



FEWER NEW CARS SOLD

Statistics released yesterday indicate that the number of new motor vehicles decreased 3.5 percent year-on-year to 19,653

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SUU KYI'S PARTY DOMINATES PARLIAMENT

P12 MYANMAR



US: TIGHT RACE AS 2016 VOTING BEGINS

The caucuses kick off the 2016 presidential nominating contests, marking a new phase in a tumultuous election


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WORLD BRIEFS



CHINA has created five new military regions covering the country as part of a continuing drive to reorganize and streamline the 2.3 million-member PLA. The north, south, east, west and central regions replace the seven previous regions. The new districts are being touted as better suited to command joint operations while further indicating President Xi Jinping's firm hold over the armed forces.

THAILAND says it has accelerated its fight against human trafficking and unregulated fishing. Bangkok says in the past eight months it has investigated 36 cases, arrested 102 suspects and rescued 130 presumed trafficking victims. In the 16 months prior to that, only 15 cases were investigated. The EU has warned Thailand that its seafood may be banned if it fails to institute effective measures against unregulated fishing.



JAPAN Toyota Motor Corp. said it will suspend vehicle production in Japan for six days this month due to a shortage of parts. The automaker said the shortage stems from a Jan. 8 explosion at a steel plant. Vehicle production in Japan will be suspended from Feb. 8 to Feb. 13. Overseas production lines aren't affected.

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Gap between VIP and mass market narrows

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RENATO MARQUES



Secretary says gov't intends to take back more land plots

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410,000 visitors cross Border Gate

More than 410,000 people crossed the Gongbei Port/Border Gate last Saturday, a week before the beginning of Chinese New Year. Customs officials said that the majority of visitors were mainland residents in town for New Year sales, even as multiple tourists postponed their visits due to last week's extreme weather conditions. The crowds at Gongbei Port prompted customs authorities to divide visitors into three queues outside the departure hall. Those waiting in line outside had to join further queues upon entry to the building. A Times reporter noted that the process, though tedious, was ultimately a necessary measure to ease congestion. A Gongbei border official said that the flow of tourists peaked on Saturday morning and held steady for almost ten hours.

C2 discusses local entertainment production

The thirteenth issue of C2 magazine will be launched tomorrow. Published by the Cultural Affairs Bureau, the periodical invites two video production companies with different market positions and characteristics to discuss the development of local entertainment production. In the "Feature" column, C2 interviews Hin U, founder of Pride Entertainment Productions, who aims to develop his company in all aspects of show business. The new "Opinion" column invites Wilson Lam, CEO of Macao Creations, to share his insights on the transition of the local design industry.

Most diesel vehicles pass emissions test

The Transportation Bureau (DSAT) reported that 501 of the 668 diesel vehicles examined in 2015 passed an emissions test. Last year, DSAT conducted 93 random vehicle inspections in 20 locations, 25 percent of which failed emissions testing. DSAT said the street inspections were a means of assessing and controlling local pollution levels. A total of 86 heavy load trucks, 211 light load trucks, 88 shuttle buses, 60 buses, and 56 taxis were randomly inspected over the course of 2015. More than 80 percent of taxis passed the emissions test, a step up from 57 percent the previous year.

TRANSPORT STATISTICS

Number of new motor vehicles falls



THE number of new motor vehicles decreased 3.5 percent year-on-year to 19,653, with that of light private cars (7,947) falling by 11.5 percent.

According to statistics released yesterday by the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC),

the total number of licensed motor vehicles reached 249,339 at the end of 2015, up by 3.8 percent year-on-year. Motorcycles and light private cars accounted for 52 and 41.3 percent respectively.

The number of traffic acci-

dents registered during the year dropped by 1.4 percent year-on-year to 15,804 cases with 5,306 casualties, 15 of which were fatal.

Cross-border vehicle traffic for the whole of 2015 increased 3.9 percent year-on-year to 5,131,997 trips. Traffic through the Cotai checkpoint (1,114,288 trips) rose by 15.2 percent.

Passenger ferry movements totaled 145,385 trips, up 3.2 percent year-on-year, with trips via the Provisional Ferry Terminal in Taipa (36,858 trips) rising by 9.1 percent.

For the Macau International Airport, commercial flight movements increased 8.3 percent year-on-year to 52,182 trips. Flights to and from mainland China (38 percent), Taiwan (23.9 percent) and Thailand (12.8 percent) took the lead, while movements to and from Japan and Vietnam soared 35 and 25.9 percent respectively,

over last year.

The airport handled 7,410 tonnes of inward air cargo, an increase of 11.1 percent year-on-year, while outward air cargo (16,278 tonnes) edged down by 0.4 percent. Taiwan remained the major origin and destination for air cargo.

MOBILE USERS STILL ON THE RISE

THERE WERE 146,138 fixed-line telephone subscribers at the end of 2015, a 4.9 percent drop from the previous year. Mobile telephone subscribers numbered 1,896,097 – a 2.1 percent increase – while the number of Internet subscribers was up 11 percent year-on-year to 338,899. For the whole of 2015, the cumulative duration of Internet usage (1.06 billion hours) rose 11.7 percent year-on-year.

Macau gears up for economic revamp

MACAU is attempting to reinvent itself after an economic slump last year, but analysts have warned that it will not be an easy road ahead.

Recently just 30 sq. km, Macau has been recently given the jurisdiction of coastal waters covering an area of 85 square kilometers. The government can use the majority of the added coastal waters to reclaim land as it seeks to develop Macau's economy beyond the gaming industry.

Ieong Tou Hong, chairman of the Macau Economic Development Promotion Association, told Singapore-based Straits Times that Macau could potentially become a hub for coastal and maritime tourism, offering activities such as luxury cruises and yachting.

"Besides making Macau a more exciting place, this would also divert tourists from other overcrowded sites," he added.

Joe Fong, a member of the Macau Chamber of Commerce youth committee, cited the importance of economic diversification and training, adding that Macau is a small market and largely reliant on the gaming industry.

"The coveted new industries need professional knowledge and qualifications, but the youth of Macau generally don't have them," he said.

Local political analyst Tam Chi Keung commented, "With the gaming houses not doing well, non-gaming industries such as culture and education will have to expand their contributions and become the dominant trend in Macau."

The MICE industry, as well as Chinese medicine, were listed in Macau's 2016 policy blueprint as potential industries to cultivate.

Residents told future infectious diseases building is safe

A number of residents against the construction of a center for the treatment of infectious diseases – to be built beside a public hospital downtown – recently visited a temporary treatment facility in Coloane.

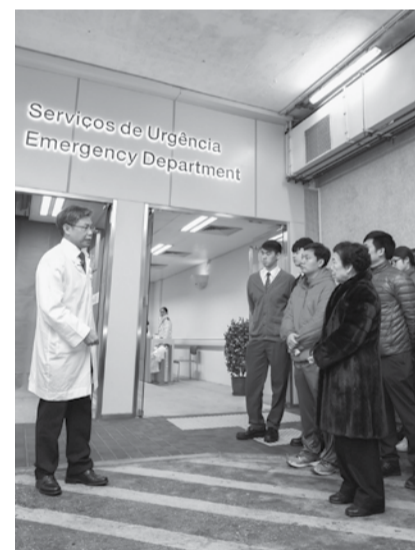
The residents toured the temporary facilities together Health Bureau (SSM) officials. Tam and his entourage assured visitors that the building was safe.

At a press conference after the visit, officials said that the upcoming treatment center – which will have 120 wards and is slated for construction later this year – meets the standards set out by the World Health Organization. The center has drawn opposition from more than 1,500 locals, due to its proximity to a nearby residential area.

The Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Alexis Tam, mentioned that the facility was set up in response to previous pandemics such as Ebola and SARS. He also remarked that Macau must be ready "for the eventuality of an outbreak."

"We must do it for public safety," he concluded. However, residents in the area are concerned that viruses may spread beyond the facility.

During the recent tour, physicians reassured visiting residents that the



air within the building is properly filtered by two different systems prior to expulsion. One of them relies on a unique Ultra Violet sterilization system that is superior to local hospitals.

When questioned about transportation around the area, Alexis Tam indicated that talks with other government bodies are underway, so as to ensure the safety and welfare of residents. Matters under discussion include transport arrangements for future visitors to the facility.

Staff reporter

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Gaming revenue falls 21.4 pct in lull ahead of CNY

Daniela Wei

MACAU'S casino revenue fell 21.4 percent in January amid a lull before this month's Lunar New Year holiday that's traditionally a popular period for Chinese gamblers to visit the region.

Gross gaming revenue fell to MOP18.7 billion (USD2.3 billion), a 20th straight month of decline, according to data released by Macau's Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau. That compares with

January tends to be a weaker month before the peak Lunar New Year season starting Feb. 8, when the majority of mass market Chinese gamblers visit over the week-long public holiday, said Billy Ng, an analyst at Bank of America Merrill Lynch, before the data was released. Revenue has stabilized, helped by new resorts that opened last year, like Studio City (pictured)



According to analysts revenue has stabilized, helped by new resorts that opened last year, like Studio City (pictured)

the median estimate of a 22 percent drop from six analysts surveyed by Bloomberg. The decline was 21.2 percent in December.

January tends to be a weaker month before the peak Lunar New Year season starting Feb. 8, when the majority of mass market Chinese gamblers visit over the week-long public holiday, said Billy Ng, an analyst at Bank of America Merrill Lynch, before the data was released. Revenue has stabilized, helped by new resorts that opened last year targeting middle-class Chinese, he said.

Casino revenue had plunged 49 percent last February, after a crackdown on corruption by China's government kept Chinese high-rollers away from Macau while the country's slowing economy hurt the mass market segment.

Gross gaming revenue in Macau fell 34 percent for the full year in 2015, a second straight year of declines. **Bloomberg**

VIP GAMBLERS LOSE DOMINANT HAND

High rollers from mainland China – a mainstay of Macau's casino industry for over a decade – have seen their importance diminish amid Beijing's crackdown on internal corruption and a slowing economy. Macau's gross gaming revenue fell in January as the gap between high rollers and the mass market segment continued to narrow. Revenue from mass-market gamblers is expected to surpass VIPs starting from the second quarter of 2016, according to Bank of America Merrill Lynch analyst Billy Ng. The forecast comes at a time when junket promoters are reportedly closing their VIP rooms.

Macau ranks ninth freest economy in APAC region

The Heritage Foundation released yesterday its 2016 report on the Index of Economic Freedom, rating Macau's economy as "mostly free" for the eighth consecutive year. The MSAR's overall score of economic freedom is 70.1, making its economy the 37th freest among 178 economies. In the Asia-Pacific region, Macau maintains its 9th position out of 42 economies, just behind Hong Kong, Singapore, New Zealand, Australia, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and Malaysia. The Monetary Authority of Macau said in a statement that the region has attracted significant investment since opening up its gaming industry in 2002.

Health Bureau prepares for Zika virus

The Health Bureau said in a statement yesterday that it has taken steps to prevent the spread of the Zika virus to Macau. Preparatory measures include: enhancing laboratory-based capability for improved disease detection; issuing guidelines to healthcare professionals; and strengthening monitoring and control efforts. The Zika virus is primarily spread to humans through bites from Aedes aegypti mosquitoes. Symptoms include fever, rash, conjunctivitis, muscle and joint pain, and headaches. The government is monitoring the latest developments of the mosquito-borne virus and will follow advice from the World Health Organization.

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MCDA enters new phase of childcare



Renato Marques

THE Macau Child Development Association (MCDA), a non-profit association founded in 2004 to support children with developmental, communication and learning disorders, inaugurated its long-awaited new headquarters over the weekend.

Named "Reach for the Star Home," the new headquarters will host a range of therapy, educational and support services.

For MCDA coordinator Eliana Calderon, the new development represents "a big opportunity for

the children and their families" and a major step in terms of "stability."

Calderon told the Times that the new venue will provide stability to the association, which will no longer be subject to the "usual kick-out" that takes place "every two years or so" when rental fees increase.

The space is also a great achievement, as it represents a place to hold "a series of vocational activities that will prepare these children for their daily lives and contribute decisively to their independence," Calderon said.

The coordinator said that MCDA now faces a new and significant challenge: the funding and hiring of professionals to work with the children, particularly in the therapy center.

"It is always a big issue. We need to hire professionals, most of them from abroad; Portugal and other countries – and the bureaucracies regarding the issuing of residency and working permits are huge and sometimes inexplicable," Calderon said. "As for the therapists, we can normally hire them, but mostly we need translators, people that can [build] the bridge between the children and even the therapists and parents. For these people, we cannot get the quota that we need."

"I think the services do not understand our needs because they work in a 'value for money system' and not in an 'every child counts and is worthy' system, as we do," she continued.

Public awareness and parental education are two other areas of focus for the association, as stigmatization often takes place in a society where parents lack information on how best to deal with their children's needs.

"Most of the time, parents focus too much on the disorder and not the opportunities to minimize it. It is normal; it is part of the phases that people pass when they face these situations," the MCDA coordinator said.

'Occupy' supporter's concerts canceled

HONG Kong singer Kay Tse announced that 10 of her concerts in mainland China had been canceled, resulting in losses of about HKD12 million.

Anna Chan Ching-sum, convenor of the pro-establishment group Caring Hong Kong Power, had previously reported Kay as a supporter of the "Occupy Central" protest.

When questioned about the cancellation, the Cantopop singer claimed that the decision had been motivated by various factors.

Kay Tse celebrated her 10-year musical career with a tour in Macau last year. She now has two concerts left in her schedule, and will begin a one-year hiatus after performing in Hong Kong.

"I was sad. The concerts are even fewer than before," she said.

Last year, several singers and actors were involved in political controversies



Kay Tse

related to mainland China. Hong Kong singer Hins Cheung and 16-year-old Taiwanese singer Chou Tzu-Yu both suffered the consequences of "inappropriate behavior".

Cheung had supported the Occupy Central protest; Chou had addressed herself as "Taiwanese" instead of "Chinese" while waving the Taiwanese flag. Taiwanese media celebrated Chou as the "light of Taiwan" and praised her stance on Taiwanese independence.

Chou's contracts with mainland companies were subsequently canceled. **Staff reporter**

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Renato Marques

AL PLENARY

Secretary says gov't intends to take back more land plots

TOPICS related to land management and public housing were the main focus of yesterday's Legislative Assembly (AL) plenary meeting. Answering lawmakers enquiries, the Secretary for Transport and Public Works pledged to withdraw more land plots in the coming few months, including some located close to Nam Van lake.

Raimundo do Rosário said that the government intends to reclaim a total of 48 land plots for which concession periods have ended. Two of these land plots were already recovered: one located in Pac On area, designated for a warehouse, and another in a new land reclamation area.

"I can guarantee that in the first semester of this year more



I do not want to tell you that it will be done in 4 or 5 years and then not be able to conclude the works in that time.

RAIMUNDO DO ROSÁRIO

land concessions will expire. I can assure you of that. We just need time to handle these processes," he said, adding that the government has already processed some 24 land concession expiration claims, 21 of

which are now involved in court disputes.

Lawmaker Mak Soi Kun asked about plans for the future use of what is currently idle land. Lam Heong Sang requested a timeline and details regarding the

seven land plots that are designated for public housing. The vice president of AL reminded Rosário that this topic has been discussed since May 2013 with few developments.

The secretary several times

replied, "there is no timeline," delegating to the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSTOP) director to explain that the plots located in Lam Mau Pier area, Iao Hon, Taipa Island and in the surroundings of the Areia Preta Power Station all are subject to procedures that involve evictions, environmental impact studies or are simply occupied by public services that are waiting to be relocated to new buildings yet to be built.

"I do not want to give you false hopes. I do not want to tell you that it will be done in four or five years and then not be able to conclude the works in that time," Raimundo do Rosário said.

The residential units of Cheng I Building are also not expected to be completed to schedule. The secretary had previously announced that the residential units would be completed and ready for delivery in April this year. He now states that "this will not be possible. Only next year."

On the public housing strategy, a topic addressed by many lawmakers, Rosário revealed that the government requested a study to "formally" ascertain the "real" needs of the territory; reiterating that public housing is still a "priority for the government."

The so-called 'third solution' public housing scheme was also addressed with the secretary revealing that the final conclusions on this matter will be made public this year, entirely discarding the possibility of the government seeking a "housing on budget" solution.

Nine spoken enquiries were presented yesterday from a total of seventeen scheduled. The session resumes today.

Authorities urged to introduce waste recycling plan

WASTE recycling and street parking were the themes of a lively debate during yesterday's AL plenary meeting.

Lawmaker Chan Hong urged authorities to introduce changes, while the Secretary for Transport and Public Works argued that there's no need for new laws regarding waste separation and recycling. "Separation of waste is much more a matter of educating society and not about forcing them to comply with a law," Raimundo do Rosário said. However he also asserted that the works undertaken so far in "raising awareness" of waste recycling "was a total failed plan." Nevertheless

he points to the approach of "intensifying works with society and namely with schools" to tackle this problem.

In other topics, lawmaker Wong Kit Cheng questioned the government about penalties and the abuse of public street parking, urging the government to revise the law concerning penalties for illegal parking.

He also urged the government to release the parking spaces that are reserved for use by the public services in order to increase the turnover of those parking spots used by the general public.

The secretary agreed that "the penalties

are relatively low" and that he is considering "intensifying them in order to increase the deterrent effect."

Regarding the use of parking spaces by public services, Mr Rosário retorted that "this work is being done and we have already reduced the number of parking spots we are using by 26 when compared with last year."

According to the figures of the Transportation Bureau (DSAT) public services are currently using a total of about 350 parking spots across the territory, a figure that authorities are trying to reduce. **RM**

Ng will not follow Au Kam San

NG Kuok Cheong will not follow in the footsteps of New Macau Association (ANM) founding member Au Kam San, who last week announced his intentions to leave the pro-democracy association. Ng will continue to donate part of his salary as lawmaker to the association, maintaining a previous arrangement.

Au Kam San stated in an email that "establishing

an association that promulgates democracy in a relatively conservative society is an act that faces tremendous pressure."

Au added that a biased selection of association members has ensured that "certain groups can maintain their power."

The association was founded on the principle of gathering people from different backgrounds, according to Au. However, he

continued, "the association no longer resembles the one I helped found."

The lawmaker also noted that he left to avoid infighting. Au has reportedly provided different excuses for his absence from recent association meetings.

The split within the association has been happening for a while. In September 2014, Ng Kuok Cheong told media that there had been

changes in the cooperation model between the lawmakers elected through ANM lists (he and Au Kam San) and the association. Ng said that he and Au Kam San would handle their own administrative duties.

Eric Sautedé, a political commentator, noted that a public response from the ANM – currently presided over by Scott Chiang – is to be expected:



Au Kam San (left) and Ng Kuok Cheong pictured at the AL

do so as Au Kam San is a very strong and respected voice of the democratic opposition – he was at the

city council and has been and still is today at the Legislative Assembly," he told the Times yesterday. **Staff reporter**

Chinese tourism expanding in Australia



Chinese tourists enjoy the sights along Sydney Harbour

THE number of Chinese tourists selecting Australia as their preferred travel destination is booming, as travelers look beyond nearby locations.

A report conducted by broker CLSA forecasts an increase in the number of Chinese tourists traveling to Australasia by an average

of 22 percent per annum between 2014 and 2020. This is considered the highest rate of growth in Chinese tourism to any region in the world. Research has shown that there was already growth of 19 percent in the number of Chinese tourists to Australia from 2009 to 2014.

By 2020, CLSA expects a 200-million person surge in the number of outbound trips made by citizens of China. That compares with last year's figure of 125 million trips, of which 58 million were to Hong Kong or Macau.

Meanwhile, the number of mainland Chinese tourists

traveling to their preferred destinations - Hong and Macau - is set to grow at an annual compound rate of just 2 percent and 4 percent respectively in the years leading up to 2020.

According to Aaron Fischer, the Hong Kong-based CLSA regional head of consumer and gaming research, as people become more affluent, they will travel further afield.

"Income growth is still positive in China. As people earn more money, they are looking to allocate more of their income and wealth to tourism and travel. Even if there is a slight slowdown in GDP growth, we don't see outbound tourism slowing down at all," explained Fischer.

He emphasized that the widespread use of social media in China was also a catalyst for travel, as tourists wish to use these platforms to boast and share their experiences of travelling overseas with their family and friends back home.

"We have seen a huge increase in the number of outbound trips over the past 10 years," Fischer said. "Countries around Asia and the world are fighting hard for the Chinese wealth. Many countries are making it easier for Chinese [people] to travel to their country."

Chinese tourists are the most lucrative visitors to Australia, spending AUD7.7 billion (MOP43.3b) a year. Thus Fischer said the weaker Australian dollar would further increase spending by Chinese visitors. **Staff reporter**

EDUCATION

Consul wants to bring more Indian students to Macau

REPRESENTATIVES of the Indian Consulate General have expressed their desire to encourage more Indian students to study in Macau, and that they are currently conducting talks with the University of Macau to achieve this end.

"We have just started a relationship with the University of Macau and we have a group of schoolteachers also visiting the University of Macau. Very soon we will also have Indian kids coming [to] study here, maybe during the next academic year," Indian consul (Consular & Education) Ravi Sinha told TDM.

Sinha also said that since it has become easier for Macau residents to visit India, the number of outbound tourists visiting the South Asian country has increased.

Residents of Macau have been able to apply online for Indian visas since July last year. Consequently, they are no longer required to visit the Consulate General of India in Hong Kong to apply for a tourist visa.

"What you need to do is to go online, apply for a visa and we'll send you what we call visa authorization, which is as good as a visa in the sense that as soon as you land in India, with visa authorization, you automatically get a visa on arrival," explained Sinha.

The University of Macau told TDM that there is currently only one Indian exchange student at the institution. However, they confirmed that they are looking forward to receiving more applications in the future.

The university has also started a recruitment scheme for potential students hailing from India. UM adds that the recruitment scheme complements the institution's globalization strategy. **Staff reporter**



University of Macau

Visitors to Thailand boosted by 16 percent

THE number of Chinese tourists visiting Thailand is expected to increase by 16 percent compound annual growth in the next five years, despite the decelerating economy in China, according to CLSA.

A total of 8.3 million Chinese tourists visited Thailand last year, accounting for 36 percent of total arrivals in 2015. The Tourism Authority of Thailand stated that 8 million Chinese tourists are expected to visit Thailand this year.

Flights from Macau to Thailand are readily available to Macau locals, with several flights departing to Bangkok,

Chiang Mai and Pattaya daily. Connecting flights to Thailand's top provinces, such as Phuket and Krabi, are provided by low cost carriers and remain popular among locals.

The sharp growth in China's outbound tourism is due to rising incomes among the Chinese population fueling a desire to travel, as visa-related restrictions are eased.

A survey by CLSA shows that 400 outbound Chinese travelers listed Thailand as the third-most popular overseas destination, just behind South Korea and Japan.

AD

This is Bill

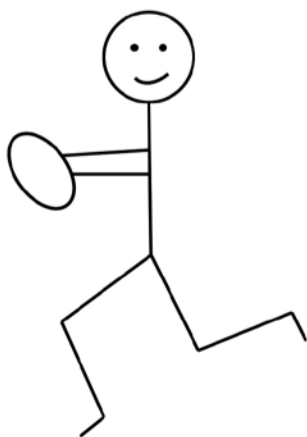
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AVIATION

Airlines restore tiny perks, like pretzels, to pacify fliers

Scott Mayerowitz, New York

AFTER 15 years of near austerity, U.S. airlines are restoring some small perks for passengers crammed into coach.

Don't expect ample legroom or free checked bags. But fliers will find improved snacks, a larger selection of free movies and — on a few select routes — the return of free meals.

Yesterday, American Airlines became the latest carrier to add something back. It announced the return of free snacks in the economy section and more free entertainment options on some aircraft.

American, which recently merged with US Airways, hasn't offered free snacks since 2003. US Airways stripped passengers of snacks in 2008.

Following the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and the subsequent recession, airlines removed almost every perk imaginable. Hot meals disappeared along with legroom, blankets and pillows.

"It was really about survival," says Fernand Fernandez, vice president of global marketing at American.

When Continental Airlines stopped giving out free cookies and mini bags of pretzels in 2011 — after its merger with United Airlines — it said the move would save USD2.5 million a year.

Since then, mergers have created four mega-carriers that control more than 80 percent of the domestic market. They started



A passenger talks on the phone as American Airlines jets sit parked at their gates at Washington's Ronald Reagan National Airport

charging \$25 for each checked suitcase. And more seats have been crammed into planes to maximize profits. Now the industry is making record profits.

"What has changed," Fernandez says, "is that the airlines have been able to fix our core business and be able to reinvest in our customers."

That means new planes, larger overhead bins and for a long time, nicer first class cabins.

Now a bit of that wealth is trickling back to coach.

In February, American will start offering Biscoff cookies or pretzels to passengers flying between New York and San Francisco or Los Angeles. By April, those snacks will expand to all other domestic routes. In May, American will bring back full meal service for coach passengers between Dallas and Hawaii.

"We know that we have customers who select our airline based on price and we're really excited to offer them a product that is superior to choosing an ultra-low cost carrier," Fernan-

dez says.

United recently announced the return of free snacks on its flights starting in February. Delta Air Lines — the other big legacy carrier — never removed snacks, even during bankruptcy.

American is also expanding its complimentary entertainment on domestic flights with in-seat TVs. Passengers will be able to choose from up to 40 movies, 60 TV shows and 300 music albums. Delta has taken a different path, focusing more on entertainment that passengers can stream to their own devices. It now offers about 67 movies and 138 TV shows for free.

"These are token investments in the passenger experience that will not cost airlines a lot of money but are small ways to make passengers a little bit happier," says Henry Hartevelde, the founder of travel consultancy Atmosphere Research Group. "American and United realized: We don't let other airlines have an advantage on price, why let them have one on pretzels." **AP**

Asia stocks uneven as China data, Japan policy weighed

CHINESE stocks fell yesterday after a weak manufacturing report while Japan extended gains following its central bank's introduction of a negative interest rate policy to boost lending by banks. Other markets were mixed.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's Nikkei 225 rose 1.8 percent to 17,833.53 and South Korea's Kospi added 0.3 percent to 1,918.22. Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell 0.6 percent to 19,557.75 and the Shanghai Composite in mainland China lost 1.7 percent to 2,689.89. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 gained 0.8 percent to 5,047.40. Stocks in Taiwan and Southeast Asia were lower.

CHINA MANUFACTURING: An index based on a survey of factory purchasing managers fell to 49.4 in January, its lowest in more than three years, in the latest sign of weakness for the world's No. 2 economy. January's reading was down from December's 49.7 on a 100-point scale on which numbers below 50 indicate contraction. Separately, the private Caixin/Markit purchasing managers' index showed improvement but was weak overall.

THE QUOTE: Investors will expect more stimulus from Beijing as the latest data showed that China's manufacturing is "in a state of further deterioration," said Mizuho Bank in a daily commentary. "Markets could be betting on more coordinated and forceful stimulus from Beijing too now that there is a certain policy stimulus momentum established."

CENTRAL BANKS: Analysts said after Japan's central bank introduced a negative interest rate policy on Friday, central banks in other countries may add to stimulus or be more cautious about tightening policy. "The Bank of Japan's move sets a more dovish tone for major central banks around the world," said Ric Spooner, chief analyst at CMC Markets in Sydney. "At the margin, it will increase the incentive for the ECB to add stimulus as it seeks to keep its currency relatively weak. Similarly the Fed and the Bank England will be a little more cautious about lifting rates."

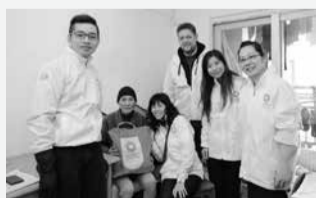
WALL STREET: U.S. stock markets posted their biggest gains in about five months on Friday though ended January with losses. The Dow Jones industrial average surged 2.5 percent to 16,466.30. The Standard & Poor's 500 rose 2.5 percent to 1,940.24. The Nasdaq composite index jumped 2.4 percent to 4,613.95.

ENERGY: Benchmark U.S. oil was down 70 cents to USD32.92 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It finished Friday at \$33.62 a barrel, up 40 cents, or 1.2 percent. Brent crude, a benchmark for international oils, fell 73 cents to \$35.26 a barrel in London.

CURRENCIES: The dollar rose to 121.20 yen from 121.12 yen on Friday. The euro strengthened to \$1.0853 from \$1.0831. **AP**

corporate bits

SANDS AMBASSADORS VISIT ELDERLY FOR SPRING-CLEANING



Seventy-five volunteers from the Sands China Care Ambassadors programme joined the elderly residents of Seac Pai Van for a spring-cleaning session on Sunday.

This is the seventh consecutive year that the Care Ambassadors have helped Macau's elderly residents — many of whom live alone — with spring-cleaning to prepare for the Chinese New Year.

The volunteers helped 25

households prepare for the Year of the Monkey by sweeping, mopping and vacuuming the residences. The Care Ambassadors also distributed CNY gift packs containing staples such as rice, oil, grain and noodles. Sands China has supported the Peng On Tung Tele-Assistance programme since 2010, and has contributed more than MOP1.2 million to the programme, benefitting more than 1,330 elderly residents.

The annual tradition is one of the important ways in which Sands China's team of volunteers extends a helping hand to vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the local community.

MACAO WATER AND SINO FRENCH WATER HOST JOINT DINNER

The Macao Water Supply Co. Ltd (Macao Water) and the Sino French Water Development Co. Ltd. (Sino French Water) co-hosted the 2016 Spring Dinner last week, with guests filling more than 40 tables in the Grand Hall of the Macao Tower Convention & Entertainment Centre.

The companies said in a joint statement that the dinner was a show of gratitude to longtime business partners and friends from different sectors, as well as the hardworking staff of their own companies.

More than 400 representatives from political, business and academic sectors — including public utilities, community associations and the com-

panies' staff — attended the banquet.

In addition to activities such as games, magic shows, lucky draws and a staff choir, the hosts also held the ceremonies for Macao Water's Creativity and Innovation Awards, as well as the Long Service Staff and Retirement Staff Awards.



VALENTINE'S DAY FEAST BY FADO



Fado, a Portuguese restaurant at Hotel Royal Macau and 2015 recipient of the Macau Government Tourist Office's "Star Merchant Award — Deluxe Restaurant," promises an exclusive Valentine's menu specially prepared by Chef Luís Américo and his team. According to a Fado press release, couples can expect a special menu of "delicious

crab mousse topped with fresh and roasted vegetables served with Portuguese style gazpacho, steamed lobster with butter-lemon sauce and roasted pine nuts in rice," among other dishes. The restaurant's four-course Valentine's menu will be available from February 12 to 14, with live music to complement the romantic atmosphere.

Loro Horta, Beijing

SINO-LUSOPHONE Agricultural Cooperation proves to be a win-win for all.

With growing wealth in China, the Chinese are getting more sophisticated and demanding in their food habits. For example, in 1985 they consumed 25 kilos of meat per person; in 2010 it grew to over 50 kilos. This voracious appetite for meat and other food products has put a severe strain on the country's ability to feed itself. However, recent Chinese overseas investment in agriculture in the Lusophone world offers a way to ease the problem of supply. Such collaboration will benefit both parties.

Commendable work by Chinese scientists has increased agricultural yields at home, but growing number of specialists believe that they have reached a ceiling and China needs to look abroad to meet its food demand. China has 22 percent of the world's population living on seven percent of the world's arable land. In recent decades, millions of peasants have moved into cities; by 2014, half of the population was urban. Mega cities such as Chongqing, Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou require larger and more complex food supplies. Environmental challenges such as soil pollution, water poisoning, deforestation and erosion have seriously strained the country's arable land. In 2014, the Ministry of Agriculture reported that 40 percent of the country's arable land was degraded as a result of pollution. To attain self-sufficiency in basic staples, most arable land is dedicated to crops such as grain and rice. The country cannot use arable land for non-essential food crops such as vegetable and fruits. Furthermore, there are few areas suitable for cattle raising. Even grain production is struggling to meet demand. In 2013, four percent of the world's grain imports went to China; its fruit imports were valued at USD9.1 billion.

China is increasingly turning to overseas farming and agriculture investment to meet this demand for food. This can bring significant benefits to both China and the Lusophone world; its countries have different ways to benefit from this co-operation.

Angola: it has a population of 16 million living on 1,243,564 square kilometres. It has 35 million hectares of arable land; only five million are being used and 30 million are virgin land. In other words, her potential for Chinese investment is limitless. In November 2014, CITIC, one of China's large state-owned enterprises, announced a \$5 billion investment in Angola to develop large farms producing soybeans, grain, sugarcane and raise cattle. If the project materialises, it will be one of the biggest agricultural investments in the world.

The CITIC project is immensely beneficial to Angola. The recent

Feeding the world's most populous nation



slump in oil price has prompted the Angolan government to seriously consider diversifying the economy. With adequate investment and planning, agriculture can make a significant contribution to this diversification. During the Portuguese colonial period, Angola was a powerhouse exporting coffee, cotton and citrus to the world. Chinese investment in agriculture can help her regain her status as a leading agricultural exporter. Since most of the population is rural, this agricultural project can generate hundreds of thousands of jobs, alleviate unemployment and mitigate rapid and chaotic urbanisation.

Mozambique: with an area of 800,000 square kilometers and a population of 24 million, it is equally promising as a major agricultural center; her potential has remained largely untapped. She has 35 million hectares of arable land, with only 10 percent being used. So far the largest Chinese project is a \$250 million investment by a Hubei group in a rice farm in Gaza province. Other Chinese companies have invested in cotton mills. China

“**The demand for Timorese coffee is already on the rise and businesses from Macau have expressed interest in investing in the coffee sector**”

has also funded an agricultural research center with over 100 Chinese experts dispatched to Mozambique. In 2015, another Chinese company was reported to have invested \$5 million in a cashew nut project.

Guinea Bissau is a small country with a population of only 1.6 million on 36,000 square miles. It is endowed with many rivers and streams, and its soil is fertile. The political stability after the July 2014 election offers new opportunities for Chinese investment in agriculture and other areas such as fisheries. The country was once a major producer of peanuts, cashew nuts and cotton; Chinese investment can revitalise these sectors. A Chinese company has expressed interest in investing in rice and cotton plantations in the region of Bafata.

In contrast, Brazil, with an area of 8,511,667 square kilometres, is the fifth largest country in the world. Unlike USA and China and their large stretches of deserts or Canada with its ice-covered terrain, Brazil has many rivers including the Amazon, the longest on earth. It is dominated by forests and fertile plains. Large portions of its 600,000 square kilometres of arable land remain unused.

Agriculture has become one of the most important and lucrative sectors in Sino-Brazilian relations. Brazil is one of China's major supplier of grain and soybeans. In 2003, China was the largest importer of Brazilian agricultural products, worth \$1.82 billion. In 2009, the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture reported that 12.6 per cent or \$5 billion worth of agricultural products went to that country. Her soybean exports to China reached 11.3 million tons in 2006, an increase of 50 per cent from the previous year.

The signing in October 2009 of a Letter of Intent with the state

of Mato Grosso do Sul allowed a Chinese company, Jiangxi Sanhe International Investment, to invest in state land; this marked the first major Chinese investment in Brazil. The agreement commits both parties to develop farming ventures. The Brazilian side will provide land and basic infrastructure and the Chinese financial investment. The acreage is not specified but will increase with the different stages of implementation. As the world's largest beef producer and exporter, Brazil is advanced in cattle-breeding technology. The state of Mato Grosso do Sul will also contribute agricultural scientists and experts in cattle-raising. Jiangxi Sanhe will invest up to \$1 billion in the project. Most of the land will be used to grow maize and soybeans and to raise cattle. Smaller portions will be dedicated to plant trees for timber. The project also expects to produce other goods such as honey, butter and cheese; it is expected to create up to 10,000 jobs for the state.

In 2011, Brazilian media cited a report by the U.S. Department of Agriculture that a Chinese group from Chongqing co-signed a US\$2.5 billion agreement to produce soya in the state of Bahia; the size of land to be utilised by the Chinese company was not specified. There are also several reports of China's interest in thousands of hectares of Brazilian farmland. However, details on the location and size of these lands remain patchy.

Portugal does not have large areas of agriculture land. But she too can offer important niche products to the smart investor. In 2013, China overtook France as the largest consumer of wine in the world and her thirst is likely to grow; but Portugal's share of this lucrative market has remained small. Since 2009, the severe economic crisis in Europe has led

to a decline in the export of wine. One way to improve Portugal's position in the Chinese market and to compete with large wine producers from France, Australia and Chile is to form joint ventures with Chinese companies. Some Chinese businesses have already expressed interest in acquiring wineries in Portugal.

In Timor-Leste, a Chinese company, Longping High-tech, has been assisting the country in improving rice cultivation. The project is so successful that the Timorese government and Longping will expand the project to three other districts. China Green Energy is currently negotiating a lease of 12,000 hectares of land for cassava plantation. There are further avenues for growth. Timor-Leste does not have large tracks of land; but its many microclimates make it ideal for production of rare and expensive agriculture products such as spices and coffee. The reputation of such Timorese products dates back to the early 16th century. More sensitive to food safety and health concerns, better off Chinese have turned to organic products — Timorese products are 100 percent organic. The demand for Timorese coffee is already on the rise and businesses from Macau have expressed interest in investing in the coffee sector. Timor-Leste as yet is unable to meet this Chinese demand; but Chinese investment in the sector can help to resolve the problem.

The potential for development is enormous in the Lusophone countries. More work is needed to facilitate the implementation of these projects. There are minor irritants. For instance, a \$250 million Chinese investment in rice farming in the Limpopo has been controversial, with an estimated 80,000 people displaced from their land. In Angola, accusations of Chinese ill-treatment of farm workers have strained relations between local people and Chinese. Problems such as bureaucratic hurdles, unclear laws on land ownership and fear of Chinese land grabs must be addressed. Transparency and, in particular, dialogue with local communities will avoid misunderstanding and malicious rumours.

Sino-Lusophone agricultural cooperation is mutually beneficial to both parties and can address the challenges each faces. Chinese investment in agriculture creates millions of jobs and reduces the over-dependence of countries like Angola and Timor-Leste on oil exports. China will benefit by getting access to large areas of fertile land and reduce the costs of feeding a more demanding society. By investing abroad in the production of non-essential food like tropical fruits, soybeans and spices, China can use its scarce land resource to cultivate essential products such as rice and grain. The benefits to both parties are simply too great to be ignored. **MDT/Macauhub**

AP PHOTO



RARE snow in central China has disrupted the country's Lunar New Year travel rush, which involves millions of people and is considered the largest annual human migration.

Travelers faced flight delays and cancellations after heavy snow fell in central Hubei province over the weekend and closed down the airport in the city of Wuhan. According to the airport's website, 67 flights were canceled Sunday and a trickle of flight-

WEATHER

Snow strands travelers at start of CNY getaway

ts were delayed or canceled yesterday because of the bad weather. The official Xinhua News Agency said at least 2,000 people were stranded

at the airport.

Sunday's closure of the airport had a knock-on effect on rail travel, as more people flocked to train stations. But

the snow slowed down trains, with an average delay of up to 50 minutes, Xinhua reported.

One expressway linking Hubei with Jiangxi provin-

ce to its south had traffic at a standstill for a stretch of about 3 kilometers. Four major expressways in Jiangsu province were closed, Xinhua said.

Chinese travelers are expected to make 2.9 billion trips during the 40-day period, which began Jan. 21. Most of those trips will fall in the weeks around the Feb. 8 Lunar New Year, as migrant workers, students and others head home to celebrate with family. **AP**

TAIWAN

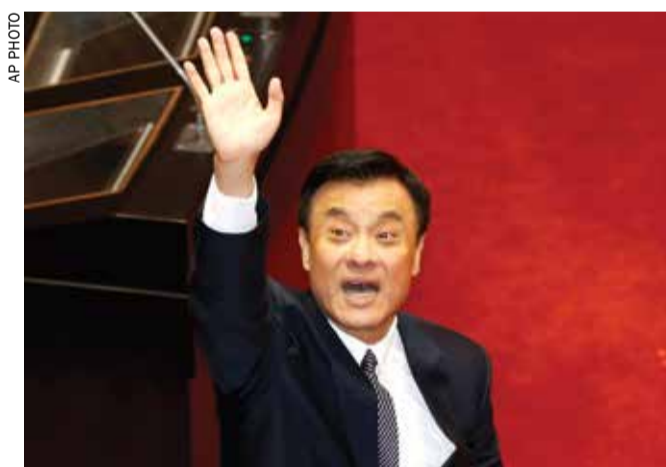
Legislative yuan elects new speaker from victorious DPP

TAIWAN'S legislature yesterday elected a new speaker from the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party following its landslide victory in elections last month.

Su Jia-chyuan became the first DPP speaker of the 113-seat body after the party trounced the ruling Nationalists in the polls, winning 89 seats and its first parliamentary majority.

DPP presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen also won a massive victory over her Nationalist rival and a third party candidate, becoming Taiwan's first woman president-elect. She takes office in May when current Nationalist President Ma Ying-jeou steps down.

Su is a veteran legislator, former interior minister and close Tsai ally. He's expected to lead efforts to reform the body, formally known as the Legislative Yuan, following complaints over logjams in passing legislation and



Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) Su Jia-chyuan

too little transparency.

The DPP rode a wave of discontent with the slowing economy and stagnant wages, along with Ma's China-friendly policies that many say benefit a small class of elites while threatening the economic future of the younger generation.

Among those taking their seats were both veterans and newcomers, among them 39-year-old Freddy Lim, lead singer with heavy metal band Chthonic. Lim's New Power Party, which he

co-founded just one year ago, emerged from an anti-Nationalist student movement and advocates Taiwan's formal independence.

Tsai's election throws new uncertainty over the relationship between Taiwan and China, which claims the island as its own territory, to be recovered by force if necessary. While she has vowed no change in the status quo, she has refused to endorse China's "one China principle" as a basis for negotiations. **AP**

Chinese manufacturing index at weakest since 2012

CHINESE manufacturing ebbed in January to its lowest in more than three years, a possible sign of further weakness in the world's No. 2 economy after posting its slowest annual growth in a quarter century.

An index based on an official survey of factory purchasing managers fell to 49.4 last month from December's 49.7. It was the sixth straight month of deteriorating conditions in China's massive manufacturing sector, which employs many millions of workers. The index released yesterday uses a 100-point scale on which numbers below 50 indicate contraction.

The latest reading is also the lowest since August 2012 and worse than many economists were expecting. Production fell, factories cut jobs and new orders, which are a sign of overall demand, slipped into contraction last month, according to the report by the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing.

China's economic growth has been steadily falling for the past half-decade as Beijing attempts to wean the economy off a tired model based on exports and investment in infrastructure in favor of domestic consumption and services. However, an unexpectedly sharp decline over the past two years has stoked fears of a politically dangerous spike in job losses.

China's economy grew 6.9 percent last year, which was its slowest expansion in 25 years.

Separately, the private Caixin/Markit purchasing managers' index showed marginal improvement, with the index edging up to 48.4 in Ja-



A woman shops at a fashion boutique in a shopping mall in Beijing

nuary from 48.2 in December.

The Caixin survey mostly covers smaller, private enterprises while the federation's report focuses on larger, state-owned companies.

"Recent macroeconomic indicators show the economy is still in the process of bottoming out and efforts to trim excess capacity are just starting to show results," said He Fan, chief economist at Caixin Insight Group. "The pressure on economic growth remains intense in light of continued global volatility," said Fan, who called for policymakers in Beijing to continue rolling out finely tuned stimulus measures as needed to prevent growth from slowing too sharply. **AP**

FINANCIAL FRAUD

Company accused of fleecing investors of USD7.6 billion

Gerry Shih, Beijing

POLICE arrested the maverick founder of China's largest online finance business on suspicion of fleecing 900,000 investors of USD7.6 billion, in what could be the biggest financial fraud in Chinese history.

State media outlets reported the arrest of Ding Ning and 20 of his employees late Sunday. State broadcaster CCTV aired purported confessions from two former employees at Ezubao, an Anhui Province outfit that rose from obscurity to become China's largest online financing platform in the span of about 18 months.

Ezubao was the most spectacular player in a booming online investment industry that Chinese authorities have been struggling to regulate. Firms ranging from established Internet companies such as Alibaba to virtually unknown upstarts have flooded into the business, promising higher returns than those at state-run banks, which often offer interest rates below inflation.

Ezubao promised investors



Policemen urge depositors from Ezubao to follow procedures as they line-up outside the State Bureau for Petition to file complaints in Beijing

that borrowers would pay back loans at interest rates between 9 percent and 14.6 percent, but 95 percent of those borrowers were fictional entities created by Ezubao, a former company executive told investigators.

Behind the firm's rise was 34-year-old Ding Ning, an Anhui native who dropped out

of school at 17 to work at his mother's hardware factory, where he first gained experience running online sales, according to media reports.

With no technical or financial training, Ding launched Ezubao in July 2014 and opened multiple marketing offices across China. The venture bought ex-

pensive ad spots that aired just before the widely viewed nightly CCTV newscast, the state broadcaster's flagship program.

Ezubao appeared to gain Beijing's imprimatur when the gov.cn government website published an interview with Ding in July discussing his life as an entrepreneur. The interview has since been removed from the site.

State media took a far different tone on Sunday as CCTV aired Ding's confession and footage of officials hauling away bags of cash from his home. The Xinhua news agency detailed Ding's extravagant lifestyle and the gifts he lavished on a business partner Zhang Min, including a \$20 million villa in Singapore and a \$1.8 million pink diamond ring.

"The truth is that it's a fraud ... it's a typical Ponzi scheme," Zhang, the associate, said in her aired confession.

Despite the vast sums cited in the case, Ezubao, which also went by Ezubo on its website, represented just a sliver of China's shadow banking industry estimated to be worth \$1.5 trillion as of the end of June,

according to Chinese banking regulators.

Independent economists and party officials alike have warned about the danger of unchecked private lending and the political spillover of a large-scale collapse.

After police shut down Ezubao in December, scores of protesters gathered outside a Beijing government building to demand their money back. Simmering anger on social media also spurred public security officials to phone Internet users to warn them against criticizing the Communist Party online.

One investor from Northeast China who lost close to \$80,000 told The Associated Press in December that police confiscated her computer and cell phone after she posted online that she might file a petition with the central government.

Fu Weigang, a researcher at the Shanghai Institute for Finance and Law, said difficulty obtaining financing in a state-dominated banking system has for decades driven Chinese citizens into underground borrowing and lending, which also gave rise to countless Ponzi schemes.

But Ezubao was able to take advantage of an influx of mom-and-pop investors in recent years using an Internet model, Fu said, effectively pushing small-scale scams to a countrywide level.

"What they were doing was nothing new in China," Fu said. "But how they were doing it online, and the scale, was unprecedented." AP

IN the latest chapter of a scandal that's jolted New York's art world, a federal jury is hearing about a Chinese immigrant who forged fakes of modern masters such as Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko in his garage, a once-reputable Manhattan gallery that sold them and the wealthy buyers who paid millions for the knockoffs.

"I got a fake painting for USD8.3 million and they don't want to give my money back to me," Domenico De Sole, the chairman of the board at Sotheby's auction house and a former Gucci CEO, groused from the witness stand last week at a high-stakes civil trial that continues today (Macau time).

His wife Eleanore — testifying with the faux color-block Rothko called "Untitled, 1956" unceremoniously propped up on an easel next to the witness stand — told jurors she "went into a shaking frenzy" when she first learned of suspicions about it.

The couple sued the Knoedler & Company

NYC jury hears details of modern masters forgery scandal

gallery and its former director, Ann Freedman, in 2013 after federal prosecutors brought a separate criminal case against Long Island dealer Glafira Rosales, who admitted in a guilty plea that she sold or consigned 40 fakes to the gallery before it closed in 2011 after more than

Qian, who was charged but has fled to China, began painting fakes of Rothkos and others out his garage

a century. The De Soles are seeking \$25 million in damages, claiming Freedman should have known the painting was a forgery.

The defense has portrayed Freedman, who wasn't charged in the criminal fraud, as a victim as well. It also contends the evidence will show that the forgeries were so good — and such a surprise — even respected art experts lost their bearings.

"This is the art world equivalent of finding dinosaur bones," Freedman's attorney, Luke Nikas, said in opening statements. "This was an important discovery. Ann believed in it and the art world believed in it."

The fraud dates to the 1990s, when Rosales, her partner and her boyfriend discovered future forger Qian Pei-Shen painting portraits on the streets of lower Manhattan. The

dealer learned the artist had trained at the same art school attended by Rothko and other famous abstract expressionists — and had a knack for mimicking their style.

Qian, who was charged criminally but has fled to China, began painting fakes of Rothkos and others out his garage at his Queens home in exchange for a few hundred dollars up to USD9,000. The dealer then began taking them to the Knoedler gallery, where she told Freedman they were undiscovered works supplied by the anonymous son of a deceased Swiss collector.

After obtaining "Untitled, 1956" for \$950,000, Freedman sold the painting to the De Soles for more than \$8 million in 2004. The couple hung it on the wall at their Hilton Head, South Carolina,

home, believing they were the owners of a museum-worthy Rothko.

"I thought it was beautiful," Domenico De Sole testified.

Pressed on cross-examination on why he hadn't done more to authenticate the painting, De Sole shot back, "I had complete trust in (Freedman) and Knoedler. It never crossed my mind that these guys were in the business of selling fake art. Is that clear?"

The defense insists Freedman was so completely conned that she paid nearly \$300,000 for a phony Pollock drip painting in 2000 and displayed it in her apartment for a decade, even though artist's signature was misspelled "Pollok." It also claims art experts who saw the Rothko were believers as well, and have asked the jury to be skeptical of testimony



Domenico De Sole, a chairman of the board at Sotheby's, and his wife Eleanore

that they never actually authenticated the work.

"The experts were fooled," defense attorney Nikas said. "And now they feel like fools."

De Sole lawyer Emily Reisbaum told jurors that, at minimum, Freedman was at fault for ignoring obvious red flags such as the proliferation of pieces from the mystery collection over a 15-year period and Rosales' willingness to sell them to the gallery at prices far below market value.

"Your common sense will tell you," Reisbaum said. "Such a treasure trove of never-before-seen masterpieces by America's most famous artists was too good to be true." AP

Esther Htusan, Naypyitaw

MYANMAR

Parliament begins new session dominated by Suu Kyi party

MYANMAR'S parliament, led for the first time by pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi's party, began a historic session yesterday that will install the country's first democratically elected government in more than 50 years.

The National League for Democracy won a landslide victory in Nov. 8 elections, taking about 80 percent of the seats at stake in the two houses of parliament to defeat the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party.

Many legislators expressed hope that yesterday marked the beginning of a new, brighter era following decades of military oppression, civil war and pervasive poverty.

"This is like a dream for me," said Khin Maung Myint, an NLD lawmaker before the largely ceremonial two-hour session. "I never imagined that our party would be able to form the government. Even the public didn't think we could have an NLD government. But now it is like a shock to us and to the world too."

Legislators from the two main parties, smaller ethnic minority parties, and military-appointed representatives filed into the cavernous parliament for the lower house session and took a joint oath of office.

Most wore the traditional dress of the Burman majority or of the Shan, Karen, Kachin, Lisu and other minorities who make up nearly 40 percent of the country's 52 million people but in the past have been poorly represented in the central government.

The session marks a historic turnaround for the NLD, which for years was suppressed

by the military. The session marks a historic turnaround for the NLD, which for years was suppressed by the military

sed by the military. Generals ruled the country directly or indirectly after seizing power in 1962, and over the years jailed hundreds of NLD leaders, including Suu Kyi, while crushing overt political activity.

The Southeast Asian nation started moving away from dictatorship toward democracy in 2011, when the military rulers agreed to hand over power to a nominally civilian government headed by President Thein Sein, a general-turned-reformist.

He will step down in late March or early April when an NLD president takes over.

Suu Kyi is constitutionally barred from taking the presidency because her sons and late husband are British citizens, and has vowed to rule from behind the scenes through a proxy. She has not announced who her party will nominate for president.

"We don't know exactly when the presidential election will



Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi (center) walks alongside other lawmakers of her National League for Democracy party

happen. We cannot tell you anything about who will be nominated as the presidential candidates as well," said Zayar Thaw, an NLD legislator.

Following two meetings between Suu Kyi and armed forces commander Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, rumors surfaced that she was pressing for the suspension of the constitutional clause that bars her from office.

But the speculation was quashed by the army's Myawaddy Daily newspaper, which wrote that "for the goodness of the mother country" the constitutional clause should not be changed.

Despite its landslide victory, the NLD will have to share

power with the military because the constitution reserves 25 percent, or 166 of the 664 seats in the two houses of parliament, for military appointees.

Thein Sein's military-backed USDP won a 2010 election in which the NLD refused to participate, protesting that it was held under unfair conditions. After several changes in the election law, the NLD contested several dozen by-elections in 2012, winning virtually all of them.

Suu Kyi's party handsomely won the previous general election in 1990, but the results were annulled by the military and many of the party's leading members were harassed and jailed.

Suu Kyi had been placed under house arrest prior to that election and spent 15 of the next 22 years mostly confined to her lakeside villa in Yangon. She was under house arrest when she won the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize.

Establishing democracy is only one hurdle the country faces. The new government will also have to contend with ethnic rebellions in several parts of the country. Thein Sein's government signed a peace pact with more than a dozen smaller ethnic armies before the elections, but major groups have stayed away and fighting continues in many states. Most are fighting for autonomy and rights over their resource-rich land.

"I hope this will be a good opportunity for us to speak out for the ethnic people and demand indigenous rights," said Lama Naw Aung, a lower house member from the Kachin State Democracy Party, representing the Kachin minority who are fighting the army in the north.

"I think there will be a change because Aung San Suu Kyi might want to finish the work for the ethnics that her father didn't get a chance to do," he said, referring to independence hero Aung San, who united various national groups. He and six colleagues were assassinated in July 1947, six months before Myanmar's independence. AP

SINGAPORE

Authorities seize 'large number' of bank accounts amid 1MDB probe

Jasmine Ng

SINGAPORE has seized "a large number" of bank accounts in connection with possible money-laundering carried out in the country, the Monetary Authority of Singapore and Commercial Affairs Department said in a joint e-mailed statement in response to queries on 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB).

"In connection with these investigations, we have sought and are continuing to seek information from several financial ins-



titutions, are interviewing various individuals, and have seized a large number of bank accounts," the agencies said in the statement yesterday. Singapore has been "actively investigating" possible

money-laundering and other offences since mid-2015, according to the statement.

Neighboring Malaysia's government investment fund, whose advisory board is headed by Prime

Minister Najib Razak, has been the subject of overlapping investigations in the country, as well as overseas jurisdictions including Switzerland and Hong Kong amid allegations of financial irregularities. Swiss prosecutors said in a Jan. 29 statement that they are seeking legal assistance from the Southeast Asian nation after a probe that they conducted into 1MDB revealed "serious indications" that about USD4 billion may have been misappropriated.

Singapore is cooperating

closely with relevant authorities including those in Malaysia, Switzerland and the U.S., the agencies said in the statement.

"We have responded to all foreign requests for information and have requested for information from relevant counterparts to aid in our investigations," according to the statement. "Singapore does not tolerate the use of its financial system as a refuge or conduit for illicit funds."

While an initial Malaysian auditor general's report in July on 1MDB didn't reveal any suspicious activity, the nation's central bank had made requests for the attorney general to initiate criminal proceedings against the debt-ridden company. The Malaysian attorney general's office dismissed the central bank's

requests, which alleged that 1MDB breached the Exchange Control Act.

Separately, Malaysia's attorney-general closed the door on a graft investigation into Najib last month, clearing him of wrongdoing over a "personal contribution" of \$681 million from Saudi Arabia's royal family, and funds from a company linked to 1MDB that appeared in his personal bank accounts.

Najib has maintained the funds were not used for private benefit, with \$620 million later returned to the Saudi donors, although there hasn't been a clear explanation as to what the rest was spent on or where that money is now. Both the premier and 1MDB have consistently denied any wrongdoing. Bloomberg

Deb Riechmann & Robert Burns,
Washington

AP PHOTO

FIFTEEN years into the war that few Americans talk about any more, conditions in Afghanistan are getting worse, preventing the clean ending that President Barack Obama hoped to impose before leaving office.

Violence is on the rise, the Taliban are staging new offensives, the Islamic State group is angling for a foothold and peace prospects are dim.

Afghanistan remains a danger zone. It's hobbled by a weak economy that's sapping public confidence in the new government. Afghan police and soldiers are struggling to hold together the country 13 months after the U.S.-led military coalition culled its numbers by 90 percent.

The bottom line: For a second time, Obama is rethinking his plan to drop U.S. troop levels from 9,800 to 5,500 before he leaves office in January 2017.

"I don't see any drawdowns" in the near future, said James Dobbins, Obama's former special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. He predicted that Obama would leave the decision to the next president.

"They are just hoping that things hold together and they won't have to face a decision on whether to actually implement the force reduction they're talking about until late summer, early fall, by which time the administration will be on its last legs," Dobbins said.

Top military officials, as well as Republicans and Democrats in Congress, think that trimming the force any more during Obama's presidency is a bad idea. Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said Thursday that Afghanistan was in a "crisis situation."

Initially, Obama announced plans to reduce the force to 5,500 troops by the end of last year, and to 1,000 by the end of 2016. Last fall, Obama changed his mind, saying the situation remained too fragile for the American military to leave. He announced plans to keep the current force of about 9,800 in place through



Afghan security forces patrol in Nad Ali district of Helmand province

AFGHANISTAN

Violence forces Obama to rethink troop levels

■ For a second time, Obama is rethinking his plan to drop US troop levels from 9,800 to 5,500 before he leaves office

most of 2016 to perform not in an offensive combat role but to continue counterterrorism missions and advise Afghans battling a resurgent Taliban.

It's been a tough year on the Afghan battlefield.

Afghan soldiers and policemen — bankrolled by USD4.1 billion in U.S. taxpayer money — fought virtually on their own last year for the first time since the U.S. invasion in 2001. NATO officials have told The Associated Press that Afghan troops are displaying prowess yet suffering sustained heavy casualties — 28 percent higher in 2015 than before the international combat mission ended in December 2014.

Lt. Gen. John "Mick" Nicholson, Obama's pick to be the next top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, said at his Sena-

te confirmation hearing Thursday that the Afghan security forces have "more than held their own against the insurgency," but are not yet "self-sustainable."

Asked whether the U.S. effort in 2015 had resulted in gains or losses, Nicholson replied:

"The Taliban came at the Afghan security forces more intensely than perhaps we anticipated. Because of that, we did not make the advances we ... thought we would make."

When U.S. and other foreign troops left on an announced schedule, the Taliban pounced.

Last fall, they briefly seized Kunduz, a city of 300,000 in northern Afghanistan. It marked the militants' first capture of a major city since before the U.S.-led invasion and was marred by the mistaken U.S. strike on a charity hospital run by Doctors Without Borders, killing 42 people.

Hamdullah Mohib, Afghanistan's ambassador to the United States, acknowledged that Kunduz was a setback. But he said it also reminded Afghans what life was like under the

Taliban.

"They don't want to return to that," he said.

In the south, Afghan army units have been engaged in fierce fights with the Taliban for months in Helmand province, where militants sow more than \$3 billion a year in opium revenue. The Afghan army in Helmand has been plagued by incompetence and corruption. The Afghan military recently fired and replaced top Afghan army leaders there.

Also in the south, U.S. and Afghan forces last year killed 150 to 200 al-Qaida members in a large training camp, complete with tunnels, that was discovered in neighboring Kandahar province, another militant stronghold.

A current Afghan official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media, acknowledged the army's many setbacks this year, but said the Taliban had sought to achieve major victories after the U.S.-led coalition announced it would end its combat mission on Dec. 31, 2015. Instead, they failed to retake huge swaths of land, the official said. **AP**

AP PHOTO



An RSPCA inspector photographing dead kangaroos lying on the roadside in the outskirts of Brisbane

AUSTRALIA

Driver deliberately killed 17 kangaroos

SEVENTEEN kangaroos have died after being deliberately run down by a driver in Australia, an animal welfare group said yesterday.

The carcasses of 16 kangaroos were found

yesterday along a 100-meter stretch of road in the eastern city of Brisbane, said Michael Beatty, a spokesman for the RSPCA in Queensland state. Another kangaroo had to

be euthanized because of its injuries. Many of the animals were young, Beatty said.

"They've definitely been deliberately run over," Beatty said. "You can quite clearly see the

tire tracks where they've gone off the road to hit them."

The group has asked for any witnesses to come forward with information.

According to data re-

leased in 2014 by Australia's Department of the Environment, 34.3 million kangaroos lived within the commercial harvest areas of the country-continent in 2011. **MDT/AP**

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Jenny Barchfield,
Mauricio Savarese

For Brazil's rich and poor, disparate response to Zika

TWO Brazilian women, two pregnancies, one nightmare. But two very different stories.

Regina de Lima and Tainara Lourenco became pregnant at a scary moment — the dawn of an extraordinary Zika outbreak, as authorities came to suspect that the virus was causing an alarming spike in a rare birth defect called microcephaly. Both have reason to fear for the health of their unborn offspring.

But that is where the similarities end.

Lima is well-off, and took advantage of the options of affluence.

Lourenco lives in a slum. She has no options, except to hope for the best.

When Lima learned she was pregnant, her initial, vertiginous rush of happiness was almost immediately smothered by dread.

Lima and her husband had been trying to start a family but decided to put the project on hold in late November, after the Brazilian government announced a possible link between mosquito-borne Zika and microcephaly, in which infants are born with unusually small heads and can sometimes suffer mental retardation or a host of serious health and developmental problems.

The connection between Zika and microcephaly is not yet understood, but the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says there is strong evidence of a link. And with more than 3,700 confirmed or suspected cases of microcephaly registered here since October — compared with fewer than 150 cases in all of 2014 — the Brazilian government took the drastic step of urging would-be parents to put off pregnancies.

But for Lima, an audiovisual producer from Rio de Janeiro, it was too late. She was already pregnant, and her first trimester — thought to be when the fetus is most susceptible to Zika — would coincide with Rio's

■ The connection between Zika and microcephaly is not yet understood, but [US authorities] say there is strong evidence of a link

summer mosquito season.

"The first weeks were terrifying," said Lima. "I cried and cried."

She was haunted by fears she may have already had Zika without knowing it — the illness can cause a fever and red splotches on the skin, but is asymptomatic in most cases — and that her baby would develop microcephaly, which ultrasounds only pick up starting in the seventh month.

So Lima did what growing numbers of wealthy Brazilian women are doing: She requested an extended vacation from work, packed her bags and left for Europe. She plans to stay at least through the end of the dicey first trimester.

"I am in a sort of exile — I could be at home with my husband, seeing my own doctors, but instead I'm here in Europe with a suitcase," Lima said in a telephone interview from London, quickly adding that she wasn't complaining. "I am lucky to have options, to be able to make decisions. Most women in my situation don't have



Tainara Lourenco, who's five months pregnant, stands outside her stilt home that stands over polluted water in a slum in Recife

that luxury. They're completely at the mercy of fate."

Indeed, although she's living on a shoestring — crashing with friends and moving weekly so as not to overstay her welcome — Lima's peace of mind comes with a price tag that would be unthinkable for the vast majority of women in this most socially stratified of countries.

Her airline ticket alone cost several times the monthly minimum wage of just over USD200, and with Brazil's currency at historic lows amid an economic recession, even everyday expenses in Europe have become exorbitant by Brazilian standards.

Unemployed and five months pregnant, 21-year-old Lourenco lives in a slum at the epicenter of Brazil's tandem Zika and microcephaly outbreaks, the state of Pernambuco in Brazil's impoverished and underdeveloped northeast.

Her shack is cobbled together from bits of wood and perches on stilts over a giant puddle of fetid water below. To eke out a living for herself and her 2-year-old daughter, Lourenco

ventures into a nearby swamp to hunt for crustaceans she hawks for \$2.50 a kilogram.

"I think I got Zika or some other disease not long ago," she said. "What can we do? Just hope that it doesn't affect the baby."

Zika is spread by the Aedes aegypti mosquito, which is well-adapted to humans, thrives in people's homes and can breed in even a bottle cap's-worth of stagnant water — not to mention the pools of rain water that lurk in just about every nook and cranny during the muggy summer rain season. While anyone can be bitten by Aedes, public health experts agree that the poor are more vulnerable because they often lack amenities that help diminish the risk, such as air conditioning and window screens.

The only precautionary measure Lourenco could possibly take, long-sleeve clothing, is unworkable in the unrelenting equatorial heat.

Like many of the estimated 400,000 women currently pregnant in Brazil, she can't afford mosquito repellent. Micro-

cephaly fears have sparked a run on repellents, emptying out the stock in many pharmacies in hard-hit areas; where it's still available — often fishing supply stores — it now often costs several times the normal price.

The government has pledged to start providing repellent to low-income women and promises to deploy some 220,000 members of the Armed Forces to help eliminate Aedes' breeding places as part of President Dilma Rousseff's declared war against the insect. But the measures are too little, too late for women whose worries about microcephaly have transformed their pregnancies into a period of unending anguish.

In the Central American nation of El Salvador, where authorities have urged women to put off pregnancy for two years, Guadalupe Urquilla is struggling to take fate into her own hands.

She's traded her dresses for long pants and closed shoes, scrubs out the family's concrete water tank every three days, and writes to San Salvador city officials, demanding that they fumigate the debris-strewn public housing complex where she lives with her husband and 2-year-old daughter.

Urquilla said her husband is believed to have had Zika last fall and her daughter had dengue.

"We're really scared," said Urquilla, who's in her 13th week of pregnancy. "Imagine my baby does not get Zika, but imagine how stressed out it will be when it comes out. The whole pregnancy we're stressed out about mosquitoes. [...] It's a huge paranoia."

Lourenco, though, is more fatalistic. "If you have to get sick you will get sick," she said. "It's everywhere." **AP**

USA ELECTIONS

Democratic, Republican races tight as 2016 voting begins

REPUBLICAN Donald Trump and Democrat Bernie Sanders hope to translate voter enthusiasm into victories in Iowa caucuses, as Ted Cruz and Hillary Clinton bank on sophisticated get-out-the-vote operations.

The caucuses kick off the 2016 presidential nominating contests, marking a new phase in a tumultuous election that has exposed Americans' deep frustration with Washin-



Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, accompanied by her daughter Chelsea Clinton

gton and given rise to candidates few expected to present a serious challenge for their party's nomination when they first entered the race.

After months of campaigning and more than USD150 million already spent on advertising, the race for supremacy in Iowa is close in both parties. Among Republicans, Trump appears to hold a slim edge over Cruz, a fiery senator from Texas.

Clinton and Sanders entered in a surprisingly tight Democratic race, reviving memories of the former secretary of state's disappointing showing in

Iowa eight years ago.

"Stick with me," Clinton said as she rallied supporters Sunday. "Stick with a plan. Stick with experience."

Sanders, the Vermont senator who has been generating big, youthful crowds across the state, urged voters to help him "make history" with a win in Iowa.

In a show of financial strength, Sanders' campaign announced Sunday it raised \$20 million in January alone. While

Sanders has a large team in Iowa, his operation got off to a later start, particularly compared with Clinton, who has had staff on the ground in the state for nearly a year.

Iowa's contest will also offer the first hard evidence of whether Trump can turn the legion of fans drawn to his plainspoken populism into voters. The scope of the billionaire's organization in Iowa is a mystery, though Trump himself has intensified his campaign schedule during the final sprint, including a pair of rallies yesterday. **AP**

what's ON



FIREWORKS, FLOWERS AND GOOD FORTUNE

LUNAR NEW YEAR'S EVE FLOWER MARKET

TIME: 9am-midnight (February 2-6)

9am (February 7)-2am (next day, February 8)

VENUE: Tap Seac Square

INCENSE AND PINWHEEL STALLS

TIME: 6pm (February 7)-6:30pm (next day, February 8)

9am-6:30pm (February 9-14)

VENUE: Shorefront of A-Ma Temple

TIME: 8pm (March 3)-7am (March 4)

VENUE: Pavement in front of Kun lam Tong Temple

FIRECRACKERS AND FIREWORKS ZONES

Noon (February 7)-2am (February 8)

10am-2am (next day, February 8-9)

10am-Midnight (February 10-12)

VENUE: Taipa - Shorefront of Est. Alm. Marques Esparteiro

Macau - Av. Dr. Sun Yat Sen (near Macau Tower)

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2833 7676 / 8988 4000

<http://www.iacm.gov.mo>

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

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

SHINING CLEAN - EXHIBITION OF YONGLE PORCELAIN EXCAVATED FROM ZHUSHAN OF THE JINGDEZHEN OFFICIAL KILN AND MUSEUM

TIME: 9am-9pm

UNTIL: March 13, 2016

VENUE: Temporary Exhibitions Gallery of the Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau

ORGANIZER: Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau,

Cultural Affairs Bureau

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8988 4100 / 2882 7103

Offbeat

UK POLICE ARREST SUSPECT WITH 38 PHONES IN HIS TROUSERS

British police have arrested a suspected thief with 38 mobile phones stuffed down his trousers.

West Midlands Police say they believe the man stole the phones from concertgoers at a show by band The Libertines in Birmingham, central England.

The 30-year-old and a second man, who was also arrested, were spotted at the venue with their trousers taped closed at the bottom. Police were on the lookout after reports of phone thefts during an earlier Libertines gig in the northwest England city of Manchester.

Police Inspector Gareth Morris said last week that anyone whose phone was taken during Wednesday's show should contact officers.

TV canal macau

13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:30	RTPi Live
16:50	Castle S.5
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

28 JAN - 04 FEB



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



THE LAST WOMEN STANDING_

ROOM 2

2.30, 4.30, 7.30, 9.30 pm

Director: Luo Lu

Starring: Shu Qi, Eddie Peng Yuyan, Hao Leie

Language: Mandarin (English/Cantonese)

Duration: 100min

THE BIG SHORT_

ROOM 3

2.30, 4.45, 9.30 pm

Director: Adam McKay

Starring: Christian Bale, Steve Carell, Ryan Gosling

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 130min

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



1990 DE KLERK DISMANTLES APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA

The President of South Africa has lifted the 30-year ban on leading anti-apartheid group the African National Congress.

In a televised speech at the opening of Parliament in Cape Town, President FW de Klerk announced restrictions would be lifted on the ANC, the smaller Pan Africanist Congress and the South African Communist Party, which is allied to the ANC.

He also made his first public commitment to release jailed ANC leader Nelson Mandela, but he did not specify a date.

The reforms will allow active opposition to apartheid for the first time in 40 years of National Party rule.

Many observers were surprised by the scope of the reforms - which included a return to press freedom and suspension of the death penalty - signalling a partial end to the 25-year-old state of emergency.

Nobel Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu said: "He has taken my breath away".

Mr Mandela's wife, Winnie, remained sceptical.

She said: "We are not going to accept a bone without meat. The unbanning of the ANC, the South African Communist Party and the Pan-African Congress in the prevailing South African climate is simply a recipe for further problems."

Other critics complained about the government's failure to completely lift the state of emergency, as the ban on TV and photographic coverage of unrest continues.

Mr de Klerk explained this was precautionary so that the authorities could monitor the progress of the reforms.

Speaking about the release of political prisoners, he said: "It does not signify in the least the approval or condoning of crimes of terrorism or crimes of violence committed under their banner."

The Conservative opposition has demanded a referendum on the white reaction to the new measures.

World leaders praised Mr de Klerk.

US President George Bush said he welcomed the decision to dismantle apartheid but emphasised further action would be needed before economic sanctions could be lifted.

British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher has written to Mr de Klerk to congratulate him for his courage.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Nelson Mandela was released on 11 February 1990. President FW de Klerk lifted the remaining apartheid legislation in 1991.

The ANC became South Africa's first democratically elected government in April 1994.

Nelson Mandela became the country's first black president on 10 May 1994 aged 75.

He retired in the middle of 1999 and was replaced as president by Thabo Mbeki.

Nelson Mandela died on December 5, 2013.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 It's a good day to hash out disagreements at work or nearly anywhere else.

Taurus April 20-May 20 Take a second or third look at your situation - is it really as bad as you had feared?

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 Don't get too excited about how much you've got to do - your energy is better spent on dreaming up new ideas and making plans.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Try not to miss the point of whatever news comes your way - though it may be hard to discern which bits are most important.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Its time for you to make a new friend! That doesn't mean you have to force anything, but you should at least open up to new coworkers or chat with folks in new social situations.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 Work - or the lack of it - may cause problems today, but there's good news: You're on the way back into balance!

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 Your fierce, brainy energy is making life easier for you today - but not in a boring way! Your great ideas and big plans help you to see the best way to cut through the bureaucracy and get your way.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 The little details really matter - so make sure you're paying close attention! If you have to sign anything, read it twice and get someone else you trust to do the same.

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 People are not to be trusted today - though that's not to say they are actively trying to stab you in the back!

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 You may be a little more social than usual today, but there's no need for you to go nuts. If anything, you may find that your energy is better spent on parties than on work projects or other stuff.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 Your unique take on today's events makes you perfect for finding solutions - or opportunities! It's a great day to advance your agenda, whatever it may be, and to show others where to go.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 You have two conflicting goals today, but you don't have to worry too much about choosing just yet. If anything, you may be able to find a way to have your cake and eat it, too!

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

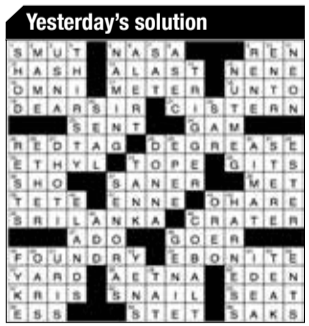
WEATHER

Weather forecast table with columns for MIN, MAX, and CONDITION. It lists weather for various cities in CHINA and the WORLD.

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Tabula ____; 5- Vane dir; 8- Entr'____; 12- Extreme; 14- Employs; 15- Puppeteer Tony; 16- Stable compartment; 17- Suffragist Carrie; 18- Buffalo's county; 19- Capital of Hawaii; 21- Likenesses; 23- Pampering place; 24- Parisian pal; 25- Table scrap; 26- Sickness at the stomach; 30- Loud sound; 32- Marsh bird; 33- One of the three Magi; 37- Sea eagle; 38- N Atlantic archipelago; 39- Chianti, e.g.; 40- Cowardly; 42- Reddish brown; 43- Convex molding; 44- Bird of prey; 45- Life story; 48- At least one; 49- Outer edge; 50- Just about; 52- Free; 57- Boyfriend; 58- Thought; 60- Happening; 61- Contented sighs; 62- Dutch cheese, wrapped in red wax; 63- Fungal infection; 64- Shoo!; 65- ACLU concerns; 66- Evil is as evil ____;

DOWN: 1- Hurry; 2- Choir voice; 3- Ollie's partner; 4- Singer Guthrie; 5- Son of Rebekah; 6- Hockey goal part; 7- Guess; 8- On the main; 9- Freight; 10- Judge or juror; 11- Discharge; 13- Ready to go; 14- Home of the Bruins; 20- Put ____ fight; 22- Ho Chi ____ City; 24- Metallic mixture; 26- Exigency; 27- Taj Mahal city; 28- Coffee dispensers; 29- Take care of; 30- Monte ____; 31- Chairman's hammer; 33- In an inadequate manner; 34- Bluish white metallic element; 35- Part of A.D.; 36- Horse of mixed color; 38- Border; 41- Gardner and others; 42- Small village; 44- In shape; 45- Rum cakes; 46- Pertaining to the small intestine; 47- City in Nebraska; 49- Quantity of paper; 51- Evict; 52- Oceans; 53- "Metamorphoses" poet; 54- Vintner's prefix; 55- Dagger of yore; 56- LAX guessimates; 59- Banned insecticide;



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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
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Steve Douglas, Manchester

Wednesday, 3:45am
Leicester v Liverpool
H 2.7, D 3.42, A 2.9

FOOTBALL | EPL PREVIEW

Title-contending Leicester begins pivotal stretch

THE likelihood of Leicester playing in the Champions League next season is growing stronger by the game.

The even more fanciful notion of Leicester as English Premier League champion? We'll have a much better idea in about two weeks.

The team that narrowly avoided relegation last season is the surprise leader by three points with 15 matches remaining, and is 10 points clear of fifth-place Manchester United. If Leicester can emerge from its next three games with a lead intact, English soccer could be in for its most unlikely league champion in a generation.

The team led by Claudio Ranieri hosts Liverpool today [Wednesday, 3:45am] in the standout match of a full midweek program in the Premier League. Away matches at Manchester City and Arsenal — the other members of the current top three — come next for Leicester, before a run of seemingly benign games while its title rivals resume their campaigns in Europe.

There's no sign of Leicester slowing down, either, having beaten Tottenham away and Stoke 3-0 in two of its last three matches.

Liverpool has been inconsistent of late, but is one of only two teams to have defeated Leicester this season. Both teams will be fresh after the fourth round of the FA Cup, with Leicester inactive after



Leicester City's Robert Huth (number 6, right) heads the ball to score the only goal of the game during their English Premier League soccer match against Tottenham Hotspur

being eliminated and Liverpool fielding its reserves in a 0-0 draw against West Ham on Saturday.

"We will have fresh legs against Leicester and that's the good news," said Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp, whose team has played a game every three of four days since Christmas. "It's an intensive time. Hopefully we have players to come back from injury and we will have enough."

AGUERO'S FOIL. Sergio Aguero is back in scoring form for Manchester City — and he might have a sidekick to share the attacking burden for the final months of the season.

Kelechi Iheanacho is a 19-year-old Nigerian who is making something of a splash in his first season in City's squad. His hat trick in City's 4-0 win over Aston Villa in the FA Cup on Saturday took his tally this season to eight goals in 507 minutes of action — a goal every 63 minutes.

He has come from nowhere to be arguably City's second-choice striker, ahead of Wilfried Bony.

Iheanacho is likely to be back on the bench for City's trip to Sunderland, but City manager Manuel Pellegrini will no longer be hesitating about whether Iheanacho is up to the task.

City is in second place, tied on points with Arsenal.

PRESSURE BACK ON. Only time will tell if Man Uni-

ted's win over second-tier club Derby in the FA Cup on Friday was another false dawn for under-pressure manager Louis van Gaal.

Stoke visits Old Trafford, looking to complete the league double over United this season. After his team's loss at Britannia Stadium on Dec. 26, Van Gaal raised the possibility of quitting, and the prospect of him departing has hovered over the Dutchman ever since.

United is five points behind Tottenham, which occupies the final Champions League qualification spot.

The biggest positive for Van Gaal at the moment is the form of Wayne Rooney, who has six goals in six games in 2016. Another six and he'll equal the club record of 249 goals held by Bobby Charlton.

"I've been scoring goals, I feel good, I feel fit and, although some of the results have been disappointing, I'm enjoying my game at the minute," Rooney said, "and long may it continue."

ELSEWHERE. Arsenal is at home against Southampton and will be looking to make amends for a 4-0 loss in the reverse match on Dec. 26.

Tottenham visits Norwich, while reigning champion Chelsea is 14 points off the top 14 heading into a match at Watford. **AP / Oddschecker.com**

JORDAN Spieth finished runner-up at the Singapore Open yesterday after South Korea's Song Young-han held his nerve to beat the fast-finishing world number one by a single stroke.

Among 13 players back at Sentosa Golf Club at the break of dawn after Sunday's final round was suspended because of a thunderstorm, Spieth sank a five-foot birdie putt on the last hole, where he had marked his ball overnight, completing a final round of 5-under 66 to finish at 11-under 273.

Song, resuming on 12 under and playing two groups behind Spieth, drained a tricky 12-foot par putt on the 16th then made par at the last two holes to win the co-sanctioned Asian and Japan Tour event.

China's Liang Wen-chong, who completed his

final round on Sunday, finished outright third at 10-under.

"I had my first perfect round today," Spieth joked about his one-shot day. "Everything was absolutely perfect. I didn't miss one shot and I made everything I looked at."

"It was tough to sleep on that putt. Even though it wasn't the most challenging putt, it was still a very nerve wracking one to hit knowing that you have to make it for what you think will be a playoff."

Ranked 204th in the world, Song had led the tournament from the second round and was five in front of Spieth heading into the final round but had to retain his composure in the closing stages as the American narrowed the gap.

The 24-year-old said he had a restless night thinking about the putt on

GOLF

Song hangs on to beat Spieth by a stroke at Singapore Open



Song Young-han

16 and spent hours practicing the shot in his hotel room.

"I felt like I was going crazy," he said, speaking through a translator. "The

putting line wasn't that bad but the situation made me nervous."

Normally one of the best putters in the game, Spieth had struggled on the

greens all week in the stifling humidity of Southeast Asia. But the 22-year-old got his game together in the final round to mount a late challenge, reeling in six birdies to put pressure on Song, who was chasing his first win as a professional after two second-place finishes on the Japan Tour.

Song managed just two birdies in his final round of 70 and dropped a shot at the seventh after an erratic drive but made a string of clutch saves to par the last seven holes, finishing with a simple tap-in at the 18th to secure the title and deny Spieth a chance of a playoff.

"I fought hard in the final round but I was just a little bit too far back," Spieth said. "I missed a few putts [earlier in the tournament] that I normally make."

"I had a lot of tough breaks. You have them both ways but this was one week where we definitely got the bad end of some bounces."

"My game's pretty close. I held it together pretty solid but I didn't have as many looks as I normally have on a weekly basis and that led to a little bit of a lack of trust in the reads." **AP**

opinion

World Views

The Editors, Bloomberg

A NUCLEAR CRUISE MISSILE THE US DOESN'T NEED

For a president who famously advocated for a world without nuclear weapons, Barack Obama has done a lot to keep the U.S. nuclear arsenal intact. That's not a criticism – it was his promise that was naive, not his policy – but in one respect, his strategy is unnecessarily destabilizing.

The administration's proposal to spend up to USD30 billion to create a new nuclear cruise missile meant to be carried by the aging B-52 bomber makes no sense financially or strategically. Cruise missiles, which are smaller than land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles and fly farther than tactical bombs dropped by planes, are the wild card of the nuclear arsenal: Unlike ICBMs, they are very hard to spot by radar or satellite, and, even if detected, they're indistinguishable from conventionally armed cruise missiles.

This is a problem because a successful deterrence strategy requires that both sides in a potential nuclear conflict have a pretty good idea of what the other would do. Three years ago, the U.K. decided not to develop a submarine-based nuclear-tipped cruise missile because it carries too great a risk of "miscalculation and unintended escalation."

Even the cold warrior Ronald Reagan subscribed to this theory of deterrence, agreeing with the Soviets in 1987 to eliminate land-based nuclear cruise missiles. His successor, George H.W. Bush, ordered them taken off U.S. submarines. The only current version is carried by the B-52, which is too slow and easily spotted to enter contested airspace and drop bombs.

In the early days of the Cold War, this weapon may have made sense. But after the B-1 supersonic bomber and B-2 stealth craft came along in the 1980s, the U.S. had planes with the capability to enter hostile airspace with nuclear bombs. (The B-1 no longer carries nuclear weapons, but the 20 remaining B-2s can.)

Today, with Russia a much-diminished nuclear threat and China little interested in challenging U.S. nuclear superiority, the need to overwhelm either nation's air defenses is less of a priority. Meanwhile, lesser potential adversaries such as Iran and North Korea have limited capability to protect their airspace. And technological advances have made the nuclear submarine fleet vastly more capable of penetrating enemy anti-missile defenses.

So why the push for the new cruise weapon? In part, it's the natural inclination of the military to trade up. There are also concerns over what will happen when the B-2 goes out of service and the B-52s, which have been flying since the 1950s, give up the ghost.

But the Air Force plans to spend USD10 billion to extend the B-2's life for another four decades, and up to another \$80 billion for the next-generation Long Range Strike Bombers, which could enter service as soon as 2025 and are designed to penetrate contested airspace. In addition, the current air-launched cruise missile can probably remain usable for 15 years, filling any gap before the new bomber takes off.

Given all this, spending billions on a new nuclear cruise missile isn't the best or wisest use of resources. William J. Perry, the former defense secretary who oversaw the development of air-launched cruise missiles, now supports a global ban on nuclear-tipped cruises.

America's nuclear arsenal remains a linchpin not only of national defense but also of international security. Obama's support of hundreds of billions of dollars to modernize the aging nuclear "triad" is justified. But plans to upgrade the nuclear cruise missile would not make the U.S., or the world, any safer.

THE CHINA SAYS PASTOR SUSPECTED OF MISAPPROPRIATING FUNDS

China's state-sanctioned Protestant church body says a pastor in a province where authorities have been cracking down on churches is under investigation for suspected misappropriation of funds.

The Zhejiang province branch of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement said on its website yesterday that Gu Yue-se was also accused of

other unspecified economic crimes.

The notice expressed "deep shock and regret" over the news and said Gu's alleged crimes were his personal behavior. In an apparent attempt to allay doubts about their allegations, it urged parishioners to be "clear-headed" about the developments and said all were equal under Chinese law.

Cuba says it will launch broadband home internet project



Michael Weissenstein, Havana

CUBA announced yesterday that it is launching broadband Internet service in two Havana neighborhoods as a pilot project aimed at bringing home access to one of the world's least connected nations.

State telecommunications company ETECSA said it would allow Cubans in Old Havana, the colonial center that is one of the island's main tourist attractions, to order service through fiber optic connections operated with Chinese telecom operator Huawei.

Odalys Rodríguez del Toro, ETECSA director for Havana, told state media that the government would also begin allowing cafes, bars and restaurants to begin order-

ring broadband service.

Del Toro offered no timeline for the pilot project or rollout of broader access and said prices would be announced in the future.

Still, any fiber-optic home connections would be an important milestone in Cuba, where broadband home service is currently legal only for diplomats and employees of foreign companies who pay hundreds of dollars a month for Internet links that are a fraction of the average speed in other countries. Some Cuban citizens have dial-up home service or restricted mobile phone connections that allow access only to state-run email.

General public access to broadband Internet began only last year, with the opening of dozens of public

WiFi spots that cost USD2 an hour. That is about a tenth of the average monthly salary in Cuba.

Del Toro said ETECSA would open 30 more WiFi spots in Havana alone in 2016, which by itself would double the number of access points in Cuba. She did not say how many more were planned for other cities.

The United States has been pushing Cuba to show that it is improving conditions for its citizens as President Barack Obama loosens the half-century old U.S. trade embargo on Cuba through a series of executive actions.

Obama hopes to travel to Cuba this year to celebrate his re-establishment of diplomatic relations with the island but has said he would visit only if he believed his presence would help improve the lives of ordinary Cubans by moving the island toward greater freedom.

U.S. Federal Communications Commission chairman Tom Wheeler traveled to Havana this month to meet with Cuban officials about increasing Cuba's connections to the Internet. Last week, the FCC gave U.S. companies blanket permission to provide voice and data connections to Cuba, doing away the requirement for special FCC permission. AP

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

SOURCE: DSMG

WORLD BRIEFS

AFGHANISTAN A suicide car bombing aimed at a police base in Kabul kills at least one person and wounds another 16. [More on p13](#)



AP PHOTO

IRAN says it now has access to more than USD100 billion worth of frozen overseas assets following the implementation of the nuclear deal with world powers. Much of the money had been piling up in banks in China, India, Japan, South Korea and Turkey since international sanctions were tightened in 2012 over Tehran's nuclear program. The comments were posted on the website of state-run Press TV yesterday.

GREECE The government enters a new round of talks with its creditors, skeptical about the depth and efficacy of its pension reform plans, facing protests over those plans from a broad spectrum of professions. Talks with the quartet of creditors – the European Commission, the European Central Bank, the European Stability Mechanism and the International Monetary Fund – were resuming at press time.

UK Britain's fertility regulator has approved a scientist's application to edit the human genetic code using a new technique that some fear crosses too many ethical boundaries. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority says it has granted research led by scientist Kathy Niakan to try to understand the genes that human embryos need to develop successfully.

NIGERIAN residents say multiple bombings of Agip oil pipelines have caused thousands of barrels of oil to pollute waterways, farms and fishing grounds in southern Bayelsa state. Fishermen say oil flowed unchecked for two days. The Italian parent company ENI says 16,000 barrels of oil per day were lost and the company yesterday began working to resume production.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

Xinhua/Cheong Kam Ka



Art for children. An artist paints in St. Lazarus district during a workshop on traditional folk art which was held for children this weekend as the Chinese Spring Festival draws near.