



**SECRETARY PLEDGES TO FIGHT HUMAN SMUGGLING**  
The Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak says that cases of human smuggling are being intensively fought

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**HONG KONG TO TIGHTEN PARTNERSHIP WITH MACAU**  
CY Leung declared in his 2016 Policy Address that HK would enhance partnership arrangements with Macau

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## WORLD BRIEFS



**CHINA** Several rights lawyers, including a woman who represented women's rights advocates, have been formally arrested, about six months after they were taken away. Li Yuhan, a lawyer for Wang Yu (pictured), said yesterday that Wang's mother had received formal arrest notices for both Wang and her husband, Bao Longjun, although the charges were not immediately clear. Wang has represented women's rights activists. The families of two other lawyers were informed earlier of their arrests, on suspicion of state subversion.

**CHINA** Stock market and currency turmoil has battered Chinese leaders' reputation as shrewd economic managers and fed doubts about their willingness to push through more wrenching reforms. In the stock market, a "circuit breaker" to suspend trading in the event of wide price swings backfired and fueled steeper falls. It was withdrawn after just four days. *More on p10*



**DAVOS** Organizers of the World Economic Forum in Davos say they have revoked an invitation to a delegation from North Korea, in what appears to be an international rebuke over the secretive Communist country's nuclear test this month. The WEF invitation had been extended to North Korea in the autumn "in view of positive signs coming out of the country," organizers said in a statement. *More on Korea on p12*

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# Survey shows a drop in gaming service quality

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# Xi calls for a China in 2016 where 'nobody dares to be corrupt'

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# First 10 days of Jan, first good news for gaming

**JANUARY** has already given way to some good news for Macau's gaming sector, according to investment analyst firm Sanford C. Bernstein, which notes that the first 10 days of this month have trended higher than average throughout December.

Spurred on by the public holiday on January 1, the subsequent 10 days recorded an average daily revenue of HKD650 million, signaling an increase of around 20 percent compared with the daily average from the full month of December.

The promising results are "likely to be driven by both VIP and premium mass, and serve as an incremental sign of Macau's stabilization," explained analysts at Bernstein.

Factoring in an assumption that the remaining 20 days of the month will produce less promising results,



analysts from the firm predicted that January's gross gaming revenue could reach between MOP18.3 billion and MOP19.5 billion; "representing a

**Analysts predicted that January's gross gaming revenue could reach between MOP18.3b and MOP19.5b**

year-on-year decline of 18 percent to 23 percent."

The news prompted analysts at Morgan Stanley Asia to upgrade their assessment of Macau from "cautious" to "in-line". The firm warned that the sector is unlikely to have bottomed-out.

## Extravagant wedding provokes social media criticism

**PHOTOGRAPHS** of an extravagant wedding in Zhongshan have gone viral, according to the South China Morning Post citing local reports, and this has provoked a series of critical and sarcastic responses from social media users.

The bride, who is from Macau, was wearing at least forty gold bracelets around her neck and a golden headdress in her hair, the pictures show.

Meanwhile, the groom was dressed like the Qin dynasty emperors of antiquity, and was accompanied by other male guests decorated as soldiers from China's final dynasty, the Qing.

According to local daily publication Southern Metropolis News, a guest at the wedding said that the groom was originally from the Zhongshan area but had moved to Macau.

"His family does business. They are very rich," the guest explained.

According to the same reports, a photo of wedding gifts at the event shows stacks and stacks of paper money, along with many other gifts that appear to be made of gold.

Pictures of the happy couple provoked a critical reception on social media, typical of those who deem such extravagance to be distasteful. "Be careful, your neck may be dislocated!" wrote one netizen, according to the SCMP, while another said, "Lady, is your neck sore? I can help you wear [your gold] for a while."

A third simply added, "I don't understand the world of the filthy rich."

The Mandarin word "Tuhao" (土豪) is often used to describe mainland Chinese people who are very wealthy but uncultured. Critics often mock what they consider to be a lack of good taste and sophistication to complement "excessive" wealth. **Staff reporter**

## ARTS

# Interactive children's show brings butterflies

**ITALIAN** "Compagnia TPO" is set to present a total of six renditions of their children's play, "Farfalle," at the Macau Cultural Centre this weekend.

"Farfalle," which means "Butterfly," is an interactive adventure, merging dance, contemporary art and digital technologies. The adventure chronicles the life cycle of the butterfly, taking the audience through a projected setting of amazing botanical images and mysterious rainforest sounds.



The use of special sensors transforms the play into a truly interactive environment, allowing children to visit the inside of a cocoon, sit on an oversized flower, or run after digitally-rendered caterpillars on a specially-built platform.

The cultural center describes the show as a "whirlpool of exciting colors and sounds," adding that the interactive nature of the performance makes the group's art "accessible to a vast international audience."

Time Out New York wrote: "By performance's end, butterflies won't be the only creatures to have [under]gone a major transformation. Your tot will have also changed, from passive theatre goer to spontaneous performer."

According to CCM, Compagnia TPO is considered a pioneer in the creation of children's interactive theatre. The group visited Macau in 2012 and hosted "Saltbrush" – a piece which explored the beauty of Australian aboriginal art and nature.

The show will be presented six times over the weekend, with the first performance on Friday evening and the final one on Sunday afternoon. Tickets can be purchased at a cost of MOP180 from CCM's box office and Macau Ticketing Network outlets.

## WeChat reports on bus arrival time 96pct accurate

**MACAU** New Era Public Company and the Sociedade de Transportes Colectivos de Macau (TCM) officially launched "MacauPublicBus," consisting of a shared official WeChat account and a mobile web page.

"MacauPublicBus" can be used by the public to view bus routes, to check the arrival



times of the two closest buses, and to obtain information of bus service times, bus stations and changes to routes.

The public can search for the account "MacauPublicBus" on WeChat in order to follow the recently launched system. The system has so far been running smoothly, with its accuracy reportedly

reaching 96 percent.

However, due to the complex coordination of satellite positioning technologies, along with the geography of Macau, it is possible that the system might present an error deviation of about 4 percent. For instance, the routes passing nearby the Border Gate, as well as routes comprising two bus stations within short distances, will possibly be affected by the reception of the satellite positioning signals.

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**A**FTER hitting a historical high in gaming services in the second quarter of 2015, the Gaming Service Index (GSI) dropped in the third and fourth quarter of last year.

The Macau Gaming Research Association launched its survey conducted by SGS Hong Kong Ltd yesterday. As has been the case previously, "mystery clients" visited casinos in the city to conduct the report.

Representatives from eleven casinos belonging to the region's six gaming operators participated in the survey.

The smiling, proactiveness and tolerance index were the three sub-indexes that were used, under the general service index.

Max Lee Kim Cheung, research manager of SGS Hong Kong Ltd, emphasized that the drop is mainly attributed to the smiling index, which was 10 percent less than the previous quarter, and the proactiveness index, which was 11 percent less than Q4.

The "smiling" score for the fourth quarter of 2015 is 0.68 out of 1.50, while "proactiveness" scored 0.55 out of 1.00, and "tolerance" is 0.88 out of 1.00, having an index of 104, 121 and 122 respectively.

# Survey shows a drop in gaming service quality



An employee stands at a cloakroom outside the casino floor at the Studio City casino resort

However, there is at least a 10 percent increase for each quarter when compared to the same quarter in 2014.

Cheung added that the typical negative comment recorded under the "proactiveness" criterion is that staff kept chatting, failing to notice customers with queries.

Security employees showed the best service performance among numerous staff categories that were assessed.

In terms of other measures, the air quality of casinos was deemed stable in the second half of 2015. The facilities in eighty-three percent of the washrooms are continually improving, however the waiting time at shuttle bus stations increased to 14.6 minutes in the fourth quarter, compared to 8.2 minutes in the third quarter, which was on par with the same quarter last year.

This year, 13 casinos will be evaluated. Six core casinos will be assessed on a quarterly basis while the seven non-core casinos will be analyzed on a semi-yearly basis. Checkpoints for conducting the survey will be 1,824 in comparison to last year's 1728.

"Later this year we have more casinos being established and we need to review the scale and methods of this research to be more constructive and useful for this industry," says Dr. L. C. Koo, assistant director of the Macau Gaming Research Association. According to him, the index should continue to "help to adapt to improve service levels, particularly during this period of consolidation of the gaming business."

Representatives of casino operators tackled the question of whether or not casino operators should remain anonymous in GSI reports.

## David Chow's company selected to taxi licenses tender

The Transport Bureau (DSAT) has accepted one bid for the public tender that will grant 100 special license taxis. Three companies competed for the licenses that will be valid for eight years. Lai Ou Taxi Service Company was the only one approved by DSAT and is presided by businessman David Chow, who said that the firm has a fleet of Mercedes vehicles prepared to meet the government requirements. Bidders must be able to provide on-call services. At least five taxis with barrier-free facilities for the disabled must also be made available.

## Two women arrested for stealing HKD480k

HKD480,000 was stolen from a mainland Chinese man last week, after two young women had spent the night in his room at a hotel. According to the police, the man met the two women at a casino nearby the new border gate. When asked by the duo if they could stay in his room, the man obliged. The next morning he found out that they had left without a trace and had stolen his suitcase which contained more than HKD400,000 in cash along with casino chips. One of the women, bearing the surname Cheng, was arrested when attempting to re-enter Macau. Cheng admitted that she and her partner stole the money and had already split it between them.

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GAMING

# 'Tigre de Cristal' is first casino in Russian zone set to rival Macau

**C**HINESE gamblers are flocking to Russia's rising Primorsky Integrated Entertainment Zone (PIEZ) just three months after the opening of the region's debut casino, reports the Siberian Times, and this is threatening to impact the world's two biggest gambling hubs, Macau and Las Vegas.



China, like Beijing, Tianjin and Qingdao, while being roughly equidistant from Shanghai and Nanjing.

"When completed it (the PIEZ) is expected to rival or surpass Las Vegas and even possibly Macau – the world's two current gambling rulers," wrote Lars Jones of World Casino News.

"It is the Siberia of Lore, but it is located within a two or three hour flight of hundreds of millions of potential Asian customers, as well as Russian denizens who are starved for legal gambling," added Jones.

President Xi's anti-corruption

campaign has already prompted wealthy Chinese travelers to head to leisure destinations other than Macau.

Analysts note that, as fewer VIP mainlanders visit the MSAR, the casino resorts need to up their investment in mass gaming and non-gaming facilities – which, being of less interest to high rollers, does little to incite them to return to Macau.

To make matters worse, the premier casino, which has received considerable investment

from Macau's Lawrence Ho, is likely to set a precedent for others planned for the region.

But analysts equally warned that without central and local government support, the Russian government venture may not succeed.

"The success of the gambling zones, beginning with Primorye and eventually including Sochi and others, will depend a lot on the government providing the right environment, infrastructure and support," concluded Jones.

## DICJ will not renew licenses of 35 junkets

**T**HE director of the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ), Paulo Martins Chan, has announced that the authority will not renew the licenses of 35 junket promoters.

The director explained during TDM's program Macau Forum that the decision was reached due to the failure of the junkets to deliver their accounting information by the deadline that had been imposed by the bureau.

It is not clear what will happen to the junket promoters that have failed to have their licenses renewed, but Chan said that the decision could help to eliminate underperforming entities in Macau.

He also released an update concerning the Dore scandal last year, which he said the bureau has been following up. Chan said the negotiations with Dore and its business partner, Wynn, had confirmed the existence of some accounting records.

The case is now under investigation and legal proceedings have begun, the director added.

### TAIWAN ON THE BRINK OF A CASINO KICKOFF IN 2019

**TAIWAN WILL** start vying with Singapore, Philippines and Macau, as the world's noted casino operators aim to do business with Asia's top source of gamblers, China. As early as this month, the parliament could give final approval to the Casino Management Act – an approval that would allow offshore is-

lands under the city's authority to accept bids for resort-casino projects as outlined in the act. InterGame has expressed that the distant archipelago of Matsu may qualify as a host soon, given that its people voted in favor of operating casinos in 2012 in the belief that it could advance employment and infrastructure.

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# Penn under fire, Macau case recalled

SEAN Penn has come under heavy fire from the media, which claims that his account of the meeting with "El Chapo" is "too sympathetic" to a man believed to be a mass-murderer and that his "rag-to-riches" version of the cartel leader's narrative whitewashes his past.

As the 55-year-old actor made the news this week, some media outlets were recalling earlier incidents that allegedly reveal Penn's violent past.

In 1986, while in Macau shooting "Shanghai Surprise" with his then-wife Madonna, Penn was arrested by police for dangling a Portuguese journalist off his hotel balcony after discovering him hiding in the room.

While his marriage to Madonna involved at least one incident of domestic abuse, he also allegedly fired guns at a helicopter during his wedding reception with the pop star.

The actor, who holds



Madonna, left, and Sean Penn arrive at the 5th Annual Sean Penn & Friends HELP HAITI HOME Gala Benefiting at the Montage Hotel on Saturday in Beverly Hills, California

some controversial left-leaning opinions on world politics, has also reportedly said that he hopes his critics "die screaming of rectal cancer."

In light of his violent history and the events that unfolded this week resulting in the capture of El Chapo, the Daily Mail's Ian Birrell mockingly remarked: "In his mind, however, he is an aid worker, diplomat and peacemaker, as well as a reporter."

# Wong Sio Chak pledges to fight human smuggling

THE Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, claims that cases of human smuggling between mainland China and Macau were intensively fought during the last year. The police arrested more than 1,800 illegal immigrants within the first three quarters of 2015, the Macao Daily News reported.

The number of instances of individual smuggling has increased. One of the factors behind that increase, according to local authorities, has been the stringent visa policies for both mainland China and Southeast Asian residents. Wong believes that 99 percent of the smugglers came to Macau to pursue work illegally.

Wong pointed out that the Customs services and other security forces have been working together, mentioning that in the event of a suspicious case, all documents on the smugglers will be shared in order to prevent their ill-intentioned actions in the short-term.

Meanwhile, the Judiciary Police will focus on information



Wong Sio Chak inspects the coastal border

analysis, identifying and using important clues to investigate the smuggling groups.

Secretary Wong clarifies that cooperation has been running smoothly.

Since Handover Day last year,

Macau is now officially administering a sea area of 85 square kilometers. Maintaining maritime order and security became a top priority for the region in order to take full advantage of the area's potential.

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# Policy Address draws praise and criticism, splitting pro-Beijing camp

**H**ONG Kong's Chief Executive (CE), Leung Chun-ying, delivered his 2016 Policy Address yesterday, drawing praise and criticism from fellow lawmakers in the HKSAR.

The Policy Address, which this year adopted the theme of "Innovate for the Economy; Improve Livelihood; Foster Harmony; Share Prosperity," generated mixed reactions from the CE's pro-Beijing camp.

Finance sector lawmaker Ng Leung-sing appeared pleased with the address, giving it a score of 85 marks out of 100 according to some reports. He said that it was "very substantial in terms of content."

## LEUNG'S SMART CITY STARTS WITH FREE WI-FI

**CY LEUNG** said yesterday that the government is considering developing the HKSAR into a "smart city," which would include the expansion of free Wi-Fi services. Such services would be made available at bus stops and shopping centers. Hong Kong, which has ranked first globally in technology infrastructure for five consecutive years, currently has over 17,000 free Wi-Fi "hotspots". Leung wants to double the number of hotspots within three years to provide the free services at all public rental housing estates, public hospitals, markets, park, sitting-out areas, promenades and tourist spots. "The internet is of increasing importance to us," Leung said, adding that the speed of Wi-Fi connections should also be improved and security ought to be enhanced.



CY Leung listens to legislators during the Policy Address presentation

"There are quite a few measures on the macro level and they're not just empty statements... Like it was said in the address, our position as an international financial center is still sound," Ng added.

But Liberal Party leader, Vincent Fang Kang, criticized the address for its vagueness and failure to tackle the diffi-

culties faced by ordinary residents of the HKSAR.

Pan-democrat lawmakers were predictably dissatisfied with the Policy Address, highlighting the CE's failure to mention the recent scandal involving the five missing booksellers.

"This is the policy address, but what is in it?" Hong Kong

Free Press (HKFP) accredited Labour Party legislator Lee Cheuk-yan with having said. "He [Leung] did not mention Lee Bo at all, or the security issues associated with 'one country, two systems'."

According to the agency, the lawmaker walked out during the speech with several of his party colleagues, one of whom described the address as "a betrayal of Hong Kong, and an act of kissing ass, all so that he [Leung] can be re-elected."

However, the Chief Executive did make reference to the Basic Law in the conclusion of his address; promising to "uphold Hong Kong's core values such as human rights, freedom, democracy, the rule and law and clean governance," and that the government will "fully and faithfully implement the principles of 'one country, two systems'."

# City suffers from upsurge on air pollution

**H**ONG Kong has seen a bigger rise in ozone pollution than industrial pollution zones in Guangdong, and this has spurred the government into taking action to crack down on air pollutants.

Environmentalists from the Clean Air Network have urged authorities to take tougher action on air pollutants through transport planning measures, according to SCMP.

The Environmental Protection Department blamed the rise on more easterly winds from the mainland but Clean Air Network stated that local factors contribute to the pollution as well.

Campaigners have studied the data on ozone levels from the Guangdong-HK-Macau air quality, monitoring the database. They discovered that Hong Kong has had a 9.2 percent increase in ozone level recordings between 2010 and 2014, higher than the 6.1 percent increase that was recorded in Guangdong.

Having studied the data from local general air-quality monitoring stations, excluding three that were included in a regional monitoring scheme, they discovered an even greater rise of 17.1 percent. In addition, local stations recorded a 27.2 percent increase in ozone between 2006 and 2014, higher than the 19.5 percent increase in the neighboring province.

According to a Coconuts Hong Kong report, the number of vehicles driving through the three cross-harbor tunnels has increased from 228,000 to over 250,000 between 2005 and 2014. This has caused environmentalists to urge the government to introduce transport planning measures.

Last year, as many as 2,196 people died from air pollution, costing HKD27 billion to public health, according to the Hedley index.

# Hong Kong to tighten partnership with Macau, develop Lantau

**C**HIEF Executive Leung Chun-ying declared in his 2016 Policy Address in Hong Kong, that the HKSAR would continue to build on established economic partnership arrangements with Macau.

There were several mentions of developments concerning the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge (HKZMB), and the CE promised that the government would support initiatives this year to speed up the development of the Lantau connection.

The completion of works on Lantau would facilitate cooperation between the two SARs and the mainland, "with particular regard to Qianhai, Nansha and Hengqin," the CE said, "as well as deepening regional cooperation in the Pan-Pearl River Delta Region."

Leung added that the government intends to create a blueprint for the island's develop-

ment and establish a dedicated "Lantau Development Office" to undertake the related tasks.

He also said the existing Lantau Development Advisory Committee has made a number of proposals detailing how other parts of the island might be used for housing, commercial and tourism purposes.

The population center would be concentrated in Tung Chung and Siu Ho in the northern part of the island, while the northeast specifically could be used for leisure and entertainment facilities.

Another proposal would see the construction of an artificial island near Kau Yi Chau, which could potentially house a population of 400,000 to 700,000 in the long term. The island could link Hong Kong Island, Lantau and New Territories West.

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**Jointly Present a Business Luncheon  
with  
Guest Speaker:  
Oliver Tong**

**Associate Director, Jones Lang LaSalle on  
Retailing in Macao - Up to the Next Level?  
Followed by short update on Macao Real Estate Market  
Wednesday, 27<sup>th</sup> January 2016**



**Venue: Ocean Room I, 1/F  
Mandarin Oriental, Macau**

**12.30: Drinks  
1 pm: Lunch**

**1.45 pm: Presentation by Oliver Tong  
2.30 pm: Close**

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POWERBALL

# Record USD1.5 million-jackpot draw today



A look at the record USD1.5b Powerball drawing

**T**HE Powerball jackpot has climbed to over USD1.5 billion, easily surpassing all other lotteries to become the largest such prize in the world. The draw is due today at 11:59am (Macau time).

The jackpot for the twice-weekly game started at \$40 million on Nov. 4. Since no one has won, the prize keeps growing, along with ticket sales in the 44 participating states, as well as the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. The jackpot estimate is reviewed daily, and the odds of winning are 1 in 292.2 million.

Other countries offer large jackpots too. Spain's massively popular Christmas lottery, known as "El Gordo," is ranked as the world's richest, though it does out a single jackpot among millions of prizes, instead of one large jackpot like the Powerball. El Gordo last month showered 2.2 billion euros (\$2.4 billion) across the country.

Six states have no lotteries of any kind. Religious beliefs have posed a barrier in Alabama, Mississippi and Utah. Alaska has been more concerned that a lottery wouldn't pay off in such a sparsely populated state. In Hawaii, lawmakers have proposed lottery measures, but the idea always fails. And in Nevada, the lottery snub is largely a nod to the state's casinos, which have no interest in the competition.

The Multi-State Lottery Association, which runs Powerball, reports that some of the biggest ticket sales come from border cities. That means residents of states without Powerball are driving to neighboring states to play the lottery.

Roughly 95 percent of Powerball tickets are computer-generated quick picks, so people's favorite numbers aren't really a factor. Officials don't track which numbers are most popular because so many are randomly generated. **AP**

Elaine Kurtenbach, Tokyo

MARKETS

**A**SIAN shares rose yesterday as Shanghai's market stabilized for a second day and Chinese export figures improved (see p10). Investors also were cheered by gains on Wall Street that snapped a losing streak, including an eight-day slump for the Nasdaq composite.

**KEEPING SCORE:** Japan's Nikkei 225 stock index jumped 2.7 percent to 17,682.33 and Hong Kong's Hang Seng was up 2.5 percent to 20,204.74. South Korea's Kospi added 1.4 percent to 1,916.57. The Shanghai Composite rose 0.9 percent to 3,048.64 and Australia's S&P/ASX 200 gained 1.0 percent to 4,975.60. Shares in Southeast Asia and New Zealand also were higher.

**CHINA TURMOIL:** After a tumultuous start to the year for Chinese stocks and the yuan, both those markets showed tentative stability, likely at least partly due to government efforts to control fluctuations in the yuan. Global markets were rattled by steep falls in Chinese stocks and a bigger than usual drop in the tightly controlled yuan. Some analysts and investors interpreted those gyrations as signs officials were having difficulty managing the slowdown in the world's No. 2 economy.

**OIL PRICES:** Crude oil prices tumbled overnight but bounced higher yesterday in Asia. While the factors that have driven prices nearly 18 percent lower this year are a concern, and are hurting exporters and energy company shares, lower oil and gas costs are a boon

# Asia shares rise as China steadies, Wall Street snaps back



Trader Fady Tanois, left, works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange

for many resource-scarce Asian economies.

**CHINA DATA:** China's exports rose 2.3 percent in December from a year earlier in yuan terms, reversing a 3.7 percent drop in November, the Finance Ministry reported yesterday. Exports were down in dollar terms but the decrease was smaller than November's. The data suggest a weakening in the yuan may be helping boost demand for Chinese products, providing welcome support for the slowing economy.

**THE QUOTE:** "I expect to see buyers filtering through Asia today to support the downsides, based on the positive leads from the Street. However, the upside space remains limited as there are few good news or data to cheer about," Bernard Aw of IG said in a commentary.

**WALL STREET:** Shares were lower for most of the day but then regained lost ground in the last hour of trading. The Dow Jones industrial average gained 117.65 points, or 0.7 percent, to 16,516.22. The Standard & Poor's 500 index added 15.01 points, or 0.8 percent, to 1,938.68. The Nasdaq composite climbed 47.93 points, or 1 percent, to

4,685.92.

**ENERGY:** U.S. crude oil rose 22 cents, or 0.7 percent, to \$30.65 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. On Tuesday, it lost 97 cents, or 3.1 percent, to \$30.44 a barrel in New York. Brent crude, a benchmark for international oils, rose 18 cents, or 0.6 percent, to \$31.13. It fell 69 cents, or 2.2 percent, to \$30.86 a barrel in London.

**CURRENCIES:** The dollar rose to 118.23 yen from 117.89 yen in the previous trading session. The euro fell to \$1.0813 from \$1.0834. **AP**

corporate bits

SHERATON MACAO EARNS TOP-TIER STATUS



Senior executives at the newly-designated "Sheraton Grand Macao"

The Sheraton Macao Hotel located in Cotai Central has now become the Sheraton Grand Macao Hotel, as revealed in an announcement from the group. It signifies an eleva-

tion of the resort's status to the company's premier-tier class. The designation means that the hotel meets a set of minimum standards which have assessed the quality

of amenities, and staff and guest satisfaction. Of the more than 400 properties that the group owns, the Sheraton Grand Macao is the 18th to have been awarded the status, according to the Sheraton Grand website. "We are very pleased to have been elevated to 'Grand' status," said a senior executive at the hotel. "This recognition by Sheraton Hotels & Resorts inspires us to continue delivering outstanding service and memorable experiences to each and every one of our guests."

To celebrate this occasion, the hotel will offer guests the chance to book a room for as little as HKD833. Bookings may be made between now and the end of January for stays up until May 31.

H&M LAUNCH CNY RANGE EXCLUSIVE TO ASIA MARKETS

Retail clothing giants H&M have launched a new range of products to coincide with the Year of the Monkey next month. Consisting of 30 distinct pieces in various shades of red, the collection will offer men's, women's and children's apparel, and will be sold exclusively in nine selected markets in Asia from January 21.

Macau, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Mainland China are among the nine selected markets to feature the collection. The new range, modeled by Siwon Choi and Liu Wen, packs "a contemporary punch and a hint of oriental touch," the company said in a press release.



"[The] Lunar New Year is a rare time of the year where we have the opportunity to dress up and catch up with our loved ones," said Siwon Choi. "The menswear collection is a fun and modern interpretation suitable for the

joyous occasion." "I love how the collection goes beyond the typical festive wardrobe by adding in a combination of modern silhouettes, ethnic details and a variety of lively prints," added model Liu Wen.

Joe McDonald, AP Business Writer

**S**TOCK market and currency turmoil has battered Chinese leaders' reputation as shrewd economic managers and fed doubts about their willingness to push through more wrenching reforms.

In the stock market, a "circuit breaker" to suspend trading in the event of wide price swings backfired and fueled steeper falls. It was withdrawn after just four days. That followed complaints curbs on stock sales and other emergency measures imposed to stop last year's market plunge were clumsy and fueled investor panic.

In currency markets, Beijing has struggled to squelch expectations it plans to devalue the yuan. That has forced the government to spend tens of billions of dollars to defend the exchange rate.

Such volatility is common in developing countries, but China's status as the world's second-largest economy and biggest trader mean missteps cause global shockwaves. And the latest turmoil has a political tinge because it comes as Beijing is promoting a bigger role for itself as a regional military power and in managing international trade and finance.

The Communist Party under President Xi Jinping wants the prosperity that comes from free-market competition and has promised entrepreneurs a bigger role in the state-dominated economy. But when stock prices plunged last June, the party reached back to the era of central planning for the sledgehammer of direct government control. It banned sales by large shareholders and ordered state companies to buy.

Forecasters who expect China to keep growing at a healthy rate "pinned that expectation on a belief that market forces will be given greater play," said Mark Williams, chief Asia economist for Capital Economics. "If the government cannot bring itself to allow market forces to be felt

# Markets turmoil batters faith in Beijing's management skills



A salesperson tends to a woman selecting winter clothes at a store having promotion sale in a shopping mall in Beijing

## ■ A society of farmers and factory workers who lived in state housing evolved in little over a decade into a nation of homeowners

in China, then the outlook is a lot grimmer."

The party has won praise for making it easier to start and run a private business. But it has yet to act on what the World Bank and other reform advocates say is the most pressing issue: Cutting monopolies and other

privileges of state companies that control industries from banking to energy to telecoms and are a drag on China's steadily slowing economic growth.

That reflects the intense political forces opposed to reducing the state's role in the economy, especially from the party's own factions that see a threat to the flow of money and other resources they can extract from government industries.

Beijing's moves on stocks and currency "are indicative of tension between the leadership's desire for market-oriented reform and the apparent fundamental objective of control," said Louis Kuijs of Oxford Economics in a report. "How this tension will be resolved in the coming years will be central to China's economic development and thus will have major global ramifications."

The latest turbulence is a blemish on an acclaimed record of achievement as party leaders steered China through two decades of explosive growth to become the world's second-largest economy.

A society of farmers and factory workers who lived in state housing evolved in little over a decade into a nation of homeowners. After the 2008 crisis, China rebounded quickly while Western countries struggled. China emerged as the most important growth market for designer clothes, Hollywood movies and smartphones.

But now, the World Bank and other advisers say China has reached a point where the economy no longer can be micro-managed by bureaucrats if it is to keep growing.

Last year's economic growth, due to be reported next week, is

forecast to have slowed to 7 percent or below. That still would be the world's second-highest, surpassed only by India.

But growth is forecast to fall further this year and economists say it will dwindle to dangerously low levels without more private competition. That raises the risk of job losses and political unrest.

For investors abroad who lack a detailed understanding of Chinese economic management, the stock market rout shook their confidence in China's leaders, said Bernard Aw, a strategist for IG in Singapore.

"Of course, the backtracking on the circuit breakers, that kind of news makes the misunderstanding even deeper," said Aw. "It also creates the impression that, Oh, they are doing trial and error, they don't know what they are doing."

Investor trust also has been eroded by the Communist Party's reflexive secrecy and abrupt policy changes with little warning.

In August, the central bank startled global markets by announcing it would use a new mechanism to make yuan's state-set exchange rate more market-oriented. The People's Bank of China gave few details and allowed the yuan to fall 2 percent against the dollar the first day, stirring fears of a steeper decline and possible competitive devaluations by other governments.

After weeks of uncertainty, Premier Li Keqiang tried to mollify concern by telling an audience of businesspeople Sept. 9 that Beijing had no plans for a "continuous devaluation." But over the four months since then, the central bank appeared to contradict that by allowing the yuan to fall another 3.4 percent to a five-year low against the dollar.

The uncertainty has led to a capital outflow of tens of billions of dollars a month. Financial analysts say investors don't believe repeated promises to avoid a bigger decline, so they are shifting assets abroad before anything valued in yuan loses value.

Williams, of Capital Economics, points to the counterexample of India, where central bank governor Raghuram Rajan is credited with cooling inflation since 2013 with a strategy that included talking in detail about his goals.

"There is a much greater sense of trust among businesses and households toward the (Indian) central bank," said Williams, "and we just don't see that at all in China."

## December trade shrinks but less than November



**C**HINA'S trade shrank in December but the decline was smaller than November's in a positive sign for lackluster economic growth.

Exports declined 1.4 percent from a year earlier to USD224.1 billion, an improvement over the previous month's 6.8 percent contraction, customs data showed yesterday. Imports were down 7.6 percent at \$164 billion, a smaller loss than November's 8.7 percent fall.

China's trade data reflect weak global demand and a decline in domestic economic growth, but economists say retail spending and manufacturing might be improving.

Economic growth fell to a six-year low of 6.9 percent in the quarter ending in September. Full year growth is expected to come in at or just below 7 percent.

"China's improved trade data in Decem-

ber will probably act to reassure global investors unnerved by the recent volatility in the country's financial and foreign-exchange markets," said Tom Rafferty of the Economist Intelligence Unit in a report. "The data is in line with other indicators that suggest China's economy is stabilizing on the back of sustained stimulus measures."

In December, the country's global trade surplus widened by 21 percent to \$60.1 billion.

For the full year, exports were off 2.8 percent at \$2.3 trillion and imports were down 14.1 percent at \$1.7 trillion. The global trade surplus was \$594 billion.

The country's trade surplus in December with the European Union, its biggest trading partner, swelled 36.8 percent to \$15.6 billion. The surplus with the United States contracted 6 percent to \$19.4 billion.

# Xi calls for a China in 2016 where 'nobody dares to be corrupt'

Ting Shi

**P**RESIDENT Xi Jinping said his signature anti-corruption campaign will not be eased and he's determined to make China this year a place where "nobody dares to be corrupt."

The anti-graft effort in 2016 will expand efforts to hunt down so-called "economic fugitives" who have fled overseas, the official Xinhua News Agency said, citing Xi's speech at the beginning of a three-day meeting of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection. After snaring about 100 high-ranking "tigers" and thousands of other mid-level officials, the campaign will also focus more on corruption at the local level in 2016, he said.

"The Communist Party central leadership's firm determination to fight corruption has not changed; the goal of preventing corruption from spreading has not changed," Xi was quoted as saying by Xinhua, adding the campaign should continue to "cover all sectors" in a "zero-tolerance" manner.

Xi warned soon after taking power in late 2012 that corruption threatened the legitimacy of the ruling Communist Party and pledged a relentless effort to stamp out graft at all level of Chinese society. The campaign



President Xi Jinping, also chairman of the Central Military Commission, makes remarks during a meeting with the new heads of the reorganized organs of the CMC this week, in Beijing

has targeted government officials, state-owned enterprises and the military, and the fallout has affected everything from luxury good prices in Hong Kong to gambling revenue in Macau as wealthy Chinese cut back on conspicuous spending to avoid

attracting suspicion.

Among the so-called tigers felled by the campaign were Zhou Yongkang, the former security chief who was sentenced to life in prison last June; Ling Jihua, former top aide of Xi's predecessor; and two former

deputy commander-in-chief of the People's Liberation Army, Xu Caihou and Guo Boxiong.

Last year 26 "tigers," meaning officials at the vice-ministerial level or above, were put under investigation for alleged corruption, according to Xinhua.

The CCDI, the Communist Party's top disciplinary body, has said there are three phases in its fight against graft: the first stage is to ensure officials don't dare to be corrupt, then institutionalizing the drive and perfecting the legal framework so officials aren't able to be corrupt, and lastly, instilling ethics and morality so that officials won't want to be corrupt.

In the overseas hunt for corruption suspects, an initiative dubbed "Skynet" that was launched in April of last year, more than 1,000 economic fugitives residing in 68 countries have been brought back to China, Xinhua said. A new round of Skynet will be launched this year that will rely on increased judicial cooperation with other countries, according to the CCDI.

In an interview with Bloomberg News last year, Fu Kui, the then top official in charge of Skynet, said all the three phases of the corruption campaign are being carried out in parallel but the emphasis is the first one: scaring officials so much that they don't dare to be corrupt.

"You want officials to not dare, then to not be able to and then to not want to and right now we're still in this first phase of scaring everybody," said Fu. **Bloomberg**

## Rights group: Beijing accuses Swede of harming state security

**A** Swedish co-founder of a human rights group in mainland China has been detained by authorities on suspicion of endangering state security, his group said.

The detention of Peter Dahlin comes as President Xi Jinping has intensified a crackdown on civil society to snuff out any potential opposition to the ruling Communist Party.

Dahlin's group, China Urgent Action Working Group, said in a statement Tuesday that the 35-year-old was detained on the evening of Jan. 3 on his way to Beijing's main airport, where he was due to fly to Thailand via Hong Kong. His Chinese girlfriend has also disappeared.

The China-based group says it has been working since 2009 to help to advance the rule of law in the country by organizing training programs by lawyers



Chinese Lawyer Yu Wensheng who spoke up on behalf of rights lawyers persecuted by authorities

for rights defenders focusing on land rights and administrative law. It also releases practi-

cal guides on the Chinese legal system.

The group said that it "has only ever advocated nonviolent, informed reliance on Chinese law," and that Dahlin had been "arbitrarily detained on spurious accusations."

It said that Dahlin suffers from Addison's Disease, a rare defect of the adrenal gland that requires daily medication. Chinese authorities, who have denied medical care to detained human rights defenders in the past, "have merely issued a verbal assurance that Peter is receiving his medicine," the group said.

It said that authorities had not disclosed any details of the charges or Dahlin's whereabouts, or allowed consular visits.

Gabriella Augustsson, spokeswoman for the Swedish Embassy in Beijing, said

that she could confirm that a 35-year-old Swedish male citizen had been detained in China and that the embassy was investigating.

Under President Xi's watch, China has been cracking down on human rights activists and lawyers who defend them, detaining them and in some cases their family members.

China has also released a draft law on the management of foreign nongovernmental organizations that would bring them under police supervision.

Although this law is still in draft form, "it appears that police are already emboldened by the draft and the recently passed National Security Law to detain a foreign national working on rule of law issues," said Frances Eve, a Hong Kong-based researcher for Chinese Human Rights Defenders.

The National Security Law calls for tougher measures against online attacks, theft of secrets and the spread of illegal or harmful information, but critics say its vagueness leaves the door open to even tighter control of civil society. **AP**

## Factory explosion in Shanghai kills four, injures two

**C**HINESE state media say four workers were killed in an explosion at a machinery factory in an industrial park on the outskirts of Shanghai.

Xinmin Evening News says two other people were injured in the blast that hit Shanghai Zhizhuo Machinery Equipment System Co. Ltd. around noon yesterday.

It's unclear what caused the explosion, although China has a poor record of workplace safety with a lack of government oversight. Cost-conscious management also is reluctant to invest in safety precautions.

# S. Korea leader calls for China help to punish the North

Hyung-Jin Kim, Seoul

**S**OUTH Korea's president yesterday urged North Korea's only major ally, China, to help punish Pyongyang's recent nuclear test with the strongest possible international sanctions.

Park Geun-hye's comments came as Seoul said North Korea had flown leaflets across the border describing her and her government as "mad dogs" as Cold War-style propaganda warfare continued between the rivals.

South Korea, the United States and others are pushing hard to impose fresh sanctions and other punitive measures on the North for what Pyongyang said was a hydrogen bomb test one week ago.

There is widespread skepticism over the H-bomb claim, but whatever the North detonated underground will likely push the country closer toward a fully functional nuclear arsenal, which it still is not thought to have.

Diplomats at a U.N. Security Council emergency session last week pledged to swiftly pursue new sanctions. For current sanctions and any new penalties to work, better cooperation and stronger implementation from China, the North's diplomatic and economic protector and a veto-wielding permanent member of the Security Council, is seen as key.

Park said in a nationally televised news conference that South Korea will push as hard as it can for strong sanctions that can force change in North Korea. But, she said, Chinese help is crucial.

"Holding the hands of someone in a difficult situation is the mark of the best partner," Park said, referring to China and South Korea's need to punish the North. "I trust China, as a permanent member of the Security



South Korean President Park Geun-hye

Council, will play a necessary role."

Beijing has recently shown signs that it's losing patience with North Korea over its repeated provocation. But China is still

seen as reluctant to clamp down on the North in part because of fears that a toppled government in Pyongyang would see millions of desperate North Koreans flooding across the border

with China and a U.S.-backed South Korean government in control of the Korean Peninsula.

Responding to the North's test, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry has urged China, to end "business as usual" with North Korea. But in a telephone conversation with his South Korean counterpart Friday, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi made it clear that Beijing supports dialogue to resolve the nuclear standoff. His reported remarks sparked speculation in Seoul that China has no intention of joining in any harsh punishment on the North.

In the wake of the nuclear test, the two Koreas have settled into a Cold War-era standoff. Since Friday, South Korea has been blasting anti-Pyongyang propaganda and K-pop songs from

huge speakers along the border, and the North is using speakers of its own in an attempt to keep its soldiers from hearing the South Korean messages.

Park said South Korea will continue its loudspeaker campaign, calling it "the surest and most effective psychological warfare tool."

Park said past broadcasts helped frontline North Korean soldiers learn the truth about Pyongyang's authoritarian rule and defect to South Korea. "The most powerful threat to totalitarianism is the power of truth," she said.

Her military announced yesterday it has found hundreds of anti-Seoul leaflets near the western portion of the Korea's border. The Defense Ministry believes those leaflets were floated over by the North's military.

It may take weeks or longer to confirm or refute the North's claim that it successfully tested a hydrogen bomb, which would mark a major and unanticipated advance for its still-limited nuclear arsenal. **AP**

## Seoul fires warning shots after drone seen



A drone is paraded in Pyongyang

**S**OUTH Korea yesterday fired 20 machine gun warning shots after a North Korean drone briefly crossed the rivals' border, officials said, the first shots fired in a Cold War-style standoff between the Koreas in the wake of the North's nuclear test last week.

The North Korean drone was flying dozens of meters south of the border and turned back to the North after the South fired shots, South Korean defense and military officials said, requesting anonymity because of office rules. The shots did not hit the drone.

North Korean drone flights across the world's most heavily armed border are rare, but have happened before.

North Korea has in recent years touted its drone program, a relatively new addition to its arsenal. In 2013, state media said North Korean leader Kim Jong Un had watched a drone attack drill on a simulated South Korean target.

In 2014, Seoul officials discovered what they called several North Korean drones that had flown across the border. Those drones were crude and decidedly low-tech, but were still considered a potential new security threat.

Animosity has been high since the North's claim on Jan. 6 that it had tested a hydrogen bomb. There is widespread skepticism over the H-bomb claim, but whatever the North detonated underground will likely push the country closer toward a fully functional nuclear arsenal, which it still is not thought to have. The North previously conducted atomic bomb tests in 2006, 2009 and 2013.

Since Friday, South Korea has been

blasting anti-Pyongyang propaganda and K-pop songs from huge speakers along the border. The North, which calls the broadcasts an act of war meant to threaten its system of government, is using speakers of its own in an attempt to keep its soldiers from hearing the South Korean messages.

Seoul said yesterday that North Korea had also flown balloons with thousands of leaflets across the border, some of them describing South Korean President Park Geun-hye and her government as "mad dogs."

North Korea's propaganda machine is using the nuclear test to glorify Kim's leadership and describing it as a necessary step to fight against what it calls a U.S.-led attempt to overthrow the North's system.

Pyongyang's state TV yesterday aired photos showing a smiling Kim awarding commendations to scientists and other workers involved in the test and shaking hands with them at a Workers' Party building. Kim called the scientists and workers "nuclear combatants" and "the heroes of heroes" who evoked fears to the U.S. and its allies, according to the state news agency. **AP**

## Vietnam dismisses Chinese accounts of test flights

**V**IETNAM has dismissed China's accounts of its test flights to an island in disputed waters, saying it received no prior information as claimed by a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman.

China Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei told reporters earlier this week that China's three test flights to Fiery Cross Reef — one of seven South China Sea features where China had carried out extensive land reclamation — were

state aviation activities and had no restrictions under international law. Hong said that Beijing had informed Vietnamese aviation authorities and Foreign Ministry about them.

Hong also said that Vietnam had failed to see "the professional, technical and civil nature of China's inspection and test flights."

Vietnam Foreign Ministry spokesman Le Hai Binh rejected the

statement as a "wrong position," saying Vietnamese authorities did not receive any information from China. He said in a statement posted on the ministry's website yesterday that China's flights had affected security and aviation safety in the South China Sea.

Binh said the flights violated Vietnam's sovereignty over the islands, and demanded that China stop any future flights and refrain from such actions.

China said it conducted three test flights earlier this month to the airstrip, one of the three built on artificial islands reclaimed by China over the last nearly two years.

Vietnam and China both claim the Paracel Islands and the two along with the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan claim all or parts of the Spratlys, which sit on potentially oil and gas rich resources and occupy one of the world's busiest shipping lanes.



A China Southern Airlines jetliner lands at the airfield on Fiery Cross Reef, known as Yongshu Reef in Chinese, in the Spratly Islands

pping lanes.

China's recent increasing assertiveness has caused serious concerns among countries in the

region and the United States, which backs freedom of navigation and overflights in the South China Sea. **AP**

## PAKISTAN

# Suicide attack on polio center kills 15

Abdul Sattar, Quetta

A suicide attack on a polio vaccination center in southwestern Pakistan yesterday killed 15 people, mainly police who had gathered to escort health workers, who have been repeatedly targeted in recent years by Islamic militants, officials said.

The bombing of the polio center on the outskirts of Quetta killed 13 police, a soldier and a civilian, said Shahzada Farhat, a police spokesman in the city. Another 23 people were wounded.

The suicide bomber detonated his explosives among the police officers, said provincial home minister Sarfraz Bugti. "We're in a war zone," he added.

The bombing happened outside the polio center shortly before vaccination teams were due to be dispatched to local neighborhoods as part of a three-day immunization campaign, said Syed Imtiaz Shah, the local police chief.

Hours after the attack, Ahmad Marwat, who described himself as a spokesman



Pakistani security officials examine the site of suicide bombing in Quetta

for Jundullah, or Army of God, a little-known militant group, claimed responsibility without explaining why the center was targeted. He warned of more attacks on polio teams in the

future.

Polio workers in Pakistan, and their police escorts, have been targeted in recent years by Islamic militants who accuse them of working as spies for

the United States.

The attacks intensified after a Pakistani doctor was arrested on charges of running a fake hepatitis vaccination campaign in the city of Abbottabad as a

cover for a CIA-backed effort to obtain DNA samples from Osama bin Laden ahead of the 2011 U.S. raid that killed him.

Pakistan is one of three countries in the world where polio is endemic, and the attacks have hindered vaccination campaigns. Some Pakistanis are also suspicious about the vaccinations, fearing it will sterilize their children.

Shah, the police chief, said the security forces were the primary target of yesterday's attack. He spoke to reporters from the scene, which was strewn with blood and debris, as rescuers took the wounded to hospitals.

Quetta is the capital of southwestern Baluchistan province, where a low-level insurgency has long been waged by Baloch separatist groups demanding a greater share of the region's natural resources or outright independence.

Al-Qaida, the Taliban and other Sunni militant groups are also active in the region. Tens of thousands have been killed in Pakistan over the past decade in attacks mainly targeting security forces and the country's Shiite minority. **AP**

## MH370

# Ocean search for Malaysian airliner finds second shipwreck, but no plane

Rod McGuirk, Canberra

THE undersea search for the Malaysian airliner that vanished almost two years ago has found a second 19th century shipwreck deep in the Indian Ocean off the west Australian coast, officials said yesterday.

A sonar search for the wreckage of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 found what appeared to be a man-made object on Dec. 19, the Australian Transport Safety Bureau said in a statement.

A follow-up investigation using an underwater drone captured high-resolution sonar images on Jan. 2 that confirmed that the find was a shipwreck, said the bureau, which is running the search for the Boeing 777 which vanished on March 8, 2014.

The Shipwreck Galleries of the Western Australian Museum conducted a preliminary review of the images and advised that the wreck was likely to be a steel or iron ship dating from the turn of the 19th century, the bureau said.

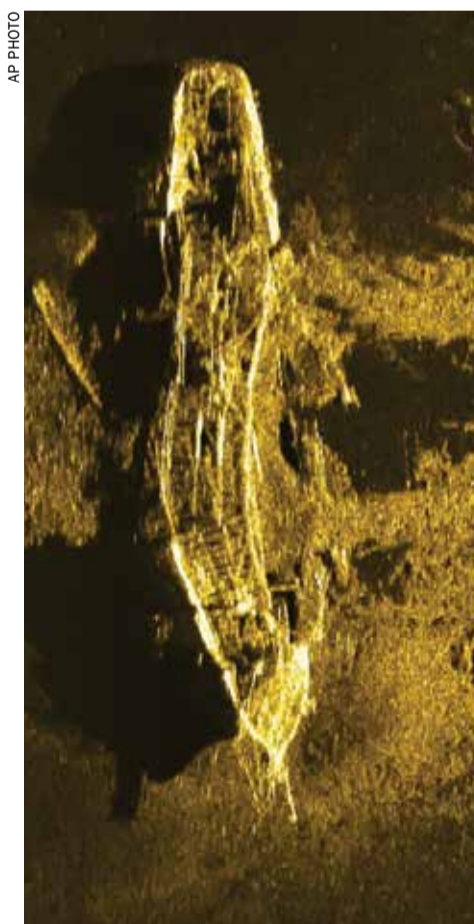
The wreck was found under water 3.7 kilometers deep, 2,600 kilometers southwest of the Australian port of Fremantle where the three search vessels are based, the bureau said.

The sea hunt similarly found what appeared to be a man-made object in March last year 3.9 kilometers deep. But it wasn't until May that a closer look confirmed that it was not plane wreckage but the wreck of a cargo ship built in the mid-to-late 19th century. Hundreds of such ships were lost during voyages across the Indian Ocean. Neither ship is likely to be identified because of the cost of mounting closer examinations.

Flight 370 is thought to have crashed in the Indian Ocean with 239 passengers and crew aboard more than 1,800 kilometers southwest of Australia after mysteriously flying off course during a flight from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing.

Searchers have been combing a 120,000-square-kilometer part of the Indian Ocean since late 2014. A wing flap found in July on the other side of the Indian Ocean when it washed up on Reunion Island is the only debris recovered.

More than 80,000 square kilometers of the seafloor have been scoured so far, and the search is scheduled to be wound up by the middle of the year if nothing else of Flight 370 is found. **AP**



Sonar image released by Australian Transport Safety Bureau

## AUSTRALIA

# Woman in stable condition after crocodile attack

A woman was in stable condition at a hospital after she was attacked by a crocodile yesterday on Australia's northwest coast, officials said.

The woman, in her 70s, was attacked in a creek near the town of Wyndham in Western Australia state, a Department of Parks and Wildlife spokeswoman said on condition of anonymity, citing departmental policy.

Wildlife rangers were headed to Wyndham to destroy the estuarine crocodile, the spokeswoman said.

The woman's condition was stabilized at Wyndham District Hospital and she was to be flown east to the larger Royal Darwin Hospital for further treatment, said Western Australia Country Health Service spokesman Peter Cogan.

Cogan provided no details of her injuries, but said her condition remained stable.

Crocodile numbers have boomed across Australia's northern tropics since they became a protected species under federal law in 1971, and they are an increasing threat to humans. **AP**

# US Navy sailors held by Iran are released with their boats

Ali Akbar Dareini & Adam Schreck, Tehran

**A**LL 10 U.S. Navy sailors detained by Iran after drifting into its territorial waters a day earlier have been freed, the U.S. and Iran said yesterday.

The Navy said the American crewmembers returned safely and there were no indications they had been harmed while in custody.

The nine men and one woman were being held at an Iranian base on Farsi Island in the Persian Gulf after being detained nearby on Tuesday. The tiny outpost has been used as a base for Revolutionary Guard speedboats as far back as the 1980s.

The sailors departed the island at 8:43 a.m. GMT aboard the boats they were detained with, the Navy said. They were picked up by Navy aircraft and other sailors took control of their boats for the return to Bahrain, where the U.S. 5th Fleet is based.

"The Navy will investigate the



Detained American Navy sailors in an undisclosed location in Iran

circumstances that led to the sailors' presence in Iran," the U.S. statement said.

The Revolutionary Guard's official website published images of the detained U.S. sailors before their release showing them sitting on the floor of a room. One was a woman with her

hair covered by a brown cloth. The pictures also showed what appeared to be their two boats.

"After determining that their entry into Iran's territorial waters was not intentional and their apology, the detained American sailors were released in international waters of the

Persian Gulf," a statement posted online by the Guard said.

Gen. Ali Fadavi, the Navy chief of Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard, was quoted earlier yesterday by Iranian state TV as saying that an investigation had shown that the Americans entered Iranian territorial waters because of "mechanical problems in their navigation system."

U.S. officials also blamed mechanical trouble for the incident.

U.S. officials had said on Tuesday that Tehran assured them the crew and vessels would be returned safely and promptly.

Fadavi said the American boats had shown "unprofessional acts" for 40 minutes before being picked up by Iranian forces after entering the country's territorial waters. He said Tehran did not consider the U.S. Navy boats violating Iranian territorial waters as "innocent passage."

The sailors were nonetheless allowed to make contact with

the U.S. military based on Iran's "responsibilities and Islamic mercy" late Tuesday, he said.

Fadavi said Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammed Javad Zarif "had a firm stance" during a telephone conversation with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry on their presence in Iran's territorial waters and "said they should not have come and should apologize."

The Revolutionary Guard's 200,000-strong force is different from the regular Iranian military and is charged with protecting the ruling system.

The Guard's naval forces are heavily dependent on fast-moving armed speedboats that can be used in teams to swarm much larger vessels.

Pentagon spokesman Peter Cook told The Associated Press yesterday that the Riverine boats were moving between Kuwait and Bahrain when the U.S. lost contact with them.

The incident came amid heightened tensions with Iran, and only hours before President Barack Obama gave his final State of the Union address to Congress and the public. It set off a dramatic series of calls and meetings as U.S. officials tried to determine the exact status of the crew and reach out to Iranian leaders. **AP**

AD

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**W**ITH Americans soon to be choosing his successor, President Barack Obama used his final State of the Union address to rekindle belief in the promise of change that first carried him to the White House, declaring that the country must not allow election-year fear and division to put economic and security progress at risk.

Addressing a hostile Republican-led Congress and a country plunged in a tumultuous, at times angry presidential campaign, Obama used his address yesterday (Macau time) to summon an affirmative vision of his administration and for the future.

"All the talk of America's economic decline is political hot air," Obama said in the address. "So is all the rhetoric you hear about our enemies getting stronger and America getting weaker."

"The United States of America is the most powerful nation on Earth. Period. It's not even close," he said.

He rebutted critics, naysayers and the Republican White House hopefuls, but also acknowledged his own failure to transform the country's bitter politics and unite the nation.

With a year left in office, he presented that task as more urgent than ever and pleaded with voters to turn away from harsh voices and come together.

"Democracy grinds to a halt without a willingness to compromise; or when even basic facts are contested," Obama said. "Our public life withers when only the most extreme voices get attention."

Obama said "one of the few regrets of my presidency" is "that the rancor and suspicion between the parties has gotten worse instead of better."

He specifically called for ending the practice of drawing up some congressional districts in a manner that gives parties an iron grip on House seats. He also urged steps to make voting easier and reduce the influence of money in politics.

The president's address to both chambers of Congress and a prime-time television audience was meant to both shape his legacy and put his imprint squarely on the race to succeed him.

He defended his record — and implicitly urged the public to elect another Democratic president to build on it.

At times, Obama referred sarcastically to the Republicans running to replace him, though without mentioning them by name, just weeks before the first nominating contests in Iowa and

AP PHOTO



President Barack Obama

## STATE OF THE UNION

# Obama warns against giving into election year cynicism

New Hampshire. He countered the negativity of Donald Trump, who promises to keep out Muslims and "Make America Great Again," and Texas Sen. Ted Cruz's vow to "carpet bomb" the Islamic State group.

Referencing terror threats around the globe, Obama defended his own efforts fighting Islamic State militants, and said: "Our answer needs to be more than tough talk or calls to carpet bomb civilians. That may work as a TV sound bite, but it doesn't pass muster on the world stage." Cruz skipped the speech, though his primary opponent, Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida, was present.

Shortly before the speech began, news broke that Iran was holding 10 U.S. Navy sailors and their two small boats that drifted into Iranian waters after experiencing mechanical problems. The development, which Obama did not mention, prompted criticism from Republicans about Obama's hard-fought Iran nuclear deal, which the president extolled, arguing that "the world has avoided another war."

Trump had his own rebuttal over Twitter, remarking: "The #SOTU speech is really

boring, slow, lethargic - very hard to watch!" Congressional Republicans began filing out even before it was over.

Obama addressed a Congress now run by emboldened Republican majorities already planning their agenda under a potential Republican successor, starting with repealing the president's signature health care law.

Behind Obama sat the new House Speaker Paul Ryan, who reacted dismissively to Obama's remarks, saying in a statement, "I can't say I was disappointed by the president's speech, but that's because I wasn't expecting much."

Obama defended his health care measure, claiming that millions have gained coverage. Delivering the Republican response, South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley reiterated

the party's pledge to "end a disastrous health care program, and replace it with reforms."

However, striking similar notes to Obama, Haley also warned against strident voices among Republicans who rail against immigrants and others, a measure of the party's profound divisions as it struggles to unite to keep Hillary Clinton or any other Democrat from replacing Obama.

"During anxious times, it can be tempting to follow the siren call of the angriest voices. We must resist that temptation," said Haley, the daughter of Indian immigrants.

It was an apparent reference to the heated rhetoric about immigrants and minorities from Republican front-runner Donald Trump that has unnerved some Republican leaders.

Mindful of the scant prospect for major legislative action in an election year, Obama avoided the traditional litany of policy proposals found in State of the Union addresses in which presidents outline their agenda for the coming year.

But Obama did offer some proposals, confronting a

Congress largely hostile to his agenda by mentioning initiatives that are dead on arrival, including immigration reform and closing the prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

But Obama held out hope that compromise could be possible — even from divided government in a campaign season — on issues like criminal justice reform, finalizing an Asia-Pacific trade pact, and helping people addicted to prescription drugs.

And he boasted of the Paris agreement on climate, refuting his critics by saying: "Look, if anybody still wants to dispute the science around climate change, have at it. You'll be pretty lonely."

Obama's vice president, Joe Biden, sat behind him. Obama alluded to Biden's own loss of his son to cancer this past year in tasking the vice president to lead a new national effort to conquer the disease.

The president himself appeared to get momentarily caught up in the emotion of the moment. As he walked toward the exit after his hour-long speech, he turned back to the crowded House chamber and said, "Let me take one more look at this thing." AP

“Our public life withers when only the most extreme voices get attention”

BARAK OBAMA

## what's ON



## 10TH MACAU DESIGN BIENNIAL

TIME: 10am to 7pm

(Closed on Monday, no admission after 6:30 pm)

UNTIL: February 14, 2016

VENUE: Macau Museum of Art

ADMISSION: Adult MOP5, free for Children under 12 years old, elderly over 65 years old (Admission is free on Sundays and public holidays)

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2836 7588

## MANUEL CARGALEIRO-PINTURA: 1954-2006

TIME: 10am-7pm (Closed on Mondays)

UNTIL: March 3, 2016

VENUE: Casa Garden Orient Foundation

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2855 4691

## MACAU PRINTMAKING TRIENNIAL

TIME: 10am-7pm

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

UNTIL: February 14, 2016

VENUE: Macau Museum of Art,

Av. Xian Xing Hai, s/n, NAPE

ADMISSION: MOP5

(Free on Sundays and public holidays)

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

## CREATIVE &amp; 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

## TUTTI COLORI

- ARTS, CRAFTS &amp; SKETCHES EXHIBITION

TIME: 10am-6:30pm

UNTIL: February 18, 2016

ADMISSION: Free

VENUE: Calcada Da Barra, No. 16 R/C LJ A,

Edif. San Chak, Macau

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2896 2820

## "FOAM TIP" BY ARLINDA FROTA

TIME: 12pm to 8pm (closed on every Tuesdays)

UNTIL: January 31, 2016

ADMISSION: free

VENUE: Signum Living Store, Rua do Almirante

Sérgio, no. 285, R/C, Macau

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2896 8925

## Offbeat

## THE SHINING: UK COMMUTERS TOLD TRAINS DELAYED BY SUNLIGHT

It's the dark days of one of the rainiest British winters on record. So some London commuters were surprised to hear their trains had been delayed because of the sun.

Rail operator Southeastern tweeted this week that "we had severe congestion through Lewisham due to dispatching issues as a result of strong sunlight." The company said low winter sun was hitting monitors at an angle that meant the drivers could not see them.

Almost 1 million people travel to London by train every weekday — and commuters are used to hearing a wide array of excuses for the frequent delays.

Past culprits have included "leaves on the line" and "the wrong type of snow."

## TV canal macau

13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:30	RTPi Live
17:10	Cougar Town S.4
18:10	Trail of Lies (Repeated)
19:00	Montra do Lilau (Repeat)
19:30	Soap Opera
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	TDM Talk Show
21:40	Comedy
22:10	Trail of Lies
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Television Film
00:05	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
00:35	RTPi Live

## cinema



## CINETEATRO

14 JAN - 20 JAN



## THE 5H WAVE

ROOM 1

2.30, 4.45, 7.15, 9.30 pm

Director: J Blakeson

Starring: Chloë Grace Moretz, Nick Robinson,

Maika Monroe

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 112min



## STEVE JOBS

ROOM 2

2.30, 4.45, 7.15, 9.30 pm

Director: Danny Boyle

Starring: Michael Fassbender, Kate Winslet,

Seth Rogene

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 122min

## SHERLOCK: THE ABOMINABLE BRIDE

ROOM 3

2.30, 4.45, 9.30 pm

Director: Douglas Mackinnon

Starring: Benedict Cumberbatch, Martin Freeman,

Una Stubbs

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 89min

## IP MAN 3

ROOM 3

7.30 pm

Director: Wilson Yip Wai Shun

Starring: Donnie Yen, Lynn Xiong, Max Zhang

Language: Cantonese (English/Cantonese)

Duration: 110min

## MACAU TOWER

14 JAN - 10 FEB

## THE 5H WAVE

2.30, 4.45, 7.15, 9.30 pm

Director: J Blakeson

Starring: Chloë Grace Moretz, Nick Robinson,

Maika Monroe

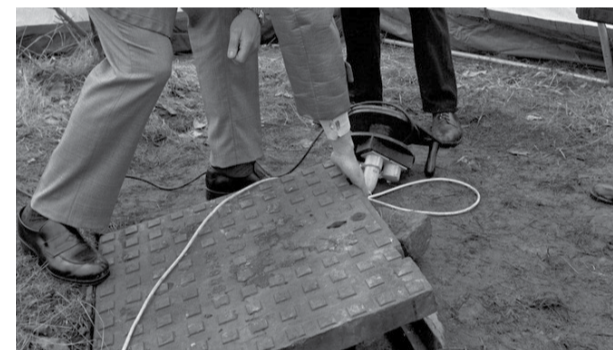
Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 112min

## this day in history



Lesley Whittle and the kidnapper Donald Neilson



## 1975 HEIRESS LESLEY WHITTLE KIDNAPPED

A 17-year-old heiress has been kidnapped from her home in Shropshire.

Lesley Whittle, left £82,000 in her father's will, was snatched from her bed at the family home in Highley. Her mother was asleep in the house at the time.

Police were called in after Lesley's brother, Ronald, received a ransom demand for £50,000.

The Whittle family run one of the biggest private coach companies in the country, based at Highley and Kidderminster.

Ronald Whittle followed the kidnapper's instructions to take the money to a telephone box and await further instructions there, but he was late making the rendez-vous and no-one came to meet him.

Hundreds of police are now scouring the area for clues. They have begun door-to-door inquiries and sniffer dogs are also being used.

Police say they are treating the ransom demand as a possible hoax.

But they are still hopeful of finding Lesley alive.

Lesley's boyfriend says kidnapping is "the only possible explanation" for her disappearance.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Lesley Whittle's body was found on 7 March, 1975.

She was hanging from a wire at the bottom of a drain shaft in Bathpool Park, Staffordshire.

In December 1975, two police officers spotted a man seen acting suspiciously in Mansfield.

The man turned out to be Donald Neilson, also known as the Black Panther for his trademark balaclava.

He was armed with a gun and was only arrested with the help of several customers in a nearby fish and chip shop.

His fingerprints were found to match one of those in the drain shaft.

Neilson was finally convicted and given five life sentences in July 1976 for the murder of Lesley Whittle and three post office workers.



YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 This is not the best time to start off in new directions...

Taurus April 20-May 20 You've got one big problem that you can't solve on your own. Now is the time to hit up a friend...

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 Communication is your specialty, but today brings a fog of uncertainty that makes you second-guess yourself.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 It's too easy to get distracted today - but if you let yourself wander, you may make a huge discovery!

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Keep reading until you're satisfied you've mastered the material - but even then, trust your gut.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 Your relationships are getting a little bumpy today - but it's not time to change course!

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 You've got way too much going on today - try to pull back from at least one major project or lengthy appointment.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 It's a great day for creative endeavors - so see if you can get your people to join you for some brainstorming or a craft project.

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 This isn't a day for progress - but you can at least keep yourself from sliding backward.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 Think outside the box and win! If you surprise the competition, you can be sure that you are going to come out ahead.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 Don't trust your sense of what's going on with your bank account. It's one of those days when assumptions can cost you quite a bit.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 Your innermost self is closer to the surface today - so make sure that you're paying attention!

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. It lists weather for various cities in CHINA and the WORLD.

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Offshoot; 6- Panama and bowler; 10- Prepare a book or film for release; 14- Steve of country music; 15- Home to most people; 16- Tears; 17- Spring sign; 18- New Rochelle college; 19- Canadian gas brand; 20- Long-suffering; 23- Hearst kidnap grp.; 24- This \_\_\_ test; 25- \_\_\_ anglais (English horn); 26- Bee follower; 27- Articles to be worn on the feet; 32- Fair; 35- Wrist bones; 36- Cinco de Mayo, e.g.; 37- In spite of; 41- Actress Alicia; 42- Deli offerings; 43- Words to Brutus; 44- Apparel; 46- Freight weight; 48- Fur scarf; 49- Tune; 50- Switch settings; 53- Tending to sleep walk; 58- Tailor's line; 59- Cross; 60- Actress Verdugo; 61- Indian garment; 62- Story; 63- Actress Sophia; 64- Uncouth; 65- 007's alma mater; 66- From Bern, say;

DOWN: 1- Closes; 2- Christmas song; 3- Skater Slutskaya; 4- Cassini of fashion; 5- Monster's nickname; 6- Israeli seaport; 7- Beginning on; 8- Fork part; 9- German river; 10- Heretofore; 11- Invalidate; 12- \_\_\_ dixit; 13- General on Chinese menus; 21- Employ; 22- Join the cast of; 26- Female bovine; 27- Observes Ramadan; 28- Scraps; 29- \_\_\_ Locka, Florida; 30- \_\_\_ Misbehavin'; 31- Prego rival; 32- Obstacle; 33- A Chaplin; 34- The right-hand side; 35- FDR's fireside \_\_\_; 38- That is to say...; 39- X; 40- Bear lair; 45- \_\_\_ Dearest; 46- "... \_\_\_ the cows come home"; 47- Bay windows; 49- "The Age of Anxiety" author; 50- Cheri of "Saturday Night Live"; 51- Dressed to the \_\_\_; 52- Examines closely; 53- Linebacker Junior; 54- Comedian Johnson; 55- Castle ring; 56- String tie; 57- Gradual; 58- Georgia, once; Abbr.;

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

A large crossword puzzle grid with some numbers and letters pre-filled.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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Real estate advertisement for H Unit in Gladiolus Court Coloane, featuring details on size, price, and renovation status.

Real estate advertisement for Nova City TAIPA, highlighting a stunning apartment with balcony and church view.

Real estate advertisement for Wai son Macau, featuring a balcony with church view and upgraded apartment.

Real estate advertisement for Jou Fai Kuok, St Pauls Ruin's Macau, featuring a renovated apartment.

Real estate advertisement for JML Property, including the company logo and contact information.



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## ATHLETICS

# WADA concerned by new findings in Russian doping scandal

John Leicester, Paris

**FINDINGS** reported by The Associated Press that track and field officials contemplated hiding the full extent of Russian doping before the 2012 London Olympics are "most concerning" and warrant further investigation, the World Anti-Doping Agency said yesterday.

The AP reported this week that six years before the International Association of Athletics Federations banned Russia, the governing body knew of doping so out of control it feared Russian athletes could die from abusing blood-boosting drugs and transfusions, and officials considered collaborating with Russians to hide the extent of cheating before the London Games.

The findings came from internal IAAF documents the AP received from a person intimately involved in the IAAF's anti-doping program. The person requested anonymity because he wasn't allowed to release the documents.

Two internal IAAF papers before the London Olympics proposed not publishing doping sanctions for lesser-known Russians. That would have violated WADA rules and the notes themselves specified that the



Russian Athletics Federation President Valentin Balakhnichev

proposed non-disclosure would be contrary to usual IAAF practice. The IAAF confirmed the authenticity of the documents but said the proposed hush-up of Russian bans was never carried out.

WADA said its commission that is investigating Russian doping and cover-ups should investigate the findings, if it hasn't already.

"The suggestions, if accurate, are most concerning," WADA spokesman Ben Nichols said in a statement to AP. "If this is new information that WADA's Independent Commission has not already examined, it will need to (be) investigated."

A second volume of findings from the WADA probe is due to be released today. Its first report last November pointed to Russian government complicity in widespread, systematic doping, leading the IAAF to suspend Russia's track and field athletes from international competition.

Athletes reacted with disgust at the new AP findings that IAAF blood tests as far back as 2009 were already providing shocking insight into the scale and gravity of Russian doping. The findings raised new questions about why the organization waited six years before suspending Russia, which

could see its athletes miss the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro in August.

"It's very disappointing," Australian race walker Jared Tallent said yesterday in an AP phone interview. "They knew Russia had massive problems back in 2009. Action should have been taken a lot sooner."

British javelin thrower Goldie Sayers tweeted: "And so it goes on. Clean athletes also damage their long-term health trying to compete with cheats. Makes me sick."

The IAAF documents reveal how its officials appealed for action from Russia, but also used advances in blood testing against offenders. They shed light on key junctures in Russia's doping crisis, which has been muddied by allegations that IAAF and Russian officials took bribes from athletes to hide doping.

By 2011, the IAAF's blood passport testing regime was flagging so many suspected Russian dopers that officials explored breaking their own rules and the WADA code by dealing with some cases privately, two internal IAAF notes show.

They proposed by-the-book sanctions for elite Russians likely to win in London, but "rapid and discreet" handling for lesser-known athletes whose di-

appearance from competition would probably go unnoticed.

For athletes who agreed, the IAAF would "undertake not to publish the sanction," which would be shortened to two years from four, according to a Dec. 5, 2011, brief.

IAAF spokesman Chris Turner said both notes were sent by the IAAF's anti-doping director at the time, Gabriel Dolle. One was to Habib Cisse, who was legal counsel to then-IAAF President Lamine Diack, the other to Diack himself, Turner told the AP.

Turner said a colleague of Dolle's in the anti-doping department objected at the time to the proposed non-disclosure of bans and they were published.

"Every suspicious ABP (blood passport) profile was investigated in full accordance with IAAF rules and the World Anti-Doping Code," he told AP. "All confirmed doping cases were publicly sanctioned. Nothing was covered-up."

Diack is facing corruption and money laundering charges in France, accused of taking more than 1 million euros (USD1.1 million) in a scheme to blackmail athletes and cover up their doping positives. French magistrates also are investigating Cisse and Dolle for suspected corruption. **AP**

## FOOTBALL

## Jerome Valcke dismissed as FIFA secretary general

Rob Harris, London

**FIFA** has fired Jerome Valcke for the second time, cutting ties with the secretary general four months after he was suspended while under investigation for wrongdoing at the scandal-scarred governing body.

FIFA announced yesterday that its emergency committee, consisting of the heads of the regional confederations, decided to dismiss Sepp Blatter's top aide over the weekend.

Valcke, whose main duty at FIFA was overseeing organization of the World Cup, rose to the top administrative job in 2007 after being re-hired despite being fired the previous year over his role in a sponsorship controversy.



Coming less than a month after Blatter was banned for eight years by FIFA, Valcke's second dismissal completes the downfall of the two men who had traveled the globe on private jets and were entertained by national leaders as they ran international soccer.

The Frenchman was banished from FIFA in September when he was put

on leave within hours of a FIFA ticketing partner alleging that the former television presenter and marketing executive sought to profit from a 2014 World Cup black market ticket deal that later fell through.

Since then, the FIFA ethics case into Valcke has hardened. FIFA prosecutors last week recommended a nine-year ban after charging him with accepting gifts, conflicts of interest, breaches of confidentiality and loyalty, and failing to cooperate with investigators.

FIFA ethics judges are expected to hear the case within weeks but Valcke will not be returning to the governing body he ran on a day-to-day basis.

"The employment rela-

tionship between FIFA and Jerome Valcke has ... been terminated," FIFA said in yesterday's statement.

Markus Kattner will continue to serve as acting secretary general, while refusing to publicly discuss his role of finance director and why FIFA authorized a 2 million Swiss franc (\$2 million) payment to Michel Platini, which led to the UEFA president being banned from soccer for eight years along with Blatter.

As marketing director at the start of the last decade, Valcke 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 USD90 million.

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

## FOOTBALL

## Neymar ordered to appear in court over Barcelona transfer

**BRAZILIAN** star footballer Neymar will appear before a judge to testify in an investigation into alleged irregularities involving his transfer to Barcelona, Spain's national court said yesterday.

Neymar's parents, former Barcelona president Sandro Rosell and current president Josep Bartomeu also will have to appear before a judge, according to court documents.

The Brazil striker is set to testify on Feb. 2, while Rosell and Bartomeu are expected to be in court on Feb. 1.

The national court last year rejected the request by Neymar and other defendants to throw out a probe into the irregularities. The court is looking into a complaint made by a Brazilian investment group which claims it was financially harmed when Barcelona and Neymar allegedly withheld the real amount of the player's transfer fee from Brazilian club Santos in 2013, in part to avoid paying the full amount of taxes.

Santos' former presidents, Luis Alvaro de Oliveira and Odilio Rodriguez Filho, also have been asked to appear in court, as well as club representatives of both Barcelona and Santos. **AP**

opinion

Views on China

Chris Bryant, Bloomberg

SOMEBODY FORGOT TO TELL MERCEDES TO WORRY ABOUT CHINA

If China's financial woes spell doom for Germany's automakers, somebody forgot to tell Daimler.

Its Mercedes-Benz brand recorded a 31 per cent jump in China sales in December, according to figures released on Friday, bringing the 2015 China increase to 33 per cent. Chinese buyers have snapped up 500 high-end Mercedes Maybachs every month since the model launched in the country in the February.

Yet regardless of that success, Daimler's shares have gyrated violently whenever China sneezes, as have other German automaker stocks. Daimler and BMW have lost a combined 24 billion euros (USD26 billion) in market capitalization since the start of December on fears their China sales will come unstuck if the yuan falls and the Chinese economy stalls.

A devalued Chinese currency would harm the ability of local buyers to afford luxury-imported vehicles and push up the cost of importing components from Europe for the vehicles the carmakers produce in China.

But to an extent, we've been here before. When the Chinese stock market crashed in August and China's central bank moved to devalue the yuan, some analysts predicted German automakers would soon be forced to warn on profits. It didn't happen.

Make no mistake, China is hugely important for Germany's automakers. BMW's China sales increased from 11.6 per cent of the total in 2010 to 21.6 per cent in 2014.

But a plunging Chinese stock market doesn't lead automatically to carnage (stocks aren't widely held), nor must a devaluation prove disastrous (German carmakers are manufacturing an increasing proportion of vehicles locally with Chinese joint venture partners).

Daimler's exuberant sales somewhat exaggerate the health of Chinese demand. Its performance is explained partly by its rebound from a faulty Chinese sales and distribution model that Daimler has since fixed. Some German carmakers have fared less well of late in China, with Audi recording a 1.4 per cent sales drop in 2015. In the first 11 months, BMW sales only rose by 2.4 per cent, compared to the double-digit growth it enjoyed there in the past.

Yet Mercedes-Benz is selling cars that rich Chinese consumers evidently still want. Sales of the S-Class saloon are booming, regardless of the supposed "new modesty" in China after a crackdown on corruption. China accounted for one-third of all S-Class sales last year.

Admittedly, competition with local Chinese carmakers has increased, putting pressure on the prices German automakers can charge.

Yet, thanks in part to a tax cut for small-engine vehicles, the overall Chinese car market is expected to expand about 5-7 percent in 2016, which isn't too shabby under the circumstances.

And amid all the wailing over the yuan, it's easy to forget that until recently the euro was the sharply devaluing currency causing policymakers concern. As euro-dollar hedges taken out two years ago start to fall away this year, German carmakers should start to enjoy more of a boost to U.S. profits.

Even if the yuan suffered a 20 percent correction against the euro, hedging would cushion much of the short-term pain for German automakers and it would return the yuan to levels last seen in 2012-2013 - a period when BMW and its compatriots had no complaint about China profits.

Providing investors can be reassured that China's rulers have not lost control over events, the sell-off may therefore be a buying opportunity, at least as far as Daimler is concerned.

Because of its range of sporty new models, Daimler is beloved by analysts. Yet its stock trades at only 7.7 estimated earnings for the next 12 months, a discount to BMW's 8.6 times. That makes Daimler a luxury investors can afford.

THE BUZZ AI SAYS LEGO POLICY CHANGE VICTORY FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Chinese artist Ai Weiwei said Wednesday that a change in policy by Lego to allow bulk orders of its toy bricks for projects with a political purpose is a victory for freedom of expression.

The Lego Group last year refused a bulk order for the toy bricks for an exhibition of Ai's in Melbourne, Australia.

Ai called that move "an act of censorship and discrimination," but Lego said it had a decades-old policy of not endorsing the use of its bricks in projects with a "political agenda." Yesterday, Lego announced that it would no longer ask what the "thematic purpose" of a project is.



Station	Air quality
Roadside	40-60 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	40-60 Moderate
Ambient	45-65 Moderate

SOURCE: DSI/MG

WORLD BRIEFS



**TURKEY** Police have arrested one person in connection with the deadly suicide bombing in Istanbul that killed 10 Germans, officials said. The suspect was detained in Istanbul yesterday (Macau time), Interior Minister Ekan Ala said during a news conference with his visiting German counterpart. He didn't provide further details.

**USA** "All the talk of America's economic decline is political hot air," Obama said in his final State of the Union address. "So is all the rhetoric you hear about our enemies getting stronger and America getting weaker. The United States of America is the most powerful nation on Earth. Period. It's not even close," he said. More on p15



**ANTARCTIC** A veteran Canadian helicopter pilot died at an Australian Antarctic base a day after he landed his chopper on an ice shelf, stepped out of the aircraft and plunged into a crevasse. David Wood, 62, was working on a fuel-loading operation on the remote ice shelf Monday when he got out of the helicopter and fell 20 meters

**UK** A list of official gifts received by Queen Elizabeth II from world leaders and dignitaries during 2015 features jewelry, ornaments and some more unusual choices - including homemade honey butter from Michelle Obama. Buckingham Palace said the U.S. first lady offered a gift box of lemon verbena tea, a candle, two small pots of honey and a jar of honey butter from the White House kitchen garden during her June visit to Britain. Other curious gifts: The governor of the British Virgin Islands presented "a bag of salt" and German President Joachim Gauck offered a marzipan model of the Brandenburg Gate.

Bowie's 'China Girl' says music video changed her life

Nick Perry, Wellington

IN 1983, New Zealander Geeling Ching was 23 years old and waiting tables at a Sydney cafe when she was chosen to play the lead role in David Bowie's "China Girl."

She says the music video and the brief romance with Bowie that followed in the 1980s were like a surreal dream and a life changer.

The death of the British rock star from cancer this week stunned fans worldwide. Ching was watching a tennis tournament in Auckland, where she lives, when her phone started buzzing: Is it true?

She was already a fan when she met Bowie. As a teenager, she'd put Bowie's posters up on her bedroom wall and bought one of his albums.

"There was something quite other-worldly about him," she told The Associated Press in an interview. "He was beautiful. Just beautiful."

The video parodies Asian stereotypes and went on to win an MTV award. At the time, the unedited version was banned from New Zealand and some other countries for a raunchy scene on a beach.

Ching said she and Bowie



Geeling Ching poses for a photo in Auckland

were naked for the scene, but it wasn't romantic.

"We got up at 3 in the morning to shoot that, to catch the sunrise, and it's the least sexy I've ever been in my life," she said.

She said she was freezing and struggling with salt water getting into her mouth. Some crew kept away curious joggers while others stood by with bathrobes. In another scene, she said, she accidentally head-butted Bowie but thankfully didn't break his nose.

A real-life romance did develop, she said. She was

struck by Bowie's intelligence, his charm and how he was so relaxed in chatting with fans.

After the shoot, she said, Bowie invited her to join him on tour in Europe. She traveled on a private jet and saw the frenzied fans.

"It was completely surreal," she said.

It didn't last long and Ching, who these days uses the Anglicized version of her family name Ng, returned Down Under.

"It's had the biggest influence on my life that I could have ever imagined," she said.

Her role in the video opened doors and she took some acting roles, including one in "Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome." But she loves the hospitality industry and now works as a restaurant manager.

In 2007, she ran the New York City Marathon, listening to Bowie's "Heroes" album as she crossed the finish line.

Ching didn't make contact with Bowie again until he played in New Zealand in 2004. He was doing a photo shoot with executives backstage when he saw her.

"His face lit up," she said. "He walked away from the photos and said, 'Geeling, you're here! Fantastic.'" AP

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

Xinhua/Song Weixing



Two women brave the cold weather while bathing in a hot spring on Tuesday in Chuzhou, a city located in east China's Anhui Province.