 tables, although I have a letter guaranteeing me what tables I needed and I applied for 450, but I can live with what everybody else is living with. My gaming license is a privilege, it's not a right. So if what they're saying to me is, "We're only going to give everybody 250 tables." How can they give me more? They said the concessionaires that build more non-gaming components should get more. I built more non-gaming compo-

nents from the beginning with the Venetian: that's why it's still a must see property.

MDT - In the press conference [last Friday], you put a lot of emphasis on the development and the completion of the Y-Bridge. You think that will be a game changer?

SA - Big [game changer].

MDT - It was announced that it's delayed for a year.

SA - What can I do, it's delayed for a year...

MDT - Some people in Macau are happy with that because the infrastructure in Macau is not ready to have all those people coming over.

SA - You can't have everything. You can't have raised salaries, promotion opportunities, new professions and not have the crowd. You don't want the crowd, but you want all the other stuff. You can't have the economic development without the crowds. It's like a restaurant. There's a joke in the States that says, "Oh, nobody goes to that restaurant anymore, it's too crowded." You can't have benefits without the cost. The benefits that we get - an improved economy, raised salaries... When I first came here in 2001, the average salary was MOP4,000 a month. Today it's MOP200,000 a year. It's a lot more than MOP4,000 a month, four times that.

MDT - Of course, there was some cost to that, there was rampant inflation, especially in the housing sector.

SA - If you ask the guys who own the house and the house went from USD150 a foot to \$500 a foot and they could sell it, they're very happy, but inflation is a component of economics, it's inescapable. If you have a good economy, you can have more inflation. You have a bad economy, you have less inflation, there's less demand. With the Federal Reserve, which is the ultimate financial authority in the United States government, it's looking to have 2% inflation, we don't even have 2%. So the Federal Reserve is trying to increase the inflation rate.

MDT - Speaking about the United States, it's all over the news: you started very early in your life selling newspapers, now you're buying them.

SA - [Laughs] Not buying them, I just bought one. I didn't buy it.

BLOOMBERG



MDT - ...you and your family.

SA - You know what I say when everybody says, "The family. Oh, you're the family?" Really, do you have grown children? [Yes] Can you tell them what kind of car to buy? [No] Can you tell them what clothes to wear?

You can't have benefits without the cost.

[No]. Right. Can you tell them what kind of house to live in? No. You don't tell your children what to do, I can't tell my children what to do. They wanted to buy the newspaper so, they bought the newspaper. I don't have anything to do with it, I have no financial interest. My money that the children have with which to buy the newspaper is their inheritance. I don't want to spend money on a newspaper.

MDT - So you don't have any media investment strategy for greater China?

SA - No, no. We have a newspaper in Israel and it's the most widely read newspaper. It's called 'Israel Today' in English. In the local language, in Hebrew, it's called the 'Israel Hayom'. I started that because the newspaper there was so far to the left politically that it was misleading the public and I had a meeting with the owner and he said he didn't want me to be a competitor. I said, "Well, just go to the centre politically," he said, "I'm already to the right." I said, "No you're not, you're to the left." So anyway, I set it up and my basic business model was to give it out free and survive on advertising, which is what I'm doing. I bought a printing plant. I print my own. I buy my paper and newsprint and I print my own newspapers. I've got 100 employees, but you know how often I talk to the editor? Just when I go there about four times a year. I never call them. ... The Review Journal in Vegas makes money and the children can't make much money when interest rates are at zero. We don't like to take..., the whole family doesn't like to take big

risks. They feel that there's a lot of history of profitability and we kept the operation in the hands of the [previous] owners. We're not operating it. So I'll probably never talk to the editor.

MDT - Some see your involvement, or your family involvement, as a political play, given your great influence in politics in America.

SA - That's one of my careers. (Smiles) So they see, but what can I do? The Review Journal newspaper is already to the right. So how much more can I bring it to the right? It's already there.

MDT - So editors and journalists can operate [independently]?

SA - [They can] Operate by themselves. We have about 200 journalists at the Israel Today newspaper. You could call any one of them and you say, "Did anybody from the Adelson family ever tell you what to write or what not to write?" and they will tell you, "No." If somebody's going to write something bad about me and [even if] there's no justification for it, I won't know about it until after it's done.

Crowd control in force on night before Xmas

SECURITY authorities will be imposing traffic control measures on Christmas Eve in the downtown areas of the Macau Peninsula in response to the expected numbers turning up for various festive functions across the city.

The traffic arrangements, scheduled to be enacted during the evening as required, will target the Senado Square, the Ruins of Saint Paul's and the square in front of Saint Dominic's Church. These spots are located along the route of the Macau Light Festival 2015, which has attracted crowds of camera-wielding sightseers every night since the journey-themed attraction kicked off on the 6th of this month.

Rua de São Paulo, the most direct access route to the Ruins of Saint Paul's with souvenir shops dotted along the ci-



ty's center, will be strictly limited to one-way movement, with people only allowed to move towards the historic façade in groups before they must proceed into the nearby alleyways or streets. Cars are prohibited from accessing the road.

After an audio-visual performance at the Ruins, the crowd of spectators

closest to the façade will be directed into the roads on either side. Meanwhile, the crowd at the square will have to walk down away from the square and follow to police instructions.

If the crowd continues into the night, vehicles coming along the Rua de Dom Belchior Carneiro have to turn right into the

Rua da Entena to approach the area of the façade. In addition, coaches will not be allowed to enter the Estrada Do Cemiterio into the Kiang Wu hospital roundabout.

While the city's heart is filled with people, the police standing guard will conduct uni-directional traffic control on the periphery of the square, prohibiting people outside the square from entering. **AU**

Uber launches Xmas specials

Uber, the on-demand application that connects riders and drivers, announced yesterday the launching of a special Christmas service in Macau. The service, known as "uberX", will permit riders to pay just MOP 8 for up to two rides anywhere in the city between Dec. 23 and 25, compliments of Uber Macau. "My team and I have been overwhelmed by the support we've received from our fellow Macau residents [...] and these three days of [MOP 8] rides is my way of saying thank you and Merry X-mas," said Uber Macau General Manager Trasy Lou Walsh. "We're pleased to finally launch uberX in Macau, after countless requests from our riders and drivers," Walsh added. "As a native Macau resident myself, I know how valuable it is to have reliable, convenient options for getting around the city." The company adds that since their launch two months ago, Uber has already provided thousands in Macau with rides, of which nearly 70 percent are Macau residents.

CPI figures suggest slow down in price inflation

Inflation figures for November 2015 suggest the continuation of a slow-down in the rate of growth; however the month represents a slight increase of 0.1 percent from October, driven by climbing prices for alcohol and tobacco. According to information released by the Statistics and Census Service, the Composite Consumer Price Index (CPI) for November 2015 increased by 3.77 percent year-on-year – attributed by the service to higher rentals, and rising charges for eating out and parking spaces. The Composite CPI, which reflects the impact of price changes as a measure of inflation, was down in November from the 4.16 percent year-on-year increase between October 2014 and 2015.

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Severely wounded Vietnamese man delivered to hospital by anonymous individuals

THE Judiciary Police are investigating the suspicious injury of a Vietnamese national who was left on the verge of death on Tuesday night.

The 28-year-old male victim, whose identity remains unconfirmed because no documentation has been found on his person, was rushed unconscious to Taipa's first-aid station at seven thirty on Tuesday night.

Aside from several minor head wounds, the victim suffered a life-threatening gash to his forehead. It was said that two people, whose identities are also unknown, left the emergency center in a rush after delivering the severely injured man.

The victim was transferred to a public hospital, but has yet to regain consciousness after receiving medical treatment there, despite being in a stable condition.

As of eight o'clock last night, no update from the authorities was available regarding the causes of the injury, details of the incident and whether the victim was employed to work in the territory.

ENVIRONMENT

MOP1 per plastic bag policy enters public discussion

Aries Un

ENVIRONMENTAL authorities are seeking public opinions over their new policy to curb citizens' and tourists' use of plastic bags while shopping, according to a media briefing on the content of the public consultation yesterday.

The new policy, which will charge plastic bag users at least MOP1 per bag if the legislative assembly approves the law, has come after years of deliberation.

According to research commissioned by the Environmental Protection Bureau to assist its policymaking, Macau's annual consumption of indecomposable bags has reached 400.5 million bags, with each resident contributing to the quantity at a rate of 2.2 bags every day.

Over 60 percent of the survey's respondents agreed that there is an overreliance on



shopping bags, and 70 percent of those respondents believe that the majority of such bags are made of plastic.

Travellers are another major consumer group of plastic bags, adding to consumption by another 50 million every year.

Over half the citizens and retailers surveyed expressed support for the levy on plastic bag use.

"Hopefully the policy will help reduce the use of plastic bags and encourage people to think twice before they ask for shopping bags," said Jeong Kin Si, who heads the depart-

ment of promotion and education in the Bureau.

The agency aims to adopt the policy, which it regards as "intimidating enough and bearable for citizens", to reduce the annual consumption by half once it is enacted.

Only supermarkets, convenience stores, pharmacies, shopping malls, food and beverage, souvenir shops, bakeries, and cosmetics stores will be subject to the prospective regulation, the authorities suggest.

"They are the seven types of shops most frequented by citizens and where plastic bags were requested," the Bureau's director Vai Hoi Iong further explained.

In addition, the profits from the levies will pass into the above businessmen's pockets, who the authorities believe would invest in environmental protection efforts in return.

"Those merchants do not

sell plastic bags for profit, and we don't expect to see the charges made," said the bureau's head. "We hope that the money could be spent on environment protection."

Wet markets, another venue that sees massive consumption of plastic bags on a daily basis, are not among the targets subject to the clampdown.

It was also revealed that, in working out a fine for law violators, the authorities would take reference from the policies of Hong Kong and Taiwan, which punish shops violating their own regulation with respective fines of HKD2,000 and around MOP1,600 respectively.

The policy, which will be in open discussion until February 5 2016, allows the use of plastic bags for free if the items contained require protection by the plastic bags for the purposes of "hygiene" and "food safety", the authorities stressed.

Government officials expect that it could take up to one or two years for the levy on plastic bag use to be legalized after half a year of consolidating the submitted opinions.

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Consultation on criminalization of indecent assaults starts today

Yesterday the authorities launched a public consultation period for their proposal of criminalizing indecent assaults as a "semi-public crime." Once it has been proven that the offender intentionally made contact with the victim they are liable to serve a maximum of one-year imprisonment or a fine for up to 120 days. The penalty will be doubled if victims are under 16 years old or have been subjected to body contact against their will by molesters exploiting their superior status. The consultation period, which lasts until the 22nd of February 2016, also seeks opinions on the proposed changes to multiple other sex-crime-related provisions in the criminal code.

Acting director proposes breastfeeding rooms for gov't departments

THE Health Bureau's acting director, Cheang Seng Ip, has proposed the establishment of breastfeeding rooms in all government departments as part of a plan to promote the wider use of breastfeeding in Macau. "We aim to lead the way and set up breastfeeding rooms in all governmental departments through relevant acts and regulations," TDM cite Cheang as saying. "We hope to take the leading role in promoting breastfeeding."



PHOTO ARCHIVE
The comments were welcomed by breastfeeding advocate, Jack Newman, who attended a semi-

nar, held recently by the Macau Breastfeeding Association.

But to what extent the proposed new breastfeeding rooms – implied to be discrete spaces – will aid the efforts of the Macau Breastfeeding Association in tackling the social stigma of public breastfeeding is still uncertain.

The Macau Breastfeeding Association was founded in 2013 to promote an array of family issues relating to nursing, and to call for more government resources to be allocated to the

promotion of breastfeeding.

The association held their annual breastfeeding flash mob campaign in May at the Iao Hon Market Garden, with the intention of continuing promoting society's acceptance of public breastfeeding.

Virginia Tam, vice-chairlady of the association told the Times in May, that many mothers are still being driven away when trying to breastfeed in public areas like hotels, restaurants and shopping malls. **Staff reporter**

Residents with lost papers to face speedy clearance next year

MACAU and Hong Kong authorities are planning to implement a simplified reporting mechanism for residents of the SARs that lose their travel documents while travelling in the two territories.

Under the new arrangement, a resident from Macau who loses his/her travel documents in Hong Kong will be permitted to circumvent an application process that hitherto required the submission of documentation to multiple departments.

Now the application for permission to de-

part can be made directly at the Hong Kong-Macau Ferry Terminal in Sheung Wan, or the China Ferry Terminal in Tsim Sha Tsui.

In addition, Hong Kong residents that lose their travel documents in Macau will be able to receive a similar service at the Outer Harbor Ferry Terminal or the Pac On Temporary Ferry Terminal at Taipa.

Those Macau residents who are currently registered with the automated immigration clearance service in Hong Kong will have the option of a speedy identity verification

and clearance process, if they grant permission to authorities to cross-reference the applicant's details.

At present there are around 220,000 Macau residents registered for the automated clearance service in Hong Kong, while 1.5 million Hong Kong residents have enrolled in Macau's equivalent service, according to information from the Government Information Bureau.

The new measure is envisioned for implementation in the first quarter of 2016.

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AVIATION

Malaysia's new Islamic airline takes off - with a prayer

Eileen Ng & Syawalludin Zain, Kuala Lumpur

THE short domestic flight from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia's biggest city, begins with a recital of Prophet Muhammad's supplication before his travel. The passengers — most of them Muslims — cup their hands, as a crew member murmurs a short prayer over the loudspeaker just before takeoff.

Malaysia's Rayani Air took to the skies over the weekend with a clear bailiwick. It is the country's first Islamic airline, offering flights that adhere to Islamic rules, including prayers, no serving of alcohol or meals with pork, and a strict dress code for Muslim female flight attendants.

The idea for Rayani Air grew out of much-publicized complaints by conservative Muslims who believed that two ma-



A Muslim woman passenger comforts her baby on board the Rayani Air after departure from Kuala Lumpur International Airport 2 in Sepang

major air disasters for the national Malaysia Airlines — Flight 370 that went missing in March 2014 and Flight 17 downed a few months later over Ukraine — were caused by Allah's wrath. Their solution: Airlines must adopt strict Islamic customs to avoid divine retribution.

The reaction to the disasters,

and the creation of the airline that operated its inaugural flight on Sunday, is an example of rising hard-line Islamic values in Malaysia, where Muslims account for about 60 percent of the country's 30 million people.

"We are answering the call of many Malaysians who wanted an Islamic airline," Raya-

ni's managing director, Jaafar Zamhari, told The Associated Press. "We are not talking about being a holy airline or flying to holy destinations. We just want to provide an alternative to travelers, but we are open to all races and religions."

Ironically, the people who answered the call of conservative Islam and started Rayani Air are Hindus, perhaps an indication that a business opportunity knows no religious boundary. The founders of the airline, which currently flies to three domestic destinations using two Boeing 737s, are Ravi Alagendrran and his wife, Karthiyani Govindan. They used parts of their first names for the airline's name.

Alagendrran or his wife couldn't be immediately reached for comments, but in remarks to local media, he had said that "anyone wishing to travel in a modest and alcohol-free

environment will feel right at home."

On a 55-minute flight Tuesday (delayed by two hours) from Kuala Lumpur to the northeastern city of Kota Baru, more than 100 passengers were greeted by Muslim female flight attendants wearing black headscarves, long pants and lime-green jackets. A prayer was recited before takeoff and passengers were served halal food, where animals are slaughtered according to Islamic procedures.

At least one passenger said she chose the airline because of its Islamic credentials.

"It's quite important for me because first of all, I am a Muslim, and second, Malaysia is an Islamic country," said Che Masnita Atikah, a 23-year-old student. "It's quite important to have this kind of airline to represent Malaysia and its image as an Islamic country."

Rayani Air is the fourth Islamic airline in the world after Royal Brunei Airlines, Saudi Arabian Airlines and Iran Air.

Jaafar said that male and female passengers are not segregated, and that there is no dress code for travelers.

"Even if they come in shorts, they are most welcome," he said. "We respect the differences among us." AP

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REAL ESTATE MATTERS

Common misconceptions about renting a property in Macau Final Part

Juliet Risdon is a Director of JML Property and a property investor.

Having established the company in 1994, JML Property offers Investment Property & Homes. It specializes in managing properties for owners and investors, and providing attractive and comfortable homes for tenants.

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JULIET RISDON

This list of common misconceptions may look innocent enough, but the difference in expectation is usually the source of major rental conflicts, and one that could be easily avoided with a little more clarity up front.

When you consider the rental process usually involves at least two different languages (sometimes three), it's not surprising that misunderstandings are commonplace.

In the final installment of this series we examine some of the most common misconceptions.....including some misconceptions on security deposits.

25-Finding good home furnishings will be easy

Some of the more popular furniture stores in Macau such as 'Area' in Ocean Gardens, Taipa and WH Furniture in old Taipa and Macau have recently closed their doors.

There are several furniture stores around Macau that you can visit, including such stores as 'City Square' or 'Zara Home' that sell not only furniture but soft furnishings and decorations as well. New shops come and go all of the time, so please contact us if you are looking for furniture and we will happily share with you the current list of stores that we use.

26-Its not a big problem if I don't pay the rent on time.

Not paying rent is a bad idea in Macau. Once a rent is overdue for 9 days or more, the landlord is entitled to charge a late fee premium of 50% of the rental amount. If a rent remains overdue for 30 days or more, the landlord can now charge a late fee premium of 100% of the rental amount. In other words, once a rent is

30 days late, you would now owe DOUBLE the normal rental amount.

This is why it is so important to pay rent at the end of a tenancy agreement.

The 2-month security deposit cannot be used in lieu of rent, and if you don't pay rent for the last 2 months, the debt owed will be equal to 4 months rent.

27-I cant afford to buy a property here

This point of view is easy to understand and relate to.

However, the first thing to remember is of course that the bank will loan you a lot of the money that is required to buy a property.

If you are a Macau resident, it is possible get up to 70%-80% of the property price funded by the bank. That still leaves 30% of the price to come up with though, and even on an apartment costing \$4.0m, you will have to find \$1.2m in cash for the initial deposit.

Non-residents funding for a property can also extend up to 70% depending on the property.

There are lots of ways that you can get your families and friends to help you out with the purchase. For example, it's possible for more than one person to co-sign for a property, so you could consider buying a property with a partner.

28-The security deposit must be refunded in full if I give notice to terminate the agreement before the end date.

Currently, Macau tenancy law states that, in the absence of another agreement between the tenant and the owner, the tenant may give three months notice to terminate an agreement.

If the two parties agree in writing for shorter period, and of course many rental contracts DO allow tenants to give two months notice instead of three, then the shorter period will stand.

The common misconception is that the tenant is then entitled to receive back the security deposit in full.

In fact, the termination of the agreement means that the tenants release themselves from the obligation that they had originally made to continue to rent the apartment for a definite period of time i.e. two years.

As compensation for the tenant breaking the original agreement, the landlord is entitled retain a maximum amount equal to one months' rent.

29-The security deposit must be refunded in full the day I leave the apartment

A good rule of thumb is that with the exception of normal wear and tear, an apartment should be left the way it was when you moved in if you want to receive the full deposit back.

Returning the apartment without giving it a thorough clean could be enough for the owner to withhold a portion of your security deposit.

However, under any circumstances the apartment must be thoroughly checked through and this includes the final payment of utility bills, hidden stains and burns and testing the working order of white goods, all of which take time.

It is usual for the return of the security deposit to take up to two weeks, we suggest that the maximum time allowed is stated clearly on the Tenancy Agreement.

To continue next week.....

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MARKETS

Asian stocks rally as crude oil prices stabilize



ASIAN stocks rallied yesterday in light trading following gains on Wall Street and stabilization of crude oil.

KEEPING SCORE: Hong Kong's benchmark Hang Seng index climbed 1.2 percent to 22,086.08 while South Korea's Kospi gained 0.6 percent to 2,005.32. The Shanghai Composite Index in mainland China added 0.3 percent to 3,662.69 and Australia's S&P/ASX 200 rose 0.9 percent to 5,163.70. Japanese markets were closed for a holiday.

ENERGY: Oil prices are staging a modest recovery that's helping lift energy and material stocks. U.S. crude oil futures rose 21 cents, or 0.6 percent, to \$36.35 in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract closed up 33 cents to \$36.14 a barrel Tuesday on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Brent crude, which is used to price international oils, added 27 cents to \$36.38 a barrel in London. Prices for both contracts had fallen by more than a third over the past year but gains over the past day have provided hope to investors that the sector has hit bottom and is now stabilizing.

QUOTABLE: "The pause in the oil price and the weakness in the U.S. dollar appear to have helped equity markets overnight," said Angus Nicholson of IG. He noted that benchmark U.S. crude has now risen 6.5 percent from its lowest point Tuesday.

HOLIDAY CALM: Overall, most financial markets are expected to trade in a narrow range until the New Year as traders take time off and the flow of major economic releases slows dramatically over the holiday period.

WALL STREET: Major U.S. benchmarks posted gains for a second day. The Dow Jones industrial average rose 1 percent to close at 17,417.27 and the Standard & Poor's 500 index rose 0.9 percent to 2,038.97. The Nasdaq composite rose 0.7 percent to 5,001.11.

CURRENCIES: The dollar was up slightly against the yen at 121.02 from 121.01 in the previous day's trading. The euro slipped to \$1.0937 from \$1.0951.
Kelvin Chan, AP Business Writer

TOURISM

Chinese visitors flock to Japan by the millions

A relaxation on visa rules for mainland Chinese, coupled with a decline in the value of the Japanese Yen (JPY), has seen Chinese tourists flocking to Japan by the millions, claims a new report by broadcaster CNBC.

Japan is currently enjoying an extended period of tourism popularity in East Asia. The record-breaking figures of the last three years show the country's tourism sector going from strength to strength – and 2015 is set to be a record high.

The number of tourists to Japan in the first 11 months of 2015 surpassed 18 million, edging in on Tokyo's target of 20 million visitors per year. Compared with the first 11 months of 2014, this year's figure represents an almost 50-percent increase year-on-year, according to CNBC.

According to statistics from the Japan National Tourism Organization, around a quarter of inbound tourists to Japan are from China. This year's rise in the number of visitors was propelled by the mainland, which saw its Japan-bound tourists leap 110 percent year-on-year, reaching 4.6 million for the first 11 months of 2015.

Known for their insatiable appetite for shopping, Chinese tourists have inspired the buzzword "bakugai" or "explosive buying" in Japan. The bakugai effect is multiplied during peak seasons like the Golden Week in October, when it was estimated that this year around 400,000 Chinese tourists spent USD830 million in just seven days.

The foreign inflows have been warmly received by a Japanese government that has inherited a legacy of decades-long sub-par economic performance.



One of Tokyo's most recent policies to promote the tourism sector involved the relaxation of its visa requirements for travelers from China, which came into effect at the start of 2015.

The government, which had set the target for the number of visitors to the island nation at 20 million, is now planning to revise the figure to 30 million by 2020, according to local media.

The consistent downward slide of the JPY against the USD since late 2012 has made the traditionally expensive Tokyo more affordable to its neighbors. The USD/JPY conversion rate stands at 121.39 at the time of print, up from around 84 in December 2012, marking a significant increase in the buying power of visitors.

With travel and shopping more affordable, Japan has established itself as a rival destination for main-

land groups who have traditionally headed for Hong Kong and Macau.

A series of other airports opening or expanding their services to East Asian airlines have also enabled carriers to set up shop in Japan and low cost carriers (LCCs) to enter the market offering competitively priced flights.

"It's not just Tokyo... it's also some of the smaller destinations in Japan like Kyushu, Fukuoka... A lot of this is also driven by the LCCs. So the more the LCCs fly to the smaller destinations, that just opens up the market," Asia-Pacific vice-president of Hotels.com, Abhiram Chowdhry, told CNBC.

Data from New Kansai International Airport Company's webpage suggested that the 2007 addition of a second runway at Kansai International Airport had boosted international flights to that destination by 29 percent as of last year. **Staff reporter**

corporate bits

NOVOTEL ZHUHAI REBRANDED AS PULLMAN

The Novotel Zhuhai has been rebranded by AccorHotels as the "Pullman Zhuhai," in line with the company's plans to promote its up-market Pullman brand in China, reported Travel Daily on Sunday.

The Novotel Zhuhai opened only last December, but AccorHotels has decided to rebrand the resort. This will take the group's Pullman portfolio in the greater China region to a total of 25 hotels across 22 cities.

"We are excited to welcome the hotel to the Pullman family," said Paul Richardson, the chief operating officer for AccorHotel's Greater China region.

"The rebranding of the property is part of AccorHotels' ongoing global endeavor to further align with its brand architecture to ensure a more consistent brand experience for its guests," Richardson added.

The 268-room, rebranded Pullman Zhuhai is situated in Gongbei, close to the major bus stations that connect the city with Guangzhou.

Facilities at the up-market resort include restaurants, ballrooms, meeting rooms, a wedding chapel, an executive lounge, sauna and steam rooms, and a fitness center and outdoor pool.

According to Travel Daily, both the ownership and management of the hotel will remain unchanged.

According to Travel Daily, both the ownership and management of the hotel will remain unchanged.



220 GRADUATE AT SANDS SHOPPES CEREMONY

The latest group of Sands Shoppes retail employees graduated at the Sands Retail Academy's fourth graduation ceremony on Tuesday, at the Venetian Macao.

At the ceremony, 220 front-line retail team members were certified to mark the completion of their training courses, designed to improve service quality at Sands Shoppes. The ceremony was also attended by representatives of over 80 retailers from the complex.

"With this being our fourth graduation, we are pleased to see an increase in both the number of participants and the number of graduates," said Antonio Ramirez, senior vice-president of human resources at Sands China.



Antonio Ramirez, senior vice-president of human resources at Sands China.

"The Sands Retail Academy is part of Sands China's long-term commitment to developing local talent in Macao, by nurturing locals who are not direct employees of Sands China," added Ramirez.

The Sands Retail Academy was launched in 2013 to improve customer service training at Sands Shoppes. Since its inception more than 1,800 retail professionals have joined the academy.

A migrant worker was pulled out alive yesterday after he was buried for more than 60 hours in a massive landslide that swept through part of a major manufacturing city in southern China.

Rao Liangzhong of the Shenzhen Emergency Response Office said that the man, Tian Zeming, was rescued around dawn on Wednesday. He said Tian was from Chongqing in southwestern China.

"The survivor had a very feeble voice and pulse when he was found alive buried under debris, and now he's undergoing further checks," Dr. Wang Yiguo told a news conference in Shenzhen, according to a transcript posted by the district government that covers the area.

State broadcaster CCTV reported that Tian later underwent surgery for a broken hand and on his foot, which had been wedged against a door panel. It said he had been trying to get out of his room when the building collapsed, and the door panel created a space for him to survive.

When they found him, Tian told rescuers his name and that there was another person buried near him, according to the transcript. Another neurosurgeon, Dai Limeng, told the news conference that he had gone into the rubble and confirmed that the second person had not survived.

More than 70 people are still missing from the landslide that happened Sunday when a mountain of construction waste material and mud collapsed and flowed into an industrial park in Shenzhen.

The Ministry of Land and Re-

SHENZHEN

Man found alive after more than 60 hours in landslide



A survivor is rescued at the site of landslide at an industrial park in Shenzhen

sources has said a steep man-made mountain of dirt, cement chunks and other construction waste had been piled up against a 100-meter (330-foot)-high hill over the past two years.

Heavy rains saturated the soil, making it heavy and unstable, and ultimately causing it to

collapse with massive force in and around an industrial park.

State media reported that the New Guangming District government identified problems with the mountain of soil months earlier.

The Legal Evening News said a district government report in

January found that the dump had received 1 million cubic meters of waste and warned of a "catastrophe."

Under pressure from the media, officials allowed about 30 journalists, mostly from foreign outlets, to approach an edge of the disaster area. Flanked by

police, reporters could observe military posts with computers and disease control stations set up for the rescue workers.

Shenzhen is a major manufacturing center, making everything from cellphones to cars, and it attracts workers from all parts of China. AP

HONG KONG

Hello Kitty owner Sanrio says fan site security leak fixed

The Japanese company that owns the Hello Kitty brand said it has fixed a security leak in an online fan site for the famous character that compromised the personal information of 3.3 million users.

Sanrio Co.'s digital arm said that it "corrected" a security vulnerability on the SanrioTown.com website and was carrying out an investigation. The leak was discovered Saturday by a security researcher.

Hong Kong-based Sanrio Digital said anyone who knew the Internet addresses of "specific vulnerable servers" could have accessed personal information such as names and birthdates. Passwords were also available but encrypted.

However, it added that the data did not include credit card or other payment details, and that no information was stolen.

"We investigated the problem and applied fixes, including se-

curing the servers identified as vulnerable" by the security researcher, Chris Vickery, the company said in a security advisory posted on the site.

SanrioTown.com is an online community for Hello Kitty enthusiasts around the world operated by Sanrio Digital. The site lets users play games, watch videos and keep up with news on their favorite cute character.

The site's members include 186,261 minors, said Mark Leeper, whose public relations firm is representing Sanrio Digital.

It's the second Internet security breach in the past month involving a large amount of children's data.

Kids' technology maker VTech reported a data breach that exposed the personal information of 6.4 million children around the world as well as 4.9 million parent accounts they were connected to.



People ride on a sightseeing bus painted with a Hello Kitty character in Tokyo

British police have arrested one man on hacking-related charges in that case.

Sanrio Digital is a joint venture between Hong Kong game developer Typhoon Games, which has a 70 percent stake, and Sanrio, which owns the rest. AP

Guotai says HK chairman returns after aiding probes

The Hong Kong arm of one of China's biggest securities companies said yesterday its chairman has returned to work after disappearing a month ago.

Guotai Junan International Holdings said Yim Fung had been assisting in "certain investigations" by authorities in mainland China in a "personal capacity" and could not be reached during that time.

Neither Yim nor the company was the subject of the investigation, Guotai said in a filing to Hong Kong's stock exchange.

The Hong Kong unit of Shanghai-based Guotai Junan Securities said Yim has resumed his duties as chairman and CEO. Company operations are "normal and stable," it added.

It didn't provide further details about the investigations.

Yim is one of a number of high-profile figures in China's securities industry who have disappeared or been detained after regulators began investigating a meltdown in China's stock markets in June.

Last month, three other big Chinese stock brokerages said they were being investigated while the official Xinhua News Agency reported that star Chinese fund manager Xu Xiang was detained on suspicion of insider trading.

GUANGDONG

Police detains grassroots labor activists as disputes rise

POLICE in Guangdong have detained seven labor activists, including three leading members of China's nascent grassroots labor movement, on charges they improperly intervened in labor disputes, the official Xinhua News Agency said Tuesday.

The report came nearly three weeks after Zeng Feiyang, Meng Han, Peng Jiayong and other activists were taken away. Xinhua confirmed the detention of seven of them, who reportedly have been denied access to lawyers.

Their detentions and the accusatory article in the state news agency are part of a crackdown on labor activism, which has been growing as labor disputes increase amid an economic slowdown.

The Hong Kong-based China Labor Bulletin reported 2,606 labor disputes this year, up from last year's 1,379. In November, the organization recorded 301 labor incidents, the highest monthly total this year.

The labor groups are independent of the official All-China Federation of Trade Unions, which has been accused of failing to protect workers' rights.

Grassroots labor activists have

gained popularity with migrant workers and have offered them many services, including legal aid.

In recent years, labor activists have helped workers elect their own representatives for group negotiations with management and organize collective actions, such as protests and work stoppages.

Chinese authorities are wary of the grassroots activism and have said hostile foreign forces are using illegal rights groups and activists to compete for the hearts of workers, sabotage the unity of the working class and undermine the state-sanctioned union.

Xinhua said Zeng and his group were funded by overseas organizations and incited workers to stage strikes that disrupted public order and hurt workers' interests.

The ruling Communist Party says it is a party of the working class, but does not tolerate any social force that may threaten its monopoly over Chinese society.

Since President Xi Jinping came into power in early 2013, the government has tried to tame social media, prosecute activists championing civil society, crack down on rights lawyers, and rope in non-governmental organizations. **AP**

Tiananmen dissident released

THE Information Center for Human Rights and Democracy, a Hong Kong-based human rights organization, issued a report on December 17 concerning the release of Chinese dissident Zhou Yongjun, according to BBC Monitoring Asia-Pacific.

Zhou Yongjun, a long-time dissident photographed at the Tiananmen Square Incident, was released from prison on December 6 after his sentence had been reduced. He was arrested most recently for trying to illegally enter Hong Kong via

Macau using a counterfeit Malaysian passport.

According to Zhou's sister, he has just returned to his hometown in Sichuan Province and paid tribute to his mother, who passed away earlier in the year.

The case of Zhou Yongjun has drawn international criticism from human rights organizations. They claim that Zhou, following his arrest in Hong Kong, was forced across the border to mainland China against his will, despite there being no extradition agreement at the time.

AP PHOTO



A nurse, talks with a patient in Chinese naval hospital ship in the port of Callao, Peru

Chinese naval hospital makes first stop in South America

Martin Mejia, Lima

A Chinese naval hospital ship is making a first-ever call at a South American port in a sign of the Asian economic giant's growing influence in the resource-rich region.

The Peace Ark, with 500 beds and 118 medical professionals, docked at a port outside Peru's capital of Lima for a seven-day service visit. It's the last destination on a three-month mission that also included stops in Australia, Mexico, Barbados, Grenada and the U.S. The 229-meter (756-foot) ship is expected to perform 2,000 free medical procedures during its stay in Peru.

"We're very thankful because during this holiday season they're going to give the gift of health care," Peruvian Health Minister Anibal Velasquez said at a ceremony alongside China's ambassador to Peru.

Such goodwill visits have been a mainstay of U.S. diplomacy in Latin America for decades, the latest being the hospital ship USS Comfort's visit to 11 nations during a regional tour earlier this year. But the Chinese outreach is more recent, having gained momentum as the country's demand for Latin America's natural resources has soared over the past decade.

"It's definitely an approach that was partially inspired or learned from U.S. actions,"

said Evan Ellis, an expert on China-Latin America relations at the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. "It's like the Boy Scouts. You show up and see who you can help."

While Ellis says the humanitarian mission in what has traditionally been Washington's backyard shouldn't set off alarm bells, the timing of the visit, with the U.S. distracted by unrest elsewhere, is propitious for Chinese aims of gradually expanding its military influence around the world.

"It's not necessarily nefarious, but one does notice what is happening," Ellis said. "It impacts the U.S. position as the partner of choice" for several Latin American countries. **AP**

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NEW ZEALAND

Judge rules Kim Dotcom can be extradited to US

Nick Perry, Wellington

A New Zealand judge ruled yesterday that colorful Internet entrepreneur Kim Dotcom and three of his colleagues can be extradited to the United States to face criminal copyright charges.

Dotcom's lawyers said they filed an appeal against the decision.

Judge Nevin Dawson's ruling came nearly four years after U.S. authorities shut down Dotcom's file-sharing website Megaupload, which was once one of the Internet's most popular sites. Prosecutors say it raked in at least USD175 million, mainly from people using it to illegally download songs, television shows and movies.

The U.S. has charged the men with conspiracy to commit copyright infringement, racketeering and money laundering.

If found guilty, they could face decades in jail.

But appeals to the extradition ruling are likely to take at least another year.

"It will end up in the Supreme Court, there's no doubt about it," said Dotcom's lawyer Ron Mansfield, referring to New Zealand's highest court. "The legal issues are so interesting and complex."

Judge Dawson, who presided over the nine-week hearing, wrote, "The overwhelming preponderance of evidence ... establishes a prima facie case to answer for all respondents on each of the counts."

The judge was required only to decide whether the U.S. had a valid case, and not whether he thought the men were guilty or innocent.

The U.S. argued that the site cost copyright holders, which included Hollywood's major

movie studios, more than \$500 million. Prosecutors say intercepted communications show the men talking about being "modern-day pirates" and "evil."

Dotcom argued that he can't be held responsible for others who chose to use his site for illegal purposes, and that any case should have been heard in civil court.

The case could have broader implications for Internet copyright rules. Mansfield said that if the U.S. side prevails, websites including YouTube and Facebook would need to more carefully police their content.

The case also raises questions about how far U.S. jurisdiction extends in an age when the Internet has erased many traditional borders. Dotcom says he has never set foot in the U.S.

Born in Germany as Kim Schmitz, Dotcom has long enjoyed



Internet entrepreneur Kim Dotcom

a flamboyant lifestyle.

He was arrested in New Zealand in 2012 after a dramatic police raid on his mansion.

Out on bail soon after, he released a music album, started another Internet file-sharing company called Mega, and launched a political party which unsuccessfully contested the nation's 2014 election.

In addition to Dotcom, who founded Megaupload and was its majority shareholder, the U.S. is also seeking to extradite former Megaupload officers Mathias Ortmann, Bram van der Kolk and Finn Batato.

"Justice was not served today," Ira Rothken, another of Dotcom's lawyers, wrote on Twitter.

New Zealand Justice Minister Amy Adams is required to sign off on any extraditions. In a statement, Adams said she would wait for the conclusion of any appeals before making a final decision. Even her decision can be subjected to judicial review.

The men remained free on bail after yesterday's ruling, pending their appeals.

Before the ruling, Dotcom wrote on Twitter, "This is my weirdest Xmas ever." AP

Rugged, stylish Akubra hat a symbol of Australia

THE image is seared into Australian lore: Under a hot desert sun, a mounted soldier pours the last of his water into his slouch hat to share with his best friend, his horse.

For countless Australians over the past 130 years, Akubra hats have not just been a fashion statement, but an integral part of life. The Akubra, an Aboriginal word meaning "head covering," has provided Australians protection from the country's harsh elements, its fur felt blocking the scorching sun and holding back the rain.

Akubra hats hold the same place in Australian folklore as Stetson cowboy hats do in the American West. They symbolize life in the Outback and a rugged self-reliance that is still a source of pride for Australians, even if many have moved to a more comfortable lifestyle in the city.

Making the Akubra started as a family business, and remains so to this day.

Shortly after arriving in Australia in 1874, Briton Benjamin Dunkerley settled in the island state of Tasmania and set up a modest hat factory. In 1904 he invited a fellow hat-making Brit, Stephen Keir, to join the company. Keir married Dunkerley's daughter Ada the next year.

The business moved to Sydney and in 1912 started using the trade name Akubra to market its hats. The word "Akubra" is now very much a part of Aussie vernacular and is often used colloquially to refer to all broad-brimmed hats worn by farmers.

When World War I broke out, the



Milliner Robert Carroll places a hat on a customer's head while he stands on a ladder in his store Strand Hatters in Sydney

company became one of two suppliers that produced the famed slouch hat worn by the Australia and New Zealand Army Corps soldiers, and it's still the major supplier for Australian troops. Today the business is run by Keir's great-grandson, Stephen Keir IV.

A process involving hot water, pressure and friction makes the rabbit-fur hats impervious to water.

Processed fur is fed into blowers that remove unwanted hair and dirt, leaving behind a soft blanket of downy-like cotton. Then the fur is sucked onto a large revolving cone while hot water is sprayed onto it, binding the fibers together and making the felt one of the world's strongest fabrics. The felt is passed through roller presses dozens of times before workers dye, mold, shape, soften and smooth each hat. Stitching in the sweat bands and trimming the interior complete the process.

Milliner Robert Carroll, manager of Akubra's only retail store, Strand Hatters in Sydney, says they are selling more hats than ever before.

"Men are wearing hats more now," Carroll says. "They like accessories, they like to look good and they're looking after themselves a bit better."

More than 40 styles in varying colors make up their range of hats, including "The Stockman" and "The Cattleman." None may be as famous as "The Great White Shark."

Worn and promoted by former world No. 1 golfer Greg Norman, known as "The Shark," the hat gained popularity and took the small family-owned company to international fame. In recent years, Akubra hats were used by medal presenters at the Olympics and worn by world leaders at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in Australia. AP

AUSTRALIA

Gov't deports French man found with extremist material

A French national carrying extremist material was detained at an Australian airport and subsequently deported two days after the deadly attacks in Paris, Australia's immigration minister said Wednesday.

The man, who had traveled to Australia from the Middle East, was stopped at Melbourne Airport on Nov. 15 and found to be carrying three cans of mace along with extremist material on his mobile devices, government officials said following a local media report about the incident on Wednesday.

Australian officials liaised with their French counterparts and held the man overnight at an immigration detention center before deporting him to France, Immigration Minister Peter Dutton said.

"We don't have any information, as I say, to link it to the Paris attacks, but it is a reminder to us all that there are people there who would seek to do us harm," Dutton told reporters.

Dutton would not say why authorities initially chose to stop the man, or what his motives for being in Australia may have been. He said he did not know what French officials had done with the man upon his return there.

Australia's government raised the country's terror threat level last year in response to the domestic threat posed by supporters of the Islamic State group. Police have since conducted dozens of raids they say have been aimed at thwarting several plots in Australia, including an alleged plan to attack government buildings and a naval base in Sydney. AP

Alan Clendenning &
Cristina Fuentes-Cantillana, Madrid

Spain thrust into governing void after splintered vote

SPAIN entered a governing void, facing weeks or months of uncertainty over what political party or parties will lead the country following a national election that fragmented the status quo. The result was so blurred that a German government spokeswoman said it was impossible to determine who deserved congratulations.

Although the ruling right-of-center Popular Party won the most votes, it failed to retain its parliamentary majority and will try to cobble together a coalition or minority government.

But that's unlikely, analysts say, because the party wouldn't get enough seats in the lower house of parliament even by allying itself with the new business-friendly Ciudadanos party that came in fourth place and is seen as the most likely ideological partner.

The ambiguous outcome pushed Spain's benchmark stock index down 3.6 percent in Madrid as investors fretted over the possibility of a governing alliance between the Socialist Party and the country's new far-left Podemos party, led by pony-tailed political science professor Pablo Iglesias.

That sort of combination could lead to a government that would try to roll back highly unpopular



Ciudadanos party leader Albert Rivera applauds during an election campaign rally in Barcelona

austerity measures imposed over the last four years by Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy.

He vowed after the vote to try to form a government, but gave few details on how he would do so after winning just 123 seats in the 350-member lower house of parliament.

Rajoy tweeted he would try to "form a stable government in the general interest of all Spaniards." He then told reporters Monday night he would initiate talks soon to do so, without naming which

parties he would seek support from.

German government spokeswoman Cristiane Wirtz told reporters Monday that Spaniards deserve congratulations for voter participation of 73.2 percent, up from the 68.9 percent turnout in 2011 that gave Rajoy a 189-seat parliamentary majority.

"But otherwise, I don't yet see so clearly who one can congratulate in this situation," Wirtz said, adding that no one from Germany's government had contacted Spa-

nish officials about the formation of a new government.

If forced from power, Rajoy and the Popular Party would become the third European victims this year of a voter backlash against austerity — following elections in Greece and Portugal seen as ballot box rebellions against unpopular tax hikes and spending cuts invoked during the eurozone's debt crisis.

In past Spanish elections, the Popular Party and the main opposition Socialists were the established powerhouses and only needed support from tiny parties to get a majority in parliament when they didn't win one from voters.

But Podemos came in a strong third place and Ciudadanos took fourth in their first election fielding national candidates.

The Socialists and Podemos on Monday ruled out voting in favor of Rajoy. Ciudadanos, which has repeatedly said it will never vote for Rajoy, said that at most it would abstain so the Popular Party could try to form a minori-

ty government — given that it was the most voted.

"Even if a stable coalition partnership emerges, the negotiations are unlikely to be swift, which implies that both consumers and businesses face a prolonged period of uncertainty," RBC Capital Markets said in a note to clients.

That could hurt business investment "precisely at a time when the Spanish economy is becoming increasingly reliant on domestic demand to fuel the recovery," RBC added.

Spaniards who cast ballots for Podemos and Ciudadanos said they weren't worried at all about the uncertainty their country could go through — or the prospect of another national election in the spring if no parties manage to cobble together a viable coalition or minority government that would rely on other parties to support it in passing legislation.

Instead, the voters who picked the upstart parties were elated at making history by upending the traditional two-party system. **AP**

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SPAIN

El Gordo giveth: Beach town hits jackpot in Spain's lottery



Cristina Ruiz, third left, 53, celebrates in front of a lottery office with red wine beside others owners after selling the second Christmas lottery prize "El Gordo"

DECKED out in their school uniforms, young Spanish school children in Madrid's stately Teatro Real opera house sang out lottery numbers on live TV yesterday (Macau time) for Spain's massively popular Christmas lottery that showered 2.2 billion euros (USD2.4 billion) across the country.

They finally sang out "El Gordo," the biggest winner in the drawing: number 79,140. People who bought that number in a southern beach city were the luckiest ones this year.

But Spaniards all over the nation shared in the wealth because

se their lottery system doles out prizes much more broadly than lotteries with huge jackpots for just a few winners.

The No. 1 prize gives out a jackpot of just 400,000 euros, but more than 1,000 tickets win the big one and the lottery hands out 24 million prizes overall.

Though other lotteries make headlines with their larger top prizes, El Gordo (The Fat One) is ranked as the world's richest and makes its mark every year in Spain, uniting the country because almost everyone takes part.

With so many prizes, there are plenty of winnings for Spaniards who band together in office pools and groups of family members or friends to buy anywhere from one to dozens of the tickets costing 20 euros each.

People can't pick their own numbers, so if they want a certain one they have to go online to find out if it exists and if so which agency or agencies are selling it. **AP**

GERMANY

Records show Hitler enjoyed special treatment in prison

Frank Jordans, Berlin

ADOLF Hitler enjoyed special treatment, including plentiful supplies of beer, during his time at Landsberg prison in Germany following a coup attempt ten years before he successfully came to power, according to newly published historical documents.

Historians have long been fascinated by the Nazi leader's time in Landsberg, where he and several followers were incarcerated after the unsuccessful Beer Hall Putsch of 1923, when Hitler tried to seize power in Bavaria. It was there that Hitler wrote much of the first volume of his book "Mein Kampf" and received a stream of visitors — 330 to be precise, according to Peter Fleischmann, a German historian.

Fleischmann, who heads the Bavarian state archives in Nuremberg, said a review of newly published prison records reveals that Hitler and fellow members of the Nazi Party were treated much more favorably than socialists or communists who were



also incarcerated for staging a coup several years earlier.

"Formally it was the same kind of sentence, but in practice it was completely different," Fleischmann said in a telephone interview this week. "The leftists ... were mistreated while the rightists had their path greased for them."

Fleischmann said Hitler and his fellow Nazis "were granted prison treatment that was far beyond the norms of the time" by officials and prison guards who sympathized with their extreme nationalist ideology.

Even though Hitler described himself as a "complete anti-al-

coholic (teetotaler)" he purchased 62 half-liter bottles of beer in July 1924 — and similar amounts the following months.

Fleischmann's 552-page book also appears to confirm a British WWII-era joke about Hitler. A doctor who examined Hitler on his arrival in Landsberg recorded that the Nazi leader was "healthy, strong" but suffered from an undescended right testicle, also known as unilateral cryptorchidism. The congenital condition can increase the chances of infertility.

Hitler was released from Landsberg on Dec. 20, 1924, due to supposed good conduct. **AP**

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2015 TEAM EVENT POOL TOURNAMENT

8-9 & 10 BALL

GROUP A				
Team No.	Team Name	Games Played	Games Won	Points
A3	SUPREME	2	39	17
A2	JACKASS	2	33	14
A4	TEAM OF BEER	2	22	7
A1	ROCKET	2	12	2

GROUP B				
Team No.	Team Name	Games Played	Games Won	Points
B2	NOYPI	2	36	14
B1	THE ALL BLANKS	2	30	10
B4	THE HEROES	2	27	9
B3	THE POOLISSONS	2	26	7

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THURSDAY

13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:30	Classic Music
15:45	Variety
18:10	Trail of Lies (Repeated)
19:00	Seasonal Program
19:30	Soap Opera
20:25	Official Program
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	TDM Talk Show
21:30	Documentary
22:10	Trail of Lies
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Documentary
23:55	Seasonal Program (Live)
01:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
02:00	RTPi Live

FRIDAY

13:00	TDM News (Repeat)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:30	Religious Program
16:10	Non-Daily Portuguese News
16:50	Seasonal Program
18:10	Trail of Lies (Repeated)
19:00	TDM Talk Show (Repeated)
19:30	Soap Opera
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:15	Seasonal Program
22:00	Publicity
22:10	Trail of Lies
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Portuguese Movie
01:10	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
02:00	RTPi Live

SATURDAY

10:30	Boonie Bears - Sr.2
11:35	Young Adult
12:00	Miscellaneous
12:30	Miscellaneous
13:00	TDM News (Repeat)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:30	Soap Opera
18:30	Contest
19:20	Miscellaneous
19:50	Non-Daily Portuguese News
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	Drama
22:00	Drama
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Tactical Unit - No Way Out
01:00	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
01:30	RTPi Live

offbeat

AIRPORT COMFORT DOGS TO HELP EASE HOLIDAY TRAVEL STRESS

A team of professionally trained comfort dogs at Dulles International Airport are helping ease travelers' stresses this holiday season.

The dogs are part of the United Airlines United Paws Program. For the first half of Christmas week, the airline has invited the comfort animals to seven of its hub airports nationwide. The dogs' purpose is to reduce stress and anxiety for holiday travelers.

The dogs walk the terminal during a morning and afternoon shift and will continue through today.

On Monday, the four-legged messengers of calm participating in the event included Rugi, a Great Dane-Labrador mix; Cinnamon, an English bulldog; and Pepper, a rescue blend of retriever, among others.

United spokesman Jonathan Guerin says science proves that simply petting a dog can reduce stress. Plus, they always bring smiles.

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



1968 FIRST ASTRONAUTS ORBIT MOON

The Apollo 8 spacecraft has taken its crew of three astronauts safely into orbit around the Moon, the first manned space mission to achieve the feat.

The climax of the mission began at 0959 GMT, when Frank Borman, James Lovell and William Anders were about 78 miles (125 km) from the Moon.

Right on schedule, the crew fired their rocket engine to send Apollo 8 into the first of 10 elliptical lunar orbits.

The engine burned for just over four minutes, and then suddenly the avid audience of television-watchers on Earth had the first-ever eyewitness account of the lunar surface from astronaut James Lovell.

"The moon is essentially grey," he said. "No colour. Looks like plaster of Paris. Sort of a greyish beach sand."

Shortly afterwards, the spacecraft passed out of contact with mission control in Houston, travelling into the dark side of the Moon - never seen directly by humans before, as it always faces away from the Earth.

There followed a tense 45 minutes in which radio communication was impossible - a drama which will be repeated on each circuit around the Moon.

Once back in contact, Apollo 8 then fired another engine, sending it into circular orbit 69 miles (110 km) above the Moon's surface.

About two and a half hours afterwards, the astronauts beamed back the first television pictures of what they were seeing.

As the pictures flooded in, the astronauts broadcast the first words of Genesis, describing the creation of the world.

They then signed out: "From the crew of Apollo 8, we pause with good night, good luck and merry Christmas and God bless all of you - all of you on the good earth."

All three men appear to be in good spirits and health.

They have been able to sleep and eat according to schedule, although the food, in plastic packets divided into small "bites", apparently tastes as bad as it looks.

One of Captain Lovell's first comments today was, "Happiness is bacon squares for breakfast."

They were told by Houston control, "You can always bring them back if you have any left over."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The crew of Apollo 8 spent 20 hours in orbit around the Moon, before returning to Earth.

They splashed down in the Pacific on 27 December, landing just 5,000 yards (4,500 metres) from their target point. They were picked up by the aircraft carrier Yorktown.

They returned as national heroes. The next mission, Apollo 9, took off at the beginning of 1969, to test a Moon-landing module.

That same year, the crew of Apollo 11 became the first men to walk on the Moon.

James Lovell went on to command the ill-fated Apollo 13, which was crippled by an explosion on board in 1970. He and his crew returned to Earth safely.

Budget constraints brought the first phase of American lunar exploration to an end in 1972.

Then, in January 2004, US President George Bush announced American astronauts would return to the Moon by 2020 as the launching point for missions further into space.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Communication is important today - but keep it short and sweet. At least one colleague or family member starts to derail the conversation with digressions and distractions, but you can politely keep them on track.

Taurus April 20-May 20 Focus on today as much as possible - long-term thinking is best put off for a few more days. You may have an emergent problem to deal with, or maybe you just need to learn more before making plans.

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 You are in motion today, which is just how you want it. Even your down-time probably involves web surfing or other forms of active entertainment in which you seek out new opportunities.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 You need to deal with a few extra elements you hadn't counted on when handling big projects today - but you can do it! It may be time to call in that favor from a friend or colleague, though.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 You're torn between two equally appealing options - which is a pretty good problem to have! Unfortunately, one key player wants you to hurry up and make up your mind, so get on it.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 You can't let your heart make decisions today - it's all about your head and the left-brain logic that sometimes gets you in trouble. Right now, that's your best bet for getting ahead, so go for it!

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 You need to try new things today - even if you'd rather poke around in the garden or just watch that same movie for the hundredth time. Fortunately, your positive mental energy is on the job.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 You can't stop thinking about some weird little detail that seems to be popping out from a spreadsheet or presentation. It's worth following up on, so make sure that you look into it carefully.

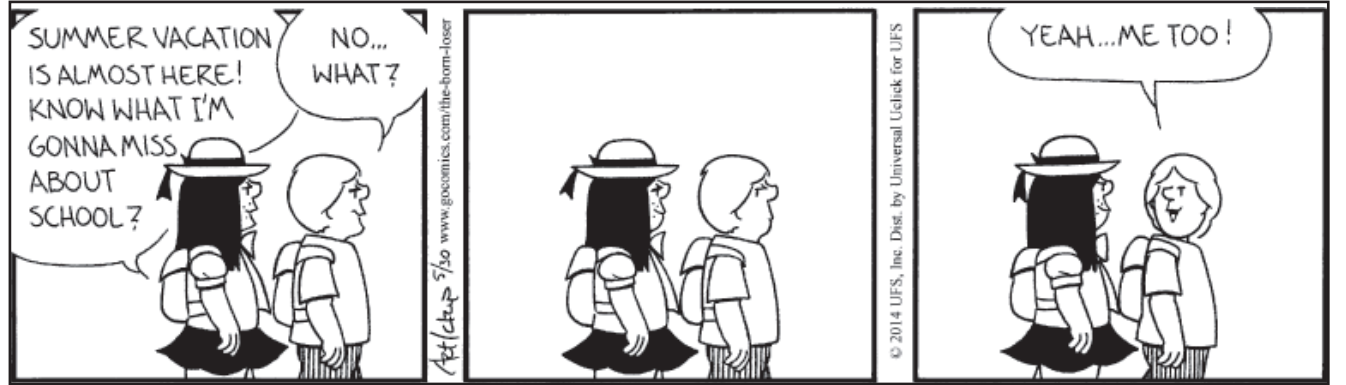
Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 You are thinking hard about things, but you're not really sure what you need to do next. See if you can get your people to offer up ideas, but don't expect much depth to come until time has passed.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 Today is all about communication, and even your quiet wisdom is much in demand now. Make sure that you're available for those who need you, and then check out what needs to happen next to make it all work.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 Something small but meaningful could spark a new romance today - if you're looking for one, that is! You may find that a stray comment about your favorite author or politician leads to something big.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 Your creative mind is much more active today, so you may need to find a way to capture all the great ideas that are coming your way. Your friends may be amused, but you know one of these is a winner!

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy

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

Easy+

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

Medium

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

Hard

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

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Work up lather; 5- Gumbo pods; 10- "Saint Joan" playwright; 14- Poi source; 15- Hotelier Helmsley; 16- Vena ...; 17- Weary comment; 18- Kick Out of You; 19- Not a dup.; 20- Composer Mahler; 22- State of decline; 24- British verb ending; 25- Gds.; 26- Chronic eye infection; 30- Baffled; 35- Small island; 36- Business mag; 37- Metal spikes; 38- Sour cherry; 41- Guarantees; 43- Minneapolis suburb; 44- Strong feeling of anger; 45- Ambient music composer Brian; 46- Hit back, perhaps; 47- Constructive; 50- Light ring; 53- Crazy ...; 54- Organized group; 58- Scattered rubbish; 62- Purina competitor; 63- Yoga posture; 66- Thus; 67- Tidy, without fault; 68- Reasoning; 69- Toupees; 70- Cubs slugger Sammy; 71- Gladden; 72- Zaire's Mobutu ... Seko;

DOWN: 1- All-male; 2- Honolulu's island; 3- Weaponry; 4- Kind of license or justice; 5- Extra virgin unctuous fluid; 6- Frat party staple; 7- Fish eggs; 8- Chipped in; 9- Swedish imports; 10- Dundee denizen; 11- Mata ...; 12- Ardent; 13- Hourly rate; 21- Powdery residue; 23- Leguminous plants; 25- Brit's raincoat; 26- Circus employee; 27- Janeiro; 28- Skylit lobbies; 29- 6, on a phone; 31- Greek cross; 32- Seductively beautiful woman; 33- 1985 Kate Nelligan film; 34- Org.; 39- SASE, e.g.; 40- Shaping tool; 41- Before, of yore; 42- Choker, e.g.; 44- Lance on the bench; 48- Mai ...; 49- Fury swimmers; 51- Start of a Dickens title; 52- Disinfectant brand; 54- Without; 55- Bread spread; 56- Tax experts; Abbr.; 57- Small amount; 59- Faithful; 60- Ova; 61- Ascended, flower; 64- Turkish general; 65- It may be picked;



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ICE HOCKEY

Pominville, Coyle score for Wild in 2-1 win over Canadiens



Montreal Canadiens goalie Mike Condon gives up a goal by Minnesota Wild's Charlie Coyle, left

Dave Campbell
Sports Writer

DARCY Kuemper began last season as Minnesota's primary goalie, until Devan Dubnyk's arrival denied him the opportunity to establish some consistency and play out of his slumps.

A relief role has not diminished Kuemper's confidence or his value to the Wild.

Jason Pominville and Charlie Coyle scored, Kuemper earned another victory with 24 saves and the Wild beat teetering Montreal 2-1 yesterday (Macau time) to stick the Canadiens with their fifth straight loss.

"It's nice when you get to play. You can get into a rhythm, and I'm just trying to keep it right

now," said Kuemper, who improved to 4-0-2 with a 1.26 goals-against average and a .947 save percentage in six games this month.

Dubnyk is healthy again after a groin injury, but Kuemper was in net because the Wild played 24 hours earlier and lost 6-3 to Dallas.

"He seemed more confident than anybody else that he was capable of it, and that's not to say we doubted him," coach Mike Yeo said. "It's just he was up and down last year. He was even up and down to start the year really, even though he didn't play in a lot of games, but his actions tell us that he was telling the truth."

Daniel Carr spoiled the shutout bid by scoring between Kuemper's pads with 7:14 remaining, giving the Canadiens some life

in what was a tight-checking, neutral-zone-centric game from start to finish. Kuemper and the Wild clamped down from there, dropping the Canadiens to 1-9 in their last 10 games.

"We're starting to help out more and more and he's still shutting the door for us, and that's huge," Coyle said.

Mike Condon stopped 20 shots for the Canadiens, who have been outscored 19-5 during their losing streak. They have 15 goals in the last 10 games. For fans of the iconic franchise, and for the players, too, remembering that 19-4-3 record they had Dec. 1 is difficult to do considering this nasty skid.

"We meet often. We talk often. It doesn't really need to be aired out there. I think what we need

to do is stick with it. We've done a lot of good things," said leading scorer Max Pacioretty, who has one goal and one assist over the last 10 games.

Coach Michel Therrien put the pressure this week on his goalies, Condon and Dustin Tokarski, to raise their play in light of all the losing. But the Canadiens just couldn't generate any kind of an attack in their third of eight straight road games.

"When you don't have a lot of space on the ice, it comes down to mistakes and we had two big ones that ended up costing us the goals," Therrien said.

With Mikael Granlund in the first period and Zach Parise in the third period, the Wild could have scored twice more. Both no-goal calls were upheld by replay reviews, prompting resounding boos from the crowd.

Condon said he thought Granlund scored, when he swept the puck out from underneath him after Granlund crashed the net for a rebound. Parise's was a wraparound move that looked as if it went further in than Granlund's. But the Wild's defense was good enough that those calls didn't matter.

The Wild improved to 13-4-1 at home this season. They've allowed only 15 non-empty-net goals in their last 33 regulation periods and been scored on just 19 times in 11 games in December.

"No one is going to feel sorry. You just have to keep on going. That's all you can do," Condon said. **AP**

OLYMPICS

Brazil attorney general alleges bribes tied to Rio games



Brazil's Speaker Eduardo Cunha

BRASIL'S attorney general is investigating allegations that bribes were paid to a powerful lawmaker to help secure contracts for the building of venues and other works for next year's Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

In documents obtained by The Associated Press, Attorney General Rodrigo Janot accuses Eduardo Cunha, speaker of the lower house in Brazil's two-chamber legislature, of receiving 1.9 million Brazilian reais (USD475,000) from the construction company OAS to craft legislation favorable for the company.

Cunha has called the allegations "ridiculous" in comments to local media, while OAS refused to comment.

The investigation is the first linking corruption to the billions being spent on Olympic building projects.

OAS is involved with building the BMX, mountain bike and canoeing venues at Deodoro in northern Rio, the second-largest cluster of Olympic venues.

The constructor is also involved in work on high-speed bus lanes, the 8 billion reais (\$2 billion) renovation of Rio's port, and projects to clean the polluted waters in Barra da Tijuca, the area where the main Olympic Park is being built.

The International Olympic Committee referred an email seeking comment to local organizers, who did not immediately respond.

Under the Brazilian system, the prosecutor is largely an investigator and it's up to the court — in this case Brazil's Supreme Court — to accept a case.

In the 190-page report, Janot says that Cunha "treated the lower house as a center for trading bribes for bills." **AP**

CRICKET

Aussie captain Smith named test player of year, de Villiers ODI

AUSTRALIA captain Steve Smith has been named the International Cricket Council test player and cricketer of the year while South Africa's A. B. de Villiers has been awarded the best one-day international player for 2015.

The ICC said yesterday that Smith was the seventh player to be awarded both test and cricketer of the year. Australian Michael Clarke won both in 2013 as did countryman Mitchell Johnson in 2014.

During the voting period from Sept. 18, 2014 to Sept. 13, Smith was the leading run-scorer in tests with 1,734 runs in 25 innings at an average of 82.57, including seven centuries.



Australian captain Steve Smith

It was de Villiers' second consecutive ODI award. De Villiers scored 1,265 runs in 20 innings at an average of just over 79, including two centuries and nine half-centuries.

New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum, who said Tuesday he plans to retire from international cricket in February, won the Spirit of Cricket Award for "inspiring his side to play the game in its true spirit."

"This was clearly evident throughout the ICC Cricket World Cup 2015, and in particular in the semifinal where McCullum showed humility and exemplary sportsmanship by inviting de Villiers and his side to the

New Zealand's dressing room after a closely-fought match," the ICC said. **AP**

THE OTHER ICC AWARDS

- TWENTY20 PERFORMANCE:** Faf du Plessis, South Africa, (119 runs in 56 balls vs. West Indies, Jan. 11, 2015).
- Emerging cricketer: Josh Hazlewood, Australia.
- Women's one-day international cricketer: Meg Lanning, Australia.
- Women's Twenty20 cricketer: Stafanie Taylor, West Indies.
- Associate/affiliate cricketer: Khurram Khan, United Arab Emirates.
- Umpire of the year: Richard Kettleborough, England.

opinion

HK Observer
Robert Carroll



THE BIN BOMBERS BLEW IT

Well done LegCo bin bombers. Just what those who want to restrict our freedoms need. Now it's we told you so; Hong Kong is not ready for more freedom, security necessitates less. Bombs going off - what next? Armed uprisings against the central government, I hear them say.

Why would these youngsters think they were helping the cause of preserving autonomy by upping the ante through this kind of violence? Why break a long tradition of peaceful assembly by challenging authority in such a manner?

Worse; four students, including a university student leader, were allegedly involved. If guilty they will have tainted the reputation of an almost entirely peaceful student body; setting off alarm bells among Chinese officials, both here and on the mainland.

Even if it was supposed to be a harmless demonstration of discontent, and that's unknown, look at the headlines: "Bomb goes off near Leg-Co." Red alert, especially within the mainland corridors of power where conspiracies are imagined in every corner. From the myriad (over)reactions in articles from the Chinese state press, it would seem that every public action or statement here, of any import, is scrutinized by the legions of Beijing overseers. This for underlying meanings, if not conspiracies - how much more 'terrorism' in our midst!

Unfortunately these young would-be-bombers fail to realize that impressions often count for more than reality. Associating the incident with serious violent undercurrents that allegedly originated from 2014's overwhelmingly peaceful Occupy Central movement, wets the appetite of those responsible for preventing such plots.

Do these young people not know that we are closely observed by officials in Beijing, in the several Hong Kong and Macau-watching bodies, their colleagues sent here and the much more numerous internet policers? And let's not forget here, in the city, the many long-term sleepers and those locally-recruited here as eyes and ears, lobbyists and conspirators for 'the good fight'.

Of course we have to bear in mind the frustrations of the young who fear a future without homes and decent jobs; that must be addressed, but not with explosives. The device didn't do any damage except to the rubbish bin where it was planted and it remains to be seen if a real explosion was planned. Let's hope not. Likewise, we should hope that this was not an encouraged, undercover false flag operation.

It's amazing that we have a recent competition law here that instead of outlawing monopolies and price fixing, outlaws real competition; forbidding what's termed parallel trading.

The holder of a copyright to a particular brand can forbid other vendors from importing and selling that brand. The new rules will mean that disagreements that used to be a civil commercial matter - is becoming a matter for the criminal courts to decide, replacing the financial clout of major commercial groupings which had hitherto served as the glue upholding the system.

Why should this matter? Well take the case of supermarkets for example.

The two main chains decide which products to put on their shelves including major international brands in demand all over the world. Once the cartels hold the copyright of these brands they cannot be sold outside of their shops. Price fixing for maximum profit is the inevitable result as well as a lack of lower-priced substitutes for the brand leaders. And that's not the whole picture.

When newcomers try to move in, the big corporations put impossible to resist pressure on suppliers of goods not to do business with others. The cartels controlling shopping malls and prime retail space also refuse to rent to potential competitors - all perfectly legal. But under the recent competition law, trying to compete by selling what should be readily available goods in a free market, would be illegal.

THE BUZZ FRANCE TIGHTENING CHURCH SECURITY AROUND CHRISTMAS

France's interior minister says the government will tighten security for churches around Christmas, amid continued concerns about potential extremist violence after deadly attacks last month.

Bernard Cazeneuve announced that churches will keep only one door open, instead of multiple doors, "to have better filtering at the entrance."

At a meeting with Christian, Jewish and Muslim religious leaders, Cazeneuve said: "Everything is being done to guarantee security." He also says that anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic violence has receded since France imposed a state of emergency in the wake of the Nov. 13 attacks around Paris by Islamic extremists, which killed 130 people.



Oscar Miranda, dressed as Santa Claus, to waves to children at Sea Life Michigan in Great Lakes Crossing Outlets Mall in Auburn Hills

NORAD prepares to track Santa's journey

PETERSON Air Force base is getting ready for its annual holiday mission - tracking Santa's storybook sleigh ride around the world.

The North American Aerospace Defense Command has been working for weeks to tackle the one-day mission.

Miles of wire, dozens of computers and 157 telephone lines will greet hundreds of volunteers today, The (Colorado Springs) Gazette reported. Volunteers will be answering calls from an estimated 125,000 children around the globe looking for Santa's whereabouts.

"We keep adding stuff every year," said Staff Sgt. Kyle Kelly after he and a team of airmen taped down phone wires in the call center Monday.

The call center in a

training building will be staffed for 23 hours and Christmas Eve. Volunteers will also share Santa's location on Facebook and Twitter. Last year, Santa got 1.6 million Facebook likes.

"We start in November," Kelly said. "We have to test every phone before we bring it in here."

NORAD's 60th year of tracking Santa involves more than the military. The program is underwritten by contractors who pay for the phones, the computers and the website.

First lady Michelle Obama is expected to volunteer, with calls forwarded to her on Christmas Eve.

Volunteers will field a growing number of calls from curious kids from outside the United States.

"We get a lot of calls from Europe, Australia and New

Zealand," said NORAD's Stacey Knott, who has organized the Santa tracking for three years.

Bilingual volunteers handle the foreign-language inquiries.

On the bilingual front, NORAD, a partnership between the U.S. and Canada, has a distinct advantage.

"The great thing about having Canadian forces here is they can speak in French," Canadian Maj. Jennifer Stadnyk said.

NORAD is responsible for defending the skies and monitoring the sea approaches for both nations.

Its control room was originally inside Cheyenne Mountain in Colorado Springs in a shelter designed to withstand a nuclear attack. The control room is now at Peterson Air Force Base, also in Colorado Springs. AP

Station	Air quality
Roadside	80-110 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	80-110 Moderate
Ambient	70-100 Moderate

SOURCE: DSI/MG

WORLD BRIEFS

USA A key defendant in an organized crime case in San Francisco's Chinatown testified this week that the undercover agent leading the probe tried to drag him into conversations and force money on him. Under cross-examination by prosecutors at his trial on murder and racketeering charges, Raymond "Shrimp Boy" Chow said the agent gave him money because the agent was looking out for him, not in exchange for any criminal activity. Chow received USD60,000 from the agent over three years.



SPACE SpaceX sent a Falcon rocket soaring toward orbit with 11 small satellites, its first mission since an accident last summer. Then in an even more astounding feat, it landed the 15-story leftover booster back on Earth safely. It was the first time an unmanned rocket returned to land vertically at Cape Canaveral and represented a tremendous success for SpaceX and a great step to the space odyssey. Billionaire Elon Musk is striving for reusability to drive launch costs down and open up space to more people. "Welcome back, baby!" Musk tweeted after touchdown.

times square by rodrigo



USA Nicolas Cage has agreed to give back a national treasure from Mongolia. A publicist for the star of the "National Treasure" adventure films confirmed that Cage was the unwitting buyer of a dinosaur skull that federal prosecutors in New York say was stolen. Prosecutors announced last week that they were seeking court approval to take custody of the 32-inch fossil so it could be returned to the Asian nation, but they did not name the buyer.