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To cope with the increasing number of passengers throughout the CNY, the Aviation Authority approved additional flights

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WORLD BRIEFS

CHINA A court in Xinjiang has reduced the sentences of 11 Uighurs convicted of terrorism and endangering state security, including a naturalized Canadian preacher whose life term had been sharply criticized by Ottawa. [More on p10](#)

CHINA Asian Champions League winner Guangzhou Evergrande has been fined for secretly filming its opponent's training session before the second-leg match of the final. Evergrande must pay USD160,000 for several rules violations around the return match against Al Ahli of United Arab Emirates last November. Meanwhile, the club signed star striker Jackson Martinez. [More on p19](#)



SOUTH KOREA warned of "searing" consequences if N. Korea doesn't abandon plans to launch a long-range rocket that critics call a banned test of ballistic missile technology. The South's rhetoric about unspecified harsh consequences comes less than a month after the North's defiant fourth nuclear test and as diplomats at the U.N. work on strong new sanctions against Pyongyang.

THAILAND Two Russian tourists are badly injured at a beach resort when a speedboat's propeller severs one man's leg and cuts deep gashes in the other man's leg. The men, believed to be in their 30s, were struck while they were diving off Phi Phi island in Krabi province.

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New Macau avoids calling for Au's resignation

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Grant Bowie 'starting to see some early signs of consolidation'

P3 GAMING

CNY

Aviation Authority approves application of 48 additional flights

To cope with the increasing number of passengers throughout the Chinese New Year, the Civil Aviation Authority (AACM) approved the applications of a total of 48 additional scheduled service and charter flights submitted by three airlines. These flights are destined to travel to and from mainland China (23 flights), Taiwan (12 flights), Japan (seven flights) and the Republic of Korea (five flights).

Air Macau, China Southern Airlines and Tiger Taiwan began operations of the above additional flights on February 1 and will run them until February 16.

In a press release, AACM



stressed that during the Chinese New Year the market for the short-haul flights such as those to and from mainland China, Taiwan, Japan and Korea are usually in great demand.

Separately, the Macau In-

Passenger numbers went up 23 percent in January

ternational Airport (MIA) revealed yesterday that the volume of passenger traffic and aircraft movements recorded an increase of 23 percent and 4 percent respectively for the month of January, 2016 compared to the same period last year.

Secretary says policy on residency remains unchanged

THE policy for handling applications by Portuguese citizens for residency in Macau has not changed, according to assurances given by the Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, to the Consul General of Portugal in Macau and Hong Kong, Vítor Sereno.

During the meeting held this week, the secretary stated that "Portuguese citizens in general have made a range of positive contributions to the development of Macau over the years," a government statement indicated.

Wong said figures for the past 12 years showed that only 114 applications by Portuguese citizens for residency in Macau, or 5.6 percent, were rejected out of a total of 2,039. Last year, four applications were not accepted, from the 131 applications received. Since 2003 only one unsuccessful applicant has filed an appeal against the authorities' decision, Wong stated.

It was also said that the average processing time for each new application was about 76 days. The average time for processing each application for renewal of residency was approximately 25 days.

During the meeting, issues relating to the criteria of how the authorities judge an application were also discussed. These included the applicant's linkages to the region; family ties and "employment in professions that are in line with Macau's development and the applicant's capacity to support him/herself with an adequate livelihood."

The meeting between the diplomat and Wong Sio Chak follows accusations made by the Council of the Portuguese Communities, which is officiated by lawmaker Pereira Coutinho.

The council has accused the immigration department of taking too long to process local ID requests



Vítor Sereno and Wong Sio Chak

and of being excessively bureaucratic. In a letter sent to Vítor Sereno, the advisory body claimed that some requests for documents violate privacy laws. "[Authorities] have been requesting bank statements in order to verify banking movements and [have been] requiring salaries greater than MOP25,000, a value that we consider extremely high," the letter reads. The number of Portuguese citizens applying for non-resident worker status has also been increasing.

EDUCATION

Foreign university students in Taiwan reach 110,000

THERE were over 110,000 overseas students enrolled at Taiwanese universities in 2015. According to Taiwan's Ministry of Education, those students represent 8.27 percent of its tertiary student population.

Foreign students come mainly from Malaysia, then China, Hong Kong, Macau and Vietnam, in that order.

The ministry revealed that the number of non-local students rose by 16,537 last year to 110,182. Statistics also showed that the number of foreign students taking up advanced degrees increased by 6,000 last year.

Department of International and Cross-strait Education section head, Liu Su-miao said that the increase was mainly attributed to an additional 7,000 Chinese students. Liu added that the recruiting efforts of overseas students by local universities has been aggressive; there has been a decline in enrollment of Taiwanese students because of the low birth rate over the past two decades.

Statistics show that the ministry's target to increase the number of foreign students from 30,000 in 2008 to more than 100,000 this year has been achieved. Taiwan's government is aiming to turn the nation into an advanced learning powerhouse in the Asia-Pacific region, according to Liu.

Liu noted that there was also a significant rise in the number of students from India, Indonesia and Myanmar.

The ministry said the focus now would be to encourage foreign students to work in Taiwan and to give the country's private sector more access to overseas graduates.

COURTS

Jilted wife convicted of defamation

A mainland Chinese woman has been convicted of defamation for harassing her husband and his alleged lover via text messages.

Upon discovering that her husband was cheating on her, the accused began messaging the couple with insults such as "chick," "duck," and "dog," and threatened to take their lives. A former dance teacher, the accused used several different numbers to send intimidating messages, often more than ten times a day, from January to April 2013.

The husband's alleged lover filed the complaint and appealed to the primary court to take out a restraining order on the accused. The court fined the defendant a total of MOP12,000 for intimidation and defamation.

During the proceedings, the accused appealed to the Court of Second Instance. The court charged her with defamation but refused to imprison her. The fines remained unchanged at MOP12,000 for defamation, and at MOP20,000 as compensation for the victim's emotional damage.

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GRANT BOWIE

'We can obviously build our business from this base'

MGM China's CEO and executive director Grant Bowie said yesterday that he is optimistic and "starting to see some early signs of consolidation and some opportunities for growth."

"It is not nearly as bad as people say it is and we can obviously build our business from this base and continue to be successful," Mr Bowie said, adding that MGM "would look positively for improvement in the gaming revenue coming this year," while "also focusing on non-gaming initiatives to bring more customers that may also want to play in our gaming rooms as well."

Questioned by journalists yesterday on the sidelines of a Chinese New Year house cleaning activity, the CEO refused to make revenue projections for the gaming industry.

"I think analysts are making predictions that are simply guesses. We just have to live with the business that we have. We need to be



Grant Bowie has a musical jam with the seniors

positive and we need to take care of our customers and to be always looking for new things to bring to Macau [in order] to bring more customers [here]," he said.

For the fifth year, MGM joined hands with "Centro de Dia Brilho da Vida," a service center for senior citizens operating under Caritas Macau, to organize the "Spring Clean for Love" event for local senior citizens living alone.

MGM's senior executives led a team of 140 volunteers, including more than 50 management

team members, to clean and decorate 200 households of 65- to 90-year-old residents.

Chinese "Fai Chun" (red banners) designed by MGM were placed on doorways and windows as festive decorations to welcome the Chinese New Year. Additionally, the gaming operator presented a New Year "goodie bag" to wish every household a healthy and prosperous year ahead.

According to the information released by MGM, "year by year, the number of volunteers participating in the house cleaning has

increased from 60 to 140, and the number of beneficiaries has grown from 80 to 200."

Commenting on the activity, Grant Bowie stated: "Through the activity, team members show their compassion and support to the community and help to forge a stronger bond within the team."

MGM has been working with "Centro de Dia Brilho da Vida" since 2010 on various activities for senior citizens locally. A dedicated team of volunteers was formed in May 2011 to pay monthly visits to the center. **Staff reporters**

TRANSITIONING BUSINESS FROM VIP TO MASS MARKET

QUESTIONED ABOUT the troubled VIP business, Grant Bowie said the gaming industry is "transitioning out of being primarily VIP business into the mass market," something that the CEO considered to be a "normal part of any business transformation." He further said that the priority should be to "minimize the impact

on those who have been affected" and to "track the customers that are now transitioning into the mass market." One VIP room closed at MGM in the past six months, and "about three" shut down during the past year, Bowie confirmed. That leaves seven VIP rooms still operating in MGM's facilities.

Police force protestors out of DSSOPT

Scores of Pearl Horizon protesters were forcibly removed by police on Tuesday night after they staged a sit-in inside the headquarters of the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT). Around 70 police officers armored with shields were deployed to the area on early Tuesday evening, and waited outside of the headquarters for the building to close. After bureau staff informed the protestors that the building would be shut, armored officers stormed the structure and forced the demonstrators out. Protesters have increased the frequency of their demonstrations and sit-ins recently in response to what they view as an inadequate government response. Earlier this week an Administrative Court in Macau rejected an appeal by Pearl Horizon plot developer, Polytec, against the government's decision not to renew the land concession.

AD

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Macau SME Procurement Platform Mobile App Design Competition

Aims of the competition
One of the objectives of this competition is to foster creativity and the development of the local IT industry as well as encouraging innovation in Macau's young entrepreneurs.
We also aim to develop a platform that will serve as a bridge between buyers and SMEs (both goods and services suppliers). Through this platform, SMEs will be able to better access business opportunities and easily co-operate with government departments and other companies.

Cash prize
1. Winner : MOP 60,000
2. First runner-up : MOP 30,000
3. Second runner-up : MOP 10,000

The winning entry may have the opportunity to be granted a vendor contract for further development. A jury panel will decide whether the winning entry can be put into official operation.

Timeline
Applications are accepted from today to the 29 February 2016

Proposal submission deadline
By 10pm on 11 March 2016
Proposals should include an operation description and be submitted to the offices of CPTTM during office hours.

For access to the application form, details and latest news of the competition, please visit <https://events.cpttm.org.mo> or scan the QR code. For further enquiries, please contact: ist-thomas@cpttm.org.mo

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Woman swindled out of MOP29,000

An English-speaking Indian man, claiming to be a clairvoyant, has swindled a 28-year-old woman out of MOP29,000 at St. Francisco Garden. According to a police report, the conman convinced the victim that he had foreseen her father's bad luck before asking the woman for money and then making the unusual request for a new phone, so as to "enhance the prayer's effect."

IACM's app adds Indonesian and Vietnamese versions



The Civic Municipal Affairs Bureau (IACM) has updated the "Information about Macao's Environmental Hygiene" mobile application, adding Indonesian and Vietnamese versions to provide ease of use to residents and visitors of various nationalities. The app features information about environmental hygiene and education in Macau, as well as providing the locations of public toilets, garbage chambers, compacting trash bins, recyclable garbage collection points and more. It was previously only available in three languages: Chinese, Portuguese and English.

Literary festival announces concert line-up

Organizers of the Macau Literary Festival announced a line-up of concerts to be included in the event's program featuring performers from Portugal, China and Macau. Yao Shisan, a Chinese folk artist, and João Caetano, a Macau-born Portuguese musician, will play at the Macao Cultural Centre on March 11. Portuguese Fado singer Cristiana Branco will perform on March 12. Another musical event will feature the Foshan Cantonese Opera Troupe. In addition, António Fonseca will present his interpretation of the epic poem "Os Lusíadas." These shows will be held at the Dom Pedro V Theatre on March 6 and 7.

New Macau avoids calling for Au's resignation

THE New Macau Association (ANM) President Scott Chiang refused to comment on whether he thinks Au Kam San should step down from his post as a lawmaker, following his resignation from the pan-democratic organization.

On the sidelines of an ANM press conference calling for greater publicity and public scrutiny of the extradition treaty in progress, Chiang did not clarify whether he would advocate Au's resignation as a lawmaker, which would subsequently trigger a by-election.

"I don't have an opinion on that," answered Chiang, before adding, "I see no law regulating that [Au should step down]."

According to the law, there is no requirement for the former ANM founder to resign from his post now that he has disassociated himself from the organization. However, it could be seen as inappropriate for the lawmaker to remain in his post following a divergence of views between Au and the association he founded and under whose banner he was elected.

According to the law, a by-election is to be called within 180 days of a member of the elected legislative resigning, unless the current term of office of the AL expires before then. Au has not made any indication that he will resign, and according to some sources, he has said that he wouldn't.

One reason that the pan-democrats, like ANM, may be reluctant to push for Au's resignation is that a by-election is unlikely to go in their favor. The conservatives are considered to have more mobilization power in the event of a sudden by-election.

Due to the proportional, list-based voting system, the party with the most number of votes would win the vacant seat. If a by-election went the same way as the most recent AL elections in 2013, that party would be Chan Men Kam's United Citizens Associa-

"I called him to enquire if [the resignation] was genuine and if there was a way to work around it."

SCOTT CHIANG

tion of Macau (ACUM), which netted 18.02 percent of the vote. ACUM is in the pan-establishment bloc that opposes the pro-democrats.

"I called him," Chiang explained, after the news of Au's departure was broken to him, "to enquire if [the resignation] was genuine and if there was a way to work around it. Obviously I failed in that."

The reason behind Au's sudden departure remains unclear, with varying accounts being speculated across the media and among the public. Some are alleging that Au claimed that ANM adopted an arbitrary method for accepting or declining new member-



ship applications, as a means of stifling potential challengers within the association.

After being questioned over the membership application system, Chiang refused to disclose the actual procedure for determining whether a member will or will not be permitted to join. He said that he prefers not to comment on individual cases.

"More are accepted than rejected," he cryptically answered. Chiang also addressed allegations that the association did not permit dissenting voices, saying that he could only speak for the brief period of his tenure as pre-

sident, but that he intends to investigate the matter further.

He also expressed that it was not a good time to start speculating over who might replace Au on the ANM list for the next election. Chiang wants to put the whole issue behind him, stressing that both sides "think of it as 'water under the bridge'." However, this does not explain Au's decision to halt financial contributions to the association from his lawmaker salary.

The president added, "we acknowledge what Au has done for the association and for Macau in the past." **Staff reporter**

Jason Chao demands full disclosure of extradition treaty

JASON Chao has said that the inclusion of an exception clause in the proposed extradition treaty "is very dangerous" and will potentially allow the abuse of power by MSAR and mainland government officials.

The New Macau Association (ANM) member said that the group was alerted to an exception clause in the proposed "extradition treaty" that allowed the extradition of non-mainland citizens from Macau for acts committed on the mainland, "involving the military or endangering interests of national defense," ignoring the requirement of double-criminality.

Double-criminality refers to the agreement on extradition that is widely accepted worldwide, when in order to proceed with extradition, a

suspect or fugitive must have committed a crime in both of the countries or states in question.

ANM is concerned that, because mainland officials frequently justify arrests of individuals as "endangering security interests," the exception clause is open to abuse.

This also applies to the recent arrests of human rights lawyers in China due to allegations of "inciting subversion of state power." Using this justification to arrest individuals has become "routine practice," Jason Chao explained.

He calls for the immediate and full disclosure of the complete text of the extradition treaty and the exact nature of the "consensus" reached with Hong Kong and mainland China.

UM receives former Nobel Committee chairman

THE University of Macau (UM) recently held a public lecture by Professor Lars Brink, the former chairman of the Nobel Committee for Physics at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.

The talk included a discussion about Alfred Nobel and his founding of the Nobel Prizes and the statues behind them. Prof Brink explained the nomination selection process for Nobel Prizes and how the Nobel Committees invite thousands of experts and scholars from different countries



Lars Brink

and institutions to nominate candidates for Nobel Prizes.

According to a UM press release, Profes-

sor Brink presented another talk titled "The Standard Model of Particle Physics is Complete," illustrating the necessary understanding of the physics the committee needs to have which resulted in the 2013 Nobel Prize in physics for the discovery of the Higgs Boson.

Prof Brink, a distinguished professor at the Chalmers University of Technology in Sweden, is also a member of the Max Planck Institute for Gravitational Physics (Albert Einstein Institute) in Potsdam, Germany.

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“ THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’ ”

15 arrested in illegal casino raid



The Public Security Police (PJ) raided an underground casino ring in Areia Preta on Tuesday night, leading to the arrests of 15 people, and the confiscation of 16 computers, a poker table, and what is being described as millions of dollars worth of gaming chips. The PJ said that 11 of the 15 individuals that were arrested are Macau residents, while the others are from Hong Kong and mainland China. They added that they suspect the gaming group had been operating the illegal casino for more than one month. The leaders of the gambling ring could face the crime of illegally operating the venue, while the others arrested may be presented with fines.

EDUCATION

The Int'l School launches new expansion project

A special ceremony was held at The International School of Macao (TIS), situated on the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) campus, to mark the official launch of the "Phase II" construction of the extension of the school.

The ceremony, held yesterday, included the unveiling of a banner, the burying of a time capsule, and a preview musical rendition by some 40 elementary school students of a song from the school's upcoming musical performance, "Seussical The Musical," inspired by children's author, Dr Seuss.

"We are very excited to be taking the first step in constructing Phase II, a building which will complete the full school model and the original vision for the TIS campus," said head of school, Howard Stribbell.

The new campus addition measures 12,500 square meters of classroom and school space that will be spread over five floors and will connect with the main



Howard Stribbell

school building. It includes a two-story library, purpose built classrooms for both kindergarten and high school students, a theatre/auditorium, and additional computer labs and music rooms. The expansion will also feature a "discovery center" and "covered playgrounds."

"Some of the parents want a swimming pool... but we are lucky to be on the Macau University of Science and Technology campus," Stribbell told reporters.

Stribbell added that the expansion

was the result of increased demand for school places by both local and expatriate applicants. According to him, the completion of the second phase will increase the school's capacity from 1,200 students today – a figure that was reached in the 2013-14 school year – by a further 400 students.

The students themselves currently represent a diverse mix of nationalities, as to be expected from an international school. There are students from around 40 different countries from

pre-kindergarten to Grade 12. Around 35 percent are from Macau, while another 20 percent are from other parts of Asia.

Phase II builds on previous developments made at TIS, including the renovation of existing buildings and facilities. A number of projects were completed in the previous academic year, including the addition of new chemistry equipment and storage units, a new waterproofing

■ **Stribbell said that the expansion was the result of increased demand for school places by both local and expatriate applicants**

and rooftop, new fitness equipment and lockers kitted out with power outlets for easy charging of mobile devices.

Phase II is scheduled to open in August 2016, just in time for the 2016-17 academic year. **Staff reporter**

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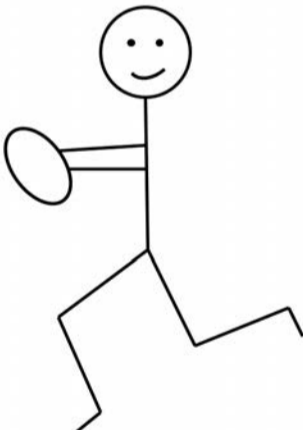
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GAMING ALERT

Philippines sets USD300m tag for casinos outside Manila

Cecilia Yap and Ian Sayson

The Philippines is open to issuing gambling licenses outside the capital of Manila and plans to require the minimum investment for new casinos at about USD300 million to ensure world-class properties are in provincial cities and towns, its gaming regulator said.

"There are areas which I think are very ripe for a casino," Cristino Naguiat, chairman of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp., said in an interview, declining to disclose those locations. The agency is "open to giving out a casino license if it can help boost economic activity and if the people in the area want it. We're developing a template to ensure that no one would be granted a license unless an investment commitment is made."

The Southeast Asian country, which is aiming to compete with Macau and Singapore casinos amid plunging revenues, has already allowed four resorts being built in the 120-hectare seaside Entertainment City complex in the capital with a minimum investment of \$1 billion each. Japanese tycoon Kazuo Okada will be constructing the country's biggest property in the Las Vegas-style casino hub by spending as much as \$2 billion.

The minimum investment, which could vary depending on the location, will likely be implemented by the new president after incumbent leader Benigno Aquino's six-year term



Dealers at the Solaire Casino, located in Pasay city, south of Manila

ends in June, Naguiat said. Aquino's administration followed his predecessor Gloria Arroyo's guidance on investment requirements for the casinos operating in the Entertainment City.

"They are trying to replicate Entertainment City on a smaller scale. This will create competitors," Jonathan Ravelas, chief market strategist at BDO Unibank Inc. "Operators in Entertainment City will have to be on their toes because if they are complacent it's not impossible that some of the traffic will go to these provincial casinos if the properties are world class".

Bloomberg shares fell 4.5 percent at 4.25 pesos at the close of trading in Manila, the biggest loss in more than two weeks and halting a three-day rally. Melco Crown Philippines Resorts Corp., operator of City of Dreams Manila, sank 5.2 percent, its biggest retreat in two weeks. Travellers International Hotel Group Inc., which will open a casino in Entertainment City by

2020, slid 1.1 percent. The benchmark Philippines Stock Exchange Index lost 1.8 percent.

The regulator, or Pagcor, also runs 13 casinos in the country, 10 of which are outside Manila.

Philippine gaming revenue is expected to more than double this year's estimated 135 billion pesos (\$2.83 billion) by 2025 when all four projects are operating, the regulator said. Philippine billionaire Enrique Razon's Bloomberg Resorts Corp. was the first to open in the hub in 2013, followed by the project of Macau operator Melco Crown Entertainment Ltd. which opened a year ago.

Okada's casino is scheduled to start operations in December, while Westside City Resorts, a venture of Philippine billionaire Andrew Tan and Malaysian billionaire Lim Kok Thay, may open by 2020, Naguiat said in Manila on Feb. 1.

Gaming revenue from government-run and privately-owned properties could reach 45 billion pesos and 90 billion pesos, respectively, in 2016, Naguiat said. That represents an 8 percent increase from a combined 125 billion pesos last year, he said.

Major casinos outside Manila include Eurone-listed Thunderbird Resorts Inc.'s 65-hectare property in northern La Union province and its mountain resort in Rizal province near the capital. **Bloomberg**

HIGHLIGHTS: GAMING INDUSTRY IN THE PHILIPPINES

* Revenue from Pagcor casinos rose 9 percent in 2015 to 43.5 billion pesos, making up 35 percent of total takings.

* Nine privately-owned casinos posted a combined revenue of 81.9 billion pesos, up 18 percent.

* Private casino revenue last year came mainly from Bloomberg's Solaire, Melco's City of Dreams Manila and Resorts World Manila.

AD



Traffic arrangement for the "Parade for Celebration of the Year of the Monkey"

The "Parade for Celebration of the Year of the Monkey" will be held on February 10th (3rd day of the Lunar New Year) at 19:30, and the following special traffic arrangement will be implemented:

The section from the roundabout in front of Macao Science Center towards Praça do Lago Sai Van on Avenida Dr. Sun Yat-Sen will be closed from 17:00-23:00. Opposite traffic lane on Avenida Dr. Sun Yat-Sen remains one way direction.

Free shuttle bus service will be provided for the public by Macao Government Tourism Office before and after the event between a certain period of time and locations. The routes and schedule are as follows:

Free shuttle bus routes

Round trip routes between Macao Cultural Centre on Avenida Xian Xing Hai, with short walking distance to Macao Science Center and the following locations:

1. Date and time: February 10th (3rd day of Lunar New Year), 17:30-22:00

Departure from:

- Rua do Dr. Pedro José Lobo (next to the Macau Square)
- Avenida do Conselheiro Ferreira de Almeida (near Pak Wai Building bus stop)
- Estrada Marginal do Hipódromo (near Man Lei Building)
- Rua Norte do Patane
- Taipa, Avenida de Kwong Tung (opposite to Hotel Altira)
- Coloane, Avenida de Vale das Borboletas (near Koi Nga Building - Block 5)
- Coloane, Rua da Cordoaria (near Health Center of Coloane)

2. Date and time: February 10th (3rd day of Lunar New Year), 22:00-00:30 of the following day.

Departure from: Macau Tower

Destination to:

- Rua do Dr. Pedro José Lobo (next to the Macau Square)
- Avenida do Conselheiro Ferreira de Almeida (near Pak Wai Building bus stop)
- Estrada Marginal do Hipódromo (near Man Lei Building)
- Rua Norte do Patane
- Taipa, Avenida de Kwong Tung (opposite to Hotel Altira)

Attention to all residents and motorists: please follow instructions provided by the traffic officers according to the actual situation.

Time of Fireworks Display: 21:45 - 22:00

Limited vehicular traffic on the section near Ocean Garden, on the lane along the waterfront of Avenida do Oceano and Avenida dos Jardins do Oceano at Taipa. Vehicles are allowed to park at the above mentioned section.



MACAO GOVERNMENT TOURISM OFFICE
www.macaotourism.gov.mo

Eurozone economy 'losing steam' amid market turmoil



Pan Pylas, London

THE economic recovery in the 19-country eurozone lost steam in January, a closely watched survey found yesterday, a sign that the turmoil in global financial markets is beginning to weigh on business activity.

Financial information company Markit said its purchasing managers' index — a broad gauge of activity across both the manufacturing and services sectors — fell to a four-month low of 53.6 points in January from 54.3 the previous month.

According to Markit, that means the region has started off the year growing at a modest 0.4 percent quarterly tick. Rates of growth also diverged, with Spain once again leading

the pack, followed by Germany. France appears to be stagnating.

Though the index remains above the 50-point threshold that indicates expansion, the survey found evidence that business activity, orders and employment are all losing momentum. The survey also noted a bigger drag on prices despite the stimulus measures the European Central Bank has pursued over the past year to push them higher.

"Growth and inflation have clearly failed to pick up over the past year despite the renewed stimulus efforts from the ECB," said Chris Williamson, Markit's chief economist. "This raises the question of whether existing stimulus has simply been insufficient, or whether monetary po-

licy is proving ineffective."

It's a difficult question to answer as the eurozone, like all economies, has had to contend with extreme volatility in financial markets. Fear of a sharp slowdown in China's economy has been the main cause of that volatility, which has seen oil prices tank.

The fall in oil prices has in one way worked against the ECB's stimulus efforts, which involve super-low and even negative interest rates and large-scale bond purchases, by reducing prices at the pump and domestic energy bills.

While that should help consumers, it also weighs on expectations for overall price increases, which an economy needs some of to remain healthy, not least as it helps businesses ge-

nerate profits. The ECB's main aim is to get consumer price inflation back toward the target of just below 2 percent. In the year to January, it stood at a paltry 0.4 percent.

Analysts think the ECB could add to its stimulus program, which currently entails 60 billion euros (USD65 billion) in monthly bond purchases through at least March 2017 — effectively pumping new money into the economy. It could also cut the rate on the deposits it takes from commercial banks from its current rate of minus 0.3 percent. The negative rate is aimed at pushing banks to lend money rather than hoarding it.

Though in theory the fall in oil prices should buoy consumer spending, it doesn't appear to be really happening in the eurozone. Separate figures from Eurostat, the European Union's statistics agency, showed retail sales up a modest 0.3 percent in December. Though that's the highest monthly increase since July, it's not as much as many economists had been predicting and unlikely to stoke the inflation the ECB desires.

Several reasons have been cited for the consumer caution, not least uncertainty over the future. Many households across the eurozone are also said to be rebuilding their savings after the battering they took over the past few crisis-ridden years. **AP**

Chinese top economic planner predicts 6.5 to 7 percent growth



A man buys a monkey-shaped candy stick from a vendor at Qianmen Street, a popular tourist spot in Beijing

CHINA'S top economic planner yesterday predicted that the world's second-biggest economy will grow between 6.5 and 7 percent this year.

The chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission, Xu Shaoshi, told a news conference that downward pressure on the world's No.2 economy would continue in 2016.

But he said China would be able to achieve its growth target if it generated sufficient jobs and maintained stable prices. Xu said governments at all levels would work to manage unemployment and prevent it from affecting social stability.

"The central government will consider providing policies to help resolve this issue and I believe local governments are fully capable of handling the situation," Xu said.

China's economy grew 6.9 percent last year, its slowest expansion in 25 years. Data for January suggested growth could continue to wane this year. An official Purchasing Managers' Index that measures manufacturing activity stood at 49.4 in January, the lowest reading since August 2012. A reading under 50 indicates a contraction in manufacturing, which in China employs many millions of workers.

Growth has been steadily falling for the past half-decade as Beijing attempts to wean the economy away from exports and infrastructure investment and toward 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.

Measures to reduce overcapacity in the steel and coal industries is expected to throw hundreds of thousands out of work, and job losses have already sparked protests in some areas. **AP**

corporate bits

Melco Crown Entertainment (MCE) volunteers recently launched a series of activities bringing festive blessings to the local community, including a donation of rice and bedding to the under-privileged, home cleaning for the elderly and a CNY party for the Concordia School for Special Education. According to a press release, over 2,600 MCE employees supported the activities that offered benefits to more than 10,000 individuals in total. The MCE Volunteer Team organized the first employee rice donation in mid-January by setting up collection booths at the Heart of House areas last week. The team has collected over 23,200 kgs of rice from over 2,400

MELCO CROWN EMPLOYEES DONATE 23,000KG OF RICE



employees in just one week. The elderly residents at Centro de Dia "Brilho da Vida" were visited by the volunteers who delivered

the first batch of rice. In collaboration with Caritas Macau, the remainder will be distributed to those in need before the CNY.

MANDARIN ORIENTAL ANNOUNCES 'SEASONS OF LOVE'

To celebrate Valentine's Day, Mandarin Oriental invites guests to indulge themselves with heart-melting offers, including a romantic getaway, "Seasons of Love." According to a press release, the getaway allows couples to enjoy a room upgrade or a intimate in-room dining.

The Forbes five-star Vida Rica Restaurant and The Spa at Mandarin Oriental are also offering special Valentine privileges, states a press release. Throughout this month, Vida Rica's chef presents both a four- and six-course degustation dinner menu. Lovers who buy from the dinner menu are entitled to a complimentary 30-minute extension to any



90-minute treatment or an upgrade to a spa suite at The Spa. The Spa offers a two-hour pampering treat-

ment for couples. "Seasons of Love" will launch on Valentine's Day and run until March 31.

China seen risking credit market crunch with leverage crackdown

SIX months after a debt-fueled rally in Chinese equity turned into a USD5 trillion rout, authorities are stepping up efforts to make sure the same thing doesn't happen in the bond market. Analysts and investors are concerned the crackdown itself could be a risky move.

The People's Bank of China moved to exert more control over wealth management products, which often invest in debt and are popular among investors seeking yields higher than on deposits. It told lenders this week it will limit funds raised through the so-called WMPs that they can outsource to other financial institutions to manage, according to people familiar with the matter. The PBOC will also tighten control of leverage that banks take on when buying notes, the people said. External managers often borrow more aggressively for debt purchases, China Merchants Bank Co. said.

"There is risk to deleveraging when economic growth is slowing," Haitong Securities Co. analysts led by Jiang Chao wrote in a report. "If there is a limit on how much funds banks can give to third parties to manage, it means a lack of momentum for further leveraging. Based on the history of China's stock market, there is risk of stampede."

The steps highlight challenges for Chinese authorities as they attempt to prevent overheating in credit markets while keeping benchmark



A pedestrian walks past a Bank of China Ltd. branch in the Gongbei district of Zhuhai

lending rates at record lows to boost the weakest economic growth in a quarter century. Investors have piled into riskier debt including WMPs despite warnings of a leverage-fueled bubble from local brokerages.

The PBOC didn't respond immediately to a faxed inquiry.

Chinese banks have been scaling up their wealth management businesses as they vie for deposits. Standard & Poor's estimates the banking sector's outstanding off-balance-sheet WMPs grew by 35

percent to 13.6 trillion yuan (\$2.1 trillion) in 2015, it said in a research note dated Jan. 28.

Outstanding repurchase agreements in the nation's interbank bond market, used by debt investors to amplify their buying power, surged to 9.7 trillion yuan in December, the highest level since at least 2012.

This was not the first time the Chinese regulators moved to contain leverage in the credit market. China's clearing house for exchange-listed

■ The central bank injected an unprecedented 1.2 trillion yuan via open-market operations in January before the CNY

debt expanded the conditions under which it can restrict financing in November.

"We saw violent deleveraging in the equity market in 2015, which didn't end very well," said Liu Dongliang, senior credit analyst at China Merchants Bank. "So I think the central bank will likely take more mild steps when dealing with the bond market leverage."

China also warned the nation's top banking executives that they could lose their jobs if they fail to keep risks under control, according to people familiar with the situation.

Shang Fulin, chairman of the China Banking Regulatory Commission, told an internal meeting last month that banks would be forced to restructure, inject new capital or change their senior management if key risk indicators fall outside "reasonable ranges," the people said, requesting anonymity because the contents of the

speech weren't made public.

"This is clearly aimed at controlling risks in the banking sector," said He Xuanlai, Singapore-based credit analyst at Commerzbank AG.

While some of the cash from WMPs facilitate off-balance-sheet lending though repackaged loans, 44 percent was invested in bonds or money-market instruments at end-2014, according to the China Banking Wealth Management Registration System.

"As investors unwind positions to meet regulatory requirements, liquidity is likely to dry up in the next few weeks, weighing on bond market performance," Commerzbank's He said. "The PBOC may also need to inject additional funds into the market to offset the de-leverage."

The central bank injected an unprecedented 1.235 trillion yuan via open-market operations in January before the Chinese New Year holidays next week. The one-month Shanghai Interbank Offered Rate, a gauge of funding availability, climbed to 3.17 percent on Jan. 28, the highest level since July, before dropping to 3.095 percent yesterday.

"It's certainly negative to the market if the regulators roll out measures," said Ming Ming, chief fixed-income analyst at Citic Securities Co. "A lot of bond buying last year came from demand from wealth management funds, and the new measures could change the supply and demand balance." **Bloomberg**

Yuan gap widens again as depreciation bets swamp PBOC fightback

THE gap between the Chinese yuan's exchange rates at home and abroad expanded to the biggest in three weeks, a sign that international traders are reviving bets against the currency after getting burned by the central bank earlier this year.

The yuan traded in Hong Kong fell as much as 0.4 percent, taking its discount to the currency in Shanghai to 1.1 percent. That's the most since Jan. 11, when the

People's Bank of China launched a two-pronged attack on short-sellers by mopping up the currency overseas and choking supply of yuan from the mainland. The assault pushed the offshore rate to a premium that week, before it swung the other way again.

"Bears are not giving up on shorting the yuan simply because of the PBOC's attacks, and they are preparing to return to the game," said Kenix Lai, a foreign-exchange analyst

at Bank of East Asia Ltd. in Hong Kong. "There will be a very intense confrontation between short-sellers and the PBOC in the near term. While the market strongly believes there's room for further declines, the central bank will try its best to keep the yuan stable."

The offshore yuan fell 0.25 percent to 6.6444 a dollar as of 6:20 p.m. in Hong Kong yesterday, data compiled by Bloomberg show. It earlier dropped to 6.6512, the

weakest since Jan. 11. The onshore currency was little changed at 6.5779. The monetary authority lowered its daily fixing by 0.02 percent to 6.5521. Chinese financial markets will be closed next week for the Lunar New Year.

The pessimism is showing in the options market, where the extra cost for three-month contracts to sell the yuan against the dollar in Hong Kong over contracts to buy jumped in January by the most since 2011.

This comes even though Chinese authorities applied stricter capital controls to scare off speculators and curb arbitrage between the yuan's onshore and offshore rates. The nation has increased scrutiny of funds being transferred overseas and limited advance foreign-exchange purchases for overseas investments. In a commentary yesterday, the official People's Daily newspaper said that yuan bears who foresee a hard landing are

either selectively blind, being jealous or serving their own needs.

The nation's economy is growing at the slowest pace since 1990, an estimated USD1 trillion of capital flowed out last year and stock markets in Shanghai and Shenzhen are in the midst of a renewed sell-off.

"Markets remain very bearish on China and are not confident that the authorities can fix the problems of yuan depreciation and capital outflows," said Ken Cheung, a Hong Kong-based strategist at Mizuho Bank Ltd. "Selling the offshore yuan will remain the best proxy to execute a short-China strategy." **Bloomberg**



Winter sights in northwest Xinjiang

Court reduces sentences for 11 Uighurs, including Canadian

Gerry Shih, Beijing

A court in western China has reduced the sentences of 11 Uighurs convicted of terrorism and endangering state security, including a naturalized Canadian preacher whose life term had been sharply criticized by Ottawa.

The official Xinhua News Agency characterized the sentence reductions for the Uighurs at Xinjiang's First Prison as a sign that authorities in the restive western region were

making progress de-radicalizing Islamist militants and separatists using a softer touch.

The rare move of clemency, announced after the prisoners took courses and repented their crimes last week, comes at a time when the Chinese government is tightening its grip over the region, expanding its security campaign and ordering cultural assimilation projects and religious restrictions that members of the Turkic-speaking Uighur minority have deemed oppressive.

Among the 11 prisoners with reduced terms is Huseyin Celil, a preacher from Ontario whose life sentence in 2007 sparked a diplomatic row between China and Canada. After fleeing China and gaining refugee status in 2000, Celil lived in Canada until he was arrested in Uzbekistan and extradited to China.

China refused to recognize his Canadian citizenship and convicted him of organizing on behalf of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement militant group.

Aside from the reduction of life sentences to fixed terms, four prisoners, including a man convicted of contacting the ETIP and the Taliban to set up training bases in Afghanistan, saw their lengthy prison terms reduced to six months, Xinhua said in a report.

The new duration of Huseyin Celil's sentence has not been announced, said San Francisco-based activist John Kamm, who has pressed for Celil's release on behalf of the Canadian government since 2009.

But Kamm lauded the decision, telling The Associated Press yesterday that commuting Celil's sentence represented "a step in the right direction" and should prompt other Xinjiang prisons to consider mass clemency.

The Canadian Embassy in Beijing did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Dilxat Raxit, a spokesman for the World Uyghur Congress exile group, called the commutations a "political propaganda tool" meant to divert attention from Beijing's repressive policies.

The long-running Uighur insurgency in Xinjiang has claimed hundreds of lives in recent years despite efforts to pacify and assimilate the region that critics say are exacerbating a cycle of discontent and unrest. China's "Strike Hard" campaign, which was launched in 2014 in response to an attack on a public market that killed 31 people, will intensify in 2016 with a focus on deploying special forces and technological tools, the Xinjiang region chairman said last month.

William Nee, China researcher at Amnesty International, said the reduced sentences were intended to show "the Communist Party's supposed benevolence and mercy" amid the broader crackdown.

"This is probably the proverbial 'carrot' to the violent 'Strike Hard' campaign's 'stick,'" Nee said.

He said that without independent or international oversight of such de-radicalization programs, "it will be impossible to judge to what extent they are effective or in line with international human rights laws and standards." AP



INVESTMENT

ChemChina offers USD43b for Swiss pesticide giant Syngenta

A Chinese state-owned chemical maker offered to buy Swiss pesticide giant Syngenta for USD43 billion in what would be the biggest-ever foreign acquisition by a Chinese company.

Syngenta AG said yesterday its board is recommending shareholders accept the offer from China National Chemical Corp., also known as ChemChina. Basel-based Syngenta said in a state-

ment that ChemChina's cash offer is worth the equivalent of 480 francs (\$482) a share, including a special 5 franc dividend for shareholders if the deal goes through.

The deal is part of a global acquisition spree by Chinese companies, which are diversifying abroad to counter a slowdown at home while also seeking foreign expertise and technology. Last month Chinese home

appliance maker Haier Group bought General Electric's home appliance business while conglomerate Wanda Group acquired Hollywood movie studio Legendary Entertainment.

The Syngenta deal, if completed, would overtake CNOOC's 2012 purchase of Canadian energy company Nexen as the biggest foreign acquisition by a Chinese company, according to Dealogic data.

Beijing-based ChemChina will keep existing Syngenta management in place following the deal, which is expected to be completed by the

end of the year. It said it would also consider an initial public offering of the business "in the years to come."

"We think it's a very good deal for Syngenta and all the stakeholders will benefit from this transaction," Syngenta Chairman Michael Demaré said in a video posted on the company's website.

Last month, ChemChina bought German machinery maker KraussMaffei for about \$1 billion and took a 12 percent stake in Swiss energy trader Mercuria. In March it bought Italian tire manufacturer Pirelli.

The Syngenta deal is also part of a shake-up of the global agricultural and chemical industry, which is being pressured by tumbling commodity prices that are forcing farmers to spend less on seeds, pesticides and equipment. The company reported yesterday that net income for 2015 fell 17 percent to \$1.3 billion as it struggled with low crop prices, instability in emerging markets and currency fluctuations.

For China, it's an opportunity to beef up its expertise in the "ag-chem" industry as part of President Xi Jinping's

plan to modernize the country's farms to keep up with demand from a rising consumer class.

"Our vision for Syngenta is all about growth," ChemChina Chairman Ren Jianxin said in a video posted online. "We see big opportunities for the company to expand its presence in emerging markets and notably in China where there is rapid modernization driven by the need to increase grain productivity and increase food quality."

Syngenta agreed to the takeover bid after spurning a \$46.5 billion offer from agricultural giant Monsanto. AP

Didi Tang, Beijing

A Chinese journalist who disappeared while seeking asylum abroad turned up yesterday, telling his wife by phone he voluntarily returned to China for an investigation, in the latest case of Beijing's reach beyond the mainland for wanted people.

He Fangmei said she spoke with her journalist husband Li Xin when she was called into a police station to receive his call. She said he told her his return was voluntary, but that she believes he was forcibly brought back and spoke against his own will.

Several people believed to be wanted by Chinese authorities have disappeared over the past year while overseas or in Hong Kong, and some critics allege that Chinese agents are abducting them without proper authorization to bring them to the mainland for interrogation.

"Beijing used to take into account foreign governments and respect other countries' laws, but in tandem with its rising strength in economy and expanding political influence, Beijing is becoming more overt in its operations and feels it can lord over some neighboring countries," veteran dissident Hu Jia said.

Li fled China in October and told the AP in an interview from India that he left because he had been forced to spy on fellow journalists, and that he wanted to stop. He later sought shelter in Thailand before disappearing Jan. 11.

"He won't tell me where he is in China, but asks me to stay rested and live my life. He asks me not to contact any outsider for it does no good to him or me," the wife said in voice and text message exchange with AP from the Henan province town

Journalist emerges 22 days after disappearance



Journalist Li Xin talks to an Associated Press reporter over Skype

of Xinxiang. "But I know that's the pattern, and Li completely spoke contrary to his own will."

Local police reached by phone said they had no knowledge of the case.

The case shows the "growing length of the Chinese government's long arm beyond its borders" in cracking down on dissenters both at home and abroad, said Maya Wang, a Hong Kong-based researcher

for Human Rights Watch.

Last October, a publisher of the Hong Kong gossip publishing house Mighty Current vanished from his apartment in Pattaya, a Thai beach resort. Gui Minhai only resurfaced in January on China's state broadcaster CCTV, where he said he returned to China to turn himself in for an old crime.

Four other members of the publishing house also disa-

appeared one by one. The last one was Lee Bo, who was believed to have been picked up while in Hong Kong, although he has sent notes to his wife that claimed he returned to the mainland voluntarily.

Pro-democracy Hong Kong lawmakers and human rights activists alleged they were abducted by Chinese agents, and that any such detentions in Hong Kong violates the ter-

ritory's autonomy under the "one country, two systems" model.

Beijing also has managed to have the Thai government to repatriate dissidents and Uighur refugees.

When a 16-year-old son of a detained rights lawyer tried to flee the country after his passport was confiscated, Chinese agents were able to track his escape route and nabbed him in Myanmar. Bao Zhuoxuan has since been brought back to China and placed under house arrest, while his mother faces the charge of state subversion and his father on charge of inciting state subversion.

State media outlets then told of a story of how Beijing rescued a misled teenager from being illegally smuggled out of the country.

In the latest case, Li was riding a train from Bangkok to Nong Khai in northeastern Thailand, where he planned to cross over into Laos and then re-enter Thailand for visa reasons, his wife said. Li was seeking refugee status in Thailand.

His wife said she had been banned from leaving China and was recently sent back from the border city of Shenzhen to their hometown in the central province of Henan. There, she was told she would soon hear from Li.

Yesterday, she was summoned to a police station and the call from her husband came through on a police landline. The incoming number was not shown, she said. **AP**

Beijing urges restraint over North Korea rocket launch



A visitor takes photos of an illuminated model of a globe while others watch at the Sci-Tech Complex in Pyongyang

CHINA'S Foreign Ministry yesterday called for all sides to show restraint over North Korea's announcement that it plans to launch a rocket in defiance of U.N. sanctions.

Ministry spokesman Lu Kang also expressed skepticism over calls by the U.S. for tough new sanctions against North Korea over its Jan. 6 nuclear test.

"We hope all sides show restraint and take prudent action to avoid any moves that may increase the tensions on the [Ko-

rean] Peninsula," Lu told reporters at a regularly scheduled news briefing.

Lu's comments come as U.S. diplomats are urging China to use its political and economic influence with North Korea to compel it to stop such actions.

China has pushed back against U.S. calls for tougher sanctions. Foreign Minister Wang Yi argued during a visit last week by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry that sanctions are not an end unto themselves and any new U.N. resolution should not provoke new tensions.

Maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula is the shared responsibility and common interest of all par-

ties, Lu said.

"China will engage in contact and coordination with each related side, and play a constructive role in maintaining the peace and stability of the peninsula and this region," he said.

North Korea's announcement came during a visit to Pyongyang by China's top envoy to North Korea, Wu Dawei. That could be seen as a snub to Beijing, North Korea's most important ally which, nevertheless, has been unable to restrain Pyongyang's actions.

Lu said only that Wu was in Pyongyang for the purpose of "exchanging views with the North Korea side over the current situation of the Korean Peninsula." **AP**

SOUTH CHINA SEA

Ambassador says US to continue flights, sail-bys



U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines Philip Goldberg answers questions from the media during a forum at suburban Quezon city, northeast of Manila

Teresa Cerojano, Manila

THE U.S. ambassador said yesterday joint patrols with the Philippines are pos-

sible in the South China Sea, where the United States has asserted its freedom to navigate by sending planes and ships into China-claimed areas.

Manila protested when a commercial Chinese aircraft landed recently on one of several artificial islands Beijing has built in the Spratlys, and

officials say China has essentially declared an air defense identification zone over the sea by issuing "provocative" challenges to Philippine military flights in the area.

Ambassador Philip Goldberg said the U.S. and the Philippines both have deep interest in ensuring freedom of navigation and he is not discarding the possibility of joint patrols in the area.

Two U.S. warships have sailed by China-claimed islands in the Spratly and Paracel island chains since October.

"I am not going to announce beforehand what we do in terms of freedom of navigation, but suffice it to say that the United States will follow international law, will continue to enjoy our rights under international law to sail through international waters or fly to international air space," Goldberg told a media forum.

Philippine Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario said last week the officials discussing possible joint patrols were looking at an area within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone.

"I am not going to prejudge what we are going to do and when we are going to do it, whether we are going to do it with the Philippines or with others, but we do discuss that principle with the Philippines and so I am not discarding that possibility," Goldberg added when asked if a proposal for U.S. joint patrols with the Philippines has been approved.

Tensions have risen in the last two years after China bui-

lt islands on disputed reefs in the Spratly Islands chain that China's neighbors fear could be used to threaten their territories. China and Taiwan have nearly identical claims to almost the entire South China Sea while the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei say parts of the sea belong to them. The United States does

“We seek the best possible relationship with China but we would also like... engagement of the entire region on solutions.”

PHILIP GOLDBERG
US AMBASSADOR

not claim part of the territory but says it has interest in the peaceful settlement of the disputes and in freedom of navigation in waters that are critical for world trade.

"We seek the best possible relationship with China but we would also like to see the engagement of the entire region on solutions that are rules-based and not unilateral," Goldberg said. Forging of a code of conduct in the area "to us is the way to go," he added. **AP**

THE Philippine Congress has run out of time under the current president to pass a Muslim autonomy bill that aims to peacefully settle a decades-long Muslim rebellion in the south, sparking concerns the setback may ignite new fighting, officials said.

Lawmakers had until yesterday to deliberate on the bill before they start a three-month break at the end of the week. The long-delayed legislation is at the heart of a peace deal signed by the largest Muslim rebel group and the government of President Benigno Aquino III, whose term ends in June.

The killing of 44 police commandos in fighting that involved some guerrillas from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front early last year scuttled the early passage of the Muslim autonomy bill outlined in the 2014 peace deal. The separatist conflict has left 150,000 people dead and stun-

PHILIPPINES

Manila fears new fighting with stalled Muslim autonomy

ted development in the country's poorest region.

The peace deal, which seeks to provide a more powerful and potentially larger autonomous region to minority Muslims in the south of the predominantly Roman Catholic nation, should have been a major legacy of Aquino's presidency.

While the Malaysian-brokered peace accord remains effective, a new autonomy bill will have to be presented to the new Congress under Aquino's successor. The presidential election is May 9.

"This delays the final settlement," said Teresa Deles, the presidential adviser on the talks. "There will be elements that will completely lose

hope that this can really be done."

Government peace negotiator Miriam Coronel-Ferrer said hard-line groups like the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, which opposed peace talks and vowed to continue fighting for a separate Muslim homeland in the south, could exploit the setback.

"They will be emboldened to renew their course in the hope that they will harvest the discontent," Ferrer said.

Mohagher Iqbal, a senior rebel leader, has said that delays in the passage of the autonomy bill and efforts to water it down have sparked frustration among guerrillas and Muslims in the south. Residents have



Filipino Muslims shout slogans during a protest at the Philippine Congress at suburban Quezon city, northeast of Manila

staged rallies to protest the delays in two predominantly Muslim cities.

U.S. Ambassador Philip Goldberg said it is crucial for peacemaking efforts to continue and for people to remain vi-

gilant to ensure that extremist groups like the Islamic State group can't spread their influence in the country's south.

About 200 Muslim protesters rallied at the gates of the House of Re-

presentatives yesterday, calling lawmakers "anti-Muslim and anti-peace" for not working on the autonomy bill with urgency over the past 17 months.

The bill "has been butchered and is now dead. But we're calling on everybody to remain calm," said a protest leader, Kashim Candido.

In 2008, three Muslim rebel commanders led attacks on Christian communities after a preliminary peace pact was not signed and was struck down by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional. The attacks sparked a major military offensive, with the clashes leaving scores of villagers and combatants dead and displacing tens of thousands of people.

Despite the delays, the 2014 peace deal remains valid and will serve as a roadmap for the next administration to finally end the Muslim unrest in the south, Deles said. **AP**

Hyung-Jin Kim, Asan

SOUTH KOREA

Woman raises 200 dogs saved from streets, restaurants

PUPPIES bark and wag their tails as they follow a gray-haired woman through a hillside compound that shelters more than 200 dogs.

"Hey, my babies. Give your mom a kiss," says Jung Myoung Sook, 61. She lowers her face and one puppy near a snow-covered kennel licks her lips; another gently paws her cheek.

In South Korea, where dogs are considered a traditional delicacy and have only recently become popular as pets, Jung's love for her canine friends is viewed by some as odd. But others see her as a champion of animal rights.

Rescuing and caring for dogs for 26 years, Jung has moved seven times because of neighbors' complaints about noise. She often stops to pick up dogs roaming the streets, and has bought others in danger of being sold to dog meat farms or restaurants.

Some question whether someone as poor as Jung, who ekes out a living cleaning a store and collecting recyclable boxes, can feed and care for so many dogs. While Jung's dogs looked healthy and well-fed during a recent visit by The Associated Press, their condition couldn't be independently confirmed.

Authorities in the central city of Asan know about Jung's cur-



Jung Myoung Sook, 61, who rescued and sheltered dogs for 26 years, takes care of dogs at a shelter in Asan

rent shelter, which she opened in 2014, but have no legal responsibility to inspect it, according to an official who refused to give his name because he wasn't authorized to speak to media on the matter.

Pets are growing in populari-

ty here, where one in five households has a cat or dog, but activists say public attitudes toward pets lag those in the West.

Supporters of Jung see her as a heroine, saving stray or lost dogs from being killed for food

or euthanized at public shelters if not adopted or found by their owners. About 81,000 stray or abandoned animals, mostly dogs and cats, were sent to public shelters in 2014, down from 100,000 in 2010, the government said.

"My babies aren't hungry. They can play and live freely here," said Jung, whose clothes are worn and hair is disheveled. "Some people talk about me, saying, 'Why is that beggar-like middle-aged woman smiling all the time,' but I just focus on feeding my babies. I'm happy and healthy."

Dozens of other South Koreans are believed to be raising large numbers of dogs, sometimes in unsanitary conditions where diseases spread easily. Jung says her dogs are mostly healthy, although some die in fights with each other.

Most of the dogs live with her for good. She said she spends about USD1,600 a month on food and medicine, and otherwise relies on donations of soybean milk, pork, dog food and canned meat. Family, friends and sometimes strangers send her money.

Park Hye-soon, a local restaurant owner, has given Jung leftover pork for four years.

"She lives only for her dogs," he said, "without doing much for herself." **AP**

MALAYSIA

Politician ousted over criticism of prime minister

THE son of former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad resigned yesterday as the top leader of a federal state, saying he was ousted because of his criticism of Prime Minister Najib Razak over a USD700 million financial scandal.

Mukhriz Mahathir said he had lost majority support in the northern Kedah state assembly following a party bid to remove him as chief minister. Mahathir has been leading calls for Najib to step down, and Mukhriz's ouster was seen as a continuing purge of critics in Najib's government.

Mukhriz warned that the ruling Malay party was now at "its weakest point," tainted by scandal-ridden state investment fund 1MDB and more than \$700 million that was channeled into Najib's personal bank accounts.

The attorney-general last week cleared Najib of any criminal wrongdoing, saying most of the money



Mukhriz Mahathir, the son of former PM Mahathir Mohamad

in his accounts was a private donation from the Saudi royal family and that Najib had returned most of it.

Mukhriz, however, said authorities in Switzerland, Singapore and other countries are still investigating 1MDB for possible graft. Two former Malaysian officials also have challenged the attorney general's decisions.

"Scandal after scandal, we can't take it all. It's too much for us. This is

traumatizing all of us," Mukhriz said.

Critics have long voiced concerns over 1MDB, which is mired in 42 billion ringgit (\$10.1 billion) in debt and has been selling its assets to clear its books. Najib, who formed 1MDB in 2009, became embroiled in the scandal after documents were leaked last year suggesting that money deposited into his accounts may have come from entities linked to 1MDB. **AP**

AUSTRALIA

Police say school bomb threats coming from overseas

DOZENS of schools around Australia have received threats over the past week in what police believe is a hoax being orchestrated overseas.

The automated telephone threats, which warn of bombings or shootings at the schools, are believed to be originating from another country and none represents any real danger, police said yesterday. Still, the calls have been hugely disruptive, with several schools going into lockdown and others forcing thousands of students to evacuate. A few children in Queensland state had to be treated for heat-related illnesses after having to wait outside their schools in sweltering summer temperatures.

"These anonymous cowards will feel the full force of the law," Victorian Education Minister James Merlino told reporters. "These incidents have caused stress, absolute stress, to our school communities. As a parent, I can't imagine the angst the parents are going through upon hearing of the threats made to the schools at which their children go to."

Schools across the world — including the U.S., Europe and Japan — have received similar threats in re-

cent months. But police in Australia have yet to determine whether the cases are linked.

Because the calls are automated, it's tough to know whether they are coming from an individual or a group, Victoria Police Chief Commissioner Graham Ashton said.

"Also, because of the international nature of this threat, that adds another layer of complexity to the investigation," he said. "So it may be some time before this investigation properly identifies, and we're able to arrest, these people."

The threats were received by schools in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania and in the nation's capital, Canberra.

"There is no evidence these are anything other than hoaxes designed to cause unnecessary disruption and inconvenience," New South Wales police said in a statement. "The threats appear to come from overseas with no credible evidence they could be carried out here."

Merlino told the Australian Broadcasting Corp. yesterday that police were looking into whether the calls in Victoria came from an elite high school in Melbourne. The school principal said he was cooperating with authorities. **AP**

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Honda Macau



opinion

World Views

Jonathan Bernstein, Bloomberg

THE PERILS OF POLITICAL HINDSIGHT IN IOWA

On to New Hampshire. But first, before it fades, here's what's in the rear-view mirror in Iowa.

1. For the Democrats, there are two ways of interpreting what was basically a tie. Bernie Sanders won on spin because the "Sanders surges, Clinton in trouble" story is irresistible for the media. But Hillary Clinton won on delegates, because if she and Sanders split the regular delegates in other races too, she'll win the nomination thanks to her huge lead in superdelegates. Unless there's a media surge for Sanders, Clinton's enormous and seemingly decisive lead among black and Latino voters seems unshakable.

2. Related: There are hindsight claims that the strong Sanders showing in Iowa meant that Senator Elizabeth Warren would have won had she entered the Democratic contest. Maybe, but there's no way of knowing if Warren or anyone else could have run as impressive a campaign as Sanders has so far.

3. Some people said Donald Trump's decision to skip the last debate hurt him. But doing that allowed him to dominate the media for several days. Just showing up, as if he was a normal candidate, wouldn't have achieved that. It's the Red Queen Race problem: As the campaign goes on, norms of low the press covers campaigns make it harder and harder for Trump to dominate the media, and he needs that to win.

4. Just because Marco Rubio is running as a coalition-style candidate doesn't mean he's not very conservative. His Senate voting record and his policy commitments during the campaign are down-the-line conservative. And on the one issue where that wasn't the case — immigration — he has changed his position.

5. Ben Carson won the battle for the most billboards visible on the way to and from the Des Moines airport. Perhaps that was a strategy aimed at the traveling press, but it's also a way for campaign consultants to convince a candidate that money is being put to good use (just speculating, for what it's worth).

6. A lot of people are calling for Iowa to switch to a primary after the slow reporting of Democratic results this year and the botched counting of the Republican votes in 2012. Better idea: Keep the caucuses, but have the state, rather than the parties, run them with properly trained poll workers. Surely officials can pay for this by diverting a small percentage of revenue they raise in sales taxes from the business generated by campaigns and the visiting press corps. Yes, the delays and glitches are an annoyance mostly for the press and impatient campaigns, not voters. And the contests where these problems occurred were in races where there were virtual ties, so delays can be explained. Still: Get it right, Iowa.

Seth Borenstein
Science Writer

THE mosquito behind the Zika virus seems to operate like a heat-driven missile of disease. The hotter it gets, the better the mosquito that carries Zika virus is at transmitting its buffet of dangerous illnesses, scientists say.

Although it is too early to say for this outbreak, past outbreaks of similar diseases involved more than just biology. In the past, weather has played a key role, as have economics, human travel, air conditioning and mosquito control. Even El Nino sneaks into the game. Scientists say you can't just blame one thing for an outbreak and caution it is too early to link this one to climate change or any single weather event.

As the temperature rises, nearly everything about the biology of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito — the one that carries Zika, dengue fever and other diseases — speeds up when it comes to spreading disease, said entomologist Bill Reisen of the University of California Davis.

"With higher temperatures you have more mosquitoes feeding more frequently and having a greater chance of acquiring infection. And then the virus replicates faster because it's hotter, therefore the mosquitoes can transmit earlier in their life," Reisen said. The thermodynamics of mosquitoes are "driven by temperature."

The hotspots for this Zika outbreak also have been temperature and drought hotspots recently. Recife, Brazil, the largest city in the Zika-struck region, saw its hottest September-October-November on record, about 1.2 degrees Celsius (2.2 degrees Fahrenheit) above normal, according to NASA data. The state of Pernambuco had its hottest and driest year since 1998, according to the state weather agency. And globally, last year was the hottest on record.

Scientists have studied Zika far less than other mosquito-borne diseases, so for guidance they often look at dengue fever or chikungunya, which are transmitted by the same species of mosquito. Dengue infects as many as 400 million people a year, with a quarter of them sick enough to be hospitalized.

Zika was just declared a global public health emergency after being linked to brain deformities in babies

ZIKA

Higher temperatures make mosquito spread disease more



Three-month-old Daniel, who was born with microcephaly, undergoes physical therapy at the Altino Ventura foundation in Recife, Brazil

in South America. Several thousand cases of microcephaly have been reported in Brazil since October, although researchers have so far not proven a definitive link to the virus. No vaccine exists for Zika.

In general, mosquitoes don't live long, maybe 10 to 12 days on average, said Tom Scott, a University of California Davis professor of both entomology and epidemiology. That's also about how long it takes a virus to grow in the mosquito gut, making the bug infectious and able to spread the disease. Often the insect will die before it can get a chance to spread the disease.

Warmer air incubates the virus faster in the cold-blooded mosquito. So the insect has more time to be infectious and alive to spread the disease, Scott said.

Warmer temperatures also make the mosquito hungrier, so it takes more "blood meals" and can spread the disease to more people, Scott, Reisen and others said. And warmer temperatures generally increase the mosquito population.

Kristie Ebi, a professor of global health at the University of Washington, calls

it "a temperature-driven eruption."

That's not the only role of weather.

El Nino, a natural warming of parts of the central Pacific Ocean that changes weather worldwide, usually puts northeastern Brazil into a drought, as it did last year. *Aedes aegypti* does well in less-developed regions in droughts, because it lives in areas where poorer people store water in outdoor containers, said Jonathan Patz, director of the global health institute at the University of Wisconsin.

"As with all mosquito-borne viruses, climate is one of many factors that influence Zika transmission," said

Andy Monaghan, a scientist who works on public health impacts of climate change at the National Center for Atmospheric Research. "I think it is too early to say anything about the role of climate change in the ongoing Zika outbreak."

However, Monaghan earlier this year presented a paper to the American Meteorological Society's annual convention that predicts that eventually *Aedes aegypti* "will move northward in the U.S. due to future warming, which would expose people to the mosquito on a regular seasonal basis in states like Missouri, Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina, Virginia and D.C." AP

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED CASE CONFIRMED IN TEXAS

HEALTH OFFICIALS yesterday (Macau time) reported that a person in Texas has become infected with the Zika virus through sex in the first case of the illness being transmitted within the United States amid the current outbreak in Latin America. The unidentified person had not traveled but had sex with a person who had returned from Venezuela and fallen ill with

Zika, Dallas County health officials said. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control issued a statement saying lab tests confirmed the non-traveler was infected with Zika. The virus, which has been linked to birth defects in the Americas, is primarily spread through mosquito bites, but investigators had been exploring the possibility it could be sexually transmitted.

what's ON



E-GENERATION ARTISTS SERIES EXHIBITIONS

- TRACE CONTOUR BY SAH

TIME: 11am-7pm

UNTIL: February 14, 2016

VENUE: Portuguese Bookshop

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

ARTIFACTS OF EXCELLENCE - SEAL CARVINGS BY

LUO SHUZHONG FROM THE MAM COLLECTION

TIME: 10am-7pm

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

UNTIL: February 28, 2016

VENUE: Macau Museum of Art,

Av. Xian Xing Hai, s/n, NAPE

ADMISSION: Adult MOP5

(Free admission on Sundays and public holidays)

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

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BY JAO TSUNG-I

TIME: 10am-6pm Daily (No admission after 5:30 pm; Except on Mondays, open on public holidays)

VENUE: Avenida do Conselheiro Ferreira de

Almeida, No. 95 C-D, Macau

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2852 2523

10TH MACAU DESIGN BIENNIAL

TIME: 10am to 7pm

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

UNTIL: February 14, 2016

VENUE: Macau Museum of Art

ADMISSION: Adult MOP5, free for Children under 12

years old, elderly over 65 years old (Admission is

free on Sundays and public holidays)

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2836 7588

MANUEL CARGALEIRO-PINTURA: 1954-2006

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

UNTIL: March 3, 2016

VENUE: Casa Garden Orient Foundation

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2855 4691

Offbeat

EAGLES VS DRONES: DUTCH POLICE
EYE BIRDS TO PREY ON DRONES

It may sound like a flight of fancy, but Dutch police are considering using birds of prey to swoop down and pluck rogue drones out of the sky.

Police are working with

a Hague-based company that trains eagles and other birds to catch drones to investigate whether the birds can be used above large events or near airports, where the small flying machines are banned.

Dennis Janus of the national police said this week that trainers exploit the birds' natural instincts to tackle the high-tech problem of drones flying in restricted areas.

Janus says the birds are trained "to think drones are their prey" and get a reward if they catch one.

Video released by police showed a small white drone with four propellers rising into the air and a bird of prey grabbing it from above with its talons in one fluid motion.

Dutch police will likely make a decision later this year whether to use the birds.

TV canal macau

13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:30	RTPi Live
16:50	Castle S.5
18:10	Trail of Lies (Repeated)
19:00	Montra do Lilau (Repeat)
19:30	Soap Opera
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	TDM Talk Show
21:40	Comedy
22:10	Trail of Lies
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Television Film
00:05	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
00:40	RTPi Live

cinema



CINETEATRO

04 FEB - 07 FEB



ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: ROAD CHIP_

ROOM 1

2.30, 4.30, 6.00, 9.45 pm

Director: Walt Becker

Starring: Jason Lee, Jesica Ahlberg, Josh Green

Language: Cantonese (Cantonese/English)

Duration: 92min

ALL'S WELL END'S WELL_

ROOM 1

9.30 pm

Director: Clifton Ko

Starring: Leslie Cheung, Stephen Chow, Raymond

Wong, Maggie Cheung

Language: Cantonese (Cantonese/English)

Duration: 100min

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 and Cantonese)

Duration: 100min



THE GOOD DINOSAUR_

ROOM 3

2.30, 4.30, 9.30 pm

Director: Peter Sohn

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 93min

THE BIG SHORT_

ROOM 3

9.30 pm

Director: Adam McKay

Starring: Christian Bale, Steve Carell, Ryan Gosling

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 130min

MACAU TOWER

04 FEB - 02 MAR

THE GOOD DINOSAUR_

ROOM 3

2.30, 4.45, 7.15, 9.30 pm

Director: Peter Sohn

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 93min

this day in history

1973 VIETNAM OBSERVERS'
STRUGGLE FOR PEACE

International inspection teams in Vietnam have been sent into the countryside to monitor the truce agreed last Saturday in Paris.

The International Commission of Control and Supervision (ICCS) was created at the Paris Peace Accords - signed by the US, the Vietcong, North Vietnam and South Vietnam - on 27 January and includes delegates from Hungary, Poland, Canada and Indonesia.

But the warring parties have been unable to agree the details of the settlement and fighting has continued in spite of the ceasefire.

About 3,500 communists have been killed by South Vietnamese troops, who claim they have suffered similar numbers of casualties over the past week.

The ICCS announced yesterday it was not going to wait for the reconciliation meeting between the Vietcong and South Vietnamese in Paris tomorrow.

Seven teams of observers are on their way to establish regional headquarters in the provincial capitals of Quang Nam, Thua Thien, Pleiku, Pham Thiet, Bien Hoa, My Tho and Can Tho.

They had already set up a skeleton presence in three of the areas after the Joint Military Commission met to produce guidelines for the ICCS on 2 February.

The Military Commission - comprising Vietcong, South Vietnam, North Vietnam and the US - is responsible for the security and transport arrangements of the ICCS.

A spokesman for the ICCS said they will be settling into their areas until the Military Commission has laid down the infrastructure for them to move to the fronts and supervise the ceasefire.

Senior figures from the Military Commission met in Saigon on 29 January to decide how demarcation lines should be drawn between the South Vietnamese and communist Vietcong armies in South Vietnam.

Under the terms of the peace agreement the ICCS is to establish regional and sub-regional administrations, with headquarters in 26 towns and 12 observation teams based in the demilitarised zone below the Seventeenth Parallel.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Fighting continued in four main areas in spite of ICCS activities.

On the northern Quang Tri front there was a heavy artillery battle as both sides tried to prevent any further ground advances.

In Quang Ngai and Binh Dinh provinces there were a series of clashes over the North-South highway in a mainly communist-controlled area.

North and south of Pleiku, in the Central Highlands, the South Vietnamese also fought to keep the roads free.

In the Northern Delta and north of Saigon the battles were over the control of hamlets.

But the fighting became less intensive and moves towards peace continued.

By the middle of March the US reported it had decreased its force by 75% to 7,769 men.

The Vietnam War finally ended with the fall of Saigon in April 1975 and the reunification of the country under communist rule.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 You're not comfortable with the pace of your own personal economic recovery...

Taurus April 20-May 20 Why be a sourpuss? You can be just as passionate about making lemonade from the lemons life has given you as you are about wishing it were a bowl of cherries...

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 Money has no feelings. It's not generous, and it's not willful either. Do yourself a favor and be dispassionate yourself when thinking about your next few steps...

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 The emotional intensity is easing. How can you continue being upset about what's basically worth less than a new pair of sneakers? Stop thinking about yesterday's value and focus on today.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Your instinct is to look at issues deeply. But no matter how far beneath the surface you search, there's no information to help you figure out your next steps. Switch gears and focus on your family instead.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 You may not believe the pessimists around you. Don't. Your goals may be unrealistic but that doesn't make them impossible. The most important ingredient is your own faith in how things will turn out.

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 The time to be greedy is past, but what do you do with all those acquisitive feelings that linger? A few minor changes in attitude might be all you need to put them to good use. Consider yourself motivated for more.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 You don't have the highest energy levels of all time, but at least you're not stuck in the doldrums anymore. A tiny drop of optimism is all it takes to launch a full-fledged rebirth. You're on your way.

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 You may want to be alone. In fact, you may want to crawl under a rock. But staying connected to others is your only lifeline to the bigger picture. Don't cut it just yet.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 The major decision of the day has to do with money, yes, but mostly it has to do with friendship. Don't be cold and detached when making up your mind. That is the approach with the least possible return.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 Now that things have slowed down, you have time to examine your emotions. Your deeper ambitions might just surprise you. At least you don't have to make the effort to switch gears, since life is already doing it for you.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 If something has you scratching your head, it goes without saying you're not ready to commit. But what if it's more subtle than that? Even the slightest bit of fuzziness is enough to put off signing on the dotted line.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy

9x9 grid for Easy Sudoku puzzle with some numbers filled in.

Easy+

9x9 grid for Easy+ Sudoku puzzle with some numbers filled in.

Medium

9x9 grid for Medium Sudoku puzzle with some numbers filled in.

Hard

9x9 grid for Hard Sudoku puzzle with some numbers filled in.

WEATHER

Table with columns: MIN, MAX, CONDITION

CHINA

Table listing weather conditions for various Chinese cities like Beijing, Harbin, Tianjin, etc.

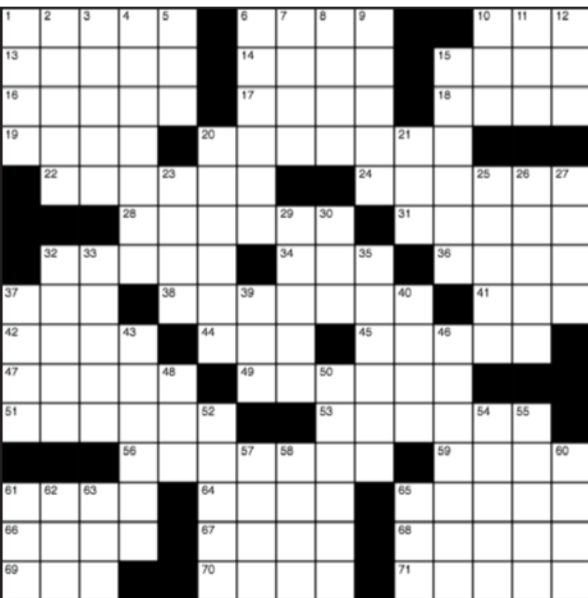
WORLD

Table listing weather conditions for various world cities like Moscow, Frankfurt, Paris, etc.

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Chart anew; 6- Cries of discovery; 10- Altar words; 13- Kick Out of You; 14- Actor Lugosi; 15- about (approximately); 16- Rice unit; 17- Journalist Jacob; 18- Consumer; 19- Sun. speeches; 20- Protective helmet; 22- Sampled; 24- Recess; 28- Except if; 31- Synthetic fiber; 32- Freeze over; 34- Supplement, with "out"; 36- Votes for; 37- Heston's org.; 38- White ant; 41- Bar order; 42- Not a dup.; 44- Agnus; 45- -burly; 47- Country singer Gibbs; 49- Have high hopes; 51- Refrain from noticing; 53- Soprano Renata; 56- Nightclothes; 59- a; 61- Hawaii's state bird; 64- Catchall abbr.; 65- Kind of kitchen; 66- Ripened; 67- Burn the midnight oil, studying; 68- Hound's trail; 69- Self-esteem; 70- Highland hats; 71- Twilled fabric;

DOWN: 1- Fixes illegally; 2- Heron; 3- Stiller's partner; 4- Under discussion; 5- Bad review; 6- Scrape off; 7- One who has something coming?; 8- Put on it; 9- Figure skater Cohen; 10- and outs; 11- Her partner would be a buck; 12- Bruins great Bobby; 15- Clamor; 20- Aided; 21- mode; 23- Hardware fastener; 25- Actor Ryan; 26- Resembling baby beef; 27- Anything?; 29- Big rigs; 30- Travel on snow; 32- Like some vbs.; 33- Monument; 35- Morals; 37- Denier's words; 39- "Michael Collins" actor; 40- Deutchmark replacement; 43- Felt one's way in the dark; 46- Go back over; 48- Tax-deferred nest egg; 50- Old Testament book; 52- Bounce; 54- Spud; 55- Rubber gasket; 57- Name on a razor; 58- Polite address; 60- Initial stake; 61- Dundee denial; 62- Ovum; 63- Classical beginning; 65- Pothook shape



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Fire department 28 572 222
Water Supply - Report 1990 992
PJ (Open line) 993
Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333
Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944
S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
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JAMIE Vardy's stunning volley set Leicester on its way to a 2-0 victory over Liverpool yesterday, keeping the unlikely title challengers top of the Premier League on a night Manchester United rediscovered its scoring touch at Old Trafford.

Manchester City and Tottenham also won to stay in touch with Leicester, but Arsenal was held 0-0 by Southampton and dropped to fourth place.

Leicester preserved its three-point lead over City and its title charge shows no sign of slowing — nor does Vardy's prolific form this season.

The England striker volleyed in a looping shot from 25 meters before adding another goal in the second half to sink Liverpool at King Power Stadium and take his tally to 18 this campaign.

"We are free of pressure," Leicester manager Claudio Ranieri said. "The players have a good feeling."

United beat Stoke 3-0, scoring in the first half at home for the first time since September. Jesse Lingard, Anthony Martial and Wayne Rooney — with his seventh goal in his last seven games — scored for United, which trimmed the gap to the Champions League qualification places to five points.

Criticized for much of the season for its risk-averse attacking approach, United has scored six goals in its last two games.

"A result like that settles the nerves of the fans, the players,

FOOTBALL | EPL

Vardy keeps Leicester's title charge rolling



Leicester City's Jamie Vardy, left, and teammate Shinji Okazaki organise the defence during their English Premier League soccer match against Tottenham Hotspur

even the manager," Lingard said. "Hopefully now we can go on a run."

Sergio Aguero was the match winner for City in a 1-0 victory at Sunderland in the team's first

game since announcing the hiring of Pep Guardiola as coach starting next season. Aguero

looks back to his sharpest, having scored eight goals in as many games in 2016.

Tottenham won 3-0 at Norwich thanks to a double from Harry Kane and another goal from young midfielder Dele Alli. The win lifted Spurs to third, above north London neighbor Arsenal on goal difference.

Also, Aston Villa had forward Jordan Ayew sent off in the 17th minute for elbowing an opponent in a 2-0 loss at West Ham, which left the league's last-place team 10 points adrift of safety. West Bromwich Albion scored two minutes into injury time to draw 1-1 against Swansea, and Bournemouth won 2-1 at Crystal Palace.

With 14 games left this campaign, Leicester is closing in on a Champions League qualification place — the team is 10 points clear of United — and must now be seen as a definite title contender.

Few thought a team that only narrowly avoided relegation last season could keep up its challenge at the other end of the standings, but the Foxes are proving everyone wrong.

"It's not a coincidence we're top of the table," Leicester midfielder Danny Drinkwater said. "This is team spirit at its highest. We won't stop believing. We're staying on the ground, but if we carry on the way we are, then why not have the belief (to win the league)?"

"It would go down in history, surely." **AP**

Jackson Martinez to join Guangzhou Evergrande

GUANGZHOU Evergrande of the Chinese Super League said yesterday it has signed Atletico Madrid striker Jackson Martinez for a new record sum in the Asian transfer market.

The 29-year-old Colombian has signed to a four-year contract for a fee of USD45.8 million (42 million euros), the club said on its website. It said Martinez will join winter training in Dubai on Feb. 9 after completing his physical exam.

"We firmly believe that the additional of international football star Jackson Martinez will strengthen our attack ... providing more exciting performances for everyone," the team said in a statement.

Despite a slowing economy, Chinese clubs have continued to splash out big sums for foreign talent, hoping for greater glory in both the long-underperforming domestic league and international



Atletico Madrid's Jackson Martinez challenge for the ball with RC Celta's Gustavo Cabral from Argentina during a Spanish La Liga soccer match against Celta Vigo

competition.

Among the biggest spenders is Shanghai Shenhua, who signed French striker Demba

Ba, and Jiangsu Suning, which paid a reported transfer fee of \$36 million (33 million euros) for Chelsea's Rami-

res, until then a record for Chinese football.

Guangzhou Evergrande, for its part, picked up Brazilian internationals Paulinho and Robinho.

In all, Super League teams spent 108 million euros (\$118 million) on players and coaches in the 2014-2015 transfer market, according to statistics from Germany's Transfer Market, placing the league second behind the English Premier League.

The spending has been fueled both by big-name sponsorships from the likes of Internet commerce giant Alibaba and a record \$1.25 billion (1.15 million euros) broadcast deal signed last year with Beijing-based Ti'ao Dongli — double what state broadcaster CCTV was offering.

That also jibes with a restructuring of the government's football management structure following calls from officials as high as president

and Communist Party chief Xi Jinping to raise China's level of play. The national team has been a persistent laggard, qualifying for only one World Cup finals.

That already seems to be paying off and under the stewardship of former Chelsea and Brazil boss Luiz Felipe Scolari, Super League champion Guangzhou last year became the only Chinese team to win the AFC Champions League twice.

Martinez had impressed as a member of his national team and FC Porto,

but was seen as underperforming at Atletico, to which he transferred last year for a 35 million euro fee. He scored just three goals in 22 appearances for the 2014 Spanish champions, leading many to call the signing a bust.

In its statement, Guangzhou praised Martinez as "a team training model, an extremely effective team leader trusted and relied upon by his teammates who maintains strict discipline off the pitch and steers well clear of distractions." **AP**

GAO HONGBO RETURNS AS CHINA NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM COACH

GAO HONGBO has returned as interim coach of the Chinese men's national football team following the departure of Frenchman Alain Perrin last month. The Chinese Football Association said on its web-

site yesterday that Gao would take the helm for the next two World Cup qualifiers while the search for a permanent coach continues. Gao led the team from 2009 to 2011.

opinion

HK Observer
 Robert Carroll



**FORGET TRANSPARENCY;
 SILENCE IS GOLDEN**

The Legislative Council Finance committee looks set to approve the additional funding needed for the world's most expensive high-speed rail without waiting for the council's public works subcommittee's approval, required by the assembly's rules. This is a rare departure from the norm and only the third time this has happened since 1997. The circumvention cannot be dismissed as a matter of efficiency, or necessary expediting, because it undermines the well-established principle of legislative oversight.

If the transport department and other officials had answered queries about the reasons for the extra costs - including the equally sensitive issue of mainland police control at the Tsim Sha Tsui terminus - it could be argued that legislators were being unreasonable; however, that was not the case. Furthermore the Finance committee chairman, while admitting that the transport department was at fault for not offering explanations, threw up his hands saying: "What can we do? More time cannot be lost!" Furthermore he then broke his supposed neutrality by telling committee members to vote yes.

So two core principles have been broken for the sake of forcing through an issue that is yet to be properly vetted. What a slippery slope we may be going down here. Given the project was based on dubious concepts and has sensitive, unresolved border control issues; it's not surprising that full disclosure has not been achieved.

We have an unnecessarily expensive railway foisted on us for political and symbolic reasons - to show that we are joined to the mainland high-speed rail network. Why did the government not do a thorough assessment of the realities and costs of the project?

It's hard to ignore the fact that you cannot run a high-speed rail at high speed over the few kilometers between here and the border; or until the next stop in Guangdong. Why choose a high-speed train when it can't run at high speed? Secondly, the link currently under consideration in Guangdong is not a direct link at all but would mean changing stations and trains some kilometers apart. So let's spell that out: we have a high-speed rail to link to the mainland bullet trains which will neither be high speed nor a direct link, and again, will be the most expensive in the world (per kilometer).

Infrastructure projects regularly exceed original budgets, but it's common knowledge that construction is the most corrupt industry worldwide. Surely there must be very close scrutiny to ensure money is well spent and sufficient transparency to probe kickbacks. Despite these red flags, the government, the MTR and Finance Committee chairman see no reason to give the legislators the answers they are asking for and insist on a LegCo green light for funding.

Given obstructionism in the chamber - a result of being designed to be toothless except in funding matters and major constitutional changes; a poor relationship with the chief executive who does not consult them; as well as populist politics - the government understandably feels frustrated and cynical about the opposition lawmakers' good will. Hence the strong-arm tactics. But wouldn't it be better to allow the subcommittee to exercise its proper function? Subsequently if seen to obstruct for obstruction's sake, then at least stakeholders, including the public, can better judge whether a highly unique action is needed or not.

A hot issue is whether mainland police will be stationed at Tsim Sha Tsui terminus to control immigration. Many lawmakers on the pan-democrat side say the move would infringe on the SAR's legal autonomy.

The long term bottom line here, I suspect, is that those involved in the initial agreement were unwilling to risk upsetting mainland leaders by not giving an unequivocal and emphatic yes to the project despite its obvious weaknesses. MTR and transport department officials are equally reluctant to have their decisions and actions looked at closely in case they are found to be at fault.

It is therefore in the best interests of all involved to receive less scrutiny over the issue. Forget transparency; silence is golden.

THE BUZZ **KINGS CANCEL YEAR OF MONKEY GIVEAWAY AS POSSIBLY OFFENSIVE**

The Sacramento Kings canceled a Lunar New Year promotional giveaway after DeMarcus Cousins complained the Year of the Monkey design was insensitive on the first day of Black History Month.

The Kings were set to give away T-shirts commemorating the Chinese Year of the Monkey, which starts on Feb. 8, at the team's game against the Milwaukee Bucks earlier this

week. The shirts sported the image of a purple monkey.

But according to a Facebook post, Bucks analyst and former player Marques Johnson said Cousins was discussing the matter with Kings employees before fans arrived for the game. Johnson agreed that the T-shirts could be construed as offensive.

The T-shirts were removed from the seats.

CHEERS!

Bourbon, Tennessee whiskey producers toast more strong sales

PRODUCERS of Kentucky bourbon and Tennessee whiskey are toasting another year of strong sales and revenue growth, led by consumers increasingly ordering high-priced, super-premium brands.

Combined U.S. revenues for bourbon, Tennessee whiskey and rye whiskey shot up 7.8 percent to USD2.9 billion in 2015, up \$210 million from the prior year, the Distilled Spirits Council said yesterday.

Domestic volume rose 5.2 percent last year to 20.4 million cases, the distilled spirits trade group said.

"We're living the dream," Chris Morris, master distiller at Brown-Forman Corp., producer of Woodford Reserve and Old Forester bourbons, said in an interview. "We're hitting our numbers as we had predicted."

Bourbon and Tennessee whiskey revenues and volumes outpaced the overall distilled spirits sector, the council said in its annual report. Rye whiskey amounts to a sliver of those overall revenue and volume figures, but it's a fast-growing part of the segment.

The popularity of top-tier products spread across



the whiskey category, with double-digit gains for super-premium Scotch, Canadian and Irish whiskeys as well, the council said.

The domestic numbers reflect sales from producers or suppliers to wholesalers.

Meanwhile, bourbon and Tennessee whiskey exports topped \$1 billion for the third straight year, despite challenges caused by a strong dollar, the trade group said. A strong dollar makes U.S. goods less competitive.

Overall U.S. spirits exports have more than doubled in the past decade, from \$743 million in 2005 to a projected \$1.56 billion last year, the council said.

Top export markets are

the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, Australia and Japan, it said.

In the U.S., consumers increasingly are reaching for high-end premium and super-premium bourbons and Tennessee whiskeys. Those super-premium volumes rose 25.2 percent in 2015 and revenues were up 26.5 percent. Super-premium brands include Woodford Reserve, Knob Creek and Jack Daniel's Single Barrel.

In the next category, volumes for high-end premium products rose 6.8 percent and revenues were up 7.7 percent. Products include Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey, Maker's Mark, Wild Turkey and Jim Beam Black.

"Consumer tastes have changed significantly," said Distilled Spirits Council spokesman Frank Coleman. "Whiskey in particular, the highest-priced products are flying off the shelves the fastest."

Meanwhile, demand was slower among lower and moderately priced brands. Volumes for value products rose 4.8 percent and were down 2.6 percent for premium brands, the council said. **AP**

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/Kin Cheung



Monkey business. A vendor (left), shows the monkey decorations to a customer at an annual CNY market in Hong Kong, yesterday.

Station	Air quality
Roadside	50-70 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	50-70 Moderate
Ambient	55-75 Moderate

SOURCE: DSMG

WORLD BRIEFS



MACEDONIA has lifted restrictions on the entry of refugees from the Greek border after Macedonian taxi drivers ended a five-day protest that had closed a key railway line, slowing migrant flows to Serbia. More than 55,000 migrants have passed through Macedonia this year.

UK The founder of budget airline EasyJet has stepped into Britain's grocery aisles. Stelios Haji-Ioannou has opened a discount grocery in northwest London, called EasyFood, offering canned sardines, soups and pasta for a mere 25 pence - for a limited time only. Prices will go up on the "limited and basic" range after a month.



SOMALIA An explosion and fire blew a gaping hole in a commercial airliner, forcing it to make an emergency landing at Mogadishu's international airport at night, officials and witnesses said. The pilot said he thought it was a bomb. An aviation expert who looked at photographs of the hole in the fuselage said the damage was consistent with an explosive device.

NIGERIA's separatists hijacked a merchant ship with foreign crew, threatening to blow it up if officials don't free a detained leader agitating for a breakaway of the state of Biafra.

USA Microsoft is recalling about 2.44 million AC power cords for its Surface Pro, Surface Pro 2, and Surface Pro 3 computers sold before March 15, 2015, because of a potential fire hazard. Users have reported 56 incidents of the cords overheating and emitting flames, and five incidents where the cords gave users an electric shock. Microsoft is offering free replacements for the cords.