



ARNALDO SANTOS AHEAD OF HOUSING BUREAU

P3



MASSIVE PROTEST AGAINST UBER
Up to 90pct of Shenzhen's taxi drivers went on strike to protest the use of ride-hailing mobile application services

P4



ZIDANE TAKES ON 1ST MAJOR CHALLENGE AS COACH
A day after replacing the fired Rafa Benitez as Madrid coach, Zidane promised attacking play

P19

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Another junket theft: HKD99.7 million P3

Ambrose So confirms Casino Greek Mythology closure

WORLD BRIEFS

CHINA Fears escalate that the global economy could struggle more than expected this year — a prospect that contributed to a plunge in financial markets. The anxiety was heightened by reports that manufacturers extended their slumps last month in the US and China, the world's two largest economies.
More on p8,9



CHINA A fire on a bus in northern China yesterday killed 14 people and injured more than 30, a fire spokeswoman said. The incident happened in Yinchuan, the capital of Ningxia region, at about 7am, and the cause of the fire is still being investigated, said a press officer at the Ningxia fire department, who gave only her surname, Wang. She said firefighters put out the fire in 10 minutes, and that 14 people died and 32 were injured.

More on backpage



UK expresses alarm over missing booksellers, Lee Bo's wife cancels police report P2

THE United Kingdom has extended its concerns over the case of the disappearance of five Hong Kong booksellers, after it emerged that one of the missing could be a British passport holder.

According to The Guardian, a spokesperson for the British embassy in Beijing said that it was aware that Lee Bo, the bookseller who vanished last week, could be a holder of a British passport.

"We are deeply concerned by reports about the disappearance and detention of individuals associated with the Causeway Bay Books bookstore in Hong Kong," a statement read. "We are monitoring all the cases closely."

"We encourage the Hong Kong SAR Government to honor its commitment to protecting the freedom of the press, and we hope the Chinese authorities will continue to make every effort to ensure that the environment in which the media and publishers operate in the Hong Kong SAR supports full and frank reporting."

UK expresses alarm over missing booksellers



A woman walks past a book featuring a photo of Chinese President Xi Jinping, left, and former Politburo member and Chongqing city party leader Bo Xilai on the cover, at the entrance of the closed Causeway Bay Bookstore

Lee Bo was the individual who first attracted media attention in October, after four of his colleagues at the Causeway Bay Bookstore and its publishing house went missing.

However, Britain is not the only European country that has expressed alarm at the recent disappearances.

The Swedish Ministry for

Foreign Affairs has previously said that its embassies in Bangkok and Beijing are investigating allegations that Swedish national, Gui Minhai, had been detained in Thailand or China.

Gui, who owns the publishing house "Mighty Current," has not been seen or heard from since he disappeared while on holiday in Thailand in October.

During a press conference held this week, the local activist and New Macau Association member Jason Chao argued that the mainland authorities "can kidnap someone in Hong Kong or Macau and take them back to the mainland for interrogation or torture." **Staff reporter**

LEE BO'S WIFE DROPS POLICE REPORT

THE MYSTERY surrounding five missing Hong Kong booksellers known for titles banned in mainland China deepened after one purportedly wrote a letter saying he was fine and helping with an investigation on the mainland,

prompting his wife to drop a missing person's report. Hong Kong police said late Monday that Lee Bo's wife canceled the report, but that they would continue investigating the other cases. They didn't say whether Lee had been located.

Realtor: housing regulations should be publicized to avoid disputes

THE head of residential sales at Jones Lang LaSalle (Macau), Jeff Wong, argues that the government should be more open with the public on real estate regulations, in order to avoid major disputes like the Pearl Horizon controversy.

Earlier this week, flat-owners criticized the government for failing to solve housing proprietors' issues such as the increase in some property management services.

"I think the government can also do much more to consistently push the release of the information to the general public, and should put more effort into that. The government, I think, can also afford to release much more information regarding the expiry dates of those lands, which would then make people feel



Jeff Wong

more confident when they buy apartments, especially in those pre-sale schemes, to avoid any misunderstanding or any potential argument between buyers and sellers in the future," Wong said to TDM.

Meanwhile, the government has decided to remove the stamp duty on the re-sale of apartments as housing prices continue to decline (see box).

In a previous inter-

view with the Times, Wong said that the stamp duty of 20 percent for residential property transactions

is one of the measures that have been "successfully cooling the market," and this has reduced the number of non-local buyers. During the interview, Wong also noted that since the demand is still high in Macau, first time home buyers who cannot afford a house in Macau could consider moving to Hengqin or Zhuhai. "The major problem for Macau is the shortage of land for all kinds of facilities. Hengqin and Zhuhai are just behind us and there is plenty of land there," he added.

PROPERTY PRICES DECLINING

THE PROPERTY market prices have been declining for the past months. According to the latest official data available, average housing prices experienced a year-on-year drop

of 18.4 percent in November. Nevertheless, the Financial Services Bureau data indicates that the residential real estate market recorded a significant increase in property transactions.

IC opens original album subsidy program

THE Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) has launched the 2016 Subsidy Programme for the Production of Original Song Albums, which will grant subsidies to up to eight beneficiaries.

Successful applicants will be awarded with a subsidy of up to MOP210,000 for the production of their album. Costs associated with album production can include that of song production, album cover design, and the marketing and promotion of the works.

Applicants for the subsidy must hold a valid Macau SAR Permanent Resident Identity Card and be aged 18 or above. In addition, applicants are required to produce a specific amount of publicly released music, or must have some producing experience. They must also assume the role of album producer, or be in supervision of the project or album, in order to be considered for the subsidy.

A judging panel will select a maximum of eight applicants on the basis of six criteria: budgeting rationale; comprehensiveness of the pro-



duction proposals and business plans; compatibility between the market positioning and the album songs and album image; standard of composition and lyrics; quality of arrangement and production; and skill of the album artist.

The program, which was launched in 2014, aims to cultivate local musicians and producers to promote the development of Macau's music industry, and is one part of the government's efforts to create a sustainable cultural and creative sector.

The IC says that through this subsidy program, they hope to encourage musicians in the MSAR to produce and release more work, and lay the groundwork for market development.

The application period opened yesterday and will run until March 4. **Staff reporter**

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THE Judiciary Police (PJ) confirmed yesterday that a senior executive at a junket operator is suspected of having stolen at least HKD99.7 million before disappearing.

PJ received a report on January 3 indicating the suspect is a man surnamed Chan who holds a top post at a junket company operating inside SJM Holdings Ltd's L'Arc Macau property. The police are investigating the matter and no arrests have so far been made.

A February 2015 Bloomberg report published by the Times described the operations which took place inside the 56-story tower, adorned with soaring gold-trimmed arches and located in the heart of Macau. The report stated that "L'Arc, ow-

New junket fraud case involving L'Arc junket operator

ned by Asia's largest casino company, has its own VIP room on the 21st floor with nine ta-

The police are investigating the case

bles, and only one was occupied when a Bloomberg reporter visited in mid-January. 'It's quiet everywhere; we mainly serve regulars now,' a

duty manager said, while trying to convince the reporter to set up a gambling account."

The report also depicted the scene on the second floor of the casino: "It's a sight that would have been unimaginable a year ago: an abandoned room for high-end gamblers. There are no tables, no dealers and no players. Carpets have been rolled up, leaving a trash-covered concrete floor. A sign on the VIP room reads "Heng Sheng Group," one of Macau's

top junket operators, which shuttles Chinese high-rollers to exclusive gaming venues and finances their bets."

When contacted by TDM, the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) denied knowledge of the case which resembles the Dore Entertainment theft.

Dore operates high-end gambling rooms at the Wynn Macau and other casinos. It reported an alleged internal theft of at least HKD300 million in September. **PB**



L'Arc Macau

Ambrose So says Casino Greek Mythology will reopen

AMBROSE So announced yesterday that the Casino Greek Mythology has closed for 'renovation works' and is expected to reopen, although he did not provide a date. The executive director and CEO of SJM Holdings confirmed the contents of yesterday's Times report, which revealed that the casino located in Taipa closed on December 30 without any prior notice.

"The hotel and the casino premises are a little bit worn out, so they would like to do a renovation before they resume operations. The shareholders are settling the ownership among themselves... I think they would like to open as soon as possible, because they would like, of course, to try to proceed and make some money," the executive director and CEO of SJM Holdings told TDM.

The Casino Greek Mythology operates under an SJM license on the premises of the Beijing Imperial Palace Hotel (formerly the New Century Hotel) that remains open.

According to TDM, 100 of the casino's staff members have been transferred to other SJM properties. The ownership



Ambrose So

dispute mentioned by Ambrose So became public in 2012, when a hotel shareholder named Ng Man-Sun (also known as Ng Wai and Kai See Wai) was attacked by a gang of six men inside the property. Ng was involved in a dispute with his former girlfriend and business partner, Chen Meihuan, who claimed that she owned 80 percent of the shares in the debt-ridden hotel.

In 2013, a ruling of the Macau Court of First Instance (TJB) resulted in the hotel being seized in order to pay unpaid debts owed to the owner of a Macau-based travel agency, Energy Travel Agency Ltd.

More recently, some of the hotel's former employees have protested near the hotel's entrance on different occasions, demanding the payment of several months' worth of unpaid salaries.

Secretary says that Arnaldo Santos was his pick to head IH

Renato Marques

ARNALDO Santos took office yesterday as the new president of the Housing Bureau (IH), replacing the former president Iong Kam Wa.

The Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raimundo do Rosário presided over the ceremony at the IH headquarters and highlighted the responsibility and importance of the position. He added that he believes the new president "will be able to stimulate a new dynamic within the Bureau."

The new president of the IH said that the nomination for the position is "a great honor and a great responsibility." He expressed his awareness that the problems regarding housing "have become of a great concern to society" and said he will have "challenging work ahead of him."

Arnaldo Santos described his purpose as to achieve the political goal of "Housing for all, wellbeing for all" that has been established by the government. He intends to achieve it by "increasing the efficiency of the [bureau] works."

There are many topics that the new IH president aims to address in his mandate, namely the works concerned with the "revision and amendment of the legal regime," as well as the "evaluation and definition of a new public housing scheme."

This scheme follows the abandoned "Macau property for Macau residents (MPMR)" policy. It was first announced during the Policy Address presentation, when Chui Sai On recognized that many people are unable to buy residential



Arnaldo Santos

properties in Macau and cannot apply for affordable housing (given that they have incomes above the cap to apply), and said that a new housing scheme may be established for them. Under that scheme, they would be able to rent flats at affordable prices and later buy them if they so wished.

Arnaldo Santos said that a study on the new scheme has been concluded and will be analysed before being announced to the public.

Another of the issues to be tackled by the IH is the "concession of

licensing for real estate mediation" and "real estate agency activities inspection."

Questioned about what his priorities will be, Santos highlighted affordable housing policies.

In response to questions regarding the fact that the previous president Iong Kam Wa has been replaced after only one year in the job, the Secretary Rosário clarified, "the department heads are appointed and these appointments have a short duration (one or two years maximum) and since the tenure of the previous president ended, he was replaced in his functions by another person - it is a normal procedure." Rosário also added that the current nomination of Mr Santos is also for a period of one year, and concluded by saying, "If I was not satisfied with the work of Mr Iong, he would not have been appointed now to the vice presidency."

Asked why he did choose Arnaldo Santos to be the new IH president, the Secretary pragmatically answered that it was "a personal decision." Rosário added that he hopes that Santos can bring "a new dynamic and 'refresh' the leadership" of the bureau.

ROSÁRIO SAYS BUILDING MANAGEMENT IS 'A PRIVATE MATTER'

QUESTIONED ON the sidelines of the new Housing Bureau president's inauguration ceremony, the Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário, classified the problems regarding the building management companies as a "private matter for each building." He said that "each building has its own general assembly that decides on which company they will hire to manage the building."

The Secretary concluded by saying: "The government will only act if there are serious disagreements between the management companies and the owners that, for example, lead to the interruption of water supply or other essentials."

The Secretary reaffirmed that "the management of the buildings is not the responsibility of the government but of each building's general assembly."

Credit Suisse: 2016 could see GGR growth

Credit Suisse has expressed its belief that the prospects for Macau's gaming stocks appear far more promising in 2016 – the result of growing "high-end demand," which began in the second quarter of last year. AASStocks Financial News credits the research house with saying that it expects a reasonable return on capital investment in the low teens for the gaming sectors' new projects. In spite of this, the broker cut its 2016–2017 forecast for gaming revenue growth to between 8 and 12 percent, claiming that net profit could see growth of between 10 and 21 percent. Other analysts have been less optimistic in their outlook, predicting that Macau's slump might not end until as late as 2017. According to AASStocks, Credit Suisse's top pick is Galaxy Entertainment. The target price has been trimmed from USD37.6 to USD35.7.

Airport's new regulations take effect

The Civil Aviation Authority of Macau (AACM) put new regulations into effect on January 1 concerning the containment of portable electronic devices with lithium batteries and spare lithium batteries on aircraft. The new regulations state that electronic devices featuring these batteries will be permitted both in hand and in checked-in baggage, provided that they do not exceed 2 grams of lithium content or a watt hour rating of 100Wh (for lithium ion). If the lithium content exceeds the maximum amount, the decision to transport the item is subject to the carrier's approval.

TRANSPORT

90 percent of Shenzhen taxis protest Uber, Didi Kuaidi



AP PHOTO

UP to 90 percent of Shenzhen's taxi drivers went on strike on Monday to protest the use of ride-hailing mobile application services such as Didi Kuaidi and Uber, according to local media.

Drivers of Shenzhen's red taxis said that they are unhappy about the compe-

tion they face from ride-hailing services, and are discontent with the fact that local government officials have not adopted measures to curb the actions of the new market entrants.

The strike resulted in long waiting queues at the Shenzhen Railway Station's taxi

rank and various other indoor and outdoor parking spaces, according to the Hong Kong Free Press.

Estimates of the number of drivers involved in the strike vary, but generally account for somewhere between 70 and 90 percent of the city's 16,000 licensed taxis.

Taxis participating in the strike were seen around the city sporting signs that read: "not in service." According to some reports, certain drivers were still picking up passengers despite displaying the signs.

However, the strike could do more harm than good in Shenzhen.

City Weekend reported that the starting price for Didi Kuaidi had more than doubled to RMB32 on Monday when the company registered "high demand." There is also a danger that private, unlicensed drivers will fill the void left by

those participating in the strike.

Taxi drivers in Shenzhen, as is the case with many other cities around the world, are feeling the strain from mobile application services, which the taxi drivers say are not being required to adhere to the same regulations and pricing restrictions as traditional services. **Staff reporter**

UBER'S CALAMITOUS DEBUT IN MACAU

UBER, THE controversial ride-hailing mobile application, debuted in Macau in October after many months of anticipation from local residents, said the company. The excitement was short-lived however, when just a few days later the Transport Bureau and the police pronounced the taxi service "illegal." Uber responded by claiming that it was operating under the same institutions that have long been overseeing other transportation in the MSAR. But that did not prevent two local drivers from being fined for working with the unlicensed transportation company.

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In loving memory of

José Manuel Braz-Gomes



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Japan to postpone casino bill

THE Japanese government and the Liberal Democratic Party have decided not to pass the Integrated Resort Facilities Promotion Bill at the Ordinary Diet Session beginning this year on January 4, according to Asia Gaming Brief, preferring instead to wait until after the House of Councilors elections.

The bill, which deals largely with casinos and the gaming industry, would lift the current ban on casinos.

However according to local press Hokkaido Shimbun, the Komeito political party remains cautious over lifting the ban due its potential to heighten gambling addiction in the island nation.

The government views the bill as a strategic measure to help stimulate Japan's precarious economy, but the legislation is likely to require accompanying regulations to be effective.

Discussions over revising the current ban on casinos first emerged back in 2002, however a decade of successive and short-lived Japanese governments cut the idea short.

Local media are now reporting that a rush to pass the bill before the House of Councilors election in the summer of 2016 could affect cooperation between Japan's two ruling parties.

According to Asia Gaming Brief, a representative from Komeito warned that there is no reason to pass the bill before the elections. "The bill is frozen until the Autumn Extraordinary Diet Sessions," the representative told media.

Ng drops demand for speedy trial, motive remains unknown

LOCAL billionaire and real estate developer Ng Lap Seng has now declined to go to trial immediately amid setbacks currently being faced at his companies, reports the South China Morning Post.

Ng's lawyer, Benjamin Brafman, did not disclose his reason behind withdrawing the request to go to immediate trial, but filed a letter to the federal court in Manhattan on Monday announcing the change of intention.

Brafman also indicated that Ng would now seek to have a trial held separately from some or all of the other defendants accused in the case, according to the SCMP.

The casino magnate stands accused of bribing the former president of the United Nations General Assembly, John Ashe, who allegedly received more than USD1.3 million in bribes to support Chinese business interests in the U.N. and Antigua.

On December 10, Brafman had requested a speedy trial, claiming that Ng's absence from his business in Macau was causing "irreparable damage" and "substantial setbacks."



AP PHOTO
Ng Lap Seng, center, leaves federal court with attorney Benjamin Brafman, left, following his release on bail in connection with a U.N. bribery scheme

Ng is currently being detained in New York under house arrest.

"It's not fair. We're asking for an immediate trial," Brafman said last month.

The request contradicted the statements made by Ng's business partner and board member of the Sun Kian Yip group, William Kuan, who told TDM in October that the group would be unaffected by Ng's detention, as he "has not directly participated in the company's operations for the past few years."

Ng, Ashe, and Yin have all pleaded not guilty to the charges laid against them

Ng is specifically accused of having conspired to pay Ashe USD500,000 in exchange for supporting the construction of a U.N.-sponsored "South-South Cooperation" conference center. It is rumored the construction was to be built in the MSAR by local businesses with ties to the Macau billionaire.

He is also being investigated for a seemingly unrelated case, in which he has been accused of lying about the purpose of an estimated USD4.5 million brought into the U.S. over the course of several years.

Ng's assistant, Jeff Yin, is also being detained over accusations of failing to disclose the true intent behind the imported money.

Ng, Ashe, and Yin have all pleaded not guilty to the charges presented against them. **Staff reporter**

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Agreement for non-gaming on new land reclamations

THE local government joined mainland authorities yesterday in signing three agreements that aim to enhance cooperation in the areas of water affairs, maritime traffic and sea use. These measures are taken in order to strengthen the management of the coastal waters now controlled by the MSAR and also to develop the region's economic potential.

The three agreements were signed by several public departments along with China's Ministries of Transport and Water Resources and the State Oceanic Administration on Maritime Development.

The agreements signed yesterday respectively aim to achieve the following: "to foster mechanisms for dealing with emergencies and to develop information-sharing methods between Macau and the mainland; to ensure adequate capability of flood prevention systems for Macau and the land ad-



The signing ceremony of the cooperation agreements

acent to the Pearl River estuary, and to protect the marine environment, local water ecology and sustainable development of those areas." The agreements also ensure that "any proposals for land reclamation are reported to the State Council, as well as that no commercial gaming will be permitted in new land reclamations."

The ceremony during which the agreements were signed was held at the government headquarters yesterday morning, and the territory was represented by the Chief Executive, Chui Sai On. Li Gang, the director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macau, also attended. **RM**

Madonna to perform in Singapore for the first time

POP singer Madonna is set to perform in Singapore for the first time at the Singapore National Stadium, but a date is yet to be announced.

Singaporean authorities have confirmed that a license has been issued for the concert, according to the Straits Times. Local coordinator Mediacorp VizPro announced in a Facebook post that the American artist will bring her "Rebel Heart Tour 2016" to the city-state.

The pop star's Asian tour will also include performances in Macau in February. The singer is set to perform at Studio City's Event Center.

"We are extremely proud to announce that Studio City, representing Macau, will be one of the major destinations to stage the world's biggest act at its futuristic event center, alongside the famous Madison Square Garden in New York and The O2 Arena in London," Studio City president JD Clayton said at the time.

Mr Clayton added that this is the first time Macau has confirmed such a world-class con-

cert. The tour's Macau performances will occur on February 20 and 21, 2016.

Madonna's 13th album, The Rebel Heart, includes the Billboard Hot 100 hit, "Bitch, I'm Madonna," a hit single that features popular stars such as Beyoncé, Nicki Minaj and Kanye West, as well as appearances by a few other fellow pop stars.

The Asian Tour is also set to visit Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Thailand and the Philippines.



Madonna pictured during a concert

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David Koenig, Dallas

EVEN the escalating tension between Iran and Saudi Arabia, two big oil-producing countries, can't halt the slide in energy prices.

Oil futures spiked briefly on Monday after the news that Saudi Arabia would cut diplomatic ties with Iran, a development that could be seen as a threat to oil supplies.

Investors quickly discounted those fears, however. After rising by USD1.35, the price of benchmark U.S. crude ended the day down 28 cents to \$36.76 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It fell again in Asian trading yesterday, dropping 3 cents to \$36.73. Brent crude, reflecting the price of international oils, was down 20 cents at \$37.02 in London.

While oil markets were seeing, stock markets sagged on evidence that the global economy might be weaker than expected this year. The Dow Jones industrial average lost 276 points, or 1.6 percent, and was down 468 points earlier in the day.

New reports indicated that manufacturing is continuing to struggle, with factory activity falling in December for the second straight month in

Iran, Saudi Arabia tensions can't halt slide in oil prices



the U.S. and the 10th straight month in China.

Slow growth means that the current oversupply of oil could be more stubborn than expected. Government figures show that the stockpile of U.S. crude oil grew by 2.6 million barrels during the week ended Dec. 25 and were 9.9 million barrels

higher than a year ago.

Oil prices are likely to remain about where they are until either production drops or the world economy perks up and drives demand higher.

Investors may have regarded the flash of tension between the Saudis and the Iranians over Saudi Arabia's execution

of an opposition Shiite cleric as merely saber-rattling. Stewart Glickman, an analyst with S&P Capital IQ, said geopolitical risk has lost some of its ability to influence oil prices.

"It is maybe a sense of security from the marketplace that with this seeming glut of crude oil that you can have tensions in Middle East and they don't count for as much as they used to three or four years ago," he said in an interview.

The explanation lies partly in robust production from the U.S., Glickman said. Saudi officials are reluctant to cut production in a bid to raise prices because they'll just concede sales to U.S. producers who will fill the void in supply.

Iran wants to regain some oil exports that it lost while under economic sanctions, soon to be lifted, for its nuclear program. Judith Dwarkin, chief economist at ITG Investment Research, said that the confrontation with Saudi Arabia makes the Saudis unlikely to offset

Iranian increases by trimming their own production — potentially adding to the glut.

Then there is the question of demand. Weak manufacturing numbers and a plunge in the Shanghai Composite stock index raised new concern about energy demand in China, the world's second-biggest economy.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration forecasts that the average price of U.S. benchmark crude this year will rise about 4 percent over 2015.

If that is correct, American motorists will continue getting a break on gasoline compared with prices not long ago. On Monday, the average price for a gallon of regular was \$1.99, according to the auto club AAA — 22 cents cheaper than a year ago.

The Energy Information Administration estimates that the average U.S. household saved about \$660 on cheaper gasoline last year, compared with 2014. **AP**

AD

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BLACK MONDAY

Chinese investors swearing off stocks after price turmoil

Joe McDonald
Business Writer, Beijing

YANG Lihua was one of millions of small investors Beijing encouraged to join a stock-buying frenzy last year. But the Shanghai newspaper editor sold after prices collapsed in June and she vowed never to return.

In November, Yang was coaxed back in after a multibillion-dollar government intervention stabilized prices. Then on Monday, the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index began the new year by plunging nearly 7 percent.

"I do not want to invest anymore," said Yang, who has lost 350,000 yuan (USD55,000) in total. "This is just too miserable. It hurts, emotionally, a lot."

Battered by market gyrations, Chinese small investors are swearing off stocks. That is setting back the ruling Communist Party's hopes of encouraging widespread stock ownership to help transform its financial markets into tools to propel economic reform.

Despite a rebound in prices from their August lows, no significant new money from small investors has flowed into stocks, according to Guo Yanhong, a market strategist for Founder Securities.

"They have either no more money to invest or they just don't want to invest anymore," said Guo.

Last year's Chinese stock boom and disastrous bust has left a legacy of public distrust of financial markets along with a bill the ruling party has yet to disclose



A man scratches his head as he checks the stock prices on an electronic board at a brokerage house in Beijing

for its rescue.

The Shanghai index ended 2015 up 9.5 percent for the year, compared with a 0.7 percent loss for Wall Street's Standard & Poor's 500 index. But many novices who bought just before the peak are left with shares worth less than they cost.

Yin Kai, a bank employee in Beijing, said he has lost about 20 percent of the 100,000 yuan (\$15,000) he has invested.

"I feel sort of depressed to talk about this, because I'm afraid I am losing almost all my recent salary to the stock market," said Kai, 26.

Financial analysts expect more selling after Friday, when a six-month-old ban on sales by shareholders who own more than 5 percent of a company is

due to expire.

Beijing keeps its financial system sealed off from global capital flows but changes in Chinese stock prices affect sentiment abroad. Monday's decline helped to trigger a Wall Street sell-off, sending the Dow Jones industrial average down 1.5 percent.

Millions of new investors were opening trading accounts a year ago as Beijing encouraged the public to buy stocks.

Chinese leaders wanted to use the markets to raise money to pay down debt at state companies. As part of a sweeping effort to make the state-dominated economy more productive, they hope transforming coddled state industries into profit-oriented companies with

outside shareholders might make them more competitive and efficient.

Driven by cheerleading by the state press, which told investors the market was in a "golden age," the Shanghai index more than doubled between November and its June 12 peak. The bubble burst after a change in bank regulations prompted concern Beijing was curbing credit to finance trading. By late June, the benchmark had lost 30 percent.

■ **'I do not want to invest anymore,' said Yang, who has lost 350,000 yuan**

Yang, the newspaper editor, watched her money evaporate. On June 25, her stocks fell by the daily limit of 10 percent. The next day they fell again by the same margin.

"I sold out all my stocks on the 30th, and decided I would never invest in the stock market again," she said.

Panicked Chinese leaders responded with interest rate cuts and promises state companies would buy stocks. They imposed the six-month ban on sales by major shareholders and canceled initial public offerings.

Prices stabilized, then fell again in August, putting the index down 43 percent from its peak. Goldman Sachs said in an

August report a group of state entities charged with propping up prices had spent an estimated 860 billion-900 billion yuan (\$135 billion-\$140 billion) to buy shares in June and July.

That left state companies with vast piles of shares, setting back official plans to reduce the government's role in the market.

Markets stabilized and even showed gains in the autumn as Beijing started winding down its emergency measures.

"In November, the market seemed stable, and looked more optimistic, so I started investing again," said Yang, who is in her 30s.

Still, analysts warned prices would lurch up and down until the market found a realistic level.

By late December, the Shanghai index had risen 25 percent from its August trough before hitting a peak Dec. 22 and tumbling again. Monday's decline put the index down 10 percent.

Trading was initially suspended for 15 minutes Monday by a newly imposed "circuit breaker" after another index, the CSI 300, fell 5 percent. Once trading resumed, a flurry of selling sent the index down another 2 percent in seven minutes, triggering a trading halt for the day.

In an apparent effort to reassure investors, the central bank said late Monday the size of its regular weekly injection of money into credit markets would be 100 billion yuan (\$21 billion) — or 13 times the size of last week's supply.

Despite that, the Shanghai index fell another 3 percent yesterday before recovering to end the day down 0.3 percent.

The market is unlikely to stabilize until at least the second quarter of this year, said Guo, of Founder Securities. He said persuading small investors to return will take longer.

"It will take some time to heal their wounds," said Guo. "Based on past experience, it usually takes a couple of years." AP

corporate bits

WINTERTIME JAPANESE HOTPOT EXPERIENCE ANNOUNCED

The Hotel Okura Macau's Japanese restaurant, "Yamazato," has announced a new wintertime hotpot experience, offering a dynamic combination of traditional and contemporary Japanese dishes.

"Shabu Shabu" is a hotpot that combines the traditional Chinese dining style with a distinctive Japanese flavor.

Guests can select their offerings from a platter heaped with paper-thin slices of Wagyu beef, fragrant shiitake mushrooms, fresh vegetables, tofu and noodles. The ingredients are accompanied by either a savory sesame or bright citrusy sauce.

The "Shabu Shabu" hotpot experience is available for



MOP1,980 and will be suitable for two to three people. The restaurant is open from

12 to 3 p.m., and again from 5:30 to 10 p.m., except on Mondays.

FISHERMAN'S WHARF NYE PARTY FEATURED LINDA CHUNG

The Macau Fisherman's Wharf "Countdown Fever 2016" party made a splash on New Year's Eve by hosting more than ten pop singers, artists and dancers.

The countdown party was held in the "enchanted" outdoor arena where guests listened to performers, while a few even had the opportunity to meet some of the stars.

Among those included in the line-up were Linda Chung, Kenneth Ma, Elanne Kwong, Mandy Wong, Benjamin Yuen and Vangie Tang.

Event organizers say that around 40,000 people attended the event, which culminated in Linda Chung performing some of her most famous songs to boost the party spirit in the lead-up to midnight.



SOUTH CHINA SEA

US Pacific Fleet shrinks even as Beijing grows more aggressive

Audrey McAvoy, Pearl Harbour

WHEN the U.S. wanted to show the world it didn't recognize what it called China's "excessive" territorial claims in disputed waters of the South China Sea this fall, it sent a warship near one of Beijing's newly built artificial reefs.

The move came amid a debate about whether the U.S. has enough ships to meet challenges posed by a fast-growing, increasingly assertive Chinese navy that is unsettling some of its neighbors. China announced last week that it would build its second aircraft carrier, this one with domestic technology.

The Navy and its regional component, the U.S. Pacific Fleet, both have fewer ships now than in the mid-1990s. Navy officials say vastly improved technology on those vessels outweighs any disadvantage from a drop in numbers.

Questions about whether the Pacific Fleet has enough resources are more of a reflection of regional anxieties than the Navy's actual capability, said its commander, Adm. Scott Swift.

Even if the entire fleet was in the South China Sea, he said, he'd still get asked whether the U.S. was bringing more forces.

"It's this sense of angst that I hear from those in the region, driven by the uncertainty and the rhetoric and, you know, the challenges that the region is facing right now," Swift said. "But I'm very comfortable with the resources I have."

PLA Navy has more than 300 surface ships, submarines, amphibious ships and patrol craft

Peter Jennings, an expert at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute think tank said the issue in peacetime is whether there are enough American vessels to reassure friends and allies and demonstrate U.S. capacity to use power when it needs to.

In wartime, it comes down to whether enough platforms survive missile strikes to carry on their work, Jennings said.

"I think this is emerging as a serious long-term problem."

The Pacific Fleet currently has 182 vessels, including combat ships like aircraft carriers as well as auxiliary and logistics vessels, said spokesman Cmdr. Clay Doss. That compares to 192 nearly two decades ago.

Around the world, the Navy has 272 ships usable in combat or to support ships in combat, nearly 20 percent less than 1998. The current total includes 10 aircraft carriers.

Swift said he would rather have the Navy he has today — and its advanced technology — than the Navy of two decades ago.

He pointed to the USS Ben-



A U.S. Navy helicopter approaching to land on the deck of the U.S. Navy aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt

fold, a guided missile destroyer upgraded with new ballistic missile defenses, as well as three new stealth destroyers, the DDG-1000, in the pipeline, as examples.

One consequence of a smaller fleet has been more time at sea. Retired Adm. Zap Zlatoper, who commanded Pacific Fleet in the 1990s, said six-month deployments used to be "sacrosanct" as anything longer made it harder for the Navy to retain sailors.

Ships now deploy for an average of seven to nine months, though the Navy plans to lower this to seven.

Ship conditions have also suffered. The USS Essex left an exercise with Australia early in 2011 and skipped another with Thailand the following year because it developed mechanical problems after delaying maintenance to stay at sea.

Bryan Clark, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, a Washington think tank, said these are signs the status quo is unsustainable.

In a November report, Clark outlined alternatives: build more ships, though this would require money Congress may not give the Navy, or deploy less, though the Pentagon has been reluctant to accept less of an overseas presence.

The other choices: keep more ships at overseas bases where they would be closer to where they operate or mix up how ships deploy, for example by sending fewer escorts with an aircraft carrier which would free some ships to operate separately.

China's People's Liberation Army Navy has more than 300 surface ships, submarines, amphibious ships and patrol cra-

ft, according to the Pentagon's Asia-Pacific Maritime Security Strategy report released in August.

China's coast guard and other maritime law enforcement fleet, meanwhile, has upward of 200 ships — more than the combined fleets of neighbors with competing claims to tiny islands in the East and South China Seas.

The U.S. Coast Guard has about 280 cutters, or vessels at least 65 feet in length, though they primarily operate stateside.

China has also grown more aggressive in asserting its claims to disputed territory. Since December 2013, it's built what the U.S. estimates to be 3,000 acres of artificial islands in the South China Sea using sand dredged from the ocean floor.

China has said the islands are meant to help ships, fishermen and disaster relief.

The U.S. says the islands will enable China to expand its maritime law enforcement and naval presence further south. It worries China could use them to disrupt sea traffic in the South China Sea, a thoroughfare for 30 percent of global maritime trade.

Some of China's ships are rudimentary, like its existing aircraft carrier.

But Narushige Michishita, Japan scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, said the lay person doesn't know this so the vessels have the same psychological effect on the public as more advanced ones.

Further, he said U.S. forces are spread around the world while China is focused on its own neighborhood.

"So even if the United States spends much more than China, it doesn't mean the local balance stays the same. The local balance in Asia is rapidly changing," Michishita said. AP

THE United States said that China's recent test of a newly completed runway on one of seven islands Beijing has constructed in the disputed South China Sea raises tensions and threatens regional stability.

State Department spokesman John Kirby reiterated a U.S. call for a halt to land reclamation and militarization of outposts in those waters, where China and five other Asian governments have competing territorial claims.

China's landing of an aircraft at Fiery Cross Reef has already drawn criticism from its neighbors. Vietnam protested last week, saying China's move violated Ha-

US opposes runway test on artificial island



The alleged on-going reclamation of Subi Reef by China is seen from Pag-asa Island in the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea

noi's sovereignty. It demanded that China stop such actions, but Beijing rejected Hanoi's protest. The Philippines, a U.S. ally, said Monday it was also considering a formal protest.

Tensions have risen in

the last two years after China transformed disputed reefs in the Spratly Island chain into islands that rival claimants fear Beijing could use to project its military might far from the Chinese mainland and threaten their

territories.

"To begin flight operations at this new airfield in a disputed area raises tensions and threatens regional stability," Kirby told reporters in Washington. He said claimants should instead focus on reaching agreement on acceptable behavior in disputed areas.

"We have made this case clear repeatedly, and we will continue to make it," he said.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said Saturday that China deployed a "civil aircraft" on the island,

which it calls Yongshu Jiao, to determine whether the new airfield in what she said was Chinese territory conformed to civil aviation standards.

The diplomatic tussle that China's action has sparked presages a continuation this year of tense exchanges, mainly among China, Vietnam and the Philippines, over long-disputed and potentially oil- or gas-rich offshore territories also claimed by Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei.

The South China Sea has also become a growing source of tension between

Washington and Beijing. While the United States is not a claimant state, it says it has a national interest in the peaceful settlement of disputes in the South China Sea and in freedom of navigation in waters that are critical for world trade.

In October, the U.S. deployed a guided missile destroyer near a different reef to challenge Beijing's claim of sovereignty in the waters around the artificial islands. China blasted the U.S. action and warned Washington not to repeat the maneuver. AP

Michelle Locke

Liquor baijiu takes a shot at the US cocktail scene

THINK bourbon is hot? It's got nothing on baijiu. Yet chances are good you haven't even heard of baijiu, the high proof, pungent, spicy, savory, sweet traditional liquor of China. It packs a fiery punch. It also happens to be the world's best-selling liquor by volume, a drink with a pedigree stretching back centuries, and was poured to toast the warming of U.S.-Sino relations during Nixon's historic 1972 visit.

Now, producers are making diplomatic overtures to an entirely new audience — the U.S. craft cocktail scene.

"We feel that it has incredible potential," says Yuan Liu, senior vice president of business development for Los Angeles-based CNS Imports, the largest importer/distributor of baijiu in United States.

Baijiu is sorghum-based, though it also can contain wheat, rice and corn. And it's not a uniform product; it's a class of spirits with many categories. Think whiskey with its range from smoky Scotch to mellow bourbon. But unlike whiskey, which is fermented in a liquid state, baijiu is more or less dry fermented inside in-ground pits. It then is steam distilled several times in goose-neck stills, aged in massive terra cotta vessels, then finally

blended (itself a complex and labor-intensive process.)

It generally is bottled at around 100 or 120 proof (well above the typical 80 proof for vodka, gin, etc.) and is classed by aroma, such as "light," "rice," "strong" and "sauce" — labels which aren't all that helpful to Westerners. Typical reactions from first-timers are that it smells and tastes like blue cheese, mushroom or soy sauce — not the most alluring descriptors.

"This is not a spirit you can just pour into a martini glass and enjoy," says New York bartender Orson Salicetti.

But introduced more gently as part of a cocktail? That can work, says Salicetti, co-founder of the Lumos bar, which focuses on the Chinese spirit and has a menu of more than 60 baijiu cocktails. Salicetti was introduced to baijiu by his architect partner Qifan Li and realized baijiu would be a great way to stand out in a city awash with specialty bars.

A popular option at Lumos is the "sesame colada," which in-



cludes caramelized pineapple juice, white sesame paste and agave syrup. There's also the goji baijiu punch, consisting of goji-infused HKB baijiu, mezcal, pink grapefruit juice, lime juice, agave syrup and orange bitters.

Lumos carries a full range of baijiu, including the No. 1 brand, Kweichow Moutai, recognizable by its distinctive pa-

ckaging of a white bottle with a red and gold label. Other major players include Wu Liang Ye and Shui Jing Fang. A newer brand is HKB, designed with cocktails in mind and bottled at a relatively mild 86 proof. There also is a U.S.-produced baijiu, from Vinn, a distillery just south of Portland, Oregon.

Most of the USD23 billion baijiu market stays in China, though there's been growing interest in exporting. Most of the baijiu imported to the United States goes to Chinese restaurants and shops. But about two years ago, CNS Imports decided to expand their reach. "We looked at each other and said, 'Why aren't we introducing this category of spirits to people outside the Chinese community?'" said Liu.

They've moved slowly, introducing the spirit to bartenders and learning, from experience, to work with rather than mask the unique flavors. "Instead of trying to mask the spirit and make it into something it isn't, like vodka, they're essentially creating and building a cocktail around the spirit," says Liu.

Clearly, there's a push to raise the profile of baijiu in the West. Whether it will be successful is another story. Baijiu has an exotic appeal which is both a weakness and a strength, says Jim Boyce, who blogs about Beijing nightlife at beijingboyce.com. "Baijiu is such a novelty and that's going to be its challenge, going from 'Yes, I tried it once and it's interesting,' to something people buy regularly or even stock at home."

Chinese traditionalists wouldn't dream of drinking baijiu anything but neat and in very small glasses, which is how Kathy Fang serves it at her family's FANG restaurant in San Francisco's bustling SOMA district. Meant to go with food, baijiu pairs well with savory bites, such as Fang's fried pork confit eggrolls, and it's been a surprising hit with tech workers who tend to be open to new tastes, says Fang.

"If you tell them it's really strong like moonshine they're even more like, 'Oh, I want to try,'" says Fang. **AP**

Beijing says pollution lessened in 2015 despite smog alerts

ENVIRONMENTAL authorities in Beijing say air quality improved in 2015, a year in which they issued the city's first two red smog alerts and showed a greater willingness to disrupt industry and ordinary people in search of cleaner air.

China has been setting national and local targets to reduce its notorious air pollution as citizens have become increasingly aware of the health dangers. Beijing's municipal government has been replacing coal-fired boilers with natural gas-powered facilities, forcing older, more polluting vehicles off the road, and closing or moving factories that are heavy polluters.

The city's average concentration of PM2.5 — small, inhalable particles that can penetrate deep into the lungs and are considered a reliable gauge of air quality — was 81 micrograms per cubic meter in 2015. That was a drop of 6 percent from 2014, and 10 percent lower than 2013, when Beijing started publishing data on PM2.5.

The "number of days of most serious PM2.5 pollution is falling each year," the capital's



Women eat sausages as they walk past the hilltop pavilion in Jinshan Park during a blue sky day in Beijing

municipal environmental protection bureau said earlier this week.

It was, however, still more than twice China's own standard of 35 micrograms per cubic meter, and seven times higher than an annual mean of 10 that the World Health Organization gives as its guideline for safe air.

Other pollutants also fell, including sulfur dioxide by 38 percent and nitrogen dioxide by 12 percent. The environmental protection bureau attributed the lowering of sulfur dioxide to the phasing out of coal-fired heating systems.

Beijing's air gets especially bad in the winter, when the burning of coal for heat in northern China increases and weather patterns add to the smog. Almost half of the worst air days were in the final two months, according to the envi-

ronmental bureau.

Beijing issued its first two red alerts in December under a two-year-old system. It meant half the city's vehicles were ordered off the roads on a given day, factory production was restricted and schools were closed.

In March last year, it lowered the threshold required to trigger a red alert from a forecast of 72 hours of continuous "severe pollution" — a Chinese air quality index reading of more than 300 — to "heavy pollution" or a reading of 200. "The earlier the launch, the greater the emissions reductions," the city government said at the time.

The two red alerts came about because of this lowered threshold and a greater willingness by authorities to issue one, said Ma Jun, of the non-governmental Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs in Beijing.

"I think before there had been some reluctance to do it because it's highly challenging to organize this and it will have a high social and economic cost," said Ma. "There has been a changing mindset on this." **AP**

Parents protest to get 2nd children registered

CHINESE parents who had children outside the country's one-child policy protested outside the family planning commission yesterday in an attempt to have their fines canceled now that all couples are allowed to have two kids.

For decades, China's family planning policy limited most urban couples to one child and rural couples to two if their first was a girl.

Couples who exceeded the limits were ordered to pay a social compensation fee. To pressure them into paying, some local authorities refused to register the child if they parents didn't pay up, which limits the child's access to education, health care and other benefits.

Some parents of unregistered children stood in a line outside the gates of the national family planning offices yesterday, holding banners with slogans including: "They are all our motherland's flowers and should not be treated differently."

One protester, Wan Changru, said the roughly 20 people included parents and grandparents of unregistered children and that they wanted family planning officials to cancel their fines.

Starting this year, all Chinese couples are allowed to have two children following an announced change to the 35-year-old policy in October.



Chinese parents who have children born outside the country's one-child policy protesting outside the family planning commission in a bid to have their fines canceled in Beijing

"Now that every couple can have two children, all kids should be treated equally, no matter whether they were born before or after the policy change," said Wan, who is also taking family planning officials to court to try to get her 6-year-old daughter registered.

Wan and others have protested at local and national family planning commissions several times previously, but this was the first since the policy was relaxed.

Yesterday, she said the security guard called the police but no police came. "This is totally different to what happened before, as dozens of police would come to stop us in the past," she said.

The national family planning commission said in December that it had repeatedly ordered its local offices not to withhold registrations, and had carried out inspections to this end. **AP**

THAILAND

Police websites hacked with 'Failed Law' message

HACKERS took over several police websites in Thailand, replacing the home pages with a message saying, "Failed Law. We want Justice!"

Police yesterday said they were investigating if the hack was in response to a Thai court decision that has been widely protested in neighboring Myanmar.

The Dec. 24 ruling resulted in death sentences for two Myanmar men convicted of murdering two British backpackers. Protesters believe the men were scapegoats and have threatened to boycott Thai goods after a trial that raised many unanswered questions about police and judicial conduct in Thailand.

Several police websites were either offline or still displayed the hackers' message yesterday evening, hours after the online attack was staged late Monday. A black screen showed a white mask and blanked-out



A message is displayed on a computer screen in Bangkok, Thailand

eyes and a hashtag **Boycott Thailand**. It also mentioned a group calling itself the "Blink

Hacker Group" and made reference to Myanmar with a line in tiny print that said, "Greetz

Myanmar Black Hats."

Thai police spokesman Dejnaronong Suthicharnbuncha said

about "two or three" websites were affected but Thai media listed more than 12.

"I received an initial report that the hackers are from another country," Dejnaronong said. When asked if he meant they were from Myanmar and whether the hack was in response to the Koh Tao verdict, he said, "It's possible. We are investigating."

Protesters have rallied in Yangon outside the Thai Embassy and at border crossings demanding a review of the evidence in the case.

The men, Win Zaw Htun and Zaw Lin, were convicted of murdering David Miller, 24, and Hannah Witheridge, 23 whose bodies were found on the island of Koh Tao on Sept. 14, 2014. Witheridge had also been raped.

Police rushed to solve the crime, under intense pressure to limit negative publicity to the tourism industry, but the investigation and trial drew widespread criticism. Police were criticized for not properly securing the crime scene, conducting more than 200 random DNA tests, releasing names and pictures of suspects who turned out to be innocent, mishandling crucial DNA evidence from the victims and allegedly torturing their prime suspects. **AP**

SOUTH KOREA

Driverless taxi on Seoul campus offers glimpse of future

Youkyung Lee, Seoul

A South Korean university is testing a sedan that can pick up and transport passengers without a human driver, giving a glimpse into the future of autonomous public transport.

Seo Seung-Woo, director of the Intelligent Vehicle IT Research Center at Seoul National University, said the university has been testing the driverless taxi to transport disabled students around campus. The vehicle, called Snuber, has been navigating the 4,109 square meter campus for the past six months without any accidents. It works in conjunction with a hailing app created by the university.

Companies around the world are betting that automated driving technology will transform public transportation.

In Japan, a company called Robot Taxi Inc. plans to offer a full commercial service in 2020.



The driverless car called Snuber with a fixture on its roof with devices that scan road conditions is shown at Seoul National University's campus

In Greece, driverless buses called CityMobil2 have been tested in real traffic. General Motors Co. said it is investing USD500 million in ride-hailing company Lyft Inc. and forming a partnership that could eventually lead to on-demand, self-driving cars.

South Korean companies, however, have been slow to embrace the self-driving technology. The country's largest carmaker, Hyundai Motor Co., said it expects to roll out a fully automated car in 2030. Only this month, Samsung Electronics

created a team to focus on autonomous driving.

On the campus of Seoul National University, many heads turn as the grey sedan passes. It has a turret on its roof with devices that scan road conditions. Seo's team outfitted the Genesis sedan with a camera, laser scanners and other sensors.

For now, due to regulations banning autonomous vehicles on the roads, a driver is behind the steering wheel and can override the automation in emergency situations.

The car cannot travel

faster than 30 kilometers per hour because of the speed limit on campus. There are no full traffic lights but researchers have programmed Snuber to navigate around other challenges.

The vehicle applies a brake pedal at a red stop sign and at a pedestrian crosswalk. When another vehicle stops in the middle of the road, the automated sedan will scan the other lanes to detect vehicles traveling from the opposite direction. If there are no other vehicles, the Snuber moves into the oncoming lane to pass the vehicle.

However, it is not yet ready for use outside the relatively controlled campus environment.

"It will take a huge amount of time and effort," said Seo. "We need more tests in real traffic conditions."

He said in early 2020, a driverless car will be running between tollgates on highways. A door-to-door pickup service using a self-driving car is likely in early 2030, he said.

Experts said such services have the potential to change delivery businesses, not only mass transport. **AP**

OBITUARY

Bee Gees manager Robert Stigwood dies at 81

IMPRESARIO Robert Stigwood, who managed the Bee Gees and produced 1970s blockbusters "Grease" and "Saturday Night Fever," has died. He was 81.

Stigwood's office said he died Monday. The cause of death wasn't immediately available.

Born in Adelaide, Australia, in 1934, Stigwood moved to Britain in his 20s and managed Eric Clapton and Cream before signing brothers Barry, Maurice and Robin Gibb, collectively known as the Bee Gees.

He later moved into movies, producing films of the Andrew Lloyd Webber-Tim Rice musical "Jesus Christ Superstar" and The Who's rock opera "Tommy," as well as disco drama "Saturday Night Fever" — set to a Bee Gees soundtrack — and the nostalgic musical "Grease."

Lloyd Webber paid tribute to Stigwood on Twitter, calling him a "great showman who taught me so much."



A Sept. 30, 1979 photo from files of pop impresario Robert Stigwood aboard his yacht Sarina as he readies to sail out of the South Street Seaport in lower Manhattan



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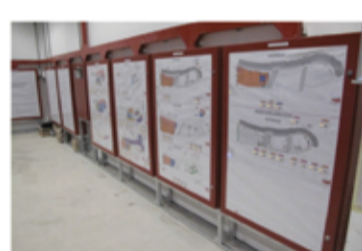


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Julie Pace,
White House Correspondent

USA

Obama thrusts gun control debate into forefront of 2016 race

PRESIDENT Barack Obama is making good on his pledge to politicize gun violence.

The package of gun-control executive actions Obama formally announced yesterday has pushed the contentious issue to the forefront of the 2016 presidential campaign, just weeks from the leadoff Iowa caucuses on Feb. 1. While Republicans and Democrats are deeply divided on the issue, both parties see Obama's actions as an opportunity to generate enthusiasm among primary voters.

But in a general election, the gun debate becomes a blurrier political proposition. Public opinion polls show Americans overwhelmingly support expanding background checks for gun purchases, but are more divided on the broader question of stricter gun laws. The gun-control advocacy movement has gained wealthy backers, including former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, but the National Rifle Association, which advocates gun owners' rights, remains one of the most dominant forces in American politics.

"It's an issue that both (sides) are really going to want to talk about for the next couple of months, but I don't know how much they're going to want to talk about it in the fall," Matthew Dowd, a former political adviser to President George W. Bush, said of the eventual presidential nominees.

For now, Obama's gun actions are a central topic as candidates crisscross Iowa, New Hampshire and other early voting states.

Republican contenders promise that if they get elected, they'll



David Foley holds a handgun while shopping at the Spring Guns and Ammo store

swiftly repeal Obama's actions, which include steps to expand background checks for gun purchases. Republican front-runner Donald Trump vowed to "un-sign" the president's measures. Florida Sen. Marco Rubio said that on his first day in the White House, "those orders are gone." Texas Sen. Ted Cruz said that while Obama may currently hold the power of the pen, "my pen has got an eraser."

On the Democratic side, front-runner Hillary Clinton has unveiled her own proposals for gun-control executive actions. At a rally in Iowa, she enthusiastically endorsed Obama's measures, but warned that a Republi-

can president could easily undo his changes.

"I won't wipe it away," Clinton said.

The cornerstone of Obama's executive actions is a background check requirement for guns purchased from dealers even if they're bought online or at gun shows. The new federal guidance aims to narrow the so-called gun show loophole that allows some purchases to occur without a background check.

In announcing the actions in the early days of 2016, Obama is purposely thrusting the issue into the center of the presidential campaign. As he foreshadowed his executive orders last

Both parties see Obama's actions as an opportunity to generate enthusiasm among primary voters

fall, Obama said addressing gun violence is "something we should politicize."

The emphasis on gun issues marks a shift for Democrats, who have shied away from the subject in recent presidential elections, not only because of the NRA, but also due to competing views within the party. Clinton and Obama both treaded carefully on guns when they faced off in the 2008 Democratic primary, and the president didn't attempt to pass congressional legislation until the shooting of elementary school students in Newtown, Connecticut, which occurred about a month after his 2012 reelection.

Democratic losses throughout the South, however, have narrowed the number of elected officials in the party who oppose gun restrictions. Gun-control backers also point to shifts in public opi-

nion and the rise of well-funded advocacy groups as reasons Democratic candidates can campaign on the topic with fewer electoral risks.

Actions to expand background checks, for example, have broad public support. A CBS/New York Times poll conducted in October found that more than 90 percent of Americans favor requiring background checks on all potential gun buyers.

Bloomberg has pumped millions of dollars into gun-control advocacy efforts, including donations to candidates who support more restrictive measures. An organization founded by former Arizona Congresswoman Gabby Giffords, who was badly wounded in a 2011 shooting, also has raised millions to promote gun control measures.

"There's more organization, there's more capacity, there's more money," said Kristin Goss, a public policy professor at Duke University who has studied gun-control advocacy groups. But asked whether the new organizations can succeed in matching the energy and organizational power of the NRA in a general election, Goss said, "That's an open question."

Associated Press-GfK polls conducted in October and December found 58 percent of Americans favor stricter gun laws. That's up slightly from 52 percent two years ago. AP

USA

Defense in Chinatown trial calls prosecution's case flimsy

A defense attorney for a man charged with murder and racketeering in a Chinatown organized crime investigation told jurors that prosecutors had not proven their allegations and that a conviction would send an innocent man to prison.

J. Tony Serra, lead attorney for Raymond "Shrimp Boy" Chow, is expected to continue his closing argument yesterday in a two-month trial that has riveted the country for its colorful characters and alleged crimes.

The investigation, led by an undercover federal agent posing as a member of an East Coast crime syn-

dicate, had previously ensnared a California state senator. Serra is a flamboyant and well-known defense lawyer. And in an unusual move, Chow took to the stand to testify he had renounced his life of crime and declare his innocence.

Prosecutors have said Chow took over a Chinese fraternal group with criminal ties after having its previous leader killed and ran an enterprise that engaged in drug trafficking, money laundering and the sale of stolen cigarettes and alcohol. He is also accused in a second killing.

On Monday, Serra derided the prosecution's evidence as flimsy, based on

secret recordings and shabby testimony from Chow's former colleagues. He railed at the government's use of secret surveillance.

"If you convict this man on the nature and quality of the evidence that has been produced, you will be convicting an innocent person," Serra said, later adding: "This is a case that is fraught, fraught with reasonable doubt."

Much of Monday's trial in the courtroom of U.S. District Judge Charles Breyer was consumed by a lengthy closing argument by the prosecution. Assistant U.S. Attorney Susan Badger asked jurors to disregard claims that Chow was

a changed man, saying that deception was his true nature.

"He is not the victim here," Badger said during her nearly four-hour presentation. "He is not the world's most misunderstood criminal."

She pointed to an evidence table displaying about a dozen firearms, guns seized from the homes of Chow's alleged partners in crime.

The 56-year-old Chow sat at a table flanked by four of his attorneys. He looked on stoically for the most part, aided by a language interpreter.

After Serra concludes his closing today (Macau



Tony Serra, right, an attorney for Raymond "Shrimp Boy" Chow, pictured at left

time), prosecutors will get a chance to rebut. Jurors should get the case today.

The multi-year investigation was spearheaded by an undercover FBI agent who testified that he spent hours with Chow and people connected to him at fancy restaurants and nightclubs, recording many of their conversations.

The agent, who testified under a pseudonym to protect his identity, said Chow tried to distance himself from any criminal activity during the probe but repeatedly accepted money after introducing the agent

to money launderers.

The probe led to the indictment of more than two dozen people in 2014 and the subsequent racketeering conviction of state Sen. Leland Yee.

Chow testified to dealing drugs and getting involved in a street gang but said he decided to renounce criminal activity after engaging in meditation.

He denied involvement in the slayings and said the agent gave him the money because the agent was looking out for him, not in exchange for criminal activity. AP

what's ON



CREATIVE & COLLECTIVE EXHIBITION

TIME: 12pm-7pm

(Closed on Tuesdays, open on public holidays)

UNTIL: January 31, 2016

VENUE: No Cruzamento da Avenida do Coronel Mesquita com a Avenida Almirante Lacerda Macau

Admission: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2853 0026

INK WASH OF THE FORBIDDEN CITY
— PAINTINGS BY CHARLES CHAUDELOT

TIME: 10am-7pm

(No admittance after 6:30 pm, closed on Mondays)

UNTIL: June 19, 2016

VENUE: Macau Museum of Art,

Av. Xian Xing Hai, s/n, NAPE

ADMISSION: MOP5

(Free on Sundays and public holidays)

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

NOTABLE COUPLE — ARTEFACTS FROM SUN WAN, DR. SUN YAT-SEN'S SECOND DAUGHTER, AND HER HUSBAND, TAI ENSAI

TIME: 10am-6pm (Ticket booth closes 5:30pm;

Closed on Mondays; Open on public holidays)

UNTIL: January 10, 2016

VENUE: Exhibition Gallery, 3rd floor, Macau

Museum, No. 112 Praceta do Museu de Macau

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2835 7911

THE COLLECTION EXHIBITION OF TAI FUNG TONG
ART HOUSE

TIME: 2pm-6pm daily (Except Mondays)

VENUE: Tai Fung Tong Art House,

Calçada da Igreja de S. Lázaro 7

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2835 3537 / 2834 6626

THE MAGNIFICENT PALACE — IMPERIAL
ARCHITECTURE OF THE FORBIDDEN CITY

TIME: 10am-7pm

(No admission after 6:30 pm, closed on Mondays)

UNTIL: March 13, 2016

VENUE: Macau Museum of Art,

Av. Xian Xing Hai, s/n, NAPE

ADMISSION: MOP5

(Free on Sundays and public holidays)

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2836 7588

MACAU ARTS WINDOW - MEMORIES AND
SYMBOLS — MULTIMEDIA BY KITTY LEUNG

TIME: 10am-7pm

(No admission after 6:30 pm, closed on Mondays)

UNTIL: February 14, 2016

VENUE: Macau Museum of Art,

Av. Xian Xing Hai, s/n, NAPE

ADMISSION: MOP5

(Free on Sundays and public holidays)

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Offbeat

KYRGYZSTAN TO DEPORT BRITON
WHO 'INSULTED COUNTRY'

Kyrgyzstan's Interior Ministry says a British citizen who made rude remarks about the country on social media is to be deported within a day.

The statement this week on the ministry's website did not specify what Michael McFeat said, but local media reports say his offending post likened a Kyrgyz sausage called chukchuk to the genitals of a horse.

According to the ministry, McFeat's comment sparked labor unrest at the Kumitor gold mine, where he is an employee, and in the wake of the scandal he tried to leave the country but was detained at the capital's international airport.

He was taken to court, charged with insulting the national dignity of the country and then found to be lacking necessary papers for legal residence in Kyrgyzstan, the ministry said.

TV canal macau

13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:30	RTPi Live
17:10	Cougar Town S.4
18:10	Trail of Lies (Repeated)
19:00	TDM Entrevista (Repeated)
19:30	Soap Opera
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	Os Resistentes - Retratos de Macau
21:05	Montra do Lilau
21:40	Miscellaneous
22:10	Trail of Lies
23:00	TDM News
23:30	The Resistentes - Macau Portraits
23:35	Documentary series
00:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)

cinema



CINETEATRO

2 JAN - 6 JAN

YO-KAI WATCH THE MOVIE_

ROOM 1

2.15, 5.50 pm

Director: Shigeharu Takahashi

Language: Cantonese (English/Cantonese)

Duration: 91min

IP MAN 3_

ROOM 1

4.00, 7.30, 9.30 pm

Director: Wilson Yip Wai Shun

Starring: Donnie Yen, Lynn Xiong, Max Zhang

Language: Cantonese (English/Cantonese)

Duration: 110min

SNOOPY: THE PEANUTS MOVIE_

ROOM 2

2.15, 5.50, 7.30 pm

Director: Steve Martino

Language: Cantonese (English/Cantonese)

Duration: 88min

THE LITTLE PRINCE_

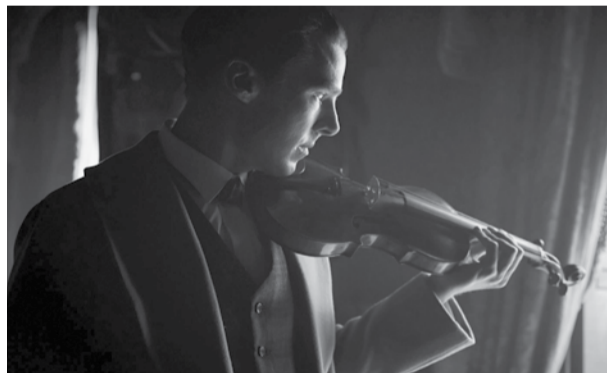
ROOM 2

4.00, 9.30 pm

Director: Mark Osborne

Language: Cantonese (English/Cantonese)

Duration: 108min



SHERLOCK: THE ABOMINABLE BRIDE_

ROOM 3

2.15, 7.15, 9.30 pm

Director: Douglas Mackinnon

Starring: Benedict Cumberbatch, Martin Freeman, Una Stubbs

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 89min

THE BOY AND THE BEAST_

ROOM 3

7.30 pm

Director: Mamoru Hosoda

Language: Japanese (English/Cantonese)

Duration: 119min

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

1994 MYSTERY ASSAILANT
ATTACKS TOP US SKATER

An unknown man brandishing a metal crowbar has attacked American figure-skater Nancy Kerrigan.

The 24-year-old skater was forced to withdraw from the US national championships in Detroit after the incident, which left her with severe bruising to her right knee.

The competition was expected to decide who would represent the United States in the forthcoming winter Olympics in Lillehammer, Norway, next month. But that now hangs in the balance.

Normally the top two finishers in these championships would qualify for the Olympics, although the US Figure Skating Association does have some discretion in the electoral process.

The attack happened as Ms Kerrigan, who won a bronze medal in the 1992 Olympics, was leaving the ice after a practice session at Cobo Hall, Detroit.

An eye-witness said: "Before she could say anything, a guy ran by, crouched down, whacked her on the knee and kept running."

"Nancy just dropped and started screaming and sobbing."

Ms Kerrigan's agent, Jerry Solomon said: "Nancy sustained quite a blow, physically and mentally."

"This could really affect her mental approach which is so important on the ice."

Police investigating the incident have been told by witnesses that the attacker had been video-taping Ms Kerrigan as she skated before he struck.

It is understood that he was wearing official credentials around his neck but detectives still have no identification.

The attack comes just eight months after tennis player Monica Seles was stabbed by a spectator with a kitchen knife as she played on a court in Hamburg, Germany.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Tonya Harding, 23, went on to win the US Ladies Figure Skating Championship finals in Detroit. But within days police began investigating allegations that the attack had been arranged and carried out by associates of Ms Harding. Ms Harding's former husband, Jeff Gillooly, her bodyguard, Shawn Eckardt, and two other men were charged with conspiracy but the skater herself denied any involvement in the plot. Eventually she admitted trying to cover up the Kerrigan attack and was fined \$100,000 and given three years' probation. Both skaters were selected to represent the US team in the Lillehammer Olympics. Ms Kerrigan went on to win a silver medal but Ms Harding performed poorly. In June of the same year the US Figure Skating Association stripped Tonya Harding of her 1994 national championship title and banned her from the organisation for life, which meant she could not compete in any future Olympic Games. In October 1999 she returned to the ice, coming second at an ESPN event in Huntington, West Virginia, for professional skaters ineligible for Olympic competition.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 You have the power to succeed today...

Taurus April 20-May 20 Your earthy nature asserts itself in a big way today...

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 You rely on others to help get your own business done...

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 You feel a new sense of balance today...

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 You're making great progress toward some personal goal...

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 Your romantic world is spinning a little faster...

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 Be wary of new situations - something isn't quite right...

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 Your potent energy is the driving force behind today's big mission...

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 You are firmly committed to doing it all yourself today...

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 You need to deal with all this energy in a positive way...

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 You're more tired than you feel you ought to be...

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 Your assistance is needed in a big way - so ask around...

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Sudoku puzzles categorized by difficulty: Easy, Easy+, Medium, and Hard. Each category contains a 9x9 grid with some numbers pre-filled.

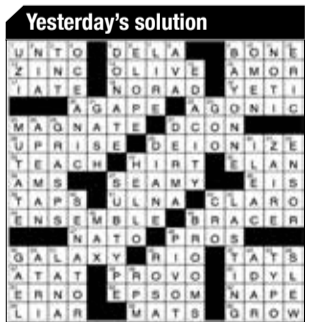
WEATHER

Weather forecast table with columns for MIN, MAX, and CONDITION. Rows include CHINA (Beijing, Harbin, etc.) and WORLD (Moscow, Frankfurt, etc.).

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- "Lovergirl" singer... Marie; 6- I'd hate to break up...; 10- Spheres; 14- Bitter; 15- Eye sore; 16- The world's longest river; 17- Numbers game; 18- Observed; 19- And others, for short; 20- Cleaning agent; 22- Online brokerage; 24- Broadway opener; 25- Throws; 26- Cream cake; 30- Go the distance; 32- Airline to Tel Aviv; 33- Secondhand; 35- Beasts of burden; 40- Cradlesong; 42- Enmity; 44- Brewer's need; 45- Reputation; 47- Buck follower; 48- A single time; 50- Instant; 52- Yellowish brown pigment; 56- ... about (roughly); 58- Respect; 59- Malarkey; 64- 1968 US Open champ; 65- Madonna role; 67- Escaping fluid; 68- Nevada senator Harry; 69- Let me repeat...; 70- Ad word; 71- Director Vittorio De...; 72- Heavy metric weight; 73- Historic times;

DOWN: 1- Apply powder to oneself; 2- Environmental sci.; 3- Harper's Bazaar illustrator; 4- Actress Talbot; 5- Title of reverence for God; 6- Good point; 7- Aseptic; 8- Storm center; 9- Beliefs; 10- Lulus; 11- Rudner and Moreno; 12- Part of an ice skate; 13- Tennis's Monica; 21- Rub vigorously; 23- Sum; 26- Slippery; 27- Hint; 28- In ... land; 29- ... well...; 31- Take ... view of; 34- Harmony; 36- Did the butterfly; 37- Father; 38- North Carolina university; 39- Type of machine found in Las Vegas; 41- Make up for wrongdoing; 43- Pulpy summer refreshment; 46- Eternal; 49- Carte blanche offer; 51- Surgery sites, briefly; 52- Singes; 53- Japanese immigrant; 54- Moral principle; 55- ... lift?; 57- Out; 60- Last word in a threat; 61- At hand; 62- Room in a casa; 63- Just manages, with "out"; 66- Brandy letters;



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Fire department 28 572 222
Water Supply - Report 1990 992
PJ (Open line) 993
Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333
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Pep Guardiola wants to coach in Premier League after Bayern

PEP Guardiola wants to coach in the English Premier League when he leaves Bayern Munich at the end of this season, but hasn't yet signed a contract with a club.

"The reason I'm not staying at Bayern is very simple: I want to coach in England in the Premier League. That's the only reason I'm not extending my contract," Guardiola said yesterday. "I'm young enough. I'm 44-years-old. I want a new challenge."

Having opted not to extend his three-year contract at Bayern, Guardiola expressed his thanks to Bayern and its chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge "because I know the club wanted to keep me, but at this stage in my career I need a new challenge. That's it, nothing more."

New players, new stadium, new restaurants, that's what I want.

PEP GUARDIOLA



Pep Guardiola instructs his players

Guardiola, who took over Jupp Heynckes' treble-winning side in 2013, led Bayern to the Club World Cup and UEFA Super Cup that same year, a German league and cup double in 2014, and

another Bundesliga title in 2015. The side set a host of records in that time.

The former Barcelona player and coach has been heavily linked with a move to Manchester City but he said no-

thing had been decided yet.

"I have different offers but I haven't decided yet," Guardiola said. "If I had signed a contract with a club then the club would communicate that. I have nothing signed yet so I

can't say anything about that."

Guardiola acknowledged that the move was "a risk for me. The club gave me an exceptional squad. It would be possible to stay here and win more" but "I think it's the right time for this new challenge. It's only my second experience as coach. I need new challenges, new experiences. Three years is enough (at Bayern). New players, new stadium, new restaurants, that's what I want. That's the reason, the only reason that I made that choice."

Guardiola paid tribute to his players at Bayern and added, "Thomas Mueller said it perfectly: 'Regardless of the coach, we want to win.' I have no doubt that they will do the best for themselves, for the club, for this period of time (the rest of the season)."

The Champions League, which has so far eluded Guardiola at Bayern, remains his main priority for this season, and he praised the club's decision to appoint former Real Madrid, Paris Saint-Germain and Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti as his replacement.

Guardiola said the Italian was "perfect for the club" and "I wish will lots of luck and want to leave him a brilliant team. He'll be coaching the best team possible. Karl-Heinz Rummenigge did perfectly. Coach leaves, coach arrives. The most important thing is stability."

Guardiola said of his time in Munich: "I'll be just a small part of the great history of this club." AP

FIFA ethics investigator recommends 9-year ban for Valcke

SEPPE Blatter's former right-hand man is facing a nine-year ban from football.

The FIFA ethics committee's lead investigator, Cornel Borbely, recommended the ban for Jerome Valcke yesterday after concluding his inquiry. In his final report, Borbely also asked that Valcke be fined 100,000 Swiss francs (USD100,000) and that his 90-day suspension be extended for another 45 days.

Valcke, a Frenchman who served alongside Blatter as secretary general for nearly a decade, was accused of violating six articles of the FIFA code of ethics, including confidentiality and conflict of interest.

The former television

journalist and sports marketing executive was originally banned for 90 days in October, a month after being put on leave by FIFA. The ban expired yesterday.

Last year, Valcke was implicated by a FIFA ticketing partner for using work and private email accounts to discuss a World Cup black market ticket deal. Valcke has denied that he sought cash from sales of top-category tickets for matches at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil he knew were being offered at several times face value.

The FIFA code of ethics allows for charges of breach of confidentiality and loyalty, which could be leveled simply for doing official business through private email

accounts.

A final decision on banning Valcke will come from ethics committee judge Hans-Joachim Eckert, the man who last month banned both Blatter and Michel Platini for eight years each.

Valcke, whose main duty at FIFA was overseeing organization of the World Cup, rose to the top administrative job at FIFA soon after being fired in 2006 during a scandal.

As marketing director, he was implicated in misleading World Cup sponsor MasterCard during contract renewal talks. FIFA and Blatter eventually signed with Visa, provoking a legal suit from MasterCard which was settled for

\$90 million.

Valcke's conduct and business ethics were severely criticized by a federal judge in New York who heard the case.

FIFA fired Valcke and other marketing officials involved in the deal, then re-hired him several months later as secretary general after Blatter was re-elected president.

FIFA has been in crisis since the federal investigations of bribery and corruption implicating senior football officials were revealed in May.

Valcke was identified as having processed transfers of \$10 million from FIFA accounts which were alleged by the U.S. Department of Justice to be bribes for CONCACAF officials to



FIFA Secretary General Jerome Valcke

support South Africa's successful bid to host the 2010 World Cup.

FIFA and Valcke said the payments were authorized by then-finance committee chairman Julio Grondona, after being requested by South African officials to be paid from their tournament organization funds.

Still, Blatter announced his planned resignation on June 2, the day after FIFA and Valcke's

role in the affair was revealed.

Blatter has said FIFA's troubles stem from the December 2010 decision to award Russia and Qatar hosting rights to the 2018 and 2022 World Cups, respectively. Valcke has been blamed for urging FIFA in 2008 to run a dual bidding contest, in order to secure long-term commercial security amid the economic downturn. AP

Harold Heckle, Madrid

ZINEDINE Zidane promised yesterday to make up for his lack of coaching experience by inspiring Real Madrid to play with the same attacking flair he displayed during his playing career.

"Football with a personal touch, with attacking play, is what I'll aim for," the former France great said at a news conference, a day after replacing the fired Rafa Benitez as Madrid coach.

"A coach is never really prepared, least of all one who hasn't coached before. But I am motivated, excited, and that is going to ensure that things go well," he said. "I always believe that it's important to play attractive, but balanced football, and I am going to work to get that on the pitch."

The 43-year-old Zidane, a three-time FIFA world player of the year and former Real Madrid star, had coached Real Madrid's reserve team in Spain's third division for the past year and a half. He agreed to the promotion to coach the first team for the rest of this season, plus two more years.

Zidane's first game as coach will be on Saturday against Deportivo La Coruna in the Spanish league. Madrid trails leader Atletico Madrid by four points and is two points behind defending champion Barcelona, which has a game in hand.

Zidane said he would continue to play Madrid's three star forwards — Cristiano Ronaldo, Benzema and Gareth Bale — although the coach said Bale was not happy with Benitez's firing.

"I understand Gareth may be upset at Rafa's departure, but he will be treated with affection. He's a fundamental player," Zidane said.

Zidane previously served as

Zidane pledges to restore Madrid's attacking prowess



Real Madrid's newly appointed coach Zinedine Zidane, 3rd right stands next to Cristiano Ronaldo, 2nd left during his first training session

assistant to Madrid coaches Jose Mourinho and Carlo Ancelotti. He served under Ancelotti's during Madrid's Champions League title run in 2014, and he knows most of the current squad.

Spanish talk radio didn't wait long to start making hopeful comparisons between Zidane and former Barcelona player-turned-coach Pep Guardiola.

Zidane dismissed the comparison.

"Guardiola is Guardiola, and I am going to try and do it the best I can," he said. "I never compared myself to others as

a player, and I won't do it as a coach."

Earlier, the club said more than 6,000 fans turned out to watch Zidane take charge during Madrid's traditional open first practice session of the year.

Zidane was named manager on Monday when Benitez was fired midway through his first season. Many Madrid fans and the local media were left lukewarm by Benitez's more defensive approach, exemplified by his conservative substitutions, such as removing Karim Benzema in Sunday's 2-2 draw at Valencia.

Zidane helped Madrid win the 2002 Champions League with a memorable goal in the final and led France to the World Cup in 1998 and the European championship in 2000. However, he blemished his otherwise stellar career with a head butt of an Italian opponent in the 2006 World Cup final, earning a red card in his last international match.

Marco Materazzi, the recipient of Zidane's infamous head butt, wished the Frenchman well.

"The weight of Zidane's personality will hold weight in the changing room," Materazzi

told the Italian daily La Gazzetta dello Sport. "But it's not going to be a walk in the park for him. For great players that become coaches, after two or three matches they're already condemned to produce results. Anyhow, without being ironic, I wish him (...) good luck."

Zidane will look to restore harmony among his players, including James Rodriguez and Francisco "Isco" Alarcon, who lost starting jobs under Benitez, and to win over the Madrid fans still angered by a 4-0 loss to Barcelona in November and its disqualification from the Copa del Rey for fielding an ineligible player.

David Beckham, a former teammate of Zidane from Madrid's group of "galaticos," backed the move that some in Spain deem risky. He called Zidane "the best person for the job."

"Does it get any better than this?" Beckham wrote on Facebook. "A man that has been the best at a game we all love, taking over a club that myself and many more people love."

But as recent predecessor Mourinho, Ancelotti, and now Benitez, all learned, Madrid president Florentino Perez will accept nothing short of a major title at the end of each season.

That means Zidane must find a way for Madrid to topple Barcelona as either European or Spanish champion. Barcelona has dominated both competitions, with four Champions League trophies in the last decade and five Liga crowns to Madrid's one in the last seven seasons. AP

INDONESIA is revising the mascot for the 2018 Asian Games after criticism that the newly unveiled bird-of-paradise looks more like a chicken.

Gatot Dewa Broto, a spokesman for the Ministry of Youth and Sport, said yesterday that the revision should be finalized over the next two to four months at the latest.

The mascot, called Drawa, was launched Dec. 27 by Vice President Jusuf Kalla and is named after Cendrawasih, the local name of an iconic bird which is only found in Indonesia's eastern most Papua province, New Guinea, and

Indonesia revising 2018 Asian Games mascot after criticism



Indonesian Vice President Jusuf Kalla delivers his speech as banners with Asian Games mascot, called Drawa, stand in the background in Jakarta, Indonesia

eastern Australia.

However, many online critics have said the design makes it look more like a chicken than a bird-of-paradise, while others have said the mascot is out of date or just not suitable for such a major event.

"The reason for the revision is that there were many criticisms and resistances from the public," Dewa Broto said. "We retain the 'Drawa', but more simple than the current one, which

is too colorful and seems to be running against trending of contemporary design."

The revision would be carried out by designers from a government agency, Dewa Broto said, but added that the ministry was still open to proposals from the public.

The games' logo is the silhouette of the bird, while the "Drawa" mascot is dressed in clothing used for the traditional martial art of Pencak Silat.

"Mr. Minister of Sports, are you not ashamed when launching the mascot? We are not in a crisis of designers," wrote Joko Anwar on Twitter.

"Drawa is taken from cen'DRAWA'sih, but once we see, we think it is a rooster," tweeted Jon Warif.

Indonesia, which last staged the games in 1962, was named again as host in 2014 after Vietnam relinquished its hosting rights because of financial concerns.

The Aug. 18 to Sep. 2 events will be held in four provinces — the capital of Jakarta, Banten, South Sumatra and West Java. AP

opinion

Macau Matters

Richard Whitfield



CASHLESS MACAU?

I have just been reading that Sweden is likely to be the first country to totally eliminate cash in the form of coins and notes, and maybe this is a medium term goal we should consider for Macau?

I read on www.slashdot.org (an interesting online news website) that now notes and coins represent just 2% of Sweden's economy, whereas they account for 7.7% of the US economy. Moreover, cash was only used for 20% of consumer payments in Sweden last year, whereas the global average is 75%. Eventually, the world will go cashless, so why not treat this as an opportunity instead of a threat.

Eliminating cash has several advantages. It can save governments significant amounts by eliminating the need to maintain an expensive inventory of notes and coins. It also makes corrupt payments much harder and makes it much more difficult for citizens to hide income to evade paying their taxes.

When I first started working with a Macau university it was accepting student tuition payments in cash, and an office girl was tasked with taking bags of cash to the bank each day (without a security escort). I quickly stopped this practice because it was dangerous for our office staff, and it was a very costly way of receiving payments. Many consumer businesses can get significant operating cost reductions by eliminating cash handling. Cash handling is a big operating headache for casinos, for instance - we have all seen the armoured cars going around town with their police escorts which all costs money.

Having a "cashless" economy would make the money laundering that is at the core of Macau's casino economy significantly more difficult, but I am not convinced that it is in Macau's best long term interests to continue to build its economy on such corrupt foundations.

There are concerns that being cashless can disadvantage the poor because they do not have access to financial services and financial charges would become a significant living expense for them. However, I believe that these issues can be managed - traditional banks are already facing disruption from start-up financial technology businesses because of their lower operating costs (which can go a long way to resolving the problems of going cashless). Implementing electronic payment systems have proven to be a boon in many places in the developing world - just look at the success of m-pesa in Africa, for instance, and the way that India is moving towards electronic deposits of social security payments.

Being cashless does not mean paying for everything by credit card, or paying exorbitant credit card fees. The Octopus card in Hong Kong is a good example of a convenient low cost, use anywhere debit card, for example, and for the life of me I do not understand why the MacauPass card is not used more widely. There are also several interesting new near field communications technologies where people can use their smart-phones for payments.

The Macau government keeps on talking about diversifying the economy and I keep on agreeing with them and suggesting avenues for development, and I think that cashless economy infrastructure is a good one. We just need a monetary authority in Macau that is forward thinking and willing to create a progressive and flexible legal framework to support growth in this area.

I also keep on saying that Macau can and should be a showcase for 21st century living. We want the tourists who come here to see the future of what their home towns could be like and to take these ideas home with them (so that their governments and institutions come to Macau to tap our expertise).

THE CHINESE WOMAN DIES OF H5N6 BIRD FLU, ANOTHER WOMAN CRITICAL

Health authorities in southern China said yesterday that a 26-year-old woman has died of a strain of bird flu, and another woman is reportedly in a serious condition.

The two contracted H5N6, a strain of bird flu that has so far only been seen in people in China. A press officer at Shenzhen's

Center for Disease Control and Prevention confirmed the death of the local woman on Dec. 30. He wouldn't identify himself.

A 40-year-old woman also from Guangdong province is in serious condition in hospital, the official Xinhua News Agency reported.



The FFZero1 by Faraday Future is displayed at CES Unveiled

CES GADGET SHOW

Faraday reveals sleek, sporty concept car in Vegas

Kimberly Pierceall & Tom Krisher, Las Vegas

The automotive future according to a new electric car maker looks an awful lot like a Corvette crossed with the Batmobile.

California-based Faraday Future debuted its sleek electric concept racecar yesterday (Macau time) during the annual CES show that focuses on consumer gadgets and has increasingly become a way for carmakers to show off their latest technological feats.

The 18-month-old company that has remained much of a mystery until recently revealing its primary backer, Chinese billionaire Jia Yueting, won \$335 million worth of incentives from the state of Nevada last month to build a \$1 billion manufacturing facility in a hard-hit Las Vegas suburb.

Not even Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval, who pushed for the incentive package and attended Monday's debut, had seen the concept car. Neither had North Las Vegas Mayor John Lee although he visited the California headquarters four months ago and saw "the intelligence building around the car."

"There was no doubt about it that that was the exclamation point," he said, referring to the negotiations to land the manufacturing plant in his city. He was convinced, he said.

Emphasizing the speed at which it will develop and build cars, the company's Senior Vice President of

Research and Development Nick Sampson said the company would deliver its first production car in a couple of years.

Sampson said Faraday had so far hired 750 people globally with most at its California headquarters and planned to break ground on its North Las Vegas plant in a few weeks with plans to hire 4,500 people there.

He said his company would utilize digital design and testing of parts and modular construction, making it quicker than competitors.

"You don't need to have a hundred year legacy in the automotive industry to define what the next generation of transportation needs to look and feel like," Sampson said, taking a stab at traditional car makers and likening the future of cars to the debut of the Apple iPhone nine years ago making several models of cell phones obsolete.

But Sampson wasn't saying what the company would build first for production, how much it's spent so far and also wasn't revealing much more information about the company's investors. The company is still shopping for a battery supplier, he said.

The presentation included Ding Lei, co-founder of LETV described as the Netflix of China, who said afterward that his company intends to partner with Faraday on research and development.

The road to make a profitable electric car company hasn't been easy for one of the most well-known in the

marketplace. Tesla has only made a quarterly profit once since its 2003 founding.

And traditional automakers have been utilizing modular design and augmented reality in development for years.

Sampson said the difference is that Faraday will be designing only electric cars unlike other car-makers that might have to spend more time redesigning a model to fit a hybrid engine, V6 or V8. "We're developing one core motor technology," Sampson said.

The company dubbed Monday's debut that included a clear fin running half the length of the car, a single-line of a smile for a headlight and a white interior with a seat inspired by NASA design the FFZero1.

The low-profile waist-high car remained under a white sheet, the centerpiece on a white stage in front of white curtains for most of Monday's night's presentation inside a large tent packed with people and press waiting for the reveal.

"It's an extreme tablet on wheels," said Richard Kim, Faraday's head of global design, saying the concept included the ability to project images on the road much like a "digital copilot," a smart phone dock in the steering wheel, tunnels below the car to funnel air through and a designed horizontal crease along the sides of the car he called the "UFO" line to signal the car was otherworldly.

It's a "car of concepts," he said rather than a concept car. **AP**

Station	Air quality
Roadside	30-50 Good
High Density Residential Area	30-50 Good
Ambient	30-50 Good

SOURCE: DSMG

WORLD BRIEFS

PUERTO RICO Federal authorities in Puerto Rico say they seized 10,000 counterfeit Barbie dolls that arrived from China. US Customs and Border Protection said that the shipment had a value of more than USD41,000. The 31-centimeter dolls came with a tiny toy dog and all have been destroyed. Officials say they seized nearly 300 shipments in Puerto Rico last year for intellectual property violations.



HAITI A commission that evaluated Haiti's contested presidential election says most of the irregularities it found in first-round voting were the result of widespread ineptitude by poll workers and not political mischief.



USA Concerned that inflamed tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia may threaten key foreign policy objectives in Iraq and Syria, among other places, the Obama administration toes a careful line in seeking to calm a diplomatic storm that many fear could lead the longtime regional rivals to direct sectarian conflict. On the home front, Obama is making good on his pledge to politicize gun violence. **More on p15**



USA The Idol's final. Carrie Underwood poses with the awards for best new artist and for best female country vocal performance for "Jesus, Take the Wheel" at the 49th Annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles. Underwood rose to fame as the winner of the fourth season of "American Idol," in 2005. The singing competition series, which also launched the careers of Jennifer Hudson and Kelly Clarkson, begins its 15th and final season tomorrow night in Los Angeles.