



MUST CAREER DAY KICKS OFF
The three-day recruitment event kicked off yesterday offering employment at 140 companies

P5



RESISTANCE TO SIMPLIFIED CHINESE SCRIPT
Compared to Hong Kong, Macau generates less resistance to the use of simplified characters

P7 MDT REPORT



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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'"

WORLD BRIEFS

CHINA When legislators head back to their provinces once Beijing's annual parliamentary gathering concludes today, they'll be tasked with implementing the eight specific policies outlined and the less tangible philosophies of Xi Jinping that underpin them, in what the party's mouthpiece Xinhua News Agency has started referring to as "Xi Jinping political economics." *More on p10*



VIETNAM-IRAN Iran's official IRNA news agency says the country hopes to boost its trade with Vietnam to USD2 billion from the current \$350 million within five years. Hassan Rouhani said he and Vietnamese President Truong Tan Sang discussed cooperation against terrorism as well as unspecified "problems" in East Asia, according to state TV.

MALAYSIA's transport minister says two plane pieces found in Mozambique will be sent to Australia to verify if they belong to Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370.

AUSTRALIA is concerned about the detention of two Australian journalists who attempted to interview the Malaysian prime minister over corruption allegations.

IRAQ A Palestinian-American member of the Islamic State group gave himself up to Iraqi Kurdish forces in the country's north - a rare instance of a voluntary surrender of a militant fighting with the extremist group in Iraq.

More on backpage

New organizers to sell GP as local brand.

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Brexit: A cloud in the blue skies of Algarve for British expats

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CRIME

Thievery in hotel rooms hits city over the weekend

Renato Marques

SEVERAL thefts in different hotel rooms occurred in the territory over the weekend, the Judiciary Police (PJ) revealed yesterday during a press conference.

The unrelated cases took place in hotel units in Taipa and Cotai and targeted tourists from mainland China and Japan.

In one of the cases, two tourists from Japan were robbed of some of their property after leaving their luggage in their room to take part in a sightseeing tour.

The two tourists who were staying in a hotel located in Tai-

pa, only noticed the next day that their luggage stored in the room had been disturbed and that they were missing one passport, a credit card, RMB2,000 in cash, a wallet worth USD500 and a laptop computer worth USD1,000.

A separate incident occurred on Friday involving another tourist, this time from mainland China, who claims to have lost a valuable wristwatch that disappeared overnight.

The tourist in question had spent the night in the hotel room with a woman from mainland China who, in addition to the tourist's HKD600,000 wristwa-

tch, also disappeared overnight.

In a similar but separate case, a 50-year-old male has lost casino chips to the sum of HKD200,000 after a night playing in a casino in the company of a 41-year-old lady from mainland China who afterward spent the night in his hotel room.

In the morning, the man noticed the absence of the lady who is alleged to have stolen the casino chips.

Four days after the incident occurred a new development transpired when police authorities intercepted the accused as she was attempting to enter the MSAR at the Border Gate

checkpoint.

Questioned by the PJ, the woman confessed to having committed the crime; explaining that she had traded the chips for cash before attempting to retreat to the mainland.

From the original theft of HKD200,000, only about HKD33,000 was recovered by the police. The woman claimed that she had already spent the remainder.

Additionally, the Public Security Police Force (PSP) caught two women (aged 43 and 32) from mainland China involved in mobile phone theft scheme.

The police force said that

during an anti-pickpocket operation held in Rua da Palha on Saturday they spotted two women acting suspiciously.

A follow-up of their activities revealed that one of them was stealing mobile phones from customers' in the area, using an umbrella to disguise her actions. Afterward she would pass the stolen goods to the other women for storage.

Both were "caught in act" but that was just the "tip of the iceberg" as further questioning and a search of their backpacks and lodgings revealed that both had stolen a total of 11 mobile phones.

Poe rebuffs alleged 'political donations' from Suncity Group

PHILIPPINES' independent presidential candidate Senator Grace Poe has allegedly accepted campaign contributions to a total of PHP150 million from a Macau-based junket operator, Suncity Group.

A Daily Tribune report claimed that documents they have obtained show that Poe's camp accepted "political donations" from Suncity Group, owned by Alvin Chau.

Suncity is currently one of the big four junket operations in Macau, controlling the majority of the local VIP baccarat market.

The company allegedly issued one cash voucher for PHP50 million (MOP8.5 million), which appa-



Philippine presidential candidate Sen. Grace Poe waves to supporters

rently had Grace Poe's signature on it.

This was not the first time Poe has been involved in likely illegal contributions. She is already under fire after she admitted that the helicopter used in campaign sorties was lent to her by San Miguel Corp. and Heli-trend Corp.

The presidential can-

didate may have violated two laws, the Corporation Code, and the Omnibus Election Code, both of which ban companies from making donations for political campaigns. The Corporation Code states that companies can make reasonable donations, but not "in aid of any political party or candidate or

for purposes of partisan political activity," while Omnibus Election Code prohibits contributions "for purposes of partisan political activity."

However, the senator yesterday denied receiving donations from Sun City Holiday Resort, according to the Sun Star Manila.

"That is absolutely not true," declared Poe in a chance interview at a public market in Iloilo city.

"The document they are releasing [is not true]. You know, I am just holding myself back but I think they should be held liable for what they are doing. [...] That [the allegation] is not true and I challenge them [to prove it]," the senator added. **Staff reporter**

Transnational divorces in Taiwan decline

COUPLES comprising a Taiwanese partner and a foreign national accounted for about 20 percent of the total number of divorces in Taiwan last year, according to data from the Directorate General of Budget Accounting and Statistics (DGBAS).

Statistics show that an annual increase of 0.5 percent in the overall number of divorces in Taiwan last year has led to a total of 53,000 divorces.

Among those, 11,000 involved a Taiwanese citizen and a foreign national, representing a 3.3 percent decline from 2014, according to the statistics.

DGBAS said that around 10,000 of all transnational marriages that ended in divorce in 2015 involved a Taiwanese man and a foreign spouse, with 62 percent of the women being Chinese citizens, including from Hong Kong and Macau.

However, in the succeeding



years since the record high, transnational couples have accounted for a small percentage of the overall divorces in Taiwan.

The agency reported that in 37 percent of cases, the female partner originated from a Southeast Asian country.

The data also shows a 3.4 percent annual increase in the number of marriages recorded in Taiwan last year, totaling 154,000 marriages of which 20,000 were transnational marriages involving a Taiwanese citizen, up by 1.5 percent from 2014. **Staff reporter**

Aecom wins bid to supervise hospital construction

THE company Aecom won the public tender organized by the Infrastructure Development Office (GDI) to supervise the construction of the future Taipa hospital. According to TDM, the company presented the second lowest price (over MOP197 million). The contract has a va-

lidity of 1,380 days and other four companies took part in the public tender

The Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Alexis Tam, said last year that he does not know when Macau's second public hospital will be ready to open, adding that he "has not been made privy to

the information."

"I have been asked by many [people] as to when the new hospital in Taipa will open and I can tell you that I myself would like to know the answer. I would. We do not have information on the matter," he said.



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SURVEY

Average earnings increase in Q4

AT the end of the fourth quarter of 2015, the “Wholesale & Retail Trade” sector had engaged 55,812 people, up by 12 percent year-on-year, with 35,446 working in retail trade.

According to a survey on manpower needs and wages in the fourth quarter of 2015 released by the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC), average earnings of the aforementioned sector (excluding bonuses and allowances) of full-time employees rose by 4.3 percent year-on-year to MOP12,480.

The “Transport, Storage & Communications” sector engaged 10,319 employees, with the average earnings of full-time employees rising in December by 1 percent year-on-year to MOP20,510.

The survey also indicated that employee numbers in the “Security Activities” sector rose 22.5 percent (to 10,621 persons) with average earnings of MOP 12,470, up by 11.6 percent year-on-year.

Meanwhile, “Wholesale & Retail Trade” had 3,780 vacancies (68.8 percent in retail trade), down by 996 year-on-year at the end of the fourth quarter. “Vacancies in Security Activities” (1,250) and “Transport, Storage & Communications” (895) went down by 163 and 88 respectively year-on-year.

According to a statement, the vacancy rate, recruitment rate and turnover rate in “Security Activities” fell by 3.6, 2.8 and 1 percentage points respectively year-on-year, indicating a decrease in demand for human resources.

Regarding vocational training in the surveyed industries, a total of 13,417 participants attended 783 training courses during the fourth quarter of 2015.

New organizers to sell Grand Prix as a local brand

Renato Marques

THE new Macau Grand Prix Organizing Committee (COGPM) aims to sell the Grand Prix as a trademark brand of Macau, supported by efforts from the cultural and creative industry, the president of the Sports Bureau of Macau (ID) Pun Weng Kun told the Times. The comments were made after the conclusion of the first meeting of the new organizing committee held yesterday evening at the Grand Prix



Tower building.

“In this new committee we are now going to have a subcommittee of branding with the aim of providing support to the development of the creative and cultural industries and also of promoting the Macau Grand Prix brand,” Pun said. He added that by linking the promotion of the Grand Prix brand with the artistic output of the cultural and creative industries, “Macau re-

sidents and tourists will recognize that there are very good products in this field.”

Pun clarified that “the idea is to develop a range of products using elements related with the GP and not just its logo.”

The new committee was made official on March 9 by order of the Chief Executive that was published yesterday in the Official gazette (BO). The organizing body will be composed of

29 members all nominated by the Secretary of Social Affairs and Culture, Alexis Tam, who also presides over the committee.

Among those to be represented in the organizing body will be a delegate of the Cultural Industries Fund and “six people of recognized merit in the fields of tourism and sports in Macau.”

Pun Weng Kun, president of ID, will coordinate the COGPM, succeeding João Manuel Costa Antunes who has undertaken that role for the past 27 years.

On previous occasions, the president of ID told the Times that the fact that it will be the first time that ID organizes the Grand Prix does not worry him since “the team will be basically the same, just with more people helping,” adding that: “I trust our team in this matter.”

The Grand Prix is a successful brand of Macau.

PUN WENG KUN

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Consulate issued travel security alert to Turkey



Police forensic officials work at the Sunday's explosion site in Ankara

Given the terrorist attack that took place in the center of Ankara on Sunday, the Consulate-General of China in Istanbul issued a travel security alert to Chinese citizens.

"In the last six months several terrorist attacks have taken place in Turkey and the government has issued an order to strengthen national security and counter-terrorism measures," reads the alert. Considering that the security situation in that country has been worsening, the Consulate-General of China in Istanbul recommended Chinese citizens to cautiously consider their recent travel plans to Turkey. The local Tourism Crisis Management Office publicized the travel alert.

Macau Pavilion at Hong Kong film and TV event



The Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) and the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) are jointly participating in

the 20th Hong Kong International Film & TV Market. Both departments set up the first Macau Pavilion in the event. The two offices also led a delegation of film and television industry partners from Macau to take part in the fair, that is currently held in Hong Kong until March 17.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Region in need of medical professionals

THE president of the Kiang Wu Nursing College of Macau (KWNC), Van Iat Kio, argues that hospitals in Macau are facing a shortage of health care professionals.

During a lecture last week, Van Iat Kio said that 60 percent of the branches of medicine are struggling to find highly qualified medics and nurses, particularly in areas of ophthalmology and cardiology. According to data provided by the Social Affairs and Culture Bureau, in 2014 only 89 nurses out of a total of 1,020 (8.7 per-



Van Iat Kio

cent), had specialized training, which pales in comparison to the 25 percent for Hong Kong.

Around eighty nine percent of doctors have medical degrees that were issued on the mainland, while Macau has trained 69.4 percent of the nurses who are currently working in local public and private hospitals. Noticeably, only 4.4 percent of high school graduates choose medical subjects.

Van Iat Kio said that "only a few schools are providing a selection of majors in medical specialties, and the flourishing gaming industry has also diminished students' interest in the subject." In Macau there are four hi-

Within the medical system, there are not many opportunities for nurses to get promoted.

VAN IAT KIO

gher education institutions currently offering a total of nine medicine-related degrees.

Besides the aforementioned issues, another challenge for the medical profession concerns the rate of employees working for private medical care companies who leave their jobs. It has become common to see doctors and nurses in private hospitals lured to the public medical system by the relatively higher salaries. Female nurses, who represent 95 percent of all nurses in Macau, are also thought to readily give up their careers in order to be closer to their families. "Under normal conditions, they would join government departments, and others would do social work," Van Iat Kio told the Times.

Medical assistants quitting their jobs has also not been going unnoticed in the public domain. Van expressed that "within the medical system, there are not many opportunities for nurses to get promoted." The president of the KWNC notes that the standards for registered medical professionals and assistants are different between local private and public hospitals. "Legal regulations concerning a unified medical employee registry are under discussion," Van revealed. "It will be forwarded to the Legislative Assembly later this year or early next year."

If the law is approved, doctors, dentists, nurses, physical therapists, and 11 other types of professionals will be able to obtain specific work licenses in their field. **Staff reporter**

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CNN dubs Macau economy 'worst performing' globally

U.S. broadcaster CNN has dubbed Macau's economy "the worst performing in the world" in reference to the one-fifth contraction in gross domestic product (GDP) last year.

The report claimed that "these are gloomy times in Macau," as the city continues to take a beating from "China's anti-corruption campaign and slowing growth."

However, while growth rates may be the slowest in the world according to CNN, neither gaming magnates nor ordinary residents seem too concerned with the slowdown. With regards to the latter average incomes were still rising at the end of last year, well into the gaming slump, and the unemployment rate has remained suspended around 1.9 percent.

■ The report claims that 'these are gloomy times in Macau'

It is in fact small businesses in the MSAR that have been most affected by the slowdown it seems, with some retailers saying earlier this year that they are not optimistic about a recovery in retail during the first quarter of 2016.

Although Macau saw the number of tourists arriving in the MSAR remain stable last year at approximately 30 million, Macau Government Tourism Offi-

ce (MGTO) head Helena de Senna Fernandes reported that non-gaming visitor spending was down 17 percent in 2015.

Fernando Gomes, owner of popular Portuguese restaurant, Fernando's, told CNN that he has only experienced a small decline in revenues, thanks to the fact that his restaurant is frequented by both locals and tourists.

Ricardo Siu, a business and economics professor at the University of Macau, told CNN that about 60 percent of Macau's economy depends on the gaming industry, and another 11 percent on related sectors like retail, hotels and restaurants.

"We've got no buffers – all our eggs are in one basket," added Malcolm McLaughlan, general manager of the Grand Coloane Resort. "To me that's the manifestation of Macau being a one-trick pony."

Analysts say that Macau's attempt to rebrand itself as less of a gaming hub and more of an 'all-in-one' tourism and leisure destination has a long way to go.

The CNN report added that, to make matters worse, a host of new resorts are slated to open this year, including The Parisian. The influx of new rooms is making the market tougher by providing an oversupply and an collapse in room prices.

Malcolm McLaughlan said that with fewer tourists coming through he's cut room rates by about 30 percent, but he still hasn't been able to attract enough customers. **DB**



THE MUST Career Day, held by the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST), has reached its sixth year, with over 140 employers looking for qualified graduates to join their teams.

Organized by the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Career Planning of MUST, the annual three-day recruitment event kicked off yesterday. It offers employment at 140 companies, including casinos, hotels, banks and financial groups, retail stores, and real estate groups. Besides those from Macau and Hong Kong, 15 mainland employers are also in attendance.

According to Liu Liang, the president of MUST, during the past five years the university has contributed a total of 13,500 graduates to the labor market and to further higher-education institutions, 40 percent of whom were local residents. "Among all graduates, 90 percent either began their

Gaming industry dominates MUST Career Day

working careers or continued on to further studies," revealed Liu.

Although both the gaming and hotel industries still dominate the event, governmental organizations, telecommunications and IT companies, and airlines are also important sources of employment. Air Macau brought its recently launched "Macau Local Cadet Pilot Program" to the event. Carmen Hong, human resources manager for Air Macau, told the Times, "We have been attending this event for several years, but the pilot training program is new. We want to train local pilots." Hong in-

formed the Times that Air Macau employs 30 pilots, but most of them come from Europe. "It's a little bit difficult to find professionals for some positions. Good language skills is one of the criteria."

Nevertheless, the slow-down of both the gaming and hotel industries, coupled with the growing potential of other fields, has made some fresh graduates lose interest in casinos and hotels, in spite of the large numbers of students still applying for those jobs. Vivian Wong, a local hotel management student at MUST, told the Times: "I am studying hotel management, so

hotels and casinos are still my top choices."

A finance student surnamed Li, said that she has "no personal demands concerning salaries and other things. It's important to get a job first, and I wish to work for finance companies."

Having started in 2011, MUST Career Day is now an annual event. Beyond the job opportunities, it also features lectures on interview skills, company culture and other topics that could help students better prepare for their careers.

Around 2,500 MUST students are expected to graduate this year. **Staff reporter**

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Daniel Beittler

THE subtitles accompanying a Mandarin TVB news program aired in Hong Kong and Macau were written in simplified Chinese characters last month, sparking outrage from viewers.

More than 10,000 Hong Kong residents wrote in to TVB expressing their disdain for the change, including Hong Kong legislative councillor Claudia Mo of the Civic Party, claiming that the decision threatens the cultural integrity of the HKSAR and represents another step in the increasing ‘mainlandization’ of the territory.

Those who take pride in the cultural continuity of the traditional script and believe it to be an integral part of the Special Administrative Regions’ heritage have long resisted the introduction of simplified Chinese characters in Macau and Hong Kong.

The resistance to the implementation of the simplified script is, however, as much a cultural issue as it is a political one. Those who seek to curtail the influence of the mainland in the two SARs are vehement that the proposed changes are a ploy by Beijing to limit the regions’ identities and, in the case of Hong Kong, suppress separatist tendencies.

Various media outlets including Liberty Times and Apple Daily have compared the cultural tiptoeing to a “boiling frog” strategy – referring to the notion that a frog placed in gradually heated water is unaware of the changing nature of its environment.

They claim that small incremental steps of ‘mainlandization’ threaten to eradicate not just Macau’s and Hong Kong’s cultural identity, but also their political autonomy.

Opponents further claim that the introduction of simplified characters and even the propagation of the use of Mandarin is part of a plan to prepare the two SARs for their eventual political integration with the mainland, in which the first step is merely the assertion of cultural standardization.

However, in Macau there is significantly less resistance to the use of both the simplified

Macau, HK take stance on simplified character tiptoeing



script and traditional characters, owing to the more than 30 million mainland visitors each year and the fact that gaming operators mainly just adopt simplified Chinese for their promotional activities – though this too is sometimes criticized as “a bootlicking gesture to tourists from the mainland,” as one social media commentator wrote.

Professor Xu Daming of the University of Macau thinks that there is no harm in adopting simplified Chinese characters per se, however since “the people of Macau are generally unhappy about it, for whatever reason, it is probably not worthwhile to displease the masses.”

“It’s important to remember that the characters are just a tool for communication,” Xu added. “I would play down this part as it is not as important as the spoken language.”

The linguistic issue also extends to the use of Mandarin within the two territories, which faces similar opposition when used in any formal capacity. However, as such

there exist two simultaneous dialectics battling it out in cultural circles: Mandarin vs. Cantonese, and Simplified vs. Traditional.

■ In Macau there is significantly less resistance to the use of both the simplified script and traditional characters

The ideas echo themes from the recent film, “Ten Years,” which forewarns of a dystopian vision of Hong Kong in which the use of Cantonese is restricted.

Some observers pointed towards the use of other languages in Macau and Hong Kong, such as Portuguese and English, which are respecti-

vely the official languages in the two SARs alongside “Chinese,” which normally refers to Cantonese. They claim that since these are in use – and few deny that they are, or should be – there ought to be no issue accommodating Mandarin and a simplified form of Chinese characters.

“Any language, especially the mother tongue, should be encouraged to be taught,” said Professor Xu, who is a Mandarin speaker. “This is the official position of UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization].”

While many observers are not necessarily in favor of the adoption of simplified Chinese or Mandarin, they criticize the locals for their hypocrisy over the issue, accusing them of being specifically anti-mainland China.

However the difference in the case of the adoption and usage of ‘non-Chinese’ languages (Romanized scripts such as English and Portuguese) is that they do not threaten to replace traditional-form

Cantonese.

In the past the introduction of simplified characters by certain institutions such as restaurant chains led to the subsequent removal of their traditional counterparts.

In 2012 McDonald’s decision to replace their signage in Macau with simplified characters triggered local outrage from Macau and Hong Kong based netizens.

One Facebook user asked, “Why do people have to make our Macau look like mainland China? I don’t want to see Simplified Chinese characters everywhere!”

The simplified form, introduced by the Communist Party in the 1950s to increase the literacy rate of the uneducated peasant classes, reduces the complexity of traditional characters by altering them or omitting strokes.

In today’s interconnected and globalized world, supporters of the simplified form add that this form is easier for non-Chinese Sinophiles to learn, thereby promoting China’s culture and influence abroad. International schools – which mainly teach simplified characters – maintain that simplification can speed up the learning and writing process.

Simplified Chinese has been in use in mainland China for decades, however attempts at further revisions of the simplification have been largely unsuccessful. Meanwhile, Macau, Hong Kong and Taiwan have maintained the use of the traditional form of written Chinese, at least in official capacities.

No plans to extend ‘simplified’ coverage

IN response to more than 10,000 letters of complaint delivered to TVB after it began using simplified Chinese characters in its Mandarin news broadcast, TVB deputy director Tsang Sing-ming clarified that the station has no plans to extend the change to other programs on the channel.

Critics were angered by what they saw as an attempt to increase the main-

land’s interference in the local, cultural autonomy of Hong Kong. They argued that, as TVB holds a Hong Kong license, it should serve the people of Hong Kong.

Those opposed to the change had their limits tested again last week after it became known that the Education Bureau’s latest consultation document specified that students in Hong Kong

should learn to read simplified Chinese characters.

HKSAR’s Secretary for Education, Eddie Ng Hak-kim, denied any political intent behind the proposal, accusing opposing factions of seeking to encourage dissent. He clarified that the policy had been declared as a goal in the Chinese Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide in 2002.

AP PHOTO



The Sheraton Fort Lauderdale Beach Hotel, a member of the Starwood Hotels and Resorts group

HOSPITALITY

Starwood receives nearly USD14b buyout bid from Chinese group

A fight for control of the Starwood hotel chain is under way following a USD14 billion buyout offer yesterday from a consortium led by China's Anbang Insurance Group.

Anbang, which remains largely unknown to most Americans, has quickly positioned itself to become a major player in the U.S. hotel industry.

It made a splash in the fall of 2014 when it bought

New York's Waldorf Astoria for almost \$2 billion. It cut a \$6.5 billion deal for Strategic Hotels & Resorts Inc. just days ago.

Now it is going toe-to-toe with U.S. hotel giant Marriott International Inc., which said late last year that it would buy Starwood, the owner of Sheraton and St. Regis hotels, in a deal worth \$12.2 billion.

Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc. said that it still favors the Marriott

deal, but that it's looking at the latest bid.

The offer from the Chinese group includes \$76 per Starwood share and Interval Leisure Group stock currently valued at about \$5.50 per Starwood share. Starwood said that there are still "a number of matters" that need to be worked out in the group's proposal.

Marriott said yesterday that it stands behind its offer. Shareholders of Marriott and Starwood are expected to vote

on that deal on March 28. If Starwood ends its agreement with Marriott or changes or withdraws its recommendation for shareholders to vote in favor of the Marriott transaction, Starwood would have to pay a \$400 million termination fee.

Starwood, based in Stamford, Connecticut, has almost 1,300 properties in about 100 countries. Its shares jumped more than 7 percent yesterday before the opening bell. **AP**

PROPERTY

China Overseas buys Citic's assets for USD4.8b

CHINA Overseas Land & Investment Ltd. said it will buy the Chinese residential property assets held by Citic Ltd. for about 31 billion yuan (USD4.8 billion) as it expands its presence across the nation's cities amid surging land prices.

China Overseas will sell 1.1 billion shares at HKD27.13 each to the Citic companies as part of the transaction, it said yesterday in a statement to the Hong Kong stock exchange. China Overseas closed 1.8 percent higher at HKD26.20 in Hong Kong, after earlier rising as much as 6.8 percent.

The property projects that China Overseas is acquiring span 25 Chinese cities including top-tier hubs such as Beijing, Shenzhen and Shanghai and smaller ones such as Foshan and Chengdu. Property prices in China's largest centers have surged this past year amid the government's moves to stimulate the real estate market, and regulators have pledged to dissolve a glut of unsold homes in lower-tier cities.

Edison Bian, a Hong Kong-based analyst at UOB Kay Hian Ltd., said the move is "justified" for China Overseas given its ample cash and the intensifying competition for land amid high prices. The 24 million square meters of land being acquired, equivalent to more than half of China Overseas' existing land bank as of June 30, will be "highly beneficial" to the company's future development, according to the statement. **Bloomberg**

corporate bits

THE VENETIAN TO HOST CHINA MUSIC AWARDS



The China Music Awards will be held at The Venetian on April 15 for the fifth consecutive year.

Sponsored by The Venetian Macao, the China Music Awards will bring some of the music industry's biggest stars together for a night of awards

and entertainment at the Cotai Arena. The ceremony will be broadcast live on Channel V throughout China and other Asian countries.

According to a statement, the theme of the ceremony is "Initial Dream, Born for Music" and the event aims to pay tribute to the singers who have contributed to the industry over the past 20 years.

The China Music Awards was originally launched back in 1994 and has previously gathered the nation's top music industry talent in host cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu, Hong Kong, Macau and Taipei. It is the only Chinese music awards event that is telecast in China and around the world.

CEM COLLABORATES WITH SAM YUK SCHOOL'S ANNUAL SCIENCE FAIR

CEM joined the Annual Science Fair last week, organized by the Macau Sam Yuk Middle School titled "Materealize": Ideas, Knowledge and Innovation."

The fair, aiming for students to cultivate a positive attitude toward and a deeper appreciation of scientific studies, held various activities designed to support students' learning of different principles related



to astronomy, chemistry and physics.

CEM presented information about Macau's local power generation and CEM's environmental initiatives, and led the students in relevant hands-on experiments.

According to a press release, the students tried to make a solar model car by themselves, and constructed wind blades using disposable plastic water bottles to be installed in a wind generator.

CEM conducts various activities each year to bring Macau's students in touch with different renewable energies, as well as to enhance their awareness and recognition of the use of renewable energy..

MUSIC AND POETRY JAM AT GRAND LAPA

Grand Lapa is set to introduce its first "Open Mic" music and poetry appreciation evening at Vasco Bar and Lounge on Thursday. Co-Organized with The Script Road - Macau Literary Festival, the event will introduce a new type of entertainment, adopting the trendy "open mic" concept from Western countries. According to a statement, performances can be in any language from any culture, from a solo performer to band, instrumental or acoustic, and can be traditional poetry or a reading.

Titled "On the Road: Music and Poetry Jam," this two-and-a-half-hour experience has free admission. The "open mic" session will start at 9:30p.m. with 30-minute sessions of



music followed by poetry, recurring until midnight. The event, which allows everyone to perform at the microphone, welcomes guests above 18.

China and Brazil well positioned to boost agriculture in Africa

CHINA and Brazil are two countries that are well positioned to boost agriculture in Africa, whose growth sector is seen as vital for the continent's development, according to analysts.

An article published last week by the Institute for Development Studies gave the recent opening of the Novo Banco de Desenvolvimento bank's Johannesburg office as an example of the "increasing influence of China and Brazil in Africa". The bank, previously known as the BRICS Development Bank, is expected to start providing loans in April.

Agriculture, the article said, is a "major area of involvement for China and Brazil in the continent," and both countries are "particularly well placed to help African countries develop their agricultural sectors."

"China provides favourable partnerships for both sides with unparalleled pragmatism, which are very well received as an alternative to an increas-



gly obsolete aid industry. Brazil offers tropical technology, which is reputed to be well adapted to the climates and soils of Africa," it said.

The involvement of both countries in the agricultural sector in Mozambique was covered by researchers Kojo Ama-

nor and Sergio Chichava in an article published in February, affirming that South-South cooperation is increasingly seen as able to "facilitate and complement other sources of assistance," creating conditions for increased "multilateral and multipolar" cooperation.

"Agricultural development is an important component of China and Brazil's relations with African states. Both countries are among the five largest agricultural producers in the world [...], they have powerful agro-business sectors operating in global markets and are expanding through mergers and acquisitions," they said.

The involvement of both countries in Mozambique has been extensively studied, given the importance of some of the support provided – a soft loan of USD50 million (2010) for construction of three processing plants (cotton, rice and corn) and a long-term credit line from the Export and Import Bank of China (Exim – \$60 million dollars, 2012) for a farming complex in Chokwe district.

According to the researchers, Chinese cooperation uses "two avenues" – the Umbelúzi Centre for Research and Transfer of Agricultural Technology (CI-TTAU), created in 2011, which tests and adapts seeds, as well

as providing training and supply contracts between Chinese companies and local farmers.

The main companies involved are Wanbao Africa Development Agriculture Limited (WAADL), considered by the China Development Bank to be the Chinese company most involved in Africa, Lianhe Africa Agriculture Development Company, China-Africa Cotton Mozambique Ltd. (CACM), Sunway International, China Africa Co Agriculture, Agricultural CCM and Hubei Lianfeng.

"Based on long-term involvement, cooperation for development and agro-industrial investment in Mozambique has expanded in recent years. Taking care of old state farms, encouraging planting of various crops, to address local food shortages, is a priority. This has had strong Chinese support and the expansion "should continue" they said.

The Brazilian initiatives in Mozambique, as in Ghana, are "structured around social protection, technology transfer and export of Brazilian agro-industrial products."

According to the researchers, Mozambique favors large-scale investments and a greater openness to land acquisition by Chinese and Brazilian companies. **MDT/Macauhub**

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opinion

Views on China

Tim Culpan, Bloomberg

THE LAST THING CHINA'S STARTUPS NEED IS PEOPLE BANK'S HELP

Zhou Xiaochuan has a lot on his plate. As governor of the People's Bank of China, the central banker is needed to deal with all manner of economic challenges, from the country's currency to its banking system, property market and, of course, macroeconomic growth.

Boosting the nation's high-tech startups? Not so much.

That hasn't stopped him trying, with comments over the weekend that Beijing will work to promote direct financing for high-tech startups. His deputy, Pan Gongsheng, went further, declaring that China needs more diversified financial products to support entrepreneurship and innovation.

As concerns swirl over China's ability to make its GDP growth target amid weaker industrial output and slowing retail sales, one could be forgiven for thinking a lack of money was holding back the country's newest businesses.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Thanks to authorities' fiscal enthusiasm, at least 780 government-backed funds had a total of 2.2 trillion yuan (USD339 billion) in assets at the end of 2015, data from Beijing-based consultancy Zero2IPO show. Incredibly, two-thirds of that was raised over the past 12 months. Spurred not only by government-backed funds, but also local and foreign venture capital firms and increasingly hungry M&A departments at the B.A.T. triumvirate (Baidu, Alibaba, Tencent), China's birthing of big, valuable startups boomed last year, according to data from CB Insights.

Although counting unicorns - startups with a \$1 billion valuation - isn't the only, or even the best, measure of entrepreneurship and innovation, it does provide an indication that money is both available, and actually being spent.

What the unicorn count doesn't show is how many startups are being established in the first place. With all that cash fighting over a limited supply, it's easy to see how valuations can climb quickly.

President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang have both made it clear that building the country's technological independence is of utmost importance. That goal was given greater urgency twice in the past month after the U.S. sent a clear signal that China's money wasn't welcome in its tech industry, and that it would cut off the supply of technology to Chinese companies to further its own foreign policy goals.

Against that backdrop, the buy versus build trade-off starts to turn squarely in favor of build. So that's what China's been doing. Of course, funds under management doesn't mean funds being invested, and much of that cash is likely burning holes in pockets (read: sitting in accounts at state-owned banks).

To Zhou's credit, the government's moves to make more money available - through cutting interest rates, reducing home down payments and lowering taxes - has helped boost property sales. If construction follows, then the property party may just start again, with state lenders left with the hangover.

Building businesses and building apartments, however, aren't the same, and that's a good thing. China needs more new businesses, it doesn't need more empty buildings.

In calling for easier funding for entrepreneurs, Zhou may be worried that so much of the country's finances have gone toward propping up huge state-owned enterprises, sucking resources away from small businesses that are crucial to growth in any economy. It's a valid concern.

But as history has shown, throwing cheap money around often creates more problems than it solves. And for the PBOC, more problems is exactly what it doesn't need.

ANALYSIS

Political economics according to Xi: working class are masters

WHEN China's legislators head back to their provinces once Beijing's annual parliamentary gathering concludes today, they'll be tasked with implementing the specific policies outlined and the less tangible philosophies of Xi Jinping that underpins them.

Based on speeches given by the president during the National People's Congress, the party's mouthpiece Xinhua News Agency has started referring to "Xi Jinping political economics," an eight-point clustering of themes such as how to reconcile state control and market forces, or the need to appreciate the nation's front-line workers.

The priority: to build a people-focused common prosperity that will ease the widening gap between rich and poor. Xi's doctrine, if enshrined in Communist Party orthodoxy, would mark a fifth leg in the party's thinking, following "Mao Zedong thought," "Deng Xiaoping theory," Jiang Zemin's "three represents" and Hu Jintao's "scientific outlook on development."

"Xi's 'political economics' has reverberated through the Great Hall of the People throughout this year's key political events," Xinhua reported yesterday. "In Xi po-



litical economics, socialism is the institutional guarantee so that all Chinese people can benefit from economic development."

Here's a rundown on the eight-point platform using the words of Xi as quoted in state media:

1. People centered: We have to arouse the enthusiasm of workers in the front-line - manufacturing workers and migrant workers. That's the essence of socialism. The working class are the masters of our country: Xi told the Shanghai delegation on March 5.

2. Common prosperity: There should be no one left behind in building a well-off society, even among ethnic groups with small populations: Xi told the Heilongjiang delegation to the NPC on March 7. The next five years will be crucial for the government to "crack the tough bones" in the battle

against poverty, Xi said on March 10 when meeting Qinghai delegates.

3. Public ownership and private ownership: Our policy of unwaveringly encouraging, supporting and guiding the non-public economy hasn't changed, Xi said while meeting delegates from the China Democratic Federation of Industry and Commerce on March 4. Development of the non-public sector from small to big, and from weak to strong, is realized under the leadership of the party, Xi said the same day while meeting delegates from the China Democratic National Construction Association and the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce.

4. New development concept: We should protect the environment like protecting our eyes and treat the envi-

ronment the way we treat our lives, Xi said to the Qinghai delegation.

5. Relationship between the government and the markets: To deepen economic reform, it's crucial to manage the balance between government policies and market forces well, Xi told the Shanghai delegation. The government must manage its duties effectively while allowing the market its freedom, he said.

6. Open economy: China's philosophy on economic growth will be driven by innovation, coordination, green development, openness and sharing, Xi told delegates from Shanghai, Heilongjiang and Qinghai.

7. New Normal: The New Normal of slower, more sustainable development is a time of challenge but also opportunities, Xi said March 4. Private companies should take the initiative and be more innovative to adapt to the New Normal, Xi said.

8. Supply side: To push supply-side structural reform will be a tough battle, Xi said at a meeting with the Hunan delegation on March 8. The supply of unnecessary and low-end output should be curtailed, while that of effective and mid-to-high end supply enlarged, Xi said. **Bloomberg**

Offshore yuan drops as Zhou says no need for major economy steps

THE offshore yuan declined the most in two weeks after China's central bank governor said major measures weren't needed to boost growth even as data released over the weekend pointed to a slowing economy.

The currency has returned to a more "normal, rational and fundamentals-driven" trend, Zhou Xiaochuan told reporters over the weekend, adding that excessive monetary stimulus isn't necessary to achieve the nation's expansion target of at least 6.5 percent over the next five years. He said also that he's unable to forecast if the yuan's volatility will end. The dollar's 14-day relative-strength index against the offshore yuan neared a level on Friday that indicates to some traders that the greenback will strengthen.

The Chinese currency traded in Hong Kong retreated 0.18 percent, the most since Feb. 16, to 6.4935 a dollar as of 6:42 p.m. local time, prices compiled by Bloomberg show. It rose 0.35 percent on Friday to the strongest level since early December. The yuan in

Shanghai was little changed, as was the People's Bank of China daily fixing, which restricts onshore moves to 2 percent on either side.

"The yuan's gain on Friday was quite sharp and it's going through some adjustments now," said Kenix Lai, a foreign-exchange analyst at Bank of East Asia Ltd. in Hong Kong. "The market was also disappointed by Zhou's comments as investors were expecting more interest-rate and bank reserve-requirement-ratio cuts to shore up growth because economic fundamentals are quite weak."

The nation's industrial output climbed 5.4 percent from a year earlier in January and February, the National Bureau of Statistics said Saturday, compared with the 5.6 percent median estimate of economists surveyed by Bloomberg. Retail sales climbed 10.2 percent from a year earlier, missing the 11 percent projected gain, while fixed-asset investment exceeded estimates with a 10.2 percent increase.

The CFETS RMB Index dropped to the lowest level since the gauge was unveiled in December as of Friday, according to data released yesterday. This suggests that the yuan is weakening against the basket.

The yield on government bonds due January 2026 was unchanged at 2.86 percent, data from the National Interbank Funding Center show. The seven-day repurchase rate, a gauge of interbank funding availability, fell one basis point to 2.27 percent, according to a weighted average from the National Interbank Funding Center.

"Because the dollar was weaker in February, the cost for the PBOC to keep the exchange rate stable was smaller and capital outflows eased," said Liu Dongliang, a Shenzhen-based analyst at China Merchants Bank Co. "But this doesn't mean the expectation for the yuan to drop further has vanished. The currency will likely weaken and be more volatile as the Federal Reserve may boost interest rates again. **Bloomberg**

Ben Bland, Shenzhen

FINANCIAL TIMES REPORT

Shenzhen mall serves up Hong Kong shopping experience

AS Chinese shoppers shun Hong Kong because of rising anti-mainland sentiment, the city's retailers are hoping for some respite with the opening of their own mall in neighbouring Shenzhen.

The RMB350m (USD54m) HOKO mall, built by Hong Kong's billionaire Cheng family, is designed to give mainland consumers access to the foreign products and Hong Kong brands they crave without the hassle of crossing the border into the increasingly troubled semi-autonomous territory.

"This is much easier than going to Hong Kong where there are long lines at immigration, mainland people get harassed on public transport and it is not safe after the recent riot," says Shenzhen resident Pan Meizhu, one of many Chinese shoppers who have been attracted by the Hong Kong-style shopping experience.

With floors named after Hong Kong shopping districts Causeway Bay, Tsim Sha Tsui and Mong Kok — site of an anti-government riot last month — the mall features some of the territory's best-known brands, such as the Chengs' Chow Tai Fook, the world's biggest listed jeweller. Tenants also include shops selling health supplements and baby milk formula — must-buy goods for mainland visitors to Hong Kong who are suspicious of the quality of products sold in China.

Chan Sai Cheong, an executi-



COURTESY CHINA DAILY

ve at Chow Tai Fook, says foot traffic has been "better than expected" since the mall opened at the end of last year, and that there was strong demand from Hong Kong retailers to rent space in a second phase scheduled to open by May.

Retailers in Hong Kong, one of the world's luxury goods hotspots, are facing tough times with December sales 8.5 percent lower than the same month last year as the number of

mainland tourists continued to shrink amid political tensions and the relative strength of the Hong Kong dollar.

During the important Chinese new year shopping period, sales at Chow Tai Fook in Hong Kong and Macau slumped 23 percent year-on-year, while those of Sasa, a leading Hong Kong cosmetics chain that has a branch in HOKO, fell 20 percent.

The new mall, located in the pilot "free-trade zone" in fas-

t-growing Shenzhen, is part of a Chinese government experiment to reduce the amount of money Chinese consumers spend overseas by offering tax reductions for companies using e-commerce to sell imported goods.

While some goods can be bought on the spot, to get tax discounts on foreign products, which can be as big as 17 percent for cosmetics, customers must buy goods using the

Mainlanders flock to Hong Kong's shops without crossing the border

mall's mobile app and wait for them to be delivered several days later.

But analysts warn that on its own, the mall will do little to alleviate currency outflows from China or the woes of Hong Kong retailers.

After a golden era for Hong Kong retailers fuelled by a surge in luxury goods purchases by China's emerging millionaires and billionaires, Jessie Guo, a consumer industries analyst at stockbroker Jefferies, believes there is "no reason to expect the magic to come back in the near term".

She says that the HOKO mall is an interesting experiment but that it is "small scale compared with the huge market in Hong Kong and the even bigger market in the mainland".

MDT/FT Exclusive

TAIWAN

Taipei launches database on areas vulnerable to quake damage



COURTESY CHINA DAILY

TAIWAN launched a database yesterday to inform residents about which areas might be susceptible to creating potentially catastrophic sinkholes in the event of one of the island's frequent earthquakes.

The Central Geological Survey's research tool shows the potential for soil liquefaction, in which the ground subsides, endangering buildings above. Color-coded maps

can be sent in the form of alerts to computers and smartphones when a quake strikes.

Liquefaction is believed to have caused a 17-story apartment building in the southern city of Tainan to topple after a magnitude-6.4 quake struck on Feb. 6, killing 115 people.

The phenomenon was also blamed for many of the building collapses in a 1999 magnitude-7.6 quake that killed 2,300

people and led to a thorough overhaul of building codes.

Most areas at risk are low-lying with sandy soil, or which have silted up over time or been filled in artificially. About three-quarters of Taiwan is covered by mountains ranging as high as almost 4,000 meters, limiting the potential subsidence danger.

Taiwan lies on an active fault line known as the Pacific Ring of Fire and is regularly struck by quakes, though most cause little damage.

Separately, the city government in Taipei, Taiwan's capital, has allocated USD85,000 for an even more detailed study, the official Central News Agency reported. The Central Geological Survey maps show substantial parts of the riverside city's downtown areas at high risk of liquefaction. AP

SOUTH CHINA SEA

Vietnamese honor soldiers killed by Chinese 28 years ago

ABOUT 200 Vietnamese gathered in central Hanoi yesterday to remember 64 Vietnamese soldiers who were killed by the Chinese navy in a clash 28 years ago in the disputed South China Sea.

They lit incense and laid flowers at the statue of King Ly Thai To, a Vietnamese hero, and then marched around the landmark Hoan Kiem Lake, chanting "down with Communist China's aggression" in the commemoration that lasted an hour.

There were no official commemorations by the government.

"I think the government should organize official ceremonies to remember those soldiers who were killed defending Truong Sa and Hoang Sa islands," said 84-year-old retired civil servant Le Mai Dau, one of the participants.

Truong Sa and Hoang Sa are Vietnamese terms for the Spratly and Pratacel islands.

Police watched the ceremony but did not intervene. Unauthorized gatherings are normally stopped by the authorities.

The 64 were killed in skirmishes with the Chinese at Johnson Sou-



AP PHOTO

200 Vietnamese gathered in central Hanoi yesterday to remember 64 Vietnamese soldiers who were killed by the Chinese navy in a clash 28 years ago in the disputed South China Sea

th Reef in the Spratly Islands and nine Vietnamese engineering soldiers were taken prisoner. In the last two years China has reclaimed land around the Johnson South Reef to form artificial islands.

China claims almost all of the Spratlys, which are rich in natural resources. Vietnam along with the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan also claim parts or all of the islands. AP

MYANMAR

Expected president is an unlikely leader

Esther Htusan, Naypitaw

FOR years he walked alongside Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, a quiet confidant as she campaigned for democracy in Myanmar. Today, with her blessing, Htin Kyaw will become the country's president.

A soft-spoken man with a penchant for literature and writing, Htin Kyaw gave up a career in the foreign ministry decades ago to help Suu Kyi, his childhood friend, with her political party. When Myanmar was under military rule, he ended up in the junta's prison along with other pro-democracy activists.

But until last week, Htin Kyaw was hardly a household name, and most people in Myanmar — or outside — could have never imagined that he would become the president of the country's first democratically elected government in more than a half-century.

Suu Kyi led her National League for Democracy party to a landslide victory in the Nov. 8 general elections, but is prevented from becoming president by a constitutional clause designed by the former military rulers who have been gradually letting go of power since 2011.

So she chose a trusted friend and adviser. She has repeatedly said she expects the president to be her proxy.

Htin Kyaw, 70, is the son of a national poet and the son-in-law of a founding member of the country's pro-democracy movement. He has known Suu Kyi, 71, since grade school. Their fathers were family friends, and Htin Kyaw has been at Suu Kyi's side almost constantly since 1992.

But he kept such a low pro-



Myanmar's pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi (center) speaks with aide Htin Kyaw (left) as she addresses her supporters from the front gates of her home after her release from house arrest in Yangon

file that journalists were left scrambling to find out anything about Htin Kyaw when his nomination was announced last week. After all, he was only the nameless face often appearing behind Suu Kyi in pictures taken during her infrequent public appearances before she was freed from long periods of house arrests.

"Htin Kyaw is a very quiet man who loves literature," said Zaw Min Kyaw, who has known Htin Kyaw for more than 20 years. Zaw Min published a book compiling a series of articles Htin Kyaw wrote about his father, titled "My Father's Life," in 2009.

"He talks steadily and softly. He is such a kind person; very honest, quiet, and passionate, and lives simply," he told The Associated Press.

Under Myanmar's complicated electoral system, the pre-

sident is elected by lawmakers of both houses of parliament. They chose from three candidates, one representing the lower house, one the upper house and one representing the military bloc, which has 25 percent of seats reserved for them. The candidate with the highest number of votes becomes president and the other two become vice presidents.

As the personal nominee of Suu Kyi, Htin Kyaw is expected to win the highest number of votes in elections set to take place today.

Suu Kyi nominated him "obviously to show that he is the most trusted person for her," said Zaw Min, 48, a former NLD member. "If this kind of person leads the country [...] it will also affect positively on the people of this country."

Htin Kyaw is one of the first generation of graduates from Ran-

■ Htin Kyaw, 70, is the son of a national poet and the son-in-law of a founding member of the country's pro-democracy movement

gon University, now the University of Yangon. He earned a bachelor's degree in economics in 1967 and a master's degree in economics in 1968, while also working as a lecturer there. He moved to the computer science department in 1970, and later studied computer science at the University of London for two years before returning home to work as a programmer and analyst until 1975.

Five years later, Zyaw Min said, Htin Kyaw then joined the government's foreign economic relations department, where he worked as deputy director. He resigned in 1992 — apparently because of his family connections to the opposition party — and took greater interest in the work of NLD, which was in the throes of a democracy campaign against a military junta.

At the time, his father-in-law, U Lwin, was sick and Htin Kyaw used to drive him to the party office. In the process he started helping Suu Kyi with issues relating to foreign policy, and became the key adviser on the party's outreach to foreign go-

vernments and embassies, even as the junta continued to throttle the democracy movement.

A watershed in his life came in 2000 when NLD workers, including Zaw Min, wanted to go to Mandalay on a campaign trip. They went to the Yangon train station to meet with Suu Kyi, who had been driven there by Htin Kyaw. But officials refused to sell them tickets, and the situation became tense.

Instead of leaving Suu Kyi at the station, Htin Kyaw "waited and waited because he knew the situation was not good," said Zaw Min.

In the end everyone was detained, including Htin Kyaw. Suu Kyi was returned to house arrest, and the other nine activists spent the next 4½ months in notorious In Sein prison.

Up to that point, and even after his release, Htin Kyaw "didn't really do much active politics as far as I know," said Zaw Min. "It's not like he was taking a big position in the political party, but over the years he ended up helping Suu Kyi a lot in party affairs."

Htin Kyaw is now a senior executive of the Daw Khin Kyi Foundation, a charity named for Suu Kyi's mother. He is also a trusted member of the party's inner circle.

"He is a very trusted friend of Daw Suu Kyi," said Zaw Min. They both went to the same elementary school in Yangon. Htin Kyaw is remembered by his acquaintances as a smart student who loved sports. At university, he played water polo.

"After he retired [from his government job], he became very quiet. He started spending a lot of time reading and writing articles," said Zaw Min. **AP**

THAILAND

Eight killed in chemical accident at Siam Commercial's headquarters

EIGHT people died at the headquarters of one of Thailand's largest banks when workers accidentally triggered the release of fire extinguishing chemicals during an upgrade of the building's safety system, officials said yesterday.

Seven other people were injured in the accident, which occurred Sunday night in the basement of the Siam Commercial Bank's head-

quarters in Bangkok.

The bank said in a statement that an initial investigation found that the accident was caused by "negligence on the part of our contractors hired to improve fire protection in the building."

Workers were upgrading a fire extinguishing system in a document archive room in the bank's basement when the accident occurred, causing the release of Pyrogen

aerosol, officials said. They did not elaborate.

Police were investigating the accident and the bank said it would release more information after a meeting of its board members yesterday.

Pyrogen is a chemical fire retardant normally intended to deprive fire of oxygen and is typically used in places where extinguishing a fire with water would damage documents or equipment.

Pyrogen's website says the dense aerosol is "most effective in unoccupied areas such as data rooms, machinery and engine spaces" and other storage areas. It says people should avoid exposure to Pyrogen and any "accidental exposure to the aerosol should be limited to five minutes."

The bank identified those who died as a security guard and seven contractors.



Security guards stand outside Siam Commercial Bank's headquarters following an accident in Bangkok

Bangkok's Erawan medical emergency center said five people died at the site of the accident and three died later at a hospital. It said the apparent cause of death was suffocation from insufficient oxygen, but

that the official cause would not be known until autopsies are performed.

Seven other people suffered suffocation-related injuries, including four who were in serious condition, Erawan said. **AP**

NEW ZEALAND

Iran's foreign minister defends ballistic missile test

IRAN'S foreign minister yesterday defended the nation's right to use ballistic missiles following a test last week, but offered no explanation for anti-Israeli messages reportedly written on them.

Speaking in Wellington, New Zealand, Mohammad Javad Zarif said Iran has always reserved the right to defend itself.

"Anybody who is crazy enough to attack us, we will attack back using conventional weapons," he said. "We hope that these conventional weapons will never be used because we do believe that in a war, everybody loses."

Zarif was responding to questions following an address to the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs. He'd earlier met with New Zealand Prime Minister John Key to talk about trade, and today will travel to Australia.

Last week's missile test was aimed at demonstrating that Iran will push ahead with its ballistic program after scaling back its nuclear program under the deal reached last year with the U.S. and other world powers.

Iran's Fars news agency reported that the missiles had the phrase "Israel must be wiped out" written on them.

Zarif said he hadn't yet returned to Iran to check out those reports. When pressed about the issue, he said it was Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. President Barack Obama who were acting aggressively.

"I ask you to go ask Netanyahu why is he threatening to use force against Iran every day. Go ask Obama why he is threatening to use force against Iran every day," Zarif said. "Why are they saying all options are on the table?"

In another development, Zarif ruled out his country accepting the involuntary return of deported Iranians from Australia, dashing Australian hopes of striking a bilateral deal that could send thousands of failed asylum seekers back to their homeland.

Zarif said his government was prepared to cooperate with Australia by encouraging would-be refugees to return home and by giving assurances that they would not be punished. But he drew the line at pressuring them.

"We will not take anybody back to Iran against their will unless they are a criminal and wanted by a court," he said. "They have not committed any crime by trying to go and seek a better life, so they can always come back, but we will not impose on them to come back."

Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop had earlier played down prospects of a repatriation deal being struck during Zarif's visit, telling reporters during a trip to Fiji that talks were in a "very early stage."

The asylum seekers have been left with uncertain futures, with Australia refusing to resettle them and Iran refusing to take them back. **AP**



Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif

AP PHOTO



Illegal fishing vessel Viking, which was seized by Indonesia's Navy is anchored next to Indonesian navy ship KRI Sutanto before its sinking on the waters off Pangandaran, West Java

INDONESIA

Authorities blow up illegal toothfish ship sought by Interpol

Andi Jatmiko, Pangandaran

INDONESIAN authorities yesterday bombed the last major ship internationally wanted for years of illegally taking toothfish from southern waters, reiterating a strong message to would-be poachers who enter the country's waters.

The navy seized the Nigeria-flagged Viking on Feb. 25 operating in waters off Tanjung Berakit in Riau Islands province south of Singapore. It was one of the half dozen ships dubbed the "Bandit 6" by the nonprofit Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, which hunted the boats and was among those who alerted Indonesian officials when the Viking entered the country's waters.

"This is to serve as a deterrent to others," Fisheries Minister Susi Pudjiastuti told reporters. She posed on the beach with a group of navy officials, their fists raised in the air with the smoking boat behind them. "You may go freely in the rest of the world, but once entering Indonesia, this is the consequence."

The Viking was operating as a so-called ghost ship, frequently changing its name and registry and not broadcasting any type of satellite signal so that its

whereabouts could be tracked, said Siddharth Chakravarty, Sea Shepherd's campaign leader, by satellite phone from a ship in the Indian Ocean.

"I wish there were more governments standing up for what they can do within their legal instruments and not worry about how international diplomacy is going to play out after that," he said, adding that the Viking had been fishing for 13 years in Antarctica and spotted 18 times, but it always escaped.

The Viking was the last in operation of the "Bandit 6" known to be illegally catching toothfish in the Southern Ocean. Patagonian toothfish, also known as Chilean sea bass, is popularly served in the United States, and fishing stocks are now better managed after years of plundering. However, U.S.-based Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch recommends avoiding eating the fish unless it comes from certain areas.

The Viking's Chilean captain and crew members have been detained in Indonesia. Interpol went after the ship in 2013 following a complaint from Norwegian authorities about illegal fishing in that country's waters.

"This is just a first step," said Stig Traavik, Norway ambassador to Indonesia who witnessed

the bombing. "In the future, it will be much more difficult to do illegal fishing, and the fish catch for local fishermen will go up."

Huge plumes of smoke and flames engulfed the Viking after the explosives were detonated. Part of the ship will be set up as a monument to mark the country's fight against illegal fishing.

"Thirteen countries had been hunting FV Viking, the cross-country illegal fishing boat. Indonesia managed to catch it," Indonesian President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo wrote on Twitter.

The country has taken a tough stance against illegal fishing since Widodo took office in 2014. Pudjiastuti has seized and blown up around 150 illegal fishing boats from a number of countries after declaring a fishing moratorium for foreign vessels.

Last year, The Associated Press exposed a slave island in a remote part of eastern Indonesia where fishermen from Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos and Thailand had been trafficked and forced to fish with little or no pay for years at a time. Pudjiastuti responded by ordering the men rescued from the island. Since then, more than 2,000 men have been freed and returned home. **AP**

PORTUGAL | BREXIT

For UK expats, it's a wonderful life in an EU that some hate

Barry Hatton, Vilamoura

BEHIND a tall hedgerow in this sleepy Portuguese town, soft applause is occasionally heard as a group of around 20 elderly British men and women, all dressed in white in late winter sunshine, engage in the genteel and quintessentially British pastime of lawn bowls.

The bowling green is a handsomely manicured lawn, around 30 meters square, nestled among palm trees and extensive condominiums whose apartments are commonly sold to expatriates from the United Kingdom. The Vilamoura Lawn Bowls Club has close to 40 members who play three-hour games, and there are enough Britons living along Portugal's southern Algarve coastline to sustain eight lawn bowls clubs that play in two leagues.

"Why live in a place in England when you can live here?" asks club member John Hewitson, 73, indicating the summery atmosphere in early March in a region that is one of Europe's most popular vacation destinations.

But for these British expats a dark cloud of uncertainty is taking shape in the Algarve's blue skies: they don't know what will happen if their country votes to leave the European Union in a June referendum. They fear that quitting the EU might snatch away their income, legal rights and health care benefits.

The U.K. and Portugal are among the bloc's 28 countries. EU laws stipulate that the bloc's citizens have the same rights as those nationals in any other member nation.

The impending ballot has brought pressing questions for these expats about what might happen if they no longer belong to the EU. Would a so-called Brexit bring different rules for them on property ownership and taxation, or inheritance rights? Would British expats still be entitled to local welfare benefits and free public health services? Would they still be able to get automatic residence and work permits?

For Hewitson, who retired out here with his wife 15 years ago and lives on his British pension, the immediate worry is the exchange rate. The British pound has weakened recently as financial markets fret over the referendum. If sterling drops to parity with the shared euro currency, which Portugal uses, it "would be a disaster for pensioners," he said.

Britain's House of Commons library estimates that roughly



John Hewitson updates the score board during a game of lawn bowls at the Vilamoura Lawn Bowls Club



Peter Booker walks along the seafront in Olhao



Sheila MacDonald, a retired Scottish woman, poses for a photo at the condominium where she lives in Tavira



Michael Wood poses for a photo behind the window of his bar in Albufeira

■ **For British expats a dark cloud of uncertainty is taking shape in the Algarve's blue skies: they don't know what will happen if their country votes to leave the EU**

1.2 million Britons live in other EU countries. France, Spain and Portugal are especially popular. Analysts, however, reckon the true number could be at least double that, and maybe a lot more, because many people don't bother registering with their embassies or local authorities.

Campaigners in the U.K. who detest the EU say they are fed up with, among other things, immigrants having access to often overstretched British public services and generous welfare benefits. The House of Commons library calculates there are around 3 million EU migrants living

in the U.K.

Peter Booker, who retired with his schoolteacher wife to Tavira in the eastern Algarve 17 years ago after a three-decade career in the British coal industry, says a possible U.K. exit from the EU is "extremely worrying." A Cambridge University history graduate who with his wife founded the Algarve History Association, which encourages expatriates to learn about Portugal, Booker rejects the anti-EU campaigners' benefits argument, saying reciprocity is fair.

"I benefit here in Portugal, and Portuguese benefit in Britain, and I think that is right and it should remain like that," he said.

Chris Wright, 70, couldn't agree more. Three years ago, his wife had a shoulder joint replaced at a local hospital — free of charge, because as a Briton she is an EU citizen — and the doctors did an "absolutely fantastic job."

Wright is behind another eccentric British sport taking root in the Algarve: walking football. It's an amateur soccer game with two essential rules: you have to be over 50 and you can't run, only walk. The club, one of four in the region, is based in the old fishing town of Olhao and has about 80 players on its books.

Wright's nightmare scenario is being left financially stranded by the referendum. "It would be very difficult for some of us to go back to the U.K. now, with prop-

erty prices having gone through the roof over there," he said after a training session next to the Olhao Stadium.

Though about half the Britons living in the Algarve are believed to be pensioners, for others their livelihoods are at stake.

In Albufeira, one of the Algarve's tourist hotspots, 60-year-old Michael Wood from Northampton, England, owns and runs the Tunes Bar. Albufeira's old town is a pretty jumble of low, whitewashed houses tumbling down to a golden beach. The importance of the British tourist trade is evident: there's a newsstand called Jimmy's and a bar called Sir Harry's, and billboards offer full English breakfasts and fish and chips.

Some of Wood's best business, he says, comes from Britons on what they call the "cigarette run": a quick trip to Portugal on a low-cost flight to buy dozens of cartons of cigarettes, which are about 70 percent cheaper than in the U.K. Because there is free movement of goods and people in the EU, there is no legal limit on how many can be taken. If the U.K. wasn't in the EU, the limit would be 200 cigarettes.

Standing behind his horseshoe bar, with British channels on two wall-mounted television sets and red-and-white England flags outside on the Portuguese street, Wood is full of praise for the Portuguese health service and

says prescriptions cost "next to nothing" compared with the U.K.

He reckons British officials could learn from the Portuguese by capping some benefits for everyone, locals or foreigners. Unemployment benefits, for example, last just 18 months in Portugal, while in the U.K. they are open-ended. "There's a limit to what people can have," Wood says.

Sheila MacDonald, a retired Scottish woman, lives in Tavira Garden, a condominium set around a large swimming pool that is home to dozens of expatriates, in the town of Tavira. She came here for the healthy climate and belongs to expat clubs that study books, music and archaeology. She also does fundraising for local charities to "put something back into the community."

She explains why she wants the U.K. to remain in the EU by recalling events of almost 80 years ago. As a small child in Edinburgh in the early years of World War II, she remembers sitting in air-raid shelters listening to the bark of anti-aircraft guns. After sleepless nights, in the morning she would pick up pieces of shrapnel in her family garden. The EU, she notes, has so far kept the peace on a continent that for centuries was wracked by wars.

"We've seen the benefits, we've lived the benefits of the EU," she said. **AP**



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what's ON



THE MASTERY OF SHIPBUILDING
– FISHING JUNK MODELS BY WAN CHUN
TIME: 10am-6pm

(Closed on Sundays and public holidays)

UNTIL: April 9, 2016

VENUE: Gallery of the Historical Archives of Macau,

Avenida do Conselheiro Ferreira de Almeida

Nº 91 - 93, Macau

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2859 2919

SOU PUI KUN'S WORK "MUSIC BOX"
IN EXHIBIT OF CONTEMPORARY SCULPTURE
TIME: 10am-7pm

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

UNTIL: June 19, 2016

VENUE: The Handover Gifts Museum of Macau,

Av. Xian Xing Hai, s/n, NAPE

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

MA-BOA / LIS-CAU, DRAWING AND
LITHOGRAPHY EXHIBITION

TIME: 2pm-7pm (Closed on Sundays)

UNTIL: March 19, 2016

VENUE: G/F Macau Cultural Centre Building,

Xian Xing Hai Avenue, Macau.

Free Admission

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2875 3282

BEYOND 9AM TO 6PM FERNANDO WONG
PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION

TIME: 12pm -8pm (closed on public holidays)

UNTIL: March 30, 2016

VENUE: Rua de Abreu Nunes 14B

Edf. San Pou R/C - A

ENQUIRIES: (853) 6307 3797

PAINTINGS AND CALLIGRAPHY DONATED
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

Offbeat

SYDNEY MOM DROPS BABY AND TODDLER FROM 2ND FLOOR WINDOW

A mother trapped by a fire in her Sydney apartment safely dropped her 2-day-old baby and 2-year-old toddler from a second-floor window to rescuers, officials said Friday.

The children were uninjured by the fire and their 6-meter fall last week in suburban Lakemba, Police Senior Constable Jamie Wallace said.

Their 27-year-old mother was rescued by firefighters using a ladder and was taken to hospital for treatment of smoke inhalation and cuts, Fire and Rescue Superintendent Adam Dewberry said.

The children were rescued before emergency services arrived and the details were sketchy.

Dewberry said the baby boy was caught by people holding a bed sheet over scattered mattresses. He was not sure how the toddler was caught.

A neighbor, who was not named, told Australian Broadcasting Corp. television that her father and a friend caught both children "in a piece of cloth" held over mattresses.

Dewberry said the mother was in the window with hot smoke billowing over her and was about to jump when the firefighters arrived.

The fire, which broke out in a kitchen, spread to other apartments and about 50 people were evacuated from the 12-apartment block, Dewberry said.

TV canal macau

13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:30	RTPi Live
17:45	Trail of Lies (Repeated)
18:35	TDM Sport (Repeated)
19:35	Soap Opera
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	Non-Daily Portuguese News
21:05	TDM Interview
21:45	Happy Endings S3
22:10	Trail of Lies
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Miscellaneous
00:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)

cinema

CINETEATRO

10 MAR - 16 MAR

GODS OF EGYPT_

ROOM 1

2.30, 4.45, 9.30 pm

Director: Alex Proyas

Starring: Brenton Thwaites, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau,

Gerard Butler

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 127min

MERMAID_

ROOM 1

7.30 pm

Director: Stephen Chau

Starring: Deng Chao, Show Lo, Zhang Yu Qi

Language: Cantonese (Cantonese/English)

Duration: 92min



THE DIVERGENT SERIES: ALLEGIANT_

ROOM 2

2.30, 4.45, 7.15, 9.30 pm

Director: Robert Schwentke

Starring: Shailene Woodley, Theo James, Jeff

Daniels, Naomi Watts

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 120min

LONDON HAS FALLING_

ROOM 3

(10-11, 13-16 Mar) 2.15, 4.00, 5.45, 9.45 pm

Director: Babak Najafi

Starring: Gerard Butler, Aaron Eckhart,

Morgan Freeman

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 99min

THE ROOM_

ROOM 3

7.30 pm

Director: Lenny Abrahamson

Starring: Brie Larson, Jacob Tremblay, Sean Bridgers

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 118min

MACAU TOWER

03 MAR - 23 MAR

GODS OF EGYPT_

2.30, 4.45, 7.15, 9.30 pm

Director: Alex Proyas

Starring: Brenton Thwaites, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau,

Gerard Butler

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 127min

this day in history



1974 ARCHITECT JAILED OVER CORRUPTION

Architect John Poulson has been jailed for five years for corruption after being found guilty of bribing public figures to win contracts.

Poulson, who was found guilty of conspiracy to make or receive corrupt gifts, admitted that cash or presents worth £30,000 had changed hands, but had denied corruption.

Leeds Crown Court was told that the 63-year-old gave away more than £500,000 in suits, holidays and flowers to win contracts.

After Poulson's business collapsed in 1972, an investigation revealed it had been making payments to several MPs, police officers, health authorities and civil servants.

The Yorkshire architect was found guilty by the jury of 10 men and two women after four hours of deliberations following the trial.

Mr Justice Waller told Leeds Crown Court there was a web of corruption that encompassed 23 local authorities and 300 individuals.

Poulson continued to protest his innocence and in a statement issued through his solicitor said: "I may have been a fool but I will always maintain that I was innocent of corruption. I have never tried to bribe anybody."

William George Pottinger, 57, a senior Scottish civil servant, was also jailed for five years for corruption.

It was revealed at Leeds Crown Court that Poulson admitted that some of his huge debt arose from income tax frauds and the Inland Revenue had a claim of £678,000 against him.

Passing sentence, Mr Justice Waller told Poulson and Pottinger that "the magnitude and evil nature" of what they had both done was such that he would not take into account their age or health.

Mr Justice Waller said: "To offer corrupt gifts strikes at the very foundation of our system. To accept them is a betrayal of trust."

Poulson, of Pontefract, broke down and wept when he heard his defence counsel speak of the courage of his wife and two daughters during the trial.

Donald Herrod, QC, had described his client as "hypocritical, self-righteous and perhaps something of a megalomaniac".

However, the defence team claimed that the prosecution had failed to prove corruption although it had proved greed.

During the trial, Poulson said: "I have squandered money on people I thought were my friends. They conned me. I did not realise what an old twit I had been until I heard some of the evidence here."

Poulson and Pottinger were taken to Armley Prison in Leeds to begin their sentences. They are both considering appeals.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The trial of John Poulson is estimated to have cost in the region of £1.25m.

It lasted 52 days and was one of the longest for corruption in legal history - with 100 witnesses and 500 documents produced as exhibits in court.

The nub of the case was whether gifts were made either for inducements or rewards, knowing it was wrong.

Poulson was sentenced to an extra two years, taking his total in jail to seven years, after making a confession in prison and pleading guilty to nine charges of corruption and conspiracy. Donald Herrod, QC, said: "He has nothing to live for and his abiding fear is that he will never complete this sentence because of his ill health."

Poulson died in 1993.

YOUR STARS

Aries
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
You need to stick it out today — otherwise, there's just no telling what might pop up tomorrow or the next day. Things are only going to work out for you if you believe in yourself.

Taurus
April 20-May 20
You need to indulge yourself today — even if you feel tapped out. In fact, a little decadence may go a long way toward recharging your batteries, so don't feel guilty about it!

Gemini
May 21-Jun. 21
It's time to take care of basic business — the kind you'd rather leave to others. There's some paperwork that only you can do, so make sure that you're on the ball. Things should perk up in a few days.

Cancer
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
This is not the time to edit yourself — in fact, you need to let your freakiest ideas out to play! Something really wild is sure to catch fire, so make sure that your people are playing with you.

Leo
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
You need to finish up with some old project that has lingered long beyond its welcome. It may be time to formally cancel it, or maybe you can actually push it past the finish line somehow.

Virgo
Aug. 23-Sept. 22
You're looking deep within yourself today — whether you mean to or not! Your amazing personal energy leads to a spiritual discovery, and you should end the day wiser than you started it.

Libra
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
You may find it harder than usual to deal with your people, thanks to some little problems that haven't quite made it to the surface yet. It's not as serious as it may seem, so try to relax.

Scorpio
Oct. 23 - Nov. 21
This is a great day to practice detachment. You may not know which of your entanglements are actually holding you back, but if you focus on one and pull away, things should get simpler.

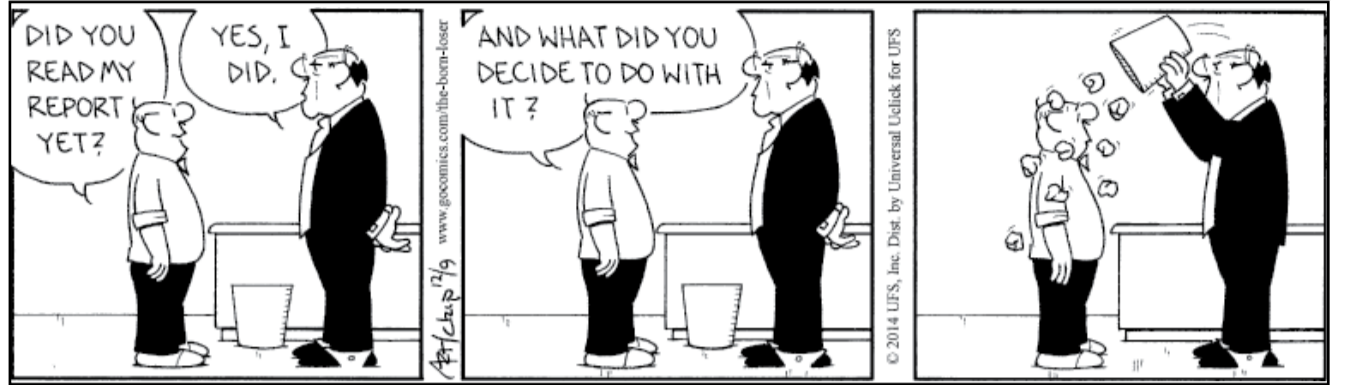
Sagittarius
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Today is all about the small stuff — which, you may remember, you shouldn't sweat. Still, you do have to address all the details of today's plan or project, so get a handle on them and then get to work!

Capricorn
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Your conscientious demeanor actually pays off for you today, as you find that you've earned the trust of someone who is naturally quite skeptical. Don't push it, but you should find things going your way.

Aquarius
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Your elders are more important than ever today — so try to reach out to them (or reach within yourself, if they're no longer with you). That kind of wisdom is impossible to achieve by other means.

Pisces
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Enjoy the finer things in life — and make them yourself, if possible! Cooking is perfect, but you could also be crafting or doing almost anything that leads to a sweeter experience.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy

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

Easy+

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

Medium

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

Hard

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-2	17	clear
Harbin	-9	1	clear
Tianjin	2	15	clear
Urumqi	-4	3	cloudy/clear
Xi'an	2	20	clear/cloudy
Lhasa	3	12	cloudy/overcast
Chengdu	8	23	overcast/drizzle
Chongqing	10	22	overcast
Kunming	11	19	clear
Nanjing	3	22	cloudy/clear
Shanghai	5	21	cloudy/clear
Wuhan	3	21	cloudy/clear
Hangzhou	6	24	overcast/cloudy
Taipei	14	22	moderate rain
Guangzhou	11	24	drizzle/overcast
Hong Kong	13	20	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	-2	0	flurry/sleet
Frankfurt	0	5	sleet/drizzle
Paris	3	12	drizzle
London	4	10	drizzle
New York	-4	16	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Win by ___; 6- Country bordered by Canada and Mexico; 9- Alternate; 14- Strong blue cotton fabric; 15- Round Table title; 16- Swell; 17- Excepting; 19- Gives off; 20- Hot time in Paris; 21- ___ uncertain terms; 22- Spread apart; 23- Like some juries; 25- Siouan speakers; 26- Powerful; 29- Topnotch; 31- "Am not!" rejoinder; 32- Breathless; 36- ___ Like It Hot; 37- Suffix with cloth; 38- Cut calories; 40- Porpoise; 43- Views; 45- Leave out; 46- Ask; 47- Ezio Pinza, for one; 50- Humble homes; 51- Nostrils; 52- Ornamental case; 54- ___ tai; 57- Stan's pal; 58- Pasteboard; 61- Ages between 13 and 19; 62- Animation unit; 63- Bony prefix; 64- Donkeys; 65- English cathedral city; 66- Flower segment;

DOWN: 1- Zip-___-Doo-Dah; 2- Immediately following; 3- A single time; 4- Part of RSVP; 5- Australian bird; 6- Putting to work; 7- ___ Fein; 8- Jason's craft; 9- Ragtime dance; 10- Rhythm; 11- ___ Selassie; 12- Kett and James; 13- Optimistic; 18- Wild dog of Australia; 23- The Hilton, e.g.; 24- Numero ___; 25- Switch positions; 26- Airline to Oslo; 27- Stepped; 28- San ___, Italy; 29- Representative; 30- Dinghy thingy; 33- Concepts; 34- Baseball team; 35- Grandpa Walton portrayer; 37- "Rocky ___" (1982); 39- Half a fly; 41- Own; 42- Med. care option; 43- Cephalopod; 44- Director's cry; 47- Bundles; 48- City on the Rhone; 49- Paris divider; 50- ___-burly; 51- ___ chance; 52- ___ homo; 53- Chinese weight; 54- Damon of "Good Will Hunting"; 55- Neighborhood; 56- Object of worship; 59- Hit on the head; 60- Sugar suffix;



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PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944	
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Luke Meredith, Los Angeles

FENCING

Ibtihaj Muhammad to make history for Muslim-Americans

IBTIHAJ Muhammad stood beaming on the podium in Budapest in 2013, flashing a bright smile, a world championship bronze medal and the red, white and blue hijab that perfectly encapsulated who she is as an athlete and a person.

Muhammad, a New Jersey-born fencer, is a proud Muslim and an equally proud American. And this summer at the Rio Olympics, Muhammad will seek to stand up for her community by fighting for a country that hasn't always fought for those who share her faith.

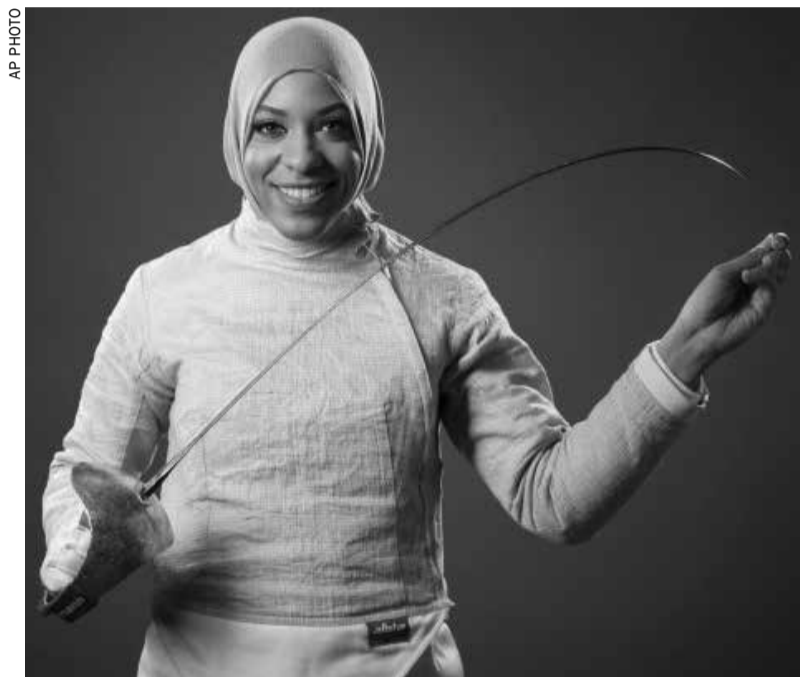
Muhammad, the middle daughter of a retired detective and special education teacher, will become the first U.S. athlete to compete in the Olympics while wearing a hijab, the head scarf required of Muslim women.

Those circumstances have put Muhammad, 30, on a platform well beyond sports.

She's hoping her presence as an Olympian can help counter the recent wave of anti-Islamic sentiment in the U.S., triggered in part by Donald Trump's comments about banning Muslims from the U.S.

"I feel like I've been blessed to be in this position, to be given this platform. When I think of my predecessors, and people who've spoken out against bigotry and hate, I feel like I owe it not just to myself but to my community to try to fight it," said Muhammad, who is ranked seventh in the world in the women's saber. "There are people who don't feel safe going to work every day, that don't feel safe being themselves. I think that's a problem."

The irony of Muhammad's rise

AP PHOTO
Ibtihaj Muhammad

to international fencing success is that it was about as American as one might imagine.

Well, almost.

Muhammad tried nearly every sport as a kid, from softball and track to tennis. But the constant modifications Muhammad would have to make to her uniform — like adding sleeves or wearing pants when her teammates had on shorts — were growing tiresome.

Then one day while in the car

with her mother, a 12-year-old Muhammad noticed a fencing practice through the windows of a local high school. Since fencers are covered from head to toe for protection, Muhammad knew right away she had found her calling — and perhaps even a way to help pay for college.

Muhammad soon hooked up with the Westbrook Foundation, an organization run by former Olympian Peter Westbrook to teach fencing to underserved

communities in metro New York. She later earned a scholarship from Duke, where she was a three-time All-American.

"Don't be fooled by that pretty face. She has something in her that it takes in real champions, that unbelievable will to win," said Westbrook, who in 1984 became the first African-American to win an Olympic medal. "She is able to dig five stories deep to pull something out. And when she loses? Oh my God."

Still, Muhammad put fencing largely aside after college, turning to teaching while she considered applying to law school. But she was still curious enough about her fencing to turn to a new coach, Akhi Spencer-El, who is also connected with the Westbrook Foundation.

Muhammad was Spencer-El's first protégé. Muhammad said she found in him someone who believed in her abilities as much as she did. That was enough to give Muhammad the push she needed to rededicate herself to the sport.

"I noticed she was something different. There was so much competitiveness," Spencer-El said. "I knew I could get her to be on a level with the best in the world."

It took a while, but Muhammad

got there.

Muhammad made her first world championship in 2010, and she helped the Americans win a team bronze a year later. Two years ago, Muhammad was part of her first gold medal-winning senior world team.

Athletes have had to fight for the right to wear religious head coverings in sports like basketball and soccer, where FIFA changed its rules to allow hijabs in 2012.

But Muhammad has never had to downplay her faith in competition or in life. She often sports multicolored hijabs on and off the strip and has even started a clothing website with her siblings, Louella.com, for Muslim women seeking more colorful options while still adhering to their religion.

Muhammad has suffered her share of backlash, though. On Saturday at the South by Southwest festival in Austin, Texas, Muhammad was asked by a volunteer to remove her hijab for a security photo and later tweeted that she couldn't "make this stuff up."

But Muhammad is intent on using her time in the spotlight to show the U.S. and the rest of the world that Muslim-Americans should be embraced, not shunned.

"I've never questioned myself as an American and my position here," Muhammad said. "This is my home. This is who I am. My family has always been here. We're American by birth, and it's a part of who I am and this is all that I know."

"So when I hear someone say something like, 'We're going to send Muslims back to their country,' it's like, 'Well, where am I going to go? I'm an American.'" **AP**

FOOTBALL

FIFA bans three South Africans over pre-World Cup match-fixing

FIFA banned three more former South African Football Association officials yesterday over match-fixing in friendly games ahead of the country's hosting of the 2010 World Cup.

Former SAFA chief executive Leslie Sedibe was banned for five years and fined 20,000 Swiss francs (USD20,200). The governing body also banned Steve Goddard and Adeel Carelse, both former officials at SAFA's referees department, for two years each.

Last year, Lindile Kika, SAFA's head of national teams in 2010, was banned from all soccer activi-

ties for six years.

FIFA believes that at least one of the South African national team's friendly games in the weeks ahead of the continent's first World Cup was fixed by the referee. SAFA officials were under investigation for allowing a company controlled by Singaporean match-fixer Wilson Raj Perumal to appoint the referees for the games.

FIFA hasn't identified the game or games in question, but South Africa's 2-1 win over Colombia and 5-0 win over Guatemala a couple of weeks before the opening of the World Cup are under sus-

picion. All three goals in the South Africa-Colombia game came through penalty kicks. There was a collection of bizarre refereeing decisions in the South Africa-Guatemala game.

South Africa-Guatemala was refereed by Niger official Ibrahim Chaibou, who is being sought for involvement in other allegedly fixed games. South Africa's game with Colombia, and an earlier 4-0 win over Thailand in another pre-World Cup friendly, were both refereed by Langat Kipnetich of Kenya.

It is believed that some SAFA officials eventually

suspected what was happening and prevented Perumal's referees from taking control of later World Cup warm-up games.

The South African officials banned yesterday by FIFA were all found guilty of misconduct and breaching rules relating to reporting wrongdoing and cooperating with investigations. Sedibe, a high-profile figure in South Africa, is now the chief executive of Proudly South African, a company which promotes South African goods and services.

SAFA said it "welcomes" the latest sanctions.

The fixing in the pre-World Cup friendlies



has long been ignored by South African authorities, with no meaningful investigation into the allegations despite promises made four years ago. Then, a series of SAFA officials, including the president at the time, were suspended pending a probe but no results have been announced. Match-fixing is a criminal offense in South Africa.

The fixing bans further overshadow Africa's first World Cup, which was undermined more recently by allegations of bribery in

the bidding process that won the tournament for South Africa. U.S. investigators looking at widespread corruption at FIFA believe that South Africa used \$10 million of its World Cup preparations budget to pay off now-disgraced former FIFA executives for voting for it to be the host.

Two unnamed but "senior" South African soccer officials have been implicated in the U.S. Department of Justice's indictment for allegedly organizing the bribes. **AP**

opinion

Our Desk

Daniel Beitler



ON THE TENACITY OF PROTESTERS

One has to admire the persistence of the Pearl Horizon unit buyers in the face of ever decreasing signs of settlement. A total of 250 residents took to the streets on Sunday in just the latest demonstration from the group that, much to Polytec's (and probably the government's) displeasure, just won't go away.

Of course, that number is far fewer than the reported 1,400 that protested in December, which probably included family and friends of the buyers – but it is nevertheless admirable given the tendency of issues in Macau to be swept under the rug or quickly forgotten.

The tenacity of these protestors is perhaps unsurprising. As the Times reported, many of the buyers have remortgaged their properties or taken loans to be able to finance the down payments on the apartments yet to be built or completed.

For some, these loans have produced an unsustainable financial situation, so protestors are justifiably angry.

To add to this, Polytec really have no reason to settle the dispute quickly. A cynic might note that the longer Polytec and the courts battle it out, the worse the financial situation will become for small unit investors. As time passes investors will become more desperate and more willing to settle unfavorably.

But while protestors are angry and have kept up the pressure on the developer for years, it is not as if the demonstrators have nothing to lose.

As they have become increasingly infuriated with the slow pace of decision-making in Macau, they have begun to turn to more physical forms of protest. On at least two occasions a police presence has been required, whether to meet small unit investors occupying the outside of the developer's headquarters in Macau, or to forcibly remove those who were planning to disrupt a company meeting for executives.

Protestors have "scuffled" with the police, and at least two people have been arrested, although they were discharged on the same day.

Meanwhile the government's response has been typical; they confiscated the land plot, issued strong words of condemnation, and then... put the issue on the backburner. They now say that the issue of the land confiscation is "in the hands of the courts."

According to the Commission Against Corruption, the decision to confiscate a developer's plot is "entirely at the discretion of the Public Administration," and not mandated by the often-cited Land Law.

Far from solving the problem, the government's decision to confiscate the land, which came as a surprise to nobody (except apparently Polytec), may have made the situation worse.

For whatever reason Polytec was unable to complete the development of the Pearl Horizon site, if they had retained the land, a settlement might have been possible. The value of that sort of asset – especially in Macau – could be offset against the compensation due to small unit buyers, and the company ought to have complied if the courts mandated it.

This is especially true given that the developer is based in Hong Kong, where the in-the-works extradition treaty is being ironed out and could, according to some reports, be applied retroactively on the basis of dual-legality.

But without the land, Polytec is in the red too. And they might fight twice as hard to salvage every pataca they can from the investment. Under the current circumstances, nobody is a winner and nobody is prepared to concede, so the demonstrations are likely to persist.

We can at least admire the persistence of protestors. Unlike many things in Macau that are swept under the rug, Pearl Horizon buyers look set to stay. They can't afford not to.

THE WRONG CHARACTER: OFFICIAL MEDIA TYPO BUZZ CALLS PRESIDENT XI JINPING THE 'LAST LEADER'

China's state news agency has had to issue a correction after it referred to President Xi Jinping as "China's last leader", an apparent copyediting error, BBC reported yesterday.

Xinhua later amended the copy, which had by then been widely reused, and asked outlets to change the reference to "China's top leader".

In the end many outlets simply removed Sunday's article in its entirety.

Such a mishap is extremely rare as references to China's president are believed to be closely scrutinized, BBC's correspondent in Beijing argues.

Chinese media is heavily regulated, with government censors often removing content on websites and social media. The two phrases are just one character different, but are pronounced very differently.

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

SOURCE: DSMG

TURKEY

Military carries out airstrikes after deadly bombing in Ankara



Family members stand by the Turkish flag-draped coffin of Murat Gul, 20, a security agent killed in Sunday's explosion, during his funeral procession in Ankara

TURKEY'S air force hit Kurdish rebel targets in northern Iraq yesterday, hours after a suicide car bombing in the capital killed 37 people and heightened tensions with the militants.

Nine F-16s and two F-4 jets raided 18 positions of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, in northern Iraq, including the Qandil mountains where the group's leadership is based, the state-run Anadolu Agency reported. Ammunition depots, bunkers and shelters were among the targets hit.

Anadolu, citing unnamed security sources, said four people suspected of direct links to the bombing were detained in the southeastern city of Sanliurfa yesterday. The report did not say in what way they were suspected of involvement. Police, meanwhile, carried out

raids in the southern city of Adana, detaining 38 suspected PKK rebels, the agency reported. Fifteen suspected Kurdish militants were also detained in Istanbul, Anadolu said.

Health Minister Mehmet Muezzinoglu said three more people died overnight from wounds suffered in Sunday night's suicide attack that targeted buses and people waiting at bus stops in the heart of Ankara. Around 125 people were wounded in the blast, with 71 people still hospitalized. Of those, 15 were in serious condition.

A senior government official told The Associated Press that authorities believe the attack was carried out by two bombers – one of them a woman – and was the work of Kurdish militants. He spoke on condition of

anonymity because the investigation was continuing.

It was the second deadly attack blamed on Kurdish militants in the capital in the past month and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan vowed to bring "terrorism to its knees."

On Feb. 17, a suicide car-bombing in the capital targeted buses carrying military personnel, killing 29 people. A Kurdish militant group, which is an offshoot of the PKK, claimed responsibility.

Turkey is grappling with a host of issues, including renewed fighting with Kurdish rebels, tensions with a Syrian Kurdish militia group which is affiliated with the PKK, threats from the Islamic State group and a Syrian refugee crisis.

About 210 people have died in five suicide bombings in Turkey since July that were blamed either on the Kurdish rebels or the Islamic State group.

"All five attacks are linked to the fallout of the Syrian civil war," said Soner Cagaptay, a Turkey expert at the Washington Institute in emailed comments. "Ankara's ill-executed Syria policy [...] has exposed Turkey to great risks." AP

WORLD BRIEFS



SYRIA The U.N. special envoy for Syria restarted peace talks between the government and the opposition, warning that the only alternative is a return to war and describing the political transition in the country now led by President Bashar Assad as "the mother of all issues." Staffan de Mistura (pictured) laid out both high stakes and low expectations for what may be the most promising initiative in years to end the conflict that moves into its sixth year today. At least a quarter of a million people have died.

VATICAN Sparks may fly this week with the first testimony in the Vatican's controversial trial over leaks of confidential documents that revealed waste, mismanagement and greed in the Catholic Church's hierarchy. Two journalists face up to eight years in prison if convicted of putting pressure on a Vatican monsignor to obtain the documents and publish them.

NIGERIAN drug agents say they have arrested four Mexicans helping Nigerian criminals build a "super-lab" capable of producing billions of dollars' worth of methamphetamine.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT



Open-air opera. Italian tenor Riccardo Massi performs next to a giant dragon during a preview of the opera "Turandot", with the Sydney Opera House and Harbour Bridge as a backdrop in Sydney, yesterday. The open-air opera's month-long production begins March 24.



USA Rihanna will be honored at BET's "Black Girls Rock!" awards. The singer will receive the Rock Star Award at the annual event honoring black women, BET announced. "Black Girls Rock!" will tape April 1 at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark. The show will air April 5 on BET. Other honorees include writer-producer Shonda Rhimes, R&B icon Gladys Knight, "Walking Dead" star and playwright Danai Gurira and actress Amandla Stenberg.