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Vietnam's pro-business prime minister has effectively withdrawn from a contest to become the Communist Party chief

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WORLD BRIEFS

CHINA-LAOS The prime minister of communist Laos assures US Secretary of State John Kerry that the small nation will help counter China's assertiveness in the South China Sea. [More on p11](#)



CHINA-VIETNAM Divided opinions within Vietnam's Communist Party on how to relate to giant neighbor and one-time ally China are among key factors in play at an eight-day congress to choose new leadership. [More on p12](#)

THAILAND A Japanese rocket maker says a large piece of metal that washed up on a beach in Thailand is likely part of a rocket launched by Japan, not a missing Malaysian plane. The discovery of the metal sparked speculation that it might be from Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, which disappeared almost two years ago. [More on p13](#)



MALAYSIA's leader defended the country's strict security laws, saying they are needed to fight terrorism as the Islamic State group warned of revenge over a crackdown on its members. PM Najib Razak said the terrorism threat is 'very real.' Opening a two-day international counter-terrorism conference, Najib said he will not apologize for taking steps to preserve national security. [More on backpage](#)



COLD TAKES ITS TOLL

One died in Macau, scores in greater China

P3

New bishop Lee attends 45th anniversary of Saint Paul's School

P4

Telecoms top complaints to Consumer Council

The Macau Consumer Council (CC) reportedly received around 7,500 requests during 2015. Of these requests, 5,499 were requests for information, 1,914 were complaints, and 26 were suggestions. Topping the list of complaints was the telecommunications sector, with a total of 450 complaints regarding both equipment and services. Following telecommunications were cases involving real estate reaching 153 complaints, and then the public transportation system with 128 complaints. The Food and Beverages sector ranked fourth, with 123 complaints. These sectors comprise almost 45 percent of the total number of complaints. Details regarding the requests received by the CC are due to be published shortly and can be accessed in the new issue of the Council's magazine "The Consumer."

UM wins two prizes in mathematical contest



The University of Macau (UM) announced in a press release yesterday that two of its student teams placed second at the Contemporary Undergraduate Mathematical Contest in Modeling of China (CUMCM), the largest mathematical modeling contest in the world. This is the second consecutive year in which UM has won prizes. The contest attracted over 28,000 teams from across the country this year, 14 of which came from Macau. CUMCM is organized by the China Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics, and is a national contest in the field of mathematical modeling.

CABE to open a chapter in the region

The Chartered Association of Building Engineers (CABE), which offers the qualification of Building Engineer, is opening a branch in Macau. Last year, Jacky Shack, a CABE Hong Kong Chapter member gave a talk about the association and its way of offering chartered membership to students in the School of Continuing Studies, Macau University of Science and Technology. CABE has also recently recognized two Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) degrees in architecture. The association has 12 offices located in the United Kingdom and Ireland. Apart from having recently opened a branch in Macau, CABE chapters will also be opened in Hong Kong, Singapore, the United States and Malaysia.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Macau can do much more in helping to mitigate climate change

A roundtable discussion held at the University of Saint Joseph (USJ) last week saw presentations from four academics, followed by an open discussion on the merits of the recent COP 21 agreement in Paris and general climate preservation efforts.

The discussion praised the international agreement last year, but added that much more needs to be done, particularly at a local level.

The Convention of the Parties (COP) 21 conference was held in Paris between November 30 and December 12 last year, producing what was heralded as a momentous agreement. The consensus reached puts in place measures to limit the increase of global temperatures above pre-industrial levels (1850) to 2 degrees Celsius.

Enhancing energy efficiency and the recycling system are priorities

However, professor David Gonçalves of the USJ clarified that the current efforts are not actually expected to cap the expected growth in temperatures by 2 degrees Celsius as envisioned in the agreement. Despite the efforts of the parties, the general understanding is that global temperatures will rise by 2.7 – 3 degrees by 2100.

Gonçalves largely praised the agreement, particularly the part that pledges USD100 billion annually from 2020, which would assist developing countries in reaching their goals to reduce carbon emissions. "This



Traffic pass residential buildings in Macau

agreement was not decided on at one meeting," he said, adding that the negotiations "have a history of over 20 years."

The discussion prompted scholars and attendees to examine the role that Macau can play in helping to mitigate climate change. Diogo Teixeira, a senior lecturer at the USJ's architecture program, said that the intervention of mayors and urban planners at a municipal level could be just as effective as international agreements.

Although tackling climate change is not in the mandate of local authorities, they can have a significant effect on reducing emissions, physical waste and energy inefficiency. Additionally, urban planners can make a difference in designing buildings which boost the resilience of cities – particularly those that are vulnerable to extreme weather and climate change.

Teixeira said that Macau needs to be more energy-efficient and needs a better recycling system. These are issues that can be at least partially addressed by local authorities. The lecturer also made some remarks about Macau's air and water quality, which he assessed as "similar to that of a developing country."

"People ask me why I ride a bike in Macau... I don't

know... maybe I will be a martyr," he joked. Outside the scope of the municipality, however, the scholars agreed that countries must cooperate with the guidance of international agreements if governments are serious about addressing climate change.

In previous years, countries such as China, India and Saudi Arabia, have been especially reluctant to adopt stringent measures to reduce carbon emissions, claiming that the proposals adversely affect developing countries' ability to industrialize.

For China, total emissions and per capita emissions both increased substantially between 1990 and 2012. The country is now the biggest exporter of total emissions, but still lags behind the U.S.,

Russia and Canada in per capita emissions.

Liu Jingjing of the Macau Ricci Institute said that Chinese attitudes to climate change are developing, with Xi's administration taking what she described as a "U-turn" in climate policy.

Historically, she said, "China has given priority to developing the economy rather than saving the planet."

For example, at the COP meeting in Copenhagen in 2009, Xie Zhenhua, the head of the Chinese climate delegation, said: "China has the right to develop the use of dirty technology just as wealthy nations have done."

However, China's participation at COP 21 signified a policy reversal in the world's most populous country. Aside from the fact that the recent summit was the first time that China's Head of State attended the talks, the Chinese delegation also announced the ambitious target of peaking total emissions by around 2030.

In addition, they aim to reduce CO2 emissions per unit of GDP by 60 to 65 percent below 2005 levels by 2030, and intend to increase carbon forest stocks by 4.5 billion cubic meters – an increase that is equivalent to at least two times the geographical size of the UK. **Staff reporter**

'SPECIAL INTERESTS' FOIL CLEANER BUSES ALLUDES PROFESSOR

ON THE sidelines of the COP 21 Roundtable Discussion, assistant professor for Christian studies, Franz Gassner complained that "special interests" prevented Macau from having greener buses. "Why are there not cleaner buses?" Gassner asked, adding that "it makes you wonder about the special interests here in Macau." Gassner was speaking in relation to the "special interests"

that had watered down some aspects of the COP 21 agreement in Paris. "Special interests must be uncovered," he said. However, a senior lecturer in the USJ's architecture program, Diogo Teixeira, pointed out the issue of greener buses is also constrained by other factors, like Macau's physical geography and the legality of alternative transport services.

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DIRECTOR AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF_Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com
MANAGING EDITOR_Paulo Barbosa paulo.barbosa@macaudailytimes.com
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS_Eric Sautedé, Leanda Lee, Severo Portela

DESIGN EDITOR_João Jorge Magalhães magalhaes@macaudailytimes.com | NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS
Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Daniel Beitler, Emille Tran, Grace Yu, Irene Sam, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips,
João Palla Martins, Joseph Cheung, Juliet Risdon, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Robert Carroll (Hong Kong
correspondent), Rodrigo de Matos (cartoonist), Ruan Du Toit Bester, Sandra Norte (designer), Viviana Seguí | ASSOCIATE
CONTRIBUTORS_JML Property, MacauHR, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars | NEWS AGENCIES_Associated Press, Bloomberg,
Lusa News Agency, MacauHub, MacauNews, Xinhua | SECRETARY_Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

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ADMINISTRATOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

SECRETARY Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com

ADDRESS Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C,
MACAU SAR Telephone: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84

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Cold snap takes its toll, expected to draw to a close

THE weather yesterday was not as severe as initially expected, with added warmth from the sunshine ensuring that temperatures settled between 3 and 10 degrees Celsius, as opposed to the 1 to 7 degrees previously forecasted by the Macau Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG).

At 6 p.m. last night, recorded temperatures across the SMG's various weather stations ranged between 7.1 and 9.5 degrees, according to the bureau's website.

Despite the sunnier-than-expected weather, the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau notified residents on Sunday of the closure of primary, kindergarten and special education schools in anticipation of the cold weather. Representatives from the bureau now say that schools will re-open today.

Meanwhile, the cold weather took its toll yesterday with six cases of hypothermia reported in Macau.

According to the Health Bureau, yesterday morning a woman suffering from chronic illness was transferred from a senior citizens' home to the Central Hospital diagnosed with hypothermia. Doctors attempted to resuscitate her but were unsuccessful, culminating in her death.

Between 4 p.m. on Sunday and 4 p.m. yesterday, a total of five further cases of hypothermia were reported at the Conde de São Januário Central



Hospital and the Kiang Wu Hospital. All of the victims are male between the ages of 20 and 75 years of age. One of the five men has been described as being in a serious condition.

Forecasts suggest that temperatures will continue to rise marginally in the next few days, reaching historical averages toward the end of the week. Olavo Rasquinho, a weather

expert and former Secretary of the U.N. Typhoon Committee based in Macau, told the Times that the cold snap "is due to the winter monsoon that is affecting the south of China and the northern part of the South China Sea."

"It is a characteristic situation [for] winter, but the temperatures are somehow lower than normal," Rasquinho said, before adding, "We cannot relate this intense cold surge with any climatological event, such as the strong El Nino," which has been affecting the area since May.

According to Rasquinho, who also served as the director of the SMG from 1996 until 1998 during the Portuguese administration, the lowest temperature recorded in Macau was -1.8 degrees Celsius on January 26, 1948, exactly 68 years ago. **Staff reporter**

Taiwan's elderly feel brunt of bitter cold

Fifty-seven people have died in Taiwan's greater Taipei area due to the unusually cold weather that has plagued many parts of the world in recent days.

Temperatures in the island's capital city plunged to a 16-year low of 4 degrees Celsius at one point, causing difficulties for senior residents of Taiwan.

A city spokesperson, who identified himself only as Chang, told Associated Press that the lack of central heating in private homes, compounded by the bitterly cold weather, had caused heart-related difficulties and shortness of breath for some elderly residents, and strokes

and hypothermia for others.

"In our experience, it's not the actual temperature but the sudden drop that's too sudden for people's circulatory systems," Chang said.

The cold front also covered Taipei's highest peak in nine centimeters of snow, and left vehicles stranded as residents ascended the mountain to see the rare weather phenomenon.

The same polar front resulted in the closure of schools yesterday in Hong Kong, where 130 people had been trapped a day earlier on a peak in the city, which rarely experiences such cold weather. Hong Kong temperatures reached 3.1 degrees on Sunday. **MDT/Agencies**

MSAR takes part in global tourism and security meeting

GOVERNMENT representatives attended a high-level meeting on global tourism and security organized by two United Nations agencies, held last week in Madrid, Spain.

It was the first time that the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) had organized a joint event. The aim of the meeting was to provide a platform for different countries to exchange relevant information in order to promote a safe tourism environment.

The Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Alexis Tam, headed the local delegation. According to him, participating in this event shows that the UNWTO attributes great importance to the MSAR in the context of worldwide tourism. For the participants, the event reinforced existing knowledge relating to strategies and measures in tourism security, creating an



Alexis Tam (second from left)

important reference for the government to continue to pursue a safe tourism environment.

At the meeting, which was attended by representatives of 86 countries and regions, including 42 ministerial-level officials, and the Secretary-General of UNWTO, Taleb Rifai, underlined the importance of sustainable development in the tourism indus-

try. He highlighted the need to use information technologies to promote tourism, and to disseminate information efficiently to promote a safe tourist environment.

Mr Rifai also said: "Despite occurrences in several countries in recent years relating to both natural disasters and incidents caused by Man, we must not let fear overcome our decisions to travel."

The Secretary-General reaffirmed that the development of the tourism industry is a great contributor to employment and economic growth of many regions around the world, thereby justifying the need for a collective focus on industry sustainability and the creation of cooperative structures to reduce travel risks.

Last year, the UNWTO registered a year-on-year growth of 4.4 percent in the number of tourists traveling around the world, establishing a new record of 1,184 million travellers. **RM**

Witness: Alan Ho supervised 'Young Single Ladies'

The former executive director of the Hotel Lisboa, Alan Ho, was allegedly one of three people with the power to change reservations at the "special" check-in counter that oversaw the activity of the women who were known at the hotel by the acronym YSL ("Young Single Ladies"). The revelation was made yesterday during the latest court hearing in the case of a group of suspects, among them Stanley Ho's nephew, who are accused of having been involved in a prostitution ring operating inside Hotel Lisboa.

Rotary holds microfilm contest



The Rotary International District 3450 has collaborated with the Golden Flower Awards to commence the "Rotary Golden Flower Youth Microfilm Awards." The contest is calling for members of the youth population in Hong Kong, Macau and mainland China to share stories containing positive messages by producing microfilms between 3 and 10 minutes long. The content or main theme should portray one of more of the core values of Rotary, which include Service, Fellowship, Diversity, Integrity and Leadership, according to the issued press release. Participants should be below the age of 30 and should be currently residing in Hong Kong, mainland China or Macau. The deadline for submissions is 6:30 p.m. on January 29, 2016.

SSM: Transfer of patients unnecessary most times



The Health Bureau (SSM) director Lei Chin Ion has revealed that more than 90 percent of oncological cases from last year were treated in local hospitals, before adding that not every critical patient needs to be sent elsewhere for medical treatment. According to Lei, "It is not possible to hand over all patients who ask to be transferred to the U.S. medical services." He added that if a specialized committee decides that local hospitals are capable of providing treatment to patients, then they will not be transferred abroad. Lei informed the public that the Health Bureau would promptly deal with all payments based on the needs of each medical case. He also mentioned that 2,954 patients were sent out of Macau to undergo treatment.

FMBA host Shanghai 1930s-style charity gala

THE France-Macau Business Association (FMBA) held its seventh annual gala dinner on Friday, with the theme, "Shanghai: Le Paris de L'Orient." The aesthetic of the event replicated the glamour of Shanghai in the 1920s and 30s when the city was considered the cultural capital of Asia.

The gala dinner was attended by over 320 guests in the Grand Ballroom of MGM Macau. They were treated to an evening of music and dance performances tailored specifically for the event.

Among those performing was violinist John Ma from Collegium MCMC, who presented a rendition of "Soirée Musicale," and choreographer Lisa Souissa of Absolute Entertainment Macao, which is known for its show-girls and cabaret-style performances.

Event organizers said that the gala dinner raised a total of MOP68,300, which will be used to support the work



of two charities, Architecture Sans Frontiers – Macau (ASF Macau) and Cradle of Hope.

ASF Macau operates at a local and regional level to promote a sustainable and socially responsible environment for disadvantaged people and communities by improving access to shelter, basic sanitation, health and education.

Cradle of Hope is a non-profit charity organization based in Macau that has helped abandoned babies and at-risk children since its establishment in 2000.

The Chairman of the FMBA, Rutger Verschuren, commended the cooperation between French organizers and their Macau-based counterparts, saying that "these meaningful exchanges have contributed to flourishing commercial ties between Macau and France in previous years."

"As Macau continues to transform into a world center for tourism and leisure, we hope to support our members to leverage on arising opportunities, and help foster trade and cultural

partnerships and friendships for a healthy future together," Verschuren added.

Eric Berti, Consul-General of France in Hong Kong and Macau, also attended the gala dinner, and praised the work of organizations like the FMBA. "French excellence is now everywhere in Macau: luxury products, wine and gastronomy of course, but also in utilities, infrastructure and hospitality."

"We even have an Eiffel Tower under construction here!" he exclaimed.

EDUCATION

Saint Paul's School celebrates 45th anniversary

SAINT Paul's School celebrated its 45th anniversary at an event held yesterday morning.

As part of celebrations, 82 teachers and staff members received awards in recognition of having served the institution for 20 years.

The ceremony began with an opening video, through which 2016 was predicted to be a year of innovative change.

Fr Alejandro Salcedo, principal of the school, expressed his gratitude to all 117 teachers and staff members who are currently serving at the institution. The new Bishop of the Diocese of Macau, Stephen Lee, also delivered a speech in which he acknowledged the dedicated work of the educators, as well as other staff members.

Ng Sai Muih, a staff member who received an award for having worked at the school for the last 21 years, was asked how she felt about working for such a long time at the school. "I have been enjoying the time with the students. I have listened to them pray every morning. My son graduated from here. I am happy about that," she told the Times. **Staff reporter**

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Man stayed overnight in supermarkets to steal

A 27-year-old local resident was arrested on charges of theft from two supermarkets, with the first case dating back to October last year.

The Judiciary Police (PJ) announced yesterday that the suspect is accused of stealing alcoholic drinks, collectively worth about MOP140,000, from two different supermarkets and on two different occasions.

Although the cases occurred with an interval of about two months, the "modus operandi" was the same in both cases.

The alleged thief entered the supermarket at a time when the shop was crowded, hid in a secluded corner and waited for the rest of the day until the shop closed. He then emerged from his hideout and stole the goods. After this, he returned to his hideout where he waited for the shop to reopen and to become crowded on the next day in order to flee with the stolen goods without being spotted.

Despite the clever plan and remarkable patience, he was spotted and was eventually caught on January 23 while walking along a street in the central district.

The suspect then admitted to the crimes to the police and revealed that he had taken the 14 bottles of liquor with a high alcohol content to mainland China, one by one, where he sold them.

The suspect was presented to the Public Prosecutors Office where he was accused of aggravated theft. **RM**

CRIME

Alleged thief caught after taking 'selfies'

Renato Marques

A domestic helper, who was illegally residing in the territory, was caught in a strange case involving theft and false statements.

According to information released yesterday by the Public Security Police Force (PSP), events started to unfold when the victim, a 21-year-old professional model from mainland China, asked a friend if she could stay in his house in Macau for a few days.

The house owner accepted her request and asked a domestic helper from Vietnam, who was working for him part-time, to help with the necessary arrangement for the stay.

All seemed to be running smoothly until, on January 12, the model returned to the house af-



Yesterday's police press conference

ter a few days of staying in a local hotel. Upon arriving, she could not find most of the belongings she had left in the house, namely a smartphone, a tablet and a sum of cash. In total, she claims to have lost around MOP127,000.

Since there were no other suspects, she voiced her suspicions to the domestic helper, who

promptly denied all the accusations.

After 12 days of doubts over what could have happened to the possessions, the answer came via iCloud, an online platform that allows users to store personal files on the web.

The victim had an active account that was set up to immediately upload to the iCloud account all

photos taken with her mobile devices, and it was with surprise that she saw some new uploads arriving in her account showing "selfie" pictures of the domestic helper.

After being taken to a police station where she continued to deny the theft, the 40-year-old Vietnamese national then attempted to provide fake identification to the police officers.

The police then discovered the domestic helper to be residing illegally in Macau with an expired visa. Moreover, she had failed to present herself regularly to the immigration police regarding a previous case of theft in which she was involved, and for which she was awaiting trial.

She was then accused of both aggravated theft and providing false declarations to the police and was sent to the Public Prosecutors Office for further investigation. Although she admitted to providing false declarations regarding her identity to the police, she continues to deny the theft.

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RETAIL

Is Miniso a Japan-based chain store?

CHINESE-JAPANESE brand Miniso has come under fire over recent weeks after Internet users widely questioned the brand's origins. Although the company's design philosophy is attributed to Japanese designer, Miyake Junya, its business head is 38-year-old Ye Guo Fu from China.

Rumors have been fueled by the brand's lack of popularity in Japan. According to the Straits Times, Miniso has just four stores in Japan, while it has more than 1,100 in China. Many of these stores are located in Guangdong – where the company's Chinese headquarters are based – and also in Macau and Hong Kong.

The contention led some to claim that the products are better described as “made in China to look Japanese.”

And the brand's logo closely resembles some of its competitors in Japan, evoking other Chinese copy-cat brands on the mainland, where copyright legislation is negligible. Critics have drawn comparisons with other Japanese high-end dollar



Ocean Qiao

stores, Muji and Uniqlo, both of which share similarities in design with Miniso.

The Times interviewed 24-year-old Ocean Qiao, the general manager of the Miniso store on Avenida da Praia Grande, who explained that the brand's lack of popularity in Japan was not the result of inauthenticity, but a result of the reputation of better-established competitors, like the 100-yen store Daiso.

“People in Japan prefer to go to Daiso. It's the same with McDonald's and KFC in the U.S. People just prefer one over the

other,” said Qiao, before adding, “Miniso is the KFC [in the analogy].”

However despite the manager alluding to the fact that Miniso might be regarded as a second-rate alternative, his comments did not account for all of the concerns relating to lack of authenticity.

Reports from Internet users suggest that the packaging used for the products contains an odd mix of characters from the various Japanese writing systems leading media website, The Beijinger, to claim that

it makes for “an interesting but incoherent bastardization of the Japanese language.”

Upon being asked why Miniso seems to have surged in popularity in China, Qiao – who is Chinese himself – says “people here like Japanese products because they regard them as being of a high quality.”

Meanwhile, chief designer, Miyake Junya, told The Straits Times that it was “funny” that “the high performance of Miniso in China has overshadowed the business in Japan.”

“I do wish to see Miniso beco-

me more successful in Japan, but I find it even more exciting to share the Japanese design philosophy with people around the world,” he added.

The store on Avenida da Praia Grande, is the second largest of the four stores operating in Macau, yet according to Qiao, it is the busiest. The largest store is located near the border gate in the northern district.

He said that the store is far more popular with local Filipinos and mainland tourists, than with the locals themselves.

“The Filipinos love the cars [toys] and the Bluetooth sets which they want to bring back to the Philippines [when they visit].”

He added that as many as 70 percent of the store's customers are Filipino.

Qiao told the Times that since December, business has been exceptionally busy due to the Christmas and New Year period and in preparation for the Chinese New Year holidays. He speculated that many Filipinos are buying products as gifts to take back to the Philippines. **Staff reporter**

“People here like Japanese products because they regard them as high quality.”

OCEAN QIAO
STORE MANAGER

THE decline in the cost of jet fuel prices has resulted in Tiger Airways (Tigerair) tripling its profits in its fiscal third quarter.

As one of Singapore's main budget carriers which flies to Macau, Tigerair is reported to have earned S\$6.8 million (MOP38.2m) for the three months ending Dec 31, compared to the S\$2.2 million in the same quarter a year ago.

Group revenue increased by 1.5 percent to S\$187.4 million, mainly due to hi-

Tiger Airways triples profits in Q3

gher lease rental income from aircraft and engine leasing arrangements with Tigerair Australia and Tigerair Taiwan. Yet passenger seat revenue lessened by 3.3 percent to S\$143.4 million.

Bloomberg data showed that the price of global crude oil fell by about a third over the past year in December. Brent Cru-

de fell to a 12-year low of US\$27.10 last week.

“The low fuel-price environment has helped our third-quarter performance and we expect to continue benefiting from it,” said Tigerair CEO Lee Lik Hsin.

Despite the drop in the carrier's expenses, it has been partially eroded by higher maintenance char-

ges, higher aircraft rental costs and the appreciation of the US dollar against the Singaporean dollar.

The airline will continue to deepen its collaboration with Scoot and the rest of the Singapore Airlines group for future sustainable growth, and is currently working on network expansion opportunities.

Staff reporter



Customers stand in line at a Tigerair check-in counter at the Hong Kong airport

corporate bits

The Venetian Macao will be in attendance with the Macau Trade and Investment Institute at the Asia-Pacific Incentives and Meetings Expo (AIME), which is to be held at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, Australia, on February 23 and 24.

The event brings together decision-makers and buyers from across the Asia-Pacific region to provide updates about the latest from the travel industry.

To showcase its extensive conference and event services and its facilities, Venetian's booth, bearing the number 4314, will promote the new product offerings and meeting spaces at Sands Resorts Cotai Strip Macao, which boasts 140,000 square meters of “flexible and versa-

VENETIAN TO PARTICIPATE IN AIME 2016



tile” meeting and exhibition space.

Conference organizers event planners and delegates can take advantage of a range of promotions that are part of “Macao Meetings with

More” including discounts on packages and complimentary rooms. This offer will be valid until December 22, 2017.

The Venetian promises that its production team will create events with spectacular entertainment tailored to the needs of its clients. Among the entertainment on offer will be “Streetmosphere” performers, singing gondoliers and characters from the DreamWorks Experience.

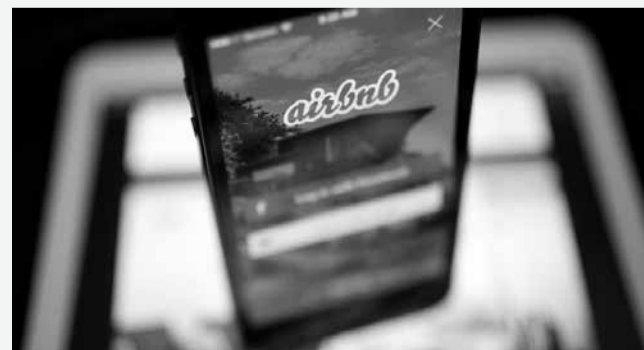
A press release issued by Sands Resorts Cotai Strip Macao also noted that the Parisian Macao is soon to bring an additional luxury experience to the city, along with more restaurants, shopping and entertainment options.

AIRBNB STUDY FINDS TRAVELLERS MIX BUSINESS WITH PLEASURE

A study developed by Airbnb and CWT Solutions Group has unveiled some trends observed among Airbnb passengers that appear to show business travellers mixing business and leisure travel.

The findings showed that business travellers spent around twice as long in Airbnb accommodation when compared with traditional accommodation, indicating that professionals may be extending their trips to the proximate weekend, mixing their business trip with leisure activities.

Also according to the findings, slightly over a third of business travel bookings with Airbnb were for more than one person, and around 45 percent of the travel was international.



“Since introducing Airbnb for Business, we've seen the number of companies using it grow enormously,” said Chip Conley, Head of Global Hospitality and Strategy at Airbnb. “Businesses have clearly been longing for a better way to manage their employee's

travel needs and business travellers seem eager for change from the traditional business travel accommodations.”

The top destinations for business travel according to the data analyzed included San Francisco, London and New York City.



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Followed by short update on Macao Real Estate Market
Wednesday, 27th January 2016



Venue: Ocean Room I, 1/F
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12.30: Drinks
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TOURISM

Yen-yuan shift curbs budgets of Chinese buying Japan's massagers

Chikako Mogi and Hiroko Komiya

CHINESE tourists tumbling off buses into the Laox duty-free store in Tokyo's bustling Ginza district say the yuan's drop against the yen may make them think twice about splurging during their shopping tours.

"Exchange rates are important," said a 27-year-old Beijinger called Wang, who declined to give his full name but was happy to show off his purchases - a face-massaging tool and electric thermos. While Japanese goods are better quality than those in China, the currency market determines what he can afford with his daily shopping budget equivalent to USD800, he said.

The number of Chinese visitors to Japan, which peaked at 591,510 in August, fell to 347,100 in December, as the yuan weakened about 10 percent against the yen since the end of July. That's a reversal from the 20 percent surge in the previous 12 months that helped Chinese tourism to Japan more than double in 2015. The 41 percent drop in visitors was steeper than the seasonal decline in 2014.

Japan is increasingly relying on tourism as businesses cut investment and households curb



A temple in Tokyo

spending. Visitors from around the world spent 3.4 trillion yen (\$28.6 billion) in 2015, about the same as the nation's annual semiconductor or automobile-part exports, according to the Ministry of Finance. Economists forecast growth of only 1 percent this year and just 0.6 percent in 2017, even as Prime Minister Shinzo Abe enters the fourth year of a premiership focused on ending 20 years of economic stagnation.

"The strong yuan has enabled many people to go on shopping binges in Japan even when the Chinese economy has been wobbly," said Daisuke Karakama, chief market economist at Mizuho Bank Ltd. in Tokyo. "The yuan has been fixed at an artificially high level, which hasn't reflected the country's economic condition, and the re-

percussions are now being felt."

The yuan bought 18.003 yen as of 6:41 p.m. in Tokyo yesterday, down from as strong as 20.285 yen on June 5, before the People's Bank of China surprised the market first with a devaluation in August and then with lower daily fixings this month. China's economic growth slowed to 6.9 percent last year, the weakest pace in a quarter century.

The exchange rate matters because, after visitor numbers from China climbed 107 percent last year to 5 million, they made up a quarter of the overall total, according to Japan Tourism Agency data released in January. The Chinese each spent an average 283,842 yen, the most of any nationality.

Forty-three percent of Chinese tourists surveyed by Hong

■ The number of Chinese visitors to Japan, which peaked at 591.5K in Aug, fell to 347.1K in Dec

Kong-based brokerage CLSA Ltd. said they would reduce the number of their outbound trips if the yuan weakened 10 percent in the next year, and 35 percent they spent on shopping. Thirty-five percent said they would switch to cheaper destinations, according to the report from Hong Kong-based analysts Aaron Fischer and Marcus Liu published this month.

A regular visitor who gave his name only as Liu said the exchange rate was making him put off purchases he was unsure on. Liu, 46, paid about 2 million yen for a compact-disk player and amplifier from Acuphase Laboratory Inc. in one of his two visits last year. Shujing Lu, 25, said Japan will remain her destination of choice regardless of currency moves

because its products are higher quality. Favorite purchases of Chinese tourists include hi-tech rice cookers and even electronic toilet seats.

Analysts are becoming increasingly bearish on the yuan as China's economy slows. The median forecast is for it to weaken to 6.6 per dollar by March 31 from an earlier prediction of 6.2 made at the end of July.

At the same time, they are less negative on the yen, expecting it to weaken to 122 per dollar, from an earlier estimate for it to depreciate to 126, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. It's 118.72 currently.

JPMorgan & Chase Co. sees scope for the yuan to decline another 10 percent against the yen by year-end. In addition to sapping retail spending in Japan, this threatens to increase deflationary pressure as imports from China become cheaper.

Tohru Sasaki, head of Japan markets research at the company in Tokyo, said he expects the yuan will weaken to 6.9 per dollar by year-end, and at the same time the yen will strengthen against the greenback to around 110. "The yuan will be considerably weaker against the yen, falling below 16," he said. "That would have a wide-reaching impact on Japan's economy." **Bloomberg**

HOSPITALITY

Hilton launches new budget hotel chain aimed at young guests

HILTON is launching a new hotel brand, focusing on budget travelers looking to spend USD75 to \$90 a night.

The new brand, named Tru, aims to compete with economy and midscale chains like Comfort Inn, Fairfield Inn and La Quinta.

Hilton Worldwide - which has more than 4,500 hotels globally - already has "limited service" brands like Hilton Garden Inn, Hampton Inn, Homewood Suites and Home2 Suites. This would be a new market for the chain.

Hilton CEO Chris Nassetta notes that 40 percent of the demand for hotel rooms comes in this price segment, the largest of any

market. He also says many of the economy and midscale chains offer an "inconsistent product and service delivery," giving Hilton the opportunity to build loyalty among younger travelers whose spending is limited right now, but could afford a more upscale location in the future.

"You go in a lot of the competition and it's like Russian roulette," Nassetta says. "There's really nobody doing it well at this price point." Many of the hotels in the segment were once part of more upscale brands but as their owners couldn't keep up with renovation costs, they downgraded to economy chains.

Tru properties won't have had a prior life as a

hotel. They will be mostly new construction with the others being urban conversions of historic buildings - banks, office buildings - into the hotel.

Hilton is launching the chain at a large conference for hotel investors - The Americas Lodging and Investment Summit - with 102 locations already signed and an addition 30 deals in various stages of negotiations and approval.

"That's bigger than entire hotel companies," Nassetta says.

The time for Hilton to enter this market is good.

While chain luxury and upscale hotels have the highest occupancy rates and average nightly room rates, their growth in the

past year has trailed the lower end of the market. The high end hotels have seen less than one percent growth in occupancy and less than 5 percent growth in revenue per available room, according to research firm STR. Midscale and economy hotel chains however have seen roughly 2 percent growth in occupancy and more than 6 percent growth in revenue per available room.

The hotels will be in a mix of markets including urban, airport and suburban. The areas include Atlanta, Dallas, Houston, Chicago, Denver, Portland, Oregon, Charlotte, North Carolina, San Antonio, Texas and Nashville, Tennessee.



Artistic rendition of a Hilton Tru hotel

To ensure that owners are able to keep the hotels fresh, Hilton made sure they would be cheaper to build and maintain.

The typical hotel will have 98 rooms and sit on 1.5 acres of land. It will cost \$84,000 a room to build, excluding land. Compare that to Hilton's Hampton Inn brand. Those typically have 130 rooms, sit on 2 acres and cost \$110,000 a room to build.

Rooms themselves will be different. Don't expect a closet. Instead there will be an open space with

hangers and hooks on the wall. And the traditional hotel desk is replaced with a chair that includes a spot for a tiny laptop or tablet. The platform bed doesn't have a box spring and there's a space-saving bench that rests over the heating and air conditioning unit.

The brand is aimed at younger travelers on a budget. But Nassetta says it is also a great way to introduce them to Hilton.

"Get them loyal to our system," he says, "and trade up as they move on in their lives." **AP**

ECONOMY

Oil drops as China diesel use falls, Saudis to maintain spending

AP PHOTO



A worker waits for cars at a gas station in Mecca, Saudi Arabia

Mark Shenk & Rakteem Katakey

OIL dropped after Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest crude exporter, said low prices won't reduce its spending on energy projects and China's diesel consumption dropped for a fourth consecutive month.

Futures dropped as much as 4.6 percent in New York. Saudi

Arabian Oil Co., also known as Saudi Aramco, is maintaining its investment plans despite the rout in the crude market, Chairman Khalid Al-Falih said yesterday. Diesel use in China dropped 5.6 percent in December compared with a year earlier and gasoline consumption grew at the slowest pace in more than two years.

Oil resumed its decline after

the biggest two-day rally in more than seven years as concerns persist over ample U.S. stockpiles, steady production from Saudi Arabia and Russia and the outlook for increasing Iranian shipments after the end of sanctions. Prices may take as long as three years to normalize, according to Bank of Montreal Chief Executive Officer William Downe.

"A decline is to be expected after a giant move like we just had," said Bob Yawger, director of the futures division at Mizuho Securities USA in New York. "We're also down because the Chinese demand numbers were off considerably, especially diesel. The Saudis aren't helping the market by deciding that they will go full-speed ahead with their in-

vestment plans."

West Texas Intermediate for March delivery dropped USD1.16, or 3.6 percent, to \$31.03 a barrel at 9:15 a.m. on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Total volume traded was 72 percent higher than the 100-day average. Front-month prices rose 21 percent over two sessions at the close Friday after the February contract expired Wednesday at \$26.55 a barrel, the lowest since 2003.

Brent for March settlement slipped 99 cents, or 3.1 percent, to \$31.19 a barrel on the London-based ICE Futures Europe exchange. The contract gained 10 percent to \$32.18 Friday. Prices advanced 11 percent last week. The European benchmark crude traded at a 16-cent premium to WTI.

Markets, including oil and stocks, rallied last week after European Central Bank President Mario Draghi signaled on Jan. 21 that stimulus could be boosted as soon as March. The U.S. Federal Reserve's meeting will be in focus this week following its first interest rate increase in 11 years.

Saudi Aramco is spending as much now as it did before the crash in crude prices, signaling no surrender in Saudi Arabia's battle with rivals. It's formulated a new strategy in response to cheaper crude, Al-Falih said at a conference in Riyadh. The state-run producer can sustain low oil prices for "a long, long time," he said.

In China, the world's biggest energy user, diesel consumption – a barometer of the country's industrial activity – will stay flat or fall in 2016, while gasoline use will rise by 200,000 barrels a day, according to an International Energy Agency forecast last month.

HONG KONG

Man wanted for US killings agrees to extradition

A Chinese fugitive arrested in Hong Kong in connection with the slayings of his teenage nephews in California told a court yesterday he won't fight extradition to the United States.

Shi Deyun told a magistrate several times that he was willing to be sent back to the United States "as soon as possible," adding that the allegations against him weren't true.

Shi arrived Saturday afternoon in Hong Kong on a flight from Los Angeles. Police, acting on a re-

quest from U.S. officials, apprehended him at the airport. He was taken to a hospital and then formally arrested early Sunday.

U.S. investigators believe Shi killed the 15- and 16-year-old boys before fleeing. The two were found with head trauma in their Arcadia, California, home after police responded to a 911 call. Investigators say he assaulted his wife, who is the sister of the dead teens' father, on Thursday after learning she wanted a divorce.

Shi declined the services of a duty lawyer and planned to represent himself. He was wearing a grey blazer over a black shirt and had a scratch on his right cheek.

When the judge asked if he agreed to extradition, Shi said through a Mandarin interpreter, "I consent as soon as possible."

Shi also applied for bail, saying he could offer a "high amount of bail money" because he had assets in mainland China and the United States.

"The details of the alle-

gations against me are not true," Shi said. "But I'm not inclined to go into the details and give a rebuttal here. I believe I will restore the truth in the U.S. with supporting facts."

He said he was in poor health and had a history of cardio disease and poor mental health.

However, Chief Magistrate Clement Lee refused his application and he was remanded into custody.

The case was adjourned until Feb. 11. AP

AP PHOTO



Chinese fugitive Deyun Shi (left) escorted by a police officer in a police van, arrives at a magistrate court in Hong Kong

Daniel Malloy, Vientiane

Laos assures US it will help counter Chinese assertiveness

THE prime minister of communist Laos assured U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry yesterday that this small nation will help counter China's assertiveness in the South China Sea.

Laos this year takes the rotating chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, with the group's heads of state scheduled to hold a special meeting next month in Sunnylands, California, at the invitation of President Barack Obama as part of his foreign policy to reach out to the region as a counterweight to China.

Kerry's visit to the landlocked nation of fewer than 7 million people was meant to pave the way for the summit, with a goal of making sure Laos holds the group. Kerry arrived in the Laotian capital Sunday.

Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong "was very clear that he wants a unified ASEAN and he wants maritime rights protected and he wants to avoid militarization and avoid the conflict," Kerry told reporters. "And that will develop as we go into Sunnylands, and there will be a greater, I'm sure, articulation of that unity going forward."

ASEAN nations such as Vietnam and the Philippines have become increasingly concerned with China's territorial claims in the South China Sea, including the construction of man-made islands and airstrips in contested areas.

But other ASEAN nations are more pro-China, including Cambodia, which blocked ASEAN from reaching consensus on the South China Sea during its 2012 chairmanship of the group. Cambodia is Kerry's next stop on an around the world diplomatic marathon this week that will also take him to China.



U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry (left) shakes hands with Lao Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong after their meeting at the Prime Minister's Office in Vientiane, Laos

Murray Hiebert, a Laos expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, noted that "these statements by Lao leaders aren't totally surprising."

He noted that a Communist Party congress in Laos last week removed a party chief generally considered as pro-Chinese and replaced him

with one who appears to be more evenhanded in his views about China and Vietnam, Laos' other big neighbor and fellow member of ASEAN.

Later this year, Obama will become the first U.S. president to visit Laos for the ASEAN summit. Laos is one of the last few communist nations remaining in the world.

The country has moved away from a hard line communist system in the past two decades, but like its close ally Vietnam, it retains a one-party political system and its government has been criticized for being intolerant of dissent.

Kerry said relations with Laos are improving after a period of war and mutual suspi-

cion. In addition to meetings with Thammavong and Thongloun Sisoulith, the deputy prime minister and foreign minister, Kerry toured That Luang, the golden-spired Buddhist structure that is Laos' most sacred monument. Kerry also was scheduled to meet with members of Obama's Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative.

Kerry and Laos' leaders discussed increased U.S. funding for a variety of projects here. That includes the removal of unexploded bombs dropped by American warplanes during the Vietnam War era, which still cause frequent casualties. Kerry, a Vietnam war veteran, also brought up a new USD6 million child nutrition program, and U.S.-funded "smart infrastructure" for the Mekong River.

"We still have concerns about human rights and freedom of expression and other issues, and I raised those," Kerry said. "But it is also - you know, we are partnering on a wide range of issues."

Phil Robertson, the deputy Asia director for Human Rights Watch, said he hopes for more human rights pressure on Laos as the country prepares to host world leaders all year.

"The international community should demand Laos' leaders end their restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly, stop their crushing censorship of the media, and permit freedom of association for workers to form independent trade unions," Robertson said. **AP**

Report: 2 Chinese killed in Laos suspected bombing

TWO Chinese citizens have been killed and one injured in a suspected bomb attack in central Laos, China's official Xinhua News Agency reported yesterday, a mountainous area that in recent months has seen an increase in violence and in years past was the scene of clashes between government forces and the Hmong ethnic minority.

The incident took place about 8:00 a.m. on Sunday in the province of Xaysomboun when the victims, one of whom was employed by a Chinese

mining company, were riding in a vehicle, Xinhua reported.

Chinese diplomats have visited the survivor, identified by the surname Zhou, and have requested a swift investigation, Xinhua said. An official contacted at the Lao Embassy in Vietnam, the country's closest ally, said he was unaware of the report.

China is a major investor in Laos' rich abundance of minerals and other natural resources and shares its one-party form of authoritarian communist government. A special Chinese presidential

envoy, Song Tao, is due to visit the country this week, Xinhua said.

Since November, there has been an increase in violence in the province, though the perpetrators have not been identified, nor has the tightly controlled state press provided any details.

In a notice posted on its website, the U.S. Embassy in Laos in November prohibited its employees from traveling to Xaysomboun province due to what it described as nighttime shooting attacks by unidentified assailants. It said one person was kil-

led on Nov. 17 and another wounded on Nov. 18.

The Hmong fought on the side of a pro-American regime during the Vietnam War, and after the communist Pathet Lao took over in 1975, many fled abroad or hid in the jungle. Until a few years ago, there were several small bands of Hmong resisters who continued to hide in the jungle and occasionally clash with security forces, but most eventually surrendered.

The U.S. government-funded news service Radio Free Asia has reported

additional attacks in November, December and January, citing unnamed police and other sources. In the latest reported attack, a bus came under fire on Jan. 14, leaving about a dozen passengers hurt but none killed, said RFA.

While RFA's reports could not be independently confirmed, it has a record of being well-informed about Laotian affairs.

In a report forwarded to The Associated Press earlier this month, Hmong sympathizers gave their own version of the recent

violence, saying that from mid-November until the end of December, there had been six attacks by government forces on groups of Hmong, killing at least seven and wounding 21.

The report, which came from a source which has provided accurate information in the past, also said that 13 Hmong villagers had been arrested in November for contacting people in the jungle, meaning Hmong who are hiding from the authorities. The source declined to be named because of fears for his personal security. **AP**

VIETNAM

PM withdraws from contest for Communist Party chief

Yves Dam Van, Hanoi

VIETNAM'S pro-business prime minister has effectively withdrawn from a contest to become the Communist Party chief, clearing the way for his rival to keep the post in what appears to be a compromise to present a united front to the nation, delegates at a party congress said yesterday.

Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung had mounted a last-minute challenge during the congress after being excluded from an official list of candidates for positions in a key party panel. Had he continued his challenge, he could have become part of the Central Committee, and subsequently could have been in contention for party general secretary.

The path is now clear for Nguyen Phu Trong to stay as general secretary, the de facto top position in Vietnam's collective leadership.

Several delegates at the congress said Dung decided on Sunday to abide by party rules that obliged him to refuse the nomination for a Central



Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung

Committee slot proposed by his supporters. The congress then voted yesterday to accept his refusal, completing a formality. The Central Committee, one of two pillars of the ruling establishment, will be chosen today.

Trong has been trying unsuc-

cessfully for years to sideline Dung, and while contests for the top post are not unheard of, they are usually settled well before the party congress, which takes place once every five years to choose new leaders.

This year, the rivalry between

Dung and Trong has gone down to the wire in the party congress, which began last Thursday and ends this Thursday. But regardless of who is in power the fundamental makeup of the government and its policies will not change radically, according to analysts.

Dung has built a reputation for promoting economic reforms, and being bold enough to confront China's territorial assertiveness in the South China Sea. But even though Trong, a stolid party apparatchik with closer leanings toward China, is now set to take the top job, it doesn't mean the economic reforms will stall or Vietnam will capitulate to Chinese assertiveness in Vietnamese-claimed waters, according to observers.

"Ideologically, there isn't a yawning gap between Trong and Dung, although most people believe that the pace of economic reform might slow a bit if Trong remains at the helm and Dung is ousted," said Murray Hiebert, a Southeast Asian expert based in Washington, DC.

Dung, who rose through the ranks of the party and held se-

nior positions, is a two-term prime minister. His economic reforms have helped Vietnam attract a flood of foreign investment and helped triple the per capita GDP to \$2,100 over the past 10 years.

Trong's camp accuses Dung of economic mismanagement, including the spectacular collapse of state-owned shipping company Vinashin; failing to control massive public debt; allowing corruption; and not dealing adequately with the non-preforming loans of state-owned banks.

Today, the delegates will be presented with 222 candidates in an election for the 180-member Central Committee. After that, they will elect at least 16 members of the all-powerful Politburo, which handles the day-to-day governance of Vietnam. It is possible that the Politburo will be expanded to 18 members this year.

Of the Politburo members, one will be chosen general secretary. Three others will be chosen, in respective order of seniority, the prime minister, the president and the chairman of the National Assembly.

Vietnam is one of the last remaining communist nations in the world, with a party membership of 4.5 million out of its 93 million people. But like its ideological ally China, the government believes in a quasi-free market economy alongside strictly controlled politics and society. AP

Christopher Bodeen

DIVIDED opinions within Vietnam's Communist Party on how to relate to giant neighbor and one-time ally China are among key factors in play at an eight-day congress to choose new leadership. A look at the countries' shared history and some of the most recent ups and downs in relations.

LONGTIME RIVALS. Vietnam and China have a complex relationship going back more than 2,000 years, including several periods of Chinese imperial occupation that were ended by Vietnamese uprisings. Despite its early support for the Vietnamese Communist Party, China invaded in 1979 in retaliation for Hanoi's overthrow of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. Diplomatic ties were restored in 1991, but tensions have risen in recent years due to competing claims to islands and reefs in the South China Sea.

KEEPING WATCH. China is closely observing the party congress and

A LOOK AT COMPLEX VIETNAM-CHINA TIES

Longtime rivals

has emphasized the importance of China-Vietnam relations, including USD90 billion in bilateral trade last year. "As a good neighbor, friend, comrade and partner to Vietnam, we wish to advance the overall strategic relationship into a new stage on the basis of long-term stability, forward thinking and good neighborliness," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said Friday. "We also wish to work with Vietnam to appropriately control maritime disputes with Vietnam so as to safeguard the maritime stability."

OIL RIG DISPUTE. In May 2014, China parked a huge oil drilling platform off the Vietnamese coast in an area where the two countries' exclusive economic zones overlap. Vietnam furiously denounced the move and sent fishing boats and coast guard vessels to harass the rig and nearby Chinese vessels. Skirmishes led to collisions

and the capsizing of at least one Vietnamese boat, while in Vietnam anti-Chinese rioting and the looting of Chinese and other foreign-owned factories left at least four Chinese citizens dead.

CHINA'S OUTREACH. Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi visited Vietnam in June 2014 to try to contain the oil rig dispute. Despite receiving a frosty reception from Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung, escalation was avoided. More significantly, the oil rig incident nudged Vietnam closer to its old enemy the United States, which later that year partially lifted an arms embargo specifically to help improve Vietnam's maritime security.

COMPETING CLAIMS. China withdrew the rig in July 2014, one month ahead of schedule, saying it had completed its mission. The confrontation is widely seen as part of a Chinese strategy to stren-

then its footprint in the South China Sea, all or part of which is also claimed by Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei. The incident also focuses renewed attention on a perceived split within the Vietnamese Communist Party between pro- and anti-China factions.

VIETNAM VISITS. Following a prolonged chill, Communist Party chief Nguyen Phu Trong led a delegation to Beijing in April 2015 and was greeted by President Xi Jinping with full military honors at the Great Hall of the People. Though little of substance resulted from the four-day trip visit, it is seen as helping get relations back on track.

MENDING TIES. China's Xi made a state visit to Vietnam in November 2015, during which he and Trong agree to limit their differences and maintain peace and stability. Xi said



Communist Pioneers' league members play music to welcome delegates during the opening ceremony of the Communist Party of Vietnam's 12th Congress in Hanoi

China will "strive together with Vietnam to control differences at sea." Trong proposed that neither side take actions that increase tensions. During the visit, about 30 people protested briefly in front of the Chinese Embassy in Hanoi. Xi also addressed Vietnam's National Assembly, but avoided mentioning the South China Sea and the 1979 war.

TENSIONS RENEWED. Vietnam protested to China in January over a test flight to a new airstrip on one of Beijing's man-made island in the

disputed Spratly Islands. Vietnam Foreign Ministry spokesman Le Hai Binh demanded an end to such flights, saying they violate Vietnam's sovereignty and hurt bilateral relations. China responded that the flights fall "completely within China's sovereignty." Days later, China conducted two more test flights. The South China Sea dispute looks only to grow more complex as China completes infrastructure on its newly created islands and boosts its maritime defense forces beyond anything its rival claimants can muster. AP

Mari Yamaguchi, Tokyo

Metal on Thai beach likely to be rocket, not plane part

A Japanese rocket maker said yesterday that a large piece of metal that washed up on a beach in Thailand is likely part of a rocket launched by Japan, not a missing Malaysian plane.

The discovery of the metal sparked speculation that it might be from Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, which disappeared almost two years ago.

Mitsubishi Heavy Industries said the metal piece is "highly likely" to be part of a Japanese H-IIA or H-IIB rocket that was launched from southern Japan, based on an initial examination of photos and videos of the object.

Company spokeswoman Sayo Suwashita said officials are trying to determine which rocket and its launch date. Rocket debris falls into the ocean after every launch, and most is collected but sometimes pieces can be found some distance from the launch site, including in foreign waters, she said.

Thai air force and civil aviation authorities said they were unaware of the statement from Japan, while the agency within the Transport Ministry that investigates aviation accidents was unavailable for



Thai people look at a large chunk of metal found on a beach in Nakhon Si Thammarat province, Thailand

comment.

Japan has launched H-IIA and H-IIB rockets since the 2000s. The most recent H-IIA launch was in November 2015.

Flight 370 took off from Malaysia in March 2014. It lost communications and made a sharp turn away from its Beijing destination before disappearing. It is presumed to have crashed in the southern Indian Ocean, far away from Thailand.

The debris was found on the eastern coast of southern Thailand's Nakhon Si Thammarat province, about 600 kilometers south of Bangkok on the Gulf of Thailand.

Malaysian Transport Minister Liow Tiong Lai said Sunday that the search for the missing jet, which carried 239 people, is ongoing in the Indian Ocean and that its second phase is expected to be completed by June. Australia has led a multinational search that has so far cost more than

USD120 million.

Aviation experts from Malaysia visited Nakhon Si Thammarat yesterday to inspect the metal piece, after which the Thai air force flew it to Bangkok for further examination.

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau announced yesterday that the search of 120 square kilometers of seabed where the Boeing 777 is thought to have crashed had been set back after a ship lost its sonar equipment.

The Fugro Discovery, one of three ships conducting the search, towed its side-scan sonar unit on Sunday into a mud volcano that rose 2,200 meters from the sea floor, the bureau said in a statement.

The ship lost the sonar unit plus 4.5 kilometers of cable. The ship is now making a six-day journey to the Australian port of Fremantle to collect new cable and will continue the search with spare sonar equipment, it said. AP

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Avenida Leste do Hipodromo N.S 25-69, Edif. Industrial Fok Tai, 12 Floor "B", Macau

TEL: + (853) 2822 1341

FAX: + (853) 2822 0824

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Julie Bykowicz, Washington

USA ELECTIONS

Billionaire donors helped Cruz rise in Republican race

FOUR of America's wealthiest businessmen laid the foundation for Ted Cruz's now-surging Republican presidential campaign and have redefined the role of political donors.

With just over a week until voters get their first say, the 45-year-old Texas senator known as a conservative warrior has been ascendant. The USD36 million committed last year by these donor families is now going toward broadcast and online advertisements, direct mailings and get-out-the-vote efforts in early voting states.

The donors' super political action committees sponsored weekend rallies in Iowa featuring Cruz and conservative commentator Glenn Beck. Iowa's caucuses on Feb. 1 lead off the state-by-state nominating contests.

The long-believing benefactors are New York hedge fund billionaire Robert Mercer, Texas natural gas billionaires Farris and Dan Wilks, and private-equity partner Toby Neugebauer. They honed their plan to help Cruz before he began his steady rise in polls — before he even announced his presidential bid in March.

"No one wants to lose," Neugebauer told The Associated Press when asked why he and others bet big on Cruz. "We didn't miss that an outsider would win. I think we've nailed it."

The groundwork laid by Neugebauer and other major donors began roughly two years ago, first in a casual conversation with Cruz at a donor's home in Palm Beach, Florida, then in a more formal way over the 2014 Labor Day holiday weekend at Neugebauer's ranch in East Texas.

That October, big-data firm Cambridge Analytica — in which Mercer is an investor — began working to identify potential Cruz voters and develop



Farris Wilks watches Republican presidential candidate Ted Cruz speak in the community center named after his mother in Cisco, Texas

messages that would motivate them. Alexander Nix, the company's chief executive officer, said the importance of this early work cannot be overstated. He credits Cruz for understanding this.

"Money never buys you time," Nix said, drawing from his experiences with campaigns worldwide. "Too often clients will come to you just before an election and expect you to work miracles. But you cannot roll back the clock."

Key donors soon came up with a novel arrangement: Each fa-

mily would control its own super political action committee, but the groups would work together as a single entity called Keep the Promise. They keep in touch through weekly strategy phone calls.

That's not how super PACs usually work. More typically, multiple donors turn over their money and leave the political decisions to professional strategists. For example, Jeb Bush's super PAC counts more than two dozen million-dollar donors.

For Cruz, the pool of really big

donors is far more concentrated: Mercer gave \$11 million, Neugebauer gave \$10 million, and the Wilks brothers and their wives together gave \$15 million.

That level of support has opened Cruz to criticism that donors are influencing his policies, whether on abortion, energy or the gold standard.

Ethanol advocates point to his oil and gas donors as the reason he wants to discontinue that government subsidy for the corn-based fuel. Cruz and the donors have dismissed that

as nonsense. His campaign cites as evidence Cruz's desire to end handouts to all parts of the energy industry.

Neugebauer, whose private equity investment firm has investments in shale, moved to Puerto Rico in 2014. He said he relocated for his children's education, but there are tax breaks as well.

Mercer is a former computer programmer and co-CEO of Renaissance Technologies, one of the country's largest hedge funds. The Wilks brothers are relative newcomers to the world of political donations, having made billions in 2011 by selling their company, which manufactures equipment for the hydraulic fracturing of natural gas.

Although these donors set aside their millions for Cruz 10 months ago, it's only now that the money is making its way into the 2016 race in a major way.

Since mid-December, the Keep the Promise super PACs have documented about \$4 million in independent expenditures to help Cruz or attack other candidates — most often Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, federal election records show.

The super PACs have been identifying and connecting with Cruz voters through digital ads and door-knocking, and recently began a multimillion-dollar TV ad campaign. A Keep the Promise van tailed the Cruz campaign bus as it made its way through Iowa last week. Super PAC workers handed out thousands of "Choose Cruz" yard signs. **AP**

JK Rowling to receive PEN award for literary service

J.K. Rowling's latest honor isn't only for her writing.

The "Harry Potter" author is to receive the PEN/Allen Foundation Literary Service Award, PEN America told The Associated Press on yesterday.

Rowling will be presented her award May 16 at the literary and human rights group's annual spring gala in New York. Previous winners include Toni Morrison, Salman Rushdie and Tim Stoppard.

In its announcement yesterday, PEN cited Rowling's advocacy for free expression; her founding of the charitable trust Volant, which supports multiple sclerosis research and other causes; and her nonprofit organization Lumos, which works to reconnect institutionalized children with their families.



J.K. Rowling

"I'm deeply honored to receive this award and humbled that my work has been recognized as having moral value by an organization I so admire," Rowling told the AP in a statement. "I've long been a supporter of PEN, which does

invaluable work on behalf of imprisoned writers and in defense of freedom of speech."

Rowling's own Potter books have been the targets of censorship and attempted censorship, with the fantasy series' feats of wizardry leading to worldwide allegations that the author advocates witchcraft and the occult. PEN America president and prize-winning author Andrew Solomon said in a statement that Rowling's writing provides a wealth of "imagination, empathy, humor, and a love of reading, along the way revealing moral choices that help us understand ourselves."

"Through their experiences with Rowling both on and off the page, countless children have learned not only

the power of speaking their own minds, but the critical importance of hearing others," Solomon said.

In May, PEN also will honor CEO Michael Pietsch of Hachette Book Group, the U.S. publisher of Rowling's detective novels written under the pseudonym Robert Galbraith. Pietsch has edited Donna Tartt, David Foster Wallace and many other writers and is working with PEN to oppose censorship of books in China.

"As a leader in the fight against pervasive censorship, he has painstakingly reaffirmed literature as more than a consumer good: as a cultural currency in need of vehement protection," PEN Executive Director Suzanne Nossel said in a statement. **AP**

what's ON



THE SKY OF THE INSIDE
— XIAO YAWEN ARTWORK EXHIBITION
TIME: 10:30am-6:30pm
(Closed on Mondays and public holidays)
UNTIL: January 31, 2016
VENUE: Calçada da Igreja de S.Lázaro, 10, Macau
ADMISSION: free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 2835 4582

THE MASTERY OF SHIPBUILDING
— FISHING JUNK MODELS BY WAN CHUN
TIME: 10am-6pm
(Closed on Sundays and public holidays)
UNTIL: April 9, 2016
VENUE: Gallery of the Historical Archives of Macau,
Avenida do Conselheiro Ferreira de Almeida N° 91 -
93, Macau
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 2859 2919

ONE CENTURY OF AUSTRIAN ART 1860-1960
TIME: 10am-7pm
(no admittance after 6:30 pm, closed on Mondays)
UNTIL: April 3, 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

INWARD GAZES
— FOUR ARTISTS IN PERFORMANCE
TIME: 10am-8pm (Closed on Mondays)
UNTIL: February 14, 2016
VENUE: Old Court Building,
Avenida da Praia Grande, Macau
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

Offbeat

TWITTER ERUPTS AFTER SAUDI CLERIC
SAYS CHESS IS FORBIDDEN

A video clip of Saudi Arabia's top cleric saying that the game of chess is "forbidden" in Islam because it wastes time and leads to rivalry and enmity among people has provoked heated debate, and widespread criticism, among Arabic Twitter users.

The clip was shared on YouTube in December, gaining traction in recent days on social media. Some Twitter users mocked Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdelaziz Al Sheikh, saying chess is an intelligent game and that is why conservative clerics decry it. Others defended his religious advice, saying that many other Islamic scholars have also warned that the game can be addictive and cause people to lose focus from their daily prayers and remembrance of God.

Saudi Arabia's influential religious establishment adheres to a strict Sunni Islamic ideology known widely as Wahhabism.

Similarly, Shiite Iran's Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani previously declared that chess is religiously prohibited because it could be used for gambling, which is not permissible in Islam.

In the 44-second clip, Al Sheikh says "the game of chess is forbidden," backing up his statement by referring to a verse in the Quran that bans gambling, intoxicants and idolatry.

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13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:30	RTPi Live
16:10	Criminal Minds S.7
17:40	Trail of Lies (Repeated)
18:30	TDM Sport (Repeated)
19:30	Soap Opera
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	TDM Interview
21:40	Non-Daily Port. News
22:10	Trail of Lies
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Miscellaneous
00:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
01:00	RTPi Live

cinema



CINETEATRO

21 JAN - 27 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, 7.15 pm

Director: Danny Boyle

Starring: Michael Fassbender, Kate Winslet,

Seth Rogene

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 127min



THE BIG SHORT_

ROOM 2

4.45, 9.30 pm

Director: Adam McKay

Starring: Christian Bale, Steve Carell, Ryan Gosling

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 130min

THE BIG BEE_

ROOM 3

2.15, 4.45, 9.30 pm

Director: Yukihiko Tsutsumi

Starring: Yosoke Eguchi, Masahiro Motoki,

Yukie Nakama

Language: Japanese (Cantonese/English)

Duration: 139min

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

1998 CLINTON DENIES AFFAIR
WITH INTERN

President Clinton has strongly denied allegations that he had an affair with a 24-year-old former White House aide.

He also rejected accusations that he asked her to lie about the relationship on oath.

Mr Clinton has come under intense media pressure as rumours circulate that he conducted an 18-month affair with Monica Lewinsky in 1995.

Miss Lewinsky, who is currently in hiding, has made no public admission, although it is understood that she has admitted to the relationship on tape.

The president made his categoric denial at a White House news conference today.

With his fist clenched and his voice shaking, he said: "I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky."

"I never told anybody to lie, not a single time, never. "These allegations are false and I need to get back to work for the American people."

Mr Clinton left the room without answering any questions.

First lady Hillary Clinton is said to be in "fighting mood" and has vowed to stand by her husband to save his political career.

The rumours of the affair first surfaced during an investigation into Mr Clinton by Independent prosecutor Kenneth Starr.

Mr Starr is understood to be keen for Miss Lewinsky to give evidence before the grand jury about the alleged affair.

But the former aide fears she will be prosecuted for perjury if she goes public about the affair as she has already denied it under sworn testimony in a separate sexual harassment case involving Paula Jones.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

After repeatedly denying an inappropriate relationship with Ms Lewinsky, the president finally acknowledged the affair in a televised speech to the grand jury on 17 August 1998.

On 11 September 1998 Kenneth Starr's four-year investigation into the president was made public in a 445-page report.

As a direct result of the report, the House Judiciary Committee proposed four articles of impeachment against the president.

Bill Clinton became only the second president in American history to face such an indictment, but he refused to resign. His trial began on 7 January 1999 and ended on 12 February when senators voted to acquit him of the impeachment charges of perjury and obstruction of justice.

YOUR STARS

Aries
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
You're not feeling great, but that's perfectly normal, all things considered. If you were feeling any better you'd have real cause to worry. So don't throw good money after bad trying to suppress your emotions.

Taurus
April 20-May 20
Money is making you nervous, but focus on the things that really make you feel secure. Socializing over a good meal, time with family and friends - these are the things that will ultimately make you happy.

Gemini
May 21-Jun. 21
The world's collective mind is on finances. But that you're not the only one who's tight with money doesn't make it any easier to be frugal. Is it still considered cheap if everyone else is doing it too?

Cancer
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
If only your balance could double along with your emotions. But while your feelings are on high alert, your bank account remains static. Focus the spotlight on anything in between the two.

Leo
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
With your sensitivity, you can tell almost instantly when emotions are bruised. And when money is involved, that could be often. It shouldn't be too difficult to maintain an honest level of goodwill.

Virgo
Aug. 23-Sept. 22
Gatherings of all kinds are being curtailed but you can still get together with family and friends. Doing things on the cheap shouldn't rule out informal get-togethers. They're the ones most worth doing anyway.

Libra
Sep.23-Oct. 22
Friends and family may tell you to quit but you have what it takes to persevere, even if it looks like you're not making any progress. Stick with a current project until you start to see the first glimmer of profit.

Scorpio
Oct. 23 - Nov. 21
If a good day to you is getting what you want, then you haven't had many good days lately. But if you change your definition to something more valuable than your everyday requests, you'll see you've actually had plenty.

Sagittarius
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
True, you need more than a band-aid, but that's all you have in your first aid kit. You have to make do with things mismatched on other levels, too. Be flexible and use what's at your disposal without asking for more.

Capricorn
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Don't let everything in your life collapse around you. Start with what you can control. Instead of focusing on only one person, be social, for instance. Then branch out from there.

Aquarius
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
It's time to move on. You still have plenty of other responsibilities you need to attend to. Stop thinking about all the things that went down with the ship and start looking ahead.

Pisces
Feb.19-Mar. 20
If you have to act like everything is fine, you're not the only one who's performing. In fact, plenty of people in your circle are all playing the same role. Just who's who is the big mystery of the day.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy

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

Easy+

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

Medium

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

Hard

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-8	2	clear
Harbin	-21	-13	clear
Tianjin	-5	2	clear
Urumqi	-19	-11	clear
Xi'an	-9	1	clear
Lhasa	-7	4	snow shower/cloudy
Chengdu	-2	6	cloudy
Chongqing	2	7	overcast
Kunming	-2	8	overcast/shower
Nanjing	-6	6	clear
Shanghai	-3	6	clear
Wuhan	-5	8	clear/cloudy
Hangzhou	-5	6	clear
Taipei	4	18	clear/cloudy
Guangzhou	2	12	cloudy/drizzle
Hong Kong	7	12	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	-8	-6	light snow
Frankfurt	2	7	cloudy/drizzle
Paris	6	10	overcast/drizzle
London	8	13	drizzle
New York	-1	3	cloudy/overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Become cheerful; 6- Tennis great Arthur; 10- Flat sound; 14- Where Hercules slew the lion; 15- Elvis's middle name; 16- Miners' sch.; 17- Tactless; 18- Panama and bowler; 19- Must've been something ___; 20- College grounds; 22- Some acid; 24- Oklahoma city; 25- Inns; 26- Baggage porter; 29- Dynamic introduction?; 30- Be that ___ may...; 31- Camp for children; 37- Spirited horse; 39- Tear; 40- Brewer's need; 41- Prisoner transport; 44- Hindu music; 45- Court plea, for short; 46- Pie coverings; 48- Oakland outfit; 52- Neighbor of Cambodia; 53- In danger; 54- Biased attitude; 58- River crossing; 59- First name in jazz; 61- Exhausted; 62- Revenuers, for short; 63- Quantity of paper; 64- Les ___-Unis; 65- Army N.C.O.; 66- Fizzy drink; 67- Actress Witherspoon;

DOWN: 1- "Power Lunch" network; 2- Jealous wife of myth; 3- Shi'ite leader; 4- Revered; 5- Native Hawaiian priest; 6- Oohed and ___; 7- Sp. ladies; 8- Spicy; 9- Trap; 10- Connected series of rooms; 11- Belle or Bart; 12- Take hold; 13- Glasses, briefly; 21- Drinks slowly; 23- Creamy white; 25- Rhythm; 26- File; 27- It is in Spain; 28- Conked out; 29- Pal, south of the border; 32- Russian range; 33- Lead carbonate; 34- Small batteries; 35- High-ranking NCO; 36- School orgs.; 38- Units of force; 42- Workpeople; 43- Final Four org.; 47- Register; 48- Floating platforms; 49- Tiny particles; 50- Like some vbs.; 51- Failed to; 52- Alpaca's cousin; 54- Decked out; 55- Dies ___; 56- Tennis matches are divided into these; 57- Gds.; 60- Summer sign



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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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<p>Houston Court, Coloane Village Coloane 1 Bedroom Apartment Upgraded in Sept 2015 HKD 13,500 / 800 sq ft Ref: 15090532</p>	<p>Lakeview Macau 3 Bedrooms Apartment Fully Furnished HKD 25,000 / 3,430 sq ft Ref: 15080524</p>	<p>Tai Nin Macau 1 Bedroom Apartment Apartment near Senado Square HKD 8,500 / 850 sq ft Ref: 15090536</p>	<p>Manhattan F Unit, Taipa 3 Bedrooms Apartment Large Master Bedroom HKD 21,500 / 1,720 sq ft Ref: 15090534</p>

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OLYMPICS

Brazil venues to be checked daily to help stop Zika

RIO de Janeiro's Olympic venues will be inspected daily during the games in a bid to prevent the spread of a mosquito-borne virus linked to a rare birth defect and also a condition that can cause paralysis, local organizers said yesterday.

Brazil is suffering from an outbreak of Zika virus, which health officials here say may be behind a spike in cases of microcephaly, which sees infants born with unusually small heads, as well as the paralysis-causing Guillain-Barre syndrome. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has advised pregnant women to reconsider travel to Brazil and 21 other countries with Zika outbreaks.

The Rio 2016 local organizing committee stressed that because the Aug. 5-21 games are during the southern hemisphere winter, Brazil's dry season, the mosquito population will be smaller.

In any case, teams will scour Rio's Olympic and Paralympic sites daily, looking for stagnant waters that are the breeding grounds for the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that transmits Zika, as well as dengue



A graduate student works on analyzing samples to identify the Zika virus in a laboratory at the Fiocruz institute in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

and chikungunya.

"Rio 2016 will continue to monitor the issue closely and follow guidance from the Brazilian Ministry of Health," the committee said in a statement.

The Zika outbreak is the latest problem to hit South America's first Olympics, coming as Brazil battles its deep

pest recession in generations, as well as a gargantuan corruption probe that has ensnared top politicians and some of the country's most prominent businessmen.

Rio organizers are cutting about USD500 million in expenses, several million tickets remain unsold, and venues for sailing, canoeing and rowing

are rife with high virus levels linked to Rio's outdated sewage treatment system.

The Zika virus originated in Africa and has spread through parts of Asia. It was first detected in Brazil late last year. Researchers suspect it may have been brought to the South American nation by a tourist during the 2014 World

Cup or during an international canoeing event in Rio the same year.

The disease spread swiftly, hitting hardest the poor and underdeveloped region in the country's northeast.

Health officials sounded the alarm in October, after noticing a spike in cases of microcephaly in tandem with the Zika outbreak. Since October, Brazil has recorded 3,893 suspected cases of the birth defect — which can lead to stillbirths, as well as long-lasting developmental and health problems among survivors. In all of 2014, South America's most-populous nation recorded fewer than 150 cases of microcephaly.

Brazil's Health Ministry doesn't track the cases of Guillain-Barre syndrome, a rare and potentially life-threatening nerve condition that can leave victims paralyzed and on life-support, but doctors in the northeast have reported a six-fold jump in the number of cases during last year's rainy season.

Health experts blame the chaotic growth of urban centers and the proliferation of plastic, which provide fertile mosquito breeding grounds, for the spread of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that carries Zika.

They say that a vaccine appears to be the best way of stopping Zika. Although the government has said it is pouring funds into developing a vaccine, officials caution that it will take at least three years. **AP**

TENNIS

Officials interview players over mixed doubles match

Justin Bergman, Melbourne

PLAYERS involved in a mixed doubles match at the Australian Open said yesterday they were interviewed by the Tennis Integrity Unit after a newspaper reported it had attracted suspicious betting patterns.

According to The New York Times report, the gambling website Pinnacle Sports said it had received an unusual spike in bets for Lukasz Kubot and Andrea Hlavackova to beat David Marrero and Lara Arruabarrena, causing it to suspend betting before the teams played on Sunday.

All players identified in the newspaper report rejected any possibility of fixing in the match, which was won by Kubot and Hlavackova 6-0, 6-3.

Kubot said yesterday that the TIU had asked



ATP chairman Chris Kermode (center) speaks during a press conference at the Australian Open tennis championships in Melbourne, Australia

him and Hlavackova questions about the match, without offering any more details. He added, though, that he didn't notice anything unusual on the court, saying "we give 100 percent of that match" and he believed his opponents "were trying 100 percent."

Marrero and Arruabarrena rejected the allegations in an interview with the Times, with Marre-

ro citing a knee injury for his team's poor play. They were not available for comment yesterday.

The sport has been under intense scrutiny in the wake of reports published by BBC and BuzzFeed News last Monday saying tennis authorities have ignored widespread evidence of match-fixing involving 16 players who had been ranked in the top 50 over the past de-

cade. The media outlets didn't name any players, but said half of them would be competing at the Australian Open.

Tennis authorities immediately rejected the assertion they had suppressed evidence of match-fixing or failed to thoroughly investigate suspected cases.

The International Tennis Federation declined to comment and the TIU does not address individual cases.

The latest report came as a former top-200 tennis player from Australia, Nick Lindahl, pleaded guilty in a Sydney court to a match-fixing charge after prosecutors say he would intentionally lose a match at a lower-tier tournament in 2013 so they could bet against him.

Tennis Australia decli-

ned to comment on the suspicious betting reported by the New York Times in Sunday's Australian Open mixed doubles match, reiterating in a statement that the TIU's policy is "to review and investigate every allegation of corruption in tennis."

According to the newspaper, Pinnacle said it began seeing "a large amount of money" being wagered on Kubot and Hlavackova to win the match by a "small number of people" after it opened betting on Thursday, prompting it to suspend wagers and notify the police in Victoria state, where Melbourne is located.

Another betting agency, William Hill, which is a sponsor of this year's Australian Open, however, said yesterday it saw no suspicious betting

activity on the match, receiving less than five bets, each at stakes below USD5 per bet. London-based Betfair also kept betting open on the match, including allowing wagers during play, the Sydney Morning Herald reported.

Kubot said that while he was open to answering the TIU's questions, he didn't believe players should be identified publicly without proof of wrongdoing.

"Of course, I think everybody should play fair and everyone is responsible for themselves. But as I said, this is nothing proved, then nothing should be said, that's it," Kubot said. "You work hard every day, as every one of us, and this is just putting us, let's say, on the black list, but without any [proof]." **AP**

ATHLETICS

Adidas says it is seeking more information from IAAF

ADIDAS, a major sponsor of global athletics, is in "close contact" with track and field's governing body, the IAAF, about the sport's doping and corruption scandals, the sportswear company said yesterday, amid reports it is considering ending its sponsorship.

The Germany-based company said that "Adidas has a clear anti-doping policy in place" and added that "we are in close contact with the IAAF to learn more about their reform process."

The IAAF too said is in contact with "all its sponsors and partners as we embark on our reform process."

A BBC report said Adidas had told the IAAF it was terminating its sponsorship deal four years early because of the doping affair involving Russian athletics and accusations of deeply rooted corruption under the IAAF's previous leadership.

Earlier this month, a World Anti-Doping Agency probe said the IAAF was corrupted from the inside by a "powerful rogue group" led by its president, and they conspired to extort athletes and allow doping Russians to continue competing.

Other IAAF leaders were at fault, too, the WADA panel's damning report said. They must have known of the nepotism that allowed Lamine Diack to turn the International Association of Athletics



The Adidas logo on a FIFA World Cup soccer ball

Federations into a personal fiefdom during his 16-year reign as president, it said.

"It is increasingly clear that far more IAAF staff knew about the problems than has currently been acknowledged," said the report, written by former WADA president Dick Pound and presented at a news conference in Munich.

A key question raised by the report is whether alleged corruption under Diack went beyond extorting doped athletes and infected other areas of IAAF business.

WADA's investigators called for a detailed follow-up probe of all world championships awarded by the ruling body for 2009-19, due to evidence

they found of possible wrongdoing. That included an indication that Diack, a former IOC member, was prepared to sell his vote in the 2020 Olympic hosting contest won by Tokyo in exchange for sponsorship of IAAF events.

"The corruption was embedded in the organization. It cannot be ignored or dismissed as attributable to the odd renegade acting on its own," the report said.

Diack was taken into custody by French authorities in November on corruption and money-laundering charges. He is suspected of taking more than 1 million euros (USD1.1 million) to blackmail athletes and cover up positive tests.

Sebastian Coe, the British middle-distance running great who took over from Diack in August, is not accused of corrupt wrongdoing. But he was a member of the IAAF's Council, its oversight body, that "could not have been unaware of the extent of doping."

The WADA report came two days after the Associated Press released details from six years of IAAF internal emails, reports and notes showing a high level of communication between the athletics federation and Russian officials about suspicious test results from the nation's athletes, including plans to cover up some doping evidence. **AP**

EUROPEAN MEDALIST AMONG 4 RUSSIANS BANNED FOR DOPING

THE RUSSIAN Olympic Committee says it has banned four Russian athletes for doping, including a former European silver medalist. Irina Maracheva, silver medal winner in the 800 meters at the 2012 European championships, received

a two-year ban, as did race-walker Anna Lukyanova, a former silver medalist at the world junior championships. There were also four-year bans for runners Maria Nikolaeva and Elena Nikulina.

BASKETBALL

Toronto makes it eight straight with win over Clippers

TORONTO extended its winning streak to a season-high eight straight by beating the Los Angeles Clippers 112-94 yesterday (Macau time), creating a bit of franchise history by sweeping both L.A. teams in the same season for the first time.

The Raptors completed a season double over the Clippers — as they also did last year — to add to the earlier sweep of the Lakers.

Elsewhere, Houston used a spurt of 3-pointers in the fourth quarter to pull away and beat state and division rival Dallas.

Toronto's Kyle Lowry scored 21 points and Jonas Valanciunas had 20 for the Raptors while Terrence Ross had five 3-pointers en route to his fourth straight game in double figures off the bench.

The eight-game streak is one short of the team record set in 2001-02.

Chris Paul had 23 points and 11 assists for the Clippers.

Houston's James Harden had a triple double of 23 points, 15 rebounds and 10 assists to lead the Rockets past Dallas 115-104.

Trevor Ariza scored a season-high 29 for the Rockets, who trailed by one entering the fourth quarter, but hit 4 3-point-



Toronto Raptors' DeMar DeRozan drives to the basket against Los Angeles Clippers' Paul Pierce

ers in a 14-4 run to take a 98-89 lead with about nine minutes left.

After a Dallas basket, Houston then added five points to effectively end the contest.

Chandler Parsons had a season-high 31 points for the Mavericks.

Brooklyn's Brook Lopez scored a season-high 31 points and grabbed 10 rebounds as the Nets beat Oklahoma City 116-106, halting the Thunder's run of wins at seven.

Boston won 112-92 at struggling Philadelphia in a game delayed a day by the wintry weather enveloping the eastern United States. **AP**

GOLF

Fowler eyes major to merit inclusion in sport's elite

GOLF'S new "Big Three" has been around for only a few months, and already there's talk of the exclusive group being expanded.

Rickie Fowler is back in the conversation after his fourth worldwide victory in the last nine months, over a stellar field at the Abu Dhabi HSBC Championship.

Yesterday, the American found himself at a career-high No. 4 in the rankings, with only Jordan Spieth, Jason Day and Rory McIlroy above him. But to merit inclusion in the sport's golfing elite, Fowler knows he needs to add a major to his increasingly impressive resume.

He gets his first chance at the Masters in April.

"I'd like to jump in and be a part of that crew," said Fowler, sitting beside the huge Falcon Tro-



Rickie Fowler

phy awarded to the Abu Dhabi champion. "The goal right now with where my game's at — it's the best it's been this early in the season in my career — I'm working on getting ready for Augusta."

"I'd like to have my shot at getting the green jacket there."

Fowler had never previously won a tournament in the first four months of a year. He's been a

slow starter to seasons — he tied for 66th in Abu Dhabi in 2015, 17 shots behind unheralded French winner Gary Stal — making the Masters even tougher to win.

But this is a different Fowler, who acknowledges that his work on the range with celebrated coach Butch Harmon is starting to pay off.

His playoff win at The Players Championship last May started his winning run that has also taken in the Scottish Open and the Deutsche Bank, and made him believe more in himself.

"From The Players on, just being in the situation, contention, Sunday, final round, against the best players in the world and just believing and having the confidence that, hey, if I go hit the shots, I'm winning, no question," Fowler said. **AP**

opinion

Our Desk

Daniel Beitler



WHY UBER IS PART OF THE ANSWER, NOT THE PROBLEM

When I first visited Macau in September 2014, I was shocked to see taxis regularly ignoring the hailing of my local acquaintances. What shocked me even more was the discovery that the situation had actually been "improving"!

That is to say nothing about my first experience of riding in a taxi in Macau, in which I paid about MOP200 for a ten-minute ride from downtown to the Macao Cultural Centre.

Since then, however, I have come to accept the normality of taxis cruising around the Macau peninsula, seeking out "certain clientele," and ultimately failing to provide their licensed service to the ordinary residents of the MSAR.

This can be frustrating during the day when you need to get somewhere quickly. In the late hours, it becomes a nightmare. I have heard anecdotes from my friends in Macau as they have recalled instances of "being stranded" at the airport, or leaving an establishment in the rougher, northern district, only to have taxi after taxi refuse to pull over.

So I was delighted, when in October, I discovered that Uber were commencing operations in Macau. These services, however, were sadly short-lived. Within days, the government came down like a ton of bricks, declaring the service illegal and subsequently prompting drivers to retreat to the shadows.

The truth of the matter is, if the government were to allow Uber to operate in Macau, it would probably be the most immediate and direct way for authorities to have a meaningful impact on the lives of ordinary people.

Those in Macau who have desperately tried to hail taxis when they have needed to reach places urgently and efficiently will understand what I mean by this. Those who have waited at bus stops to watch bus after bus, packed with commuters, refuse to allow passengers to board, will understand this.

Those who have to negotiate excessive on-call "premiums" that often exceed MOP100 – because the taxis rarely pull over seeking your business – they will understand what I mean by this.

And those who have resorted to buying their own car or motorbike, despite the recent tax hikes and the government's efforts to reduce motor traffic in the city, will also know what I mean by this.

Uber has faced significant resistance worldwide because, in most places, the presence of the app-based service threatens an existing market for incumbent taxi services.

However, in Macau, there is very little difference in terms of price between an Uber taxi and a regular one. Customers choose Uber because they know Uber will stop for them. That alone makes it a reliable service.

And given the length of the taxi queue outside the Grand Lisboa – and at other casino resorts, for that matter – in the late afternoon and early evening, can incumbent taxi companies really argue that the introduction of say, 100 Uber cars, will really affect their business?

The introduction of Uber services in Macau may seem especially negligible, since the Transport Bureau (DSAT) is poised to issue a license to Lai Ou Taxi Service for 100 "special taxis". At least we can assume the bureau is poised to award the tender to Lai Ou, since they are thus far the only company whose bid has been accepted by DSAT.

Or will the presence of just three Uber cars – the number of cars currently operating – affect the taxi companies and their drivers? If it does indeed affect their business, then that is all the more reason to permit the operation of Uber.

Imagine a world where taxi drivers compete for business like every other private sector institution – by providing a service for an agreeable price at an appropriate quality. Imagine a world where they seek out customers, instead of refusing them.

In fact, the legalization of Uber services could prompt a win-win situation for everybody involved.

THE BOXING: THURMAN, PORTER FINALIZE WELTERWEIGHT TITLE BOUT MARCH 12

Keith Thurman and Shawn Porter have agreed to fight for Thurman's WBA welterweight title on March 12, the boxers announced over the weekend.

After months of negotiations and mutual accusations of avoidance, the deal is done for one of the most attractive fights in a high-pro-

file division long dominated by Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Manny Pacquiao.

Thurman and Porter both have designs on becoming the top new star in the 147-pound class in the wake of Mayweather's retirement and Pacquiao's self-described probable retirement in April.

PORTUGAL

Center-right elected president Rebelo de Sousa demands financial discipline



Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa

Barry Hatton, Lisbon

A center-right candidate scored a resounding victory in Portugal's presidential election Sunday (yesterday, Macau time), warning he would use the largely ceremonial post to prevent the center-left anti-austerity government from worsening the debt-heavy country's financial health.

Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, a veteran moderate politician and law professor, collected more than half the votes against nine rivals.

With 99 percent of the votes counted, Rebelo de Sousa won 52 percent whi-

le his nearest rival came in with less than half of that.

Rebelo de Sousa will move into the head of state's riverside pink palace in Lisbon in March, replacing Anibal Cavaco Silva, who has served the maximum of two five-year terms.

The president has no executive power, and is largely a figurehead, but can be an influential voice and in a crisis has the power to dissolve Parliament if he feels the country is going off track.

A Socialist minority government runs Portugal with the backing of the Communist Party and the radical Left Bloc. The government

is trying to pull off a balancing act by ending austerity measures while pledging to continue the financial prudence adopted after Portugal's 78 billion-euro (USD84 billion) bailout in 2011 amid a eurozone financial crisis.

The government's critics say that is a risky policy in Portugal whose economy is struggling to gain momentum and where the jobless rate is over 11 percent.

Rebelo de Sousa said in his victory speech he expected the government to generate more economic growth "without compromising financial stability."

At the same time he promised to be impartial and encourage consensus between political parties, "healing the wounds" of the recent crisis.

Prime Minister Antonio Costa vowed his "full cooperation" with the president.

Rebelo de Sousa, 67, has had a long career in the public eye, working as a newspaper editor, a popular media pundit, a junior member of governments since the 1970s, and a former member of the European Parliament.

Turnout was low Sunday at 52 percent after a dull two-week campaign. AP

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/Wally Santana



Frozen deities. Snow sits on the Chinese god statues at the Pinglin temple in the high mountain area of New Taipei City, yesterday. An unusually cold weather front that caused sudden drops in temperatures has been blamed for killing as many as 57 people in Taiwan's greater Taipei area (see more on page 3).

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

SOURCE: DSMG

WORLD BRIEFS



INDIA-FRANCE India and France said yesterday that they are close to sealing a multibillion euro agreement for New Delhi to purchase 36 Rafale fighter jets. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Francois Hollande made the announcement during a joint news briefing in Delhi.

PAKISTAN Officials say a northwestern Pakistani university where Islamic militants gunned down 21 students and teachers last week has reopened yesterday for classes amid tight security.



AFGHANISTAN An Afghan official says three border policemen have been killed and three others were wounded in a suicide attack near an important border crossing in southern Afghanistan. The police say the attack took place when five suicide bombers stormed the border police headquarters at Spin Boldak, on the border with Pakistan yesterday.

SYRIA Peace talks between the Syrian government and opposition groups are to start on Friday, the UN special envoy on Syria announced yesterday. Staffan de Mistura told reporters he would be sending out invitations to the talks in Geneva today. The talks are expected to take six months and the sides will not talk directly to each other to begin with.

USA Ford Motor Co. is pulling out of Japan and Indonesia, saying that market conditions in each country have made it difficult to grow sales or make sustained profits. "Japan is the most closed, developed auto economy in the world, with all imported brands accounting for less than 6% of Japan's annual new car market," a spokesman wrote in an email message.