

MACAU, HK RECORD 'SEVERE DECLINES' IN TOURISM REVENUES
Despite increased Chinese spending abroad, Macau and Hong Kong recorded "severe declines" in tourism revenues last year

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KNOW YOUR BASIC LAW
The promotion of the Basic Law among youngsters is a compelling purpose behind the activities slated for the year it turns 23

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DOLLAR RISES FROM NINE MONTH LOW ON POSSIBLE RATE INCREASE

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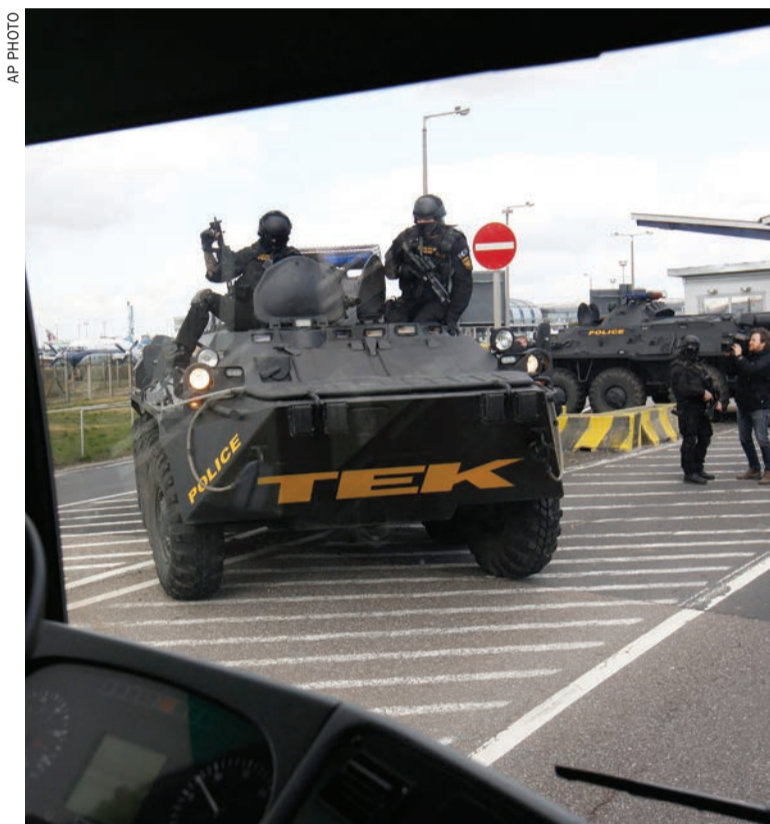
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Terror in Brussels, Europe on maximum alert

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WORLD BRIEFS

TAIWAN's government will take international media on a tour of its largest island holding in the South China Sea in a bid to reinforce its territorial claims. A government official says that the visit aims to counter the Philippine's claims that the island is merely a rock and is not entitled to territorial waters.



INDONESIA Thousands of taxi drivers caused traffic chaos in the Indonesian capital yesterday in a violent protest against what they consider to be unfair competition from ride-hailing apps such as Uber.

SINGAPORE Two maintenance staff working on elevated tracks in Singapore's mass transit system were hit and killed by a train yesterday, an official said, marking another incident in a string of disruptions in recent years.



Tax relief measures exclude most expats

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Macau, HK record 'severe declines' in tourism revenues despite increased Chinese spending abroad

Daniel Beitler

FIGURES released this week by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) revealed "severe declines" in tourism revenues last year in both Macau and Hong Kong. The declines were of 32 percent and 8.4 percent respectively.

Analysts believe that the slump in tourism revenues in the two SARs has been primarily seen in visitors from the mainland, a demographic which makes up a significant portion of external visitors to Macau and Hong Kong.

While Hong Kong recently reported a fall in visitors that is being widely accredited to the recent Mong Kok riot, the beating of a mainland Chinese tourist last year and growing anti-mainland rhetoric, Macau's Chinese New Year visitor volume recorded a growth of 5.2 percent in comparison to 2015.

However, the notable growth in visitors was not paralleled in visitor spending. Casino operators and Macau-based businesses registered drastic drops in commerce, as reported by the Times.

A growth in the number of visitors, but a decline in



A woman carrying a Forever 21 branded shopping bag walks along a street in front of the Ruins of St Paul's Cathedral

visitor spending suggests either that Chinese tourists who have a historic tendency to engage in significant shopping sprees, are on average spending less in the MSAR, or that the growth in numbers is due to less affluent visitors.

According to gaming analyst Richard Huang of Nomura Holdings, the latter holds true for the gaming sector where the average daily revenue in

February was 20 percent lower than it was in 2015. As the Times reported last month, Huang said that the number of tourists and high hotel occupancy rate do not necessarily translate into increased spending, if "the visitation growth is mainly driven by tourists with weaker spending power."

In addition to the enduring effect of Xi Jinping's anti-corruption campaign on visitor spending in Macau, David Scowsill, the president and CEO of the WTTC, told The Financial Times that the slowdown has been exacerbated by Beijing's move to stem capital outflows from the Mainland.

Scowsill added that holders of the popular Unionpay bank card in China are now restricted to withdrawing a maximum of RMB100,000 per year and RMB10,000 per day at overseas ATMs, which may have further restricted visitor spending.

However external Chinese tourism is not slowing down, as the WTTC figures make clear. The organization claims that Chinese consumers fuelled a travel and tourism boom last year despite the economic difficulties of the country in the second half of 2015.

Chinese tourists spent USD215 billion outside of mainland China in 2015, an increase of 53 percent

According to the figures released this week, Chinese tourists spent USD215 billion outside of mainland China in 2015, representing a 53 percent rise from the USD140 billion spent in the previous year.

"[Chinese] outbound tourism is growing like crazy," Scowsill told The Financial Times. "There were some significant shocks last year, in the stock market and the currency, but it didn't slow the growth of travel and tourism. Once people have started

to travel, they are reluctant to give that up."

Taiwan and South Korea fared similarly to the two SARs last year, reporting declines in tourist spending of 1.5 percent and 10.2 percent respectively. Japan despite expectations to the contrary, appeared to benefit from Chinese tourism – recording a 47 percent surge in arrivals and a 37 percent growth in visitor spending.

Europe has also performed well in attracting Chinese visitors, who are increasingly looking at travel destinations further abroad than East Asia. Popular destinations, according to WTTC, include the UK, Germany and Iceland.

Meanwhile the number of external tourists visiting China last year edged up to 56.9 million, a rise of just 2.2 percent over the last two years, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization. Provisional figures from the UN body, as cited by the Financial Times, registered a rise of just 1.1 percent over that recorded in 2014.

Tourism revenues received from foreign visitors also saw marginal growth, reaching USD61 billion last year, according to calculations made by the WTTC.

However the figure accounts for just 2.6 percent of China's total export revenue, far below the global average of 6.1 percent for economic contributions of external tourism.

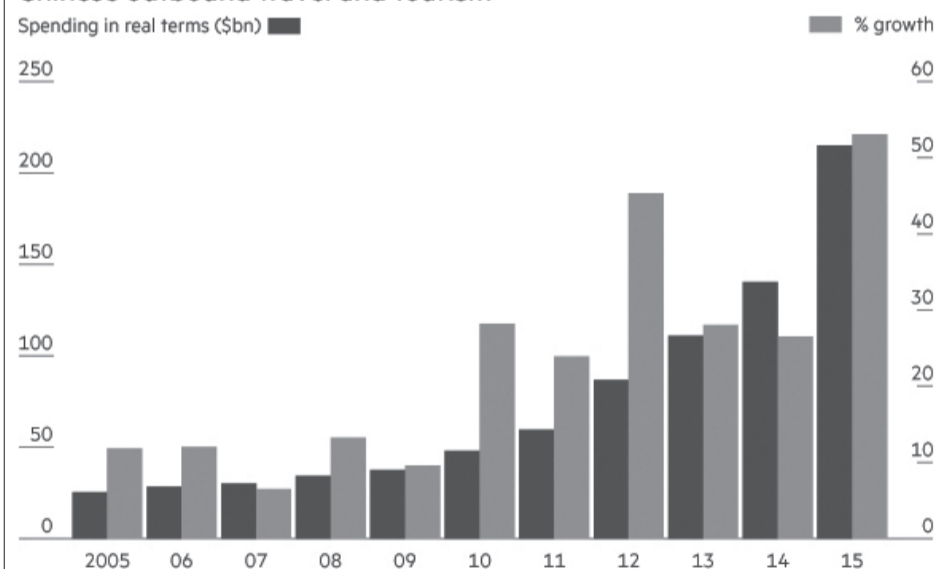
TOURISM CRISIS MANAGEMENT OFFICE ON ALERT AFTER EXPLOSION IN BRUSSELS

THE MACAU Tourism Crisis Management Office (GGCT) is closely monitoring the situation caused by several explosions happened yesterday at the airport and subway in Brussels, Belgium, the office informed in a statement yesterday (see p8,15,19).

The GGCT also informs that is keeping in close contact with the Macau tourism industry, remaining alert to any development related with the case.

According to the same source, the information gathered until the moment by GGCT reveals that there aren't any tourism organized groups from the territory touring the Belgian capital city and that, so far, the GGCT has not received any information or assistance requests regarding the referred incident.

Chinese outbound travel and tourism



Source: World Travel & Tourism Council

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Tax relief measures, for some



Renato Marques

WITH the implementation of the Law no. 15/2015 – the Government Budget of Financial Year 2016, issued by the Chief Executive of MSAR in December 17, 2015, a series of “tax relief measures” have been introduced in order to relieve the financial pressure on Macau residents. But many have been excluded from the benefits namely, the blue card holders.

One of the most popularly addressed measures was the refund of 60 percent of the so-called “Professional tax,” that is, the salary tax paid on income derived in the year of 2014.

At the time, it was explained that this tax refund would have a ceiling of MOP12,000 and would be refunded to taxpayers who held a Macau Resident Identity Card on December 31, 2014.

Not included in these measures were all the non-resident workers that live and work in the territory. This has led to suggestions that this measure discriminates against such individuals.

The Times questioned the Financial Services Bureau (DSF) in order to verify the information. A spokesperson at the Bureau stated that the refund is

“The measure is] purely political and deliberately discriminatory, aiming to favor one section of society.”

JOSÉ I. DUARTE
ECONOMIST

“part of a government package of tax relief measures and that, in this particular case, only Macau residents are entitled to the Professional Tax Refund (60% of tax paid, capped at MOP 12,000).”

The Times asked economist José I. Duarte for his opinion on these measures.

Duarte said that “this is definitely not an economy-based decision, although to some extent, to include all of the population on the measure [tax refund] would have some economic result but I don’t think it would be of any relevance and for sure not a concern for the

Macau government,” adding that the decision is “purely political and deliberately discriminatory, aiming to favor one section of society.”

Duarte concluded, “people are free to judge this [measure] as fair or unfair, but either way it can only be judged at an ethical and political level.”

In terms of the possible repercussions of the discontent in part of society, caused by this decision, Duarte remarked, “people cannot do much more than complain about it. The non-residents have a very reduced political voice or no voice at all.”

Also contacted by the Times on this topic, Dr Leanda Lee who stated: “Firstly, the differing application in refund to tax payers who happen to sit in different categories - blue card holders, temporary residents and permanent residents - creates confusion, questions, uncertainty and debate in society, particularly among the expatriate community who contribute so much.” She added that “the uncertainty creates an additional time and emotional burden on the tax office personnel who repeatedly have to explain the criteria for the 60 percent refund.”

Dr Lee recalled that “for tho-

Non-resident workers don’t have an organized body to voice their grievances [but continued discriminatory decisions] might be enough to change that.

DR LEANDA LEE
SCHOLAR, HR EXPERT

se who are not entitled to a refund, there remains the feeling of being disenfranchised, left out, and utterly undervalued by such decisions,” also adding that since the “only differentiating factor is the ability to vote, it’s certainly not an economic decision and it sends a clear message to permanent residents and those on the other side of the divide who is welcome and who isn’t, and whose contributions are more valued.”

In terms of an organizational behavioral perspective, she stated, “if a particular organization had made a similar discriminatory decision, management should anticipate a great number of dissatisfied employees, perhaps even an industrial dispute, and a drop in job performance.” Lee’s comments agree in part with those of Duarte on the fact that the “non-resident workers don’t have an organized body to voice their grievances,” however a continuous series of similar decisions perceived to be against this work force “might be enough to change that.”

E Jiao from five companies recalled by the Health Bureau



The Health Bureau instructed Chinese medicine pharmacies to recall a product named E Jiao, which is produced

by five different companies. All five companies were recently inspected during a routine operation for trace elements of Cow gelatin. E Jiao is made in Shandong province under five brands: “Jin Zhong Ji pin Dong E Jiao”, “Fu Lu Shou Shan Dong A Fu E Jiao” (TA 1422000), “Zhan Qiao Pai Shan Dong E Jiao”, “Xiang Long Pai Shan Dong Zi E Jiao”, and “Yong Zheng Tang Zhan Qiao E Jiao”. E Jiao is used as an ingredient in traditional Chinese medicine.

Macau, Guangdong promote multi-destination travel in Thailand



Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO), Tourism Administration of Guangdong Province, Tourism Administration of Guangzhou

Municipality, and Qingyuan Municipal Tourism Bureau held a “Joint Sales Mission of Guangdong and Macao – Bangkok, Thailand” in Bangkok this week to increase connections with the tourism sector in Thailand to promote multi-destination travel to Guangdong and Macau. The authorities jointly rolled out the mission to expand their international visitor markets and foster regional tourism development. The joint sales mission includes destination product presentations by Guangdong and Macau representatives to introduce their tourism resources and products to the Thai travel trade. The program will also comprise a networking luncheon and media interviews.

Victor Chan says spokesperson’s office ‘effective’ with media



The Government spokesperson and Director of the Government Information Bureau (GCS), Victor Chan, said yesterday that the

press spokesperson system “has become one of the important channels for the SAR government to effectively communicate with the media and the public. It depends on the media’s support and participation, to ensure news on the administration is successfully conveyed to the public.” The Office of the Government Spokesperson and the GCS jointly organized a gathering yesterday which was attended by some 80 participants, including heads and representatives of local media organizations and associations, overseas correspondents, and press coordinators of government secretariat offices. During the event, Chan outlined the government’s efforts to provide news releases and the outlook concerning new challenges in addition to listening to opinions and suggestions from the industry.

Social security subsidies to increase in July

THE Social Security Committee of the Social Security Fund (FSS) announced an increase in all social security pensions and subsidy payments, during a meeting held by the Committee for the Co-ordination of Social Affairs (CPCS). Pensions for the disabled and for the elderly will increase by MOP100 to MOP3,450 per month, Macao Daily News reported.

Relief payments will be set to MOP2,266 per month, while one-time payments will see an average growth of 3 percent, a smaller increase to the previous adjustment. In case of

unemployment or sickness, eligible residents will receive a daily subsidy of MOP138 and MOP104 respectively, values slightly above the preceding MOP134 and MOP101. Birth, marriage and funeral subsidies will increase, in the same order, from MOP1,900, MOP1,900, and MOP2,460 to MOP1,957, MOP1,957, and MOP2,534 respectively. The FSS estimates that an extra MOP55 million will be allocated after the adjustments take effect between July and December of this year.

Regarding the payment ratio of the

welfare contributions between the employer and employee, Iong Kong Io, president of the FSS, said that “a comprehensive analytical report on the economy and employment relationships will be delivered in the second half of this year.”

These measures come after legislator Leong Weng Chai filed an inquiry to the AL last year questioning “if the new regulation will also be applied to all workers that are included in the law No. 15/2009, and if the government will treat all pensioners the same under the Article 25 of the Basic Law.” **Staff reporter**

Environmental fair themed 'Opportunities for Waste Management'

THE ninth annual Macao International Environmental Co-operation Forum and Exhibition (MIECF) is set to be hosted at The Venetian, from March 31 to April 2. "Waste Management" will be the focus of this year's MIECF activities.

Themed "Green Economy – Opportunities for Waste Management," the fair aims to serve as a multilateral platform to enhance cooperation on eco-friendly commerce and technology in the Pearl River Delta, as well as in international markets. It will feature various activities such as an industry networking session, seminars and presentations, and technical visits to promote the growth of the green industry.

Raymond Tam, director of the Environmental Protection Bureau said yesterday at MIECF's press conference that the city will continually organize 'green events' to "put forward a green economy."



The three-day fair, hosted by the local government, and coordinated by the Environmental Protection Bureau and the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM), has attracted over 450 exhibitors from around 20 countries and regions to participate and showcase their products and services, with 92 exhibitors coming

from the Pearl River Delta and 21 prime exhibitors from leading environmental protection enterprises.

Over 50 environmental experts, mostly from Portuguese-speaking countries, will hold talks in a series of sessions; namely, "Zero Waste and High Efficiency", "Turning Green into Gold", "From Waste to Resources

and Rewards", "Building with Less", "Green Chemical Forum – Treatment of Chemical Solid Waste and Hazardous Waste", and "Pan Pearl River Delta Region (PPRD) Session – Solid Waste Management and Policies and Technology in the Pan Pearl River Delta Region" in the venue which spans an area of 16,900 square meters.

Irene Lau, executive director of IPIM, said that the fair's focus is on 'recovering waste and creating more opportunities.'

"We are in the Pearl River Delta and we're dealing with a lot of waste [...] from food, buildings, construction. How to kind of rescue them, how to put them together [...] and create more opportunities, that is our focus," expressed Lau.

Moreover, she claimed the budget for the event has stood at around MOP25 million since the fifth edition of MIECF, although services have been improved "a lot".

"We hope to keep it up but I'm confident we can maintain the same by not [increasing] expenses," she emphasized.

Last year, the MIECF Green Showcase attracted more than 9,600 visitors over three days, while more than 3,600 people from nine countries attended the forum. **Staff reporter**

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TOURISM

Tam's office hopes police can handle illegal accommodation

THE Legislative Assembly (AL) Follow-up Committee for Public Administration advised that the Office of the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture engage in conversations with the police force regarding cooperation on law enforcement over illegal accommodation, Macao Daily News reported.

Two years ago, the AL Follow-up Committee for Public Administration reported to the government the difficulties it encountered when dealing with illegal accommodation. However, nothing effective eventuated, despite the government's promises to review the law enforcement process.

Chan Meng Kam, president of the AL Follow-up Committee for Public Administration, said the department intended to transfer the law enforcement operations to the police, due to the complexity surrounding these 'illegal hotels'.

"The hotels serve as a stage for gang-related disputes, for imprisonments, for prostitution, for drug use, as well as for

overstaying visas, over which the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has no rights whatsoever to conduct investigations."

Last year, the MGTO inspected 1,118 residential units that were under suspicion of operating as illegal accommodation, out of which 53 were required to be closed for a period of six months. The unlicensed guesthouses are located mainly in the vicinity of gaming areas, including the ZAPE, and the Macau Ferry Terminal.

In order to comply with legal requirements, all operations were conducted by the MGTO subsequent to complaints addressed to the police regarding the existence of such accommodation facilities. Although over the past two years, 90 percent of the issued penalties were applied by the MGTO, "the ratio of successfully executed penalties is low. The underlying cause [of the problem] needs to be addressed, especially the smugglers," said Chan. **Staff reporter**

Renato Marques

THE promotion of the Macau Basic Law and younger generations' knowledge of it continues to be a compelling purpose behind the activities slated to take place on the celebration of the 23rd Anniversary of the establishment of the Macau Basic Law, organizers of the celebrations revealed in a press conference yesterday afternoon at the Legal Affairs Bureau (DSAJ) meeting room.

As has been the case in previous years, this year's celebrations will be a collaborative effort across four government organizations. The event will see a large number of activities that range from Seminars on the "13th five-year plan and the stable development of Macau," to courses on the Basic Law, game, and contests, said Ho Sio Kam, the Secretary-General of the Board of Association of Promotion of the Macau Basic Law.

The chief of the law promotion department and public relations of the Legal Affairs Bureau (DSAJ), Lo Cheng Peng, noted that some of the most anticipated activities are related to the promotion of the Basic Law to the young. She added that one of the primary goals of the activities is to "incentivize the disclosure and the promotion of the [Basic] Law among both the students and the teachers in schools." She added

Basic Law promotion continues to youth

that "several contests will take place in the schools of the territory from May to December this year."

The Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau (IACM) will mount a celebratory bazaar with many games, theatre performances and quizzes all of which will seek to "elevate the knowledge of all citizens and get them to know the rights and duties of being a Macau citizen," in the words of Patsy Ko, Chief of the Citizen Cabinet of IACM.

Also part of the organizing team, the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEJ), represented by Cheong Kuai San, Director of DSEJ's Center of Permanent Education, will organize activities for children as young as 7 years old, all of which will also aim to match the knowledge of the basic law with the Chinese traditional art of calligraphy.

The celebratory activity pro-

gram will extend from March to December this year.

In a separate event at the premises of the Institute for Tourism Studies, the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Identification Services Bureau, the Legal Affairs Bureau and the IFT jointly held a seminar on "Constitution and Basic Law – Fundamental Rights and Duties of Macau Residents, Nationality Law, Consular Protection and Consular Services," which is part of the thematic seminar series for higher education institutions.

According to the organizers, the series aims to "enrich the knowledge of university students on the fundamental rights and duties of residents, the Nationality Law, consular protection and services under the framework of the [National] Constitution and the Basic Law."

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Popular Sports Games II open for application



YESTERDAY, the Sports Bureau announced that the second edition of the Macau Popular Sports Games is now open for applications. Eligible residents interested in table tennis, track or field activities, as well as swimming, are encouraged to participate.

Created with the purpose of encouraging residents to develop better lifestyle habits such as physical exercise, the event has been organized by the Athletic Association of Macau China, the Swimming Association of Macau, and the Sports Bu-

reau, and will begin on May 14 and last for two days.

The application period started yesterday and will run until April 15. The games will accept youth groups (aged 6 to 24), adults (25 and older), people with a disability, and family groups. Each person is allowed to participate in up to two games.

For residents who wish to participate in track or field activities, the running distances will range from 50m to 3km. Swimming enthusiasts will be able to choose either the 25m or the 50m competitions. For

people with a disability, 50m and 100m races will be available, in addition to a selection of wheelchair races.

The inaugural Sports Games took place in 2014, having accepted 2,100 valid applications. The Sports Bureau anticipates 2,500 applications this year. With a total budget of MOP3.2 million, the same amount as the first Games, this may be stretched, as the sports department added table tennis to the list of sports.

Currently, decisions have not been made regarding whether or not the event should be a biennial one. Pun Weng Kun, president of the Sports Bureau, said, "we plan to hold the event every two years. After this year's edition, we will make a final decision."

The Sports Bureau invites the public to visit their official website for further details about the event. **Staff reporter**

Living dinos at the Science Center

THE "Living Dinosaurs" exhibition opens today at the Macao Science Center (MSC). This is the first special exhibition themed around dinosaurs presented by the center.

The exhibit's science advisors include American paleontologist Dr Gregory M. Erickson, Argentinian paleontologists Dr Sebastian Apesteguia, and Dr Adrian Giacchino, chairman of the non-profit organization the Azara Foundation, that strives to promote research into Argentinian natural and cultural heritage.

Meanwhile, the Science Center Dino Coloring Contest and the Multimedia Design Contest Award Presentation Ceremony took place this weekend at MSC.

Awards for the Dino Coloring Contest were presented to 13 junior primary school students and 13 senior primary school students. Aiming to encourage imagination and creativity among local children, a further prizes twenty prizes were awarded.

The top prize of the Multimedia De-

sign Contest went to the Colégio Diocesano de São José, while Escola Luso-Chinesa Técnico-Profissional took home the consolation prize. Six teams from the Workers' Children Secondary School took the remaining prizes, including the second and third prizes in addition to four consolation prizes.

Some of the short videos were found to be probable copyright violations of by the judges, although the students been properly warned and informed of acceptable practices.

According to the organizers, the committee had suggested that if students were not sure whether they had the right to use online resources, to email the provider of such resources seeking permission, thus avoiding any kind of copyright infringement.

The Dino Coloring Contest offered the participants between MOP100 and MOP1,000 in prizes. The Multimedia Design Contest granted MOP7,000, MOP4,000 and MOP2,000 for the first, second, and third prizes, respectively. **Staff reporter**



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TELECOMS

CTM unveils Macau-HK roaming plan, reports revenue up 6.3 percent

Daniel Beittler

COMPANHIA de Telecomunicações de Macau (CTM) held a press lunch yesterday to notify the media of its upcoming products and services as well as of the progress made to the company's infrastructure to improve coverage within Macau.

In cooperation with Hong Kong-based mobile communication firm, CSL, CTM launched a new package last week that is available to contract customers, which will allow users to exchange network data without having to pay additional roaming charges.

The company says that the plan, entitled "City Link", is the first roaming share plan introduced in Asia. Though its scope is currently limited to Hong Kong, there are plans to expand the service to other cities, including those in mainland China.

CTM reported their business



performance for the year of 2015, including their advances toward accomplishing their vision of a "Digital Macau". Revenue for last year amounted to MOP5.18 billion, while profits totaled MOP1.15 billion. The growth in revenue of 6.3 percent stemmed primarily from business solutions, internet, mobile and leased line services. Additionally, more than MOP693 million was invested

in infrastructure projects last year, representing an increase of 33 percent over 2014, and marking the highest investment undertaking in CTM's history.

This investment was used to achieve 100 percent fiber network coverage throughout Macau, expand the number of Wi-Fi hotspots on the public transportation system, and make progress in the launch of their 4G services. These represent

only a few of the company's long-term plans.

Vandy Poon, the Chief Executive Officer of CTM, said that although the company is focusing its investments on installing the 4G network, it remains "committed to continuing to provide the 3G service and increasing the speed of those individuals on these networks without them having to ask for it."

Representatives of the com-

pany added that CTM reduced the charges for local mobile extra data twice last year, with a cumulative total reduction of as much as 97 percent in some cases.

The meeting yesterday also unveiled a new range of products and services. Among the products were a 360-degree camera and a virtual reality headset designed to heighten entertainment experiences. In terms of services, the company is developing an e-commerce network, "MacauGoodHands", which is expected to launch in either May or June.

The network will showcase Macau products, and in its initial stage will act as a platform for local commerce. With the assistance of the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute, CTM plans to use the platform to market local products to Portuguese-speaking countries and, later, "selected regions" in the Greater China area.

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S&P 500 futures fall after Brussels bombings; travel stocks drop

U.S. stock futures fell after bomb explosions in Brussels killed at least 26 people, jolting markets and signaling an end to a four-day winning streak for the Standard & Poor's 500 Index.

Carnival Corp., American Airlines Group Inc., Delta Air Lines Inc. and Expedia Inc. led travel-related stocks lower, falling at least 2.5 percent. Southwest Airlines Co. and Priceline Group Inc. also fell. Flights in and out of Brussels were canceled and security precautions were stepped up at travel hubs around Europe after the blasts at the Belgian capital's airport and a subway station.

Contracts on the S&P 500 expiring in June retreated 0.4 percent to 2,034.75 at 8:40 a.m. in New York. Dow Jones Industrial Average futures lost 50 points, or 0.3 percent, to 17,478, a sign the gauge will snap seven straight days of gains, its longest streak of increases since October. West Texas Intermediate crude futures fell 0.9 percent.

"The attack is an external shock, and its impact on the rebound rally will depend on if it is followed by similar incidents," said Christian Gattiker, head of research at Julius Baer Group Ltd. in Zurich. "It's been a roller coaster in the



first quarter."

Bank of America Corp. said yesterday that clients were net sellers of USD1.4 billion of U.S. stocks in an eighth consecutive week of selling, the longest client-selling streak in five years. That suggests investors still doubt the sustainability of the rally, strategists at the firm said.

Declines yesterday would interrupt a five-week rally bolstered by improving economic data, rising crude prices and optimism that central banks around the world will continue to support growth. The S&P 500 has erased the fallout from a tumultuous start to 2016, rebounding 12 per-

cent since its February low and turning positive for the year last week. The index is among the top three best-performers this year among developed-market benchmarks tracked by Bloomberg.

The main U.S. equity gauge is heading toward the first monthly increase since November, which would halt the longest streak of declines since 2011. Worries over China's slowdown and routs in oil and banks had dragged the S&P 500 last month to the lowest level since 2014.

The Chicago Board Options Exchange Volatility Index closed Monday at a seven-month low amid five

days of declines, the most in a month. The measure of market turbulence known as the VIX is also on its way toward a sixth weekly retreat which would be the longest since 2008.

Equities haven't declined since the Federal Reserve last week signaled a slower pace for interest-rate increases. Traders are pricing in a 41 percent probability for a move at the central bank's June meeting, down from about 54 percent before the Fed released a revised economic outlook last Wednesday. Chicago Fed President Charles Evans is scheduled to speak this afternoon. **Bloomberg**

Dollar climbs as Fed officials say April rate increase possible

THE dollar advanced for a second day yesterday as two Federal Reserve officials indicated that the central bank may raise interest rates as soon as next month, bolstering the appeal of assets denominated in the U.S. currency.

The greenback climbed versus most of its major peers as Atlanta Fed President Dennis Lockhart and San Francisco Fed chief John Williams said recent economic data may justify additional policy tightening after raising rates in December for the first time in almost a decade. The dollar rose from near a nine-month low reached last week after the central bank refrained from lifting borrowing costs at its March meeting and lowered its projections for the rest of the year.

The Fed's post-meeting statement prompted traders to scale back expectations for a hike in April to 10 percent on Monday, down from a 27 probability seen last week, futures contracts show. Officials seem to be dialing back some of their earlier dovish rhetoric, and reiterating comments from Chair Janet Yellen that a rate increase in April remains on the table.

"We're the prettiest of the ugly out there from an interest-rate and central-banking standpoint, so that helps the dollar," said Dave Floyd, head of foreign-exchange trading and research at Aspen Trading Group in Bend, Oregon. "Any little news is really the only thing people can go off of right now."

The Bloomberg Dollar Spot Index, which tracks the currency versus 10 peers, gained 0.3 percent to 1,189.65 as of 5 p.m. in New York. The greenback added 0.3 percent to USD1.1241 per euro and 0.4 percent to 111.95 yen.

A JPMorgan Chase & Co. measure of global foreign-exchange volatility fell to 10.29 percent, the lowest since Jan. 14. **Bloomberg**

corporate bits

MGM CELEBRATES EASTER WITH CONCORDIA SCHOOL FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION



In celebration of Easter, MGM will continue the tradition of "Celebrating the Easter spirit with Concordia School for Special Educa-

tion", now in its third year.

Led by MGM's senior management team, over 30 volunteer team members visited the school yesterday

to extend love, care and happiness to the students.

According to a statement, 10 teachers and 56 school-children between 4 and 10 years old welcomed MGM's volunteers and executives.

During the visit, staff volunteers interacted with the children through games and singing performances. Each student was given a special Easter gift bag consisting of chocolate Easter eggs, cupcakes, sandwiches and stationery.

MGM supports the Macau community through the motto 'Create a Better Tomorrow Today' which focuses on philanthropic and volunteer efforts to give back to society. The volunteer team was established in 2010, and currently has over 480 active members.

H&M TO LAUNCH 'CONTEMPORARY COLLECTION' IN APRIL

The 2016 Conscious Exclusive Collection, launched to coincide with the opening of the exhibition, "Fashion Forward - 300 years of Fashion" at the Musée de Arts Decoratifs, conveys an idea of 'painterly and sophisticated elegance', according to a press release.

The H&M design team has delved into the museum's collections of archival fashions to discover haute couture pieces from the last three centuries, resulting in a contemporary collection that will be available in approximately 180 stores worldwide as well as online from April 7.

Materials used in the garments include organic silk, hemp, recycled linen and Tencel blends as well as new



materials such as beads made from recycled glass and Denimite - a material made out of recycled worn-out denim.

Moreover, this season's launch of "Conscious Exclusive" includes three wedding dresses

which are described as having "dreamy, draped lines."

H&M will be the exclusive sponsor of the upcoming exhibition "Fashion Forward - 300 years of Fashion" at Musée de Arts Decoratifs.

ANGOLA

Luanda plans to ban ivory trade



THE government of Angola intends to ban the ivory trade across the country and a draft executive decree was presented last week in Luanda by an inter-ministerial committee, Angolan news agency Angop reported.

The draft decree was presented during a meeting of the Inter-ministerial Commission against

Environmental and Other Crimes Related to Wild Fauna and Flora, and also discussed a strategy to close ivory stands, such as the ones in a craft market in Luanda.

The meeting, chaired by the minister of Environment, Fátima Jardim also analysed the possibility of Patrols of the Crime Unit at the 4 de Fevereiro international airport and the airports of Maria Teresa (Kwanza Norte) and Bengo and assessed a uniform to be worn by staff involved in the initiative.

At the first meeting of the Inter-ministerial Commission against Environmental and Other Crimes Related to Wild Fauna and Flora, held at the end of 2015, Jardim said there was an urgent need to respond to poaching, especially of elephants and rhinos. **MDT/Macauhub**

Brazil prepares to attract tourists from China

BRASIL'S preparations to receive tourists from China during the Olympics and Paralympics in 2016 was the focus of a seminar entitled "Welcome Chinese" held recently in the Federal Senate, according to information from the Brazilian Tourism Institute (Embratur).

Gilson Lira, Director of Tourism Promotion of Embratur, cited data from the World Tourism Organization as saying that Chinese citizens have been the highest tourism spenders worldwide since 2012.

Around 100 million people from China travel to different foreign destinations every year, and in 2014, according to the Statistical Yearbook of the Brazilian Ministry of Tourism. Brazil received

only 57,000 of these people.

The Institute's actions focused on the Chinese market include an invitation to 10 tour operators to the World Travel Market (WTM) fair to be held this month in São Paulo, a partnership with the Municipal Sports and Recreation Office of Rio de Janeiro to promote the Olympic Games and a visit by the Brazilian delegation to China to establish new operational agreements and investments in the sector.

The vice president of the China Tourism Academy, Zhong Guang Liele at the seminar said China was keen to stimulate tourism to Brazil, which is, along with the United States and Mexico, one of three tourism hubs in the Americas. **MDT/Macauhub**

PORTUGAL

Chinese citizens continue to lead in obtaining golden visas



Tourists pose for a selfie at the Nossa Senhora do Monte or "Our Lady of the Hill" viewpoint overlooking Lisbon

NINETY-SEVEN Chinese citizens in February received a so-called golden visa under Portugal's Residence Permit Programme for Investment (ARI), said in Lisbon the Foreigners and Borders Service (SEF).

In addition to the Chinese citizens golden visas were granted to 13 people from Brazil, five from Russia, two from South Africa, two from Lebanon and 25 from other countries. 136 of the 144 vi-

sas were granted in return for investments in property.

The 144 foreign nationals who were entitled to golden visas in the second month of the year invested 89.3 million euros in Portugal, of which 81.2 million or 91 percent of the total was used to buy housing.

In January, the Portuguese authorities awarded 65 golden visas in return for investments of 38.5 million euros, of which 93 percent was applied to the real estate sector.

China continues to dominate by nationalities, with 2248 ARI, followed by Brazil (110), Russia (99), South Africa (75) and Lebanon (44).

Since the scheme was launched in October 2012, 2,997 residence permits have been granted, totaling an investment of 1.821 billion euros, of which 1,645 billion (more than 90 percent of the total) were used to purchase real estate and 176.3 million euros were capital transfers. **MDT/Macauhub**

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Penny Wang, Didi Tang, Bangkok

DONG Junming was detained several times in his Chinese homeland before he and his family fled to Bangkok in February 2015. A year later, he was preparing to make a more desperate journey to evade Chinese authorities who still felt dangerously close.

In the months since he arrived in Thailand, dozens of Chinese asylum-seekers have been sent back home by Thai authorities. Other dissidents have simply disappeared from Thailand and Hong Kong before re-emerging in mainland Chinese custody. Beijing appears increasingly eager to snatch back countrymen who have attempted to escape its grasp.

Dong is a practitioner of the Falun Gong spiritual movement, which is banned in China and whose members are persecuted there. He, his wife and daughter have a long wait to obtain refugee status and get resettled in a third country — they won't even interview with the U.N. refugee agency until at least 2017. In the meantime, he's unable to work legally and his family's travel documents have expired.

So Dong decided to flee once

It's highly risky out there on the ocean, but we are so fearful here in Thailand that I thought I should take the risk.

DONG JUNMING

Fearful of Beijing's reach abroad,



Chinese asylum seeker Dong Junming looks out a window after an interview with the Associated Press in Bangkok

more. This time it would be by boat, to New Zealand, some 6,000 miles away. The country is so isolated that, as far as authorities know, not one refugee boat has successfully reached its shores.

He would leave with six other Chinese adults, including a couple taking their two sons, ages one and seven. They believed New Zealand offered them the best chance of gaining refugee status.

Dong, as well as eight other Chinese dissidents living in Thailand who did not make the boat journey, described lives of anxiety and frustration bordering on outright despair in interviews with The Associated Press. Though free and under no immediate deportation threat, Dong said he feared what the future might

bring. So when offered a berth on the yacht in January, he took it.

"It's highly risky out there on the ocean, but we are so fearful here in Thailand that I thought I should take the risk," he said.

Dong and fellow travelers boarded the yacht the night of Feb. 29. The captain was democracy activist Li Xiaolong, the father of both children aboard. He bought the secondhand vessel, which also carried his wife and two brothers.

They had a month's supply of food and water. Their confidence was boosted by a fellow activist who succeeded in making a shorter sea voyage from Thailand to Australia.

They believed their own journey would be smooth. They were wrong.

Fears over the growing reach of Chinese security services crystallized among many Chinese dissidents with the recent disappearances of people associated with a Hong Kong bookstore that sold gossip titles on the lives of Chinese leaders. One of the missing was believed to have been abducted from Thailand, another from Hong Kong, though both have since said they voluntarily returned to mainland China.

Asylum-seekers in Thailand were more alarmed that the Thai government sent back about 100 asylum-seekers from China's Turkic Muslim Uighur minority last summer, and repatriated two Chinese dissidents in November, saying they violated immigration rules. Critics viewed

Thailand's military-led government as catering to China, its biggest trading partner.

With President Xi Jinping at China's helm and brimming with confidence, the communist government is pursuing greater cooperation with police abroad.

One aspect of the campaign popular within China is Beijing's Skynet operation, which seeks the return of corrupt Chinese officials and others accused of absconding overseas with ill-gotten gains. Since October 2014, China has seen the return of 124 corruption suspects who had fled to 34 countries, the country's chief justice told the national legislature this month.

That campaign has had limited success in the U.S., which has no extradition treaty with China and requires evidence that the offences they are accused of by China would also constitute a crime in America.

Beijing has raised the heat not only on corruption suspects but also on dissidents who fled China. Forced repatriations and alleged abductions have particularly rattled Chinese asylum-seekers who have congregated in Thailand, where the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees has an office.

"Beijing has become so ruthless that it grants us no way out at all," said Hu Junxiong, a democracy activist who fled to Thailand last year, after Chinese authorities detained him 35 days for helping other activists with computer and technology issues.

"It won't let us flee, but stays on our tail to catch us and bring us back to China, where we surely will be met with har-

Iron ore billionaire's comeback king looks past China

AFTER inking a surprise joint venture deal with the world's top iron ore producer, Fortescue Metals Group Ltd. is setting its long-term sights beyond China, its biggest customer and the world's top customer.

The tie-up of Australian billionaire Andrew Forrest's company with Vale SA amounts to the emergence of a new iron ore power bloc, according to Macquarie Group Ltd. The accord, which allows for the Brazilian company to buy a minority stake in

Fortescue and invest in existing or future mines, may help the world's fourth-biggest producer eventually push into new markets to the west of China, according to Chief Executive Officer Nev Power.

Fortescue's latest deal is another unexpected twist in the company's roller coaster history since 2003 that's been marked by disputes with regulators, governments and rivals, multiple debt and investor dramas and share price gyrations. The Vale pact was sealed this month after about a

year of talks initiated by Forrest against a backdrop of slowing demand in China, the biggest buyer of iron ore.

"In the most difficult circumstances, he's always ready to pull another rabbit out of the hat," said Philip Kirchlechner, previously Fortescue's head of marketing from June 2003 to May 2006. The pact is "quite a sophisticated idea because it is doing something more strategic and visionary," said Kirchlechner, now Perth-based director at Iron

Ore Research Pty.

The accord partners, whose first priority is an ore blending joint venture in China, also have an eye on developing a pipeline of projects that could eventually feed steel demand driven by the demographic change likely to sweep through Central Asia to the Middle East, Fortescue's Power said March 15 in an interview.

"We will be monitoring the market to look at what the demand curve looks like," Power said. "While we are very focused on China and the developed regions of Asia

at the moment, to the west of China we have all of central Asia, India and the 'stan countries, the Middle East and even Northern Africa, which is within a very efficient and competitive sea distance from Western Australia."

Forrest founded Fortescue to tap China's rapid industrialization even as larger rivals missed early indicators of a boom that saw crude steel output soar 12-fold between 1990 and 2014 as millions of people moved to cities and drove demand for

homes, roads, cars and appliances.

From 2009 to 2015, Fortescue expanded full-year shipments six-fold, a faster rate than any other major supplier in a frantic dash to meet China's hunger for imports. The producer's stock surged by more than 40,000 percent between the renaming of a predecessor company in 2003 through to a mid-2008 peak, the period when it sent a maiden shipment of 180,000 metric tons aboard the Heng Shan to China's Baosteel Group Corp. **MDT/Bloomberg**

dissidents try risky voyage

sh persecutions and end up in misery," Hu said in an interview from Bangkok.

The yacht set off from Pattaya, southeast of Bangkok. Dong's wife and daughter stayed in Thailand because the family's funds were limited and, since their visas had expired, they were at risk of being detained by Thai authorities.

The next day, the vessel was battling waves up to 5 meters (16 feet) tall, Dong said.

About 135 kilometers (84 miles) into the journey, a problem emerged with the yacht's steering. One of those aboard managed to fix it, but after another 100 kilometers (62 miles) the waves returned and the rudder went out again, Dong recalled.

"The boat was spinning, and it was shaking violently," Dong said. "We were still 100 kilometers [62 miles] from the closest shore."

They turned the boat toward shore and manually operated the rudder. Their distress calls went unanswered.

"I was extremely fearful," Dong said. "We were in lifejackets, and I was so sick I could not get up."

The baby and his brother were quiet, Dong recalled.

"The little one had his eyes wide open and did not cry at all. The older one was simply lying there. I did not know if he was scared or was feeling numb. Their mother was vomiting and could not do anything."

Deep into the night of March 1, the yacht ran aground in southern Thailand's Chumphon province.

The boat was taking on water and listed on the shore. After

AP PHOTO



In this photo provided by Zhang Hong, Chinese asylum seekers pose for a photo in front of the yacht they used in a failed attempt to reach New Zealand after they ran ashore in Chumphon province in southern Thailand.

waves gradually pushed it to an upright position, the adults waded to land, fetched the children and called for help, Dong said.

"Our boat could have sunk out there," Dong said in an interview from Bangkok. "We are lucky to be alive."

Thailand is home to thousands of asylum-seekers from China and elsewhere, many of whom live under murky legal status. Even those who enter the country legally often overstay their visas. Thailand has no law managing asylum-seekers fleeing conflict and persecution.

Activists say Thai authorities used to look the other way on Chinese asylum-seekers, but that changed after the May 2014 military coup.

Thai government spokesman Sansern Kaewkamnerd said authorities follow the rules when sending illegal immigrants back to their countries of origin. "If we don't, Thailand might become a hub for smugglers to transport people to third countries and we wouldn't want that," he said.

Vivian Tan, spokesperson for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees in Thailand, said asylum-seekers are often caught up in routine illegal-immigration crackdowns. Although the U.N. office has no control over how Thailand enforces immigration rules, it works with authorities to help asylum-seekers avoid being detained, Tan said.

Some Chinese refugees fear Chinese agents as well as Thai

authorities.

Hu, who traveled to Thailand without identification last year, said someone claiming to be a Chinese diplomat called him and said the embassy monitored local activists' phone calls. He said the caller asked him to inform on fellow asylum-seekers.

"I think it's part of [Beijing's]

Beijing has become so ruthless that it grants us no way out at all.

HU JUNXIONG

plan to turn us against each other," Hu said.

The Chinese Embassy in Bangkok said it had no knowledge of Chinese authorities conducting surveillance on dissidents in Thailand.

As they wait for years to be recognized as refugees, Chinese asylum-seekers say they survive by dipping into meager savings and practicing extreme frugality. They avoid police at all costs, even if they're victimized.

On the night the ill-fated journey to New Zealand ended, however, hiding was not an option.

Of the seven adults who took part in the failed voyage, two — including Li's wife, Gu Qiao — were detained for not having valid documents; they remained in Thai custody this week. Li, the trip's organizer, was charged with aiding undocumented immigrants but later released on bail.

The one-year-old traveler is also in state custody. The seven-year-old was returned to Li's brothers, who also had been on the boat. Like Dong and one other passenger, the brothers were freed when their documents were found to be in order.

"Now, I am back to live in fear again," Dong said. "I am back to wait for the U.N. interview, and I feel hopeless."

His family lives as simply as they can. Once rent is paid, their monthly budget leaves them with just 500 baht (USD14), his wife, Wang Shumei said. They pick through vegetables discarded from farmers' markets, and sometimes sellers give them food out of pity, she said. And they practice Falun Gong meditation exercises.

"Should there be another opportunity, I would leave Thailand again," Dong said. "And many of us have the same thought." AP

AP PHOTO



In this September 11, 2010 file photo, a nurse prepares a vaccine shot against measles at a clinic in Beijing. China's Food and Drug Administration has ordered local governments to track the whereabouts of poorly refrigerated and probably ineffective vaccines

Gov't to track poorly stored vaccines sold illegally

CHINA'S Food and Drug Administration has ordered local governments to track the whereabouts of poorly refrigerated and probably ineffective vaccines after police detained a woman thought to have sold nearly USD100 million worth of the suspect products nationwide.

The scandal has reawakened longstanding concerns among the public over the safety of food and medicine. Nine pharmaceutical wholesalers believed to

have sold the vaccines are being investigated.

The administration earlier this week ordered a thorough check on where the vaccines were distributed and how they may have been used. The central government administration demanded local authorities investigate the nine wholesalers believed to have sold the vaccines.

The vaccines included those for hepatitis B, rabies, mumps and Japanese encephalitis. Poorly stored vaccines may lose

their potency and cause side effects.

A 47-year-old former doctor has been detained in the eastern province of Shandong for allegedly selling the vaccines to nationwide distributors. Police told state media that the suspect, identified by her last name Pang, had earlier been convicted of illegally selling vaccines in 2009 and sentenced to three years in prison. She was released after the sentence was suspended for five years.

State media reports say Pang sold about 2 million doses of suspect vaccines. Shandong's provincial food and drug safety administration has publicized a list of buyers and sellers.

Amid widespread counterfeiting and lax enforcement, China has struggled to ensure food and drug safety. Past scandals have involved phony infant formula discovered to be nothing but starch and bogus vaccines containing only saline solution. AP

MYANMAR

Suu Kyi to be part of new democratic government



National League for Democracy party (NLD) leader Aung San Suu Kyi arrives at Myanmar's parliament in Naypyitaw, last week

Aung Shine Oo, Naypyitaw

MYANMAR'S president-elect yesterday proposed an 18-member Cabinet that will include party leader Aung San Suu Kyi, the former dissident who campaigned for decades to replace the military junta with a democratically elected government.

President-elect Htin Kyaw submitted the names to parliament for a formal review and approval by legislators today, after which the ministers' Cabinet positions will be decided.

At the top of the list is Suu Kyi, who was not able to become president because of a constitutional block, even though she led her party to a landslide victory in a general election last November.

It has been widely rumored that Suu Kyi will become foreign minister, but that's far from certain because if she were to take that post she would have to give up her parliamentary seat and end party activities.

"I doubt that Aung San Suu Kyi would take the position of the foreign minister," said Toe Kyaw Hlaign, a political analyst. "Also, working as a foreign minister requires a lot of time traveling around the world. She will have to do a lot of international relations and overseas trips, and she won't have the time to exercise control over the government."

Suu Kyi has said in the past that she will be "above the president" and govern

the country indirectly.

Still, her entry into the government is a remarkable turn of fortunes not only for the Nobel Peace Prize laureate but also for the country, which had been under iron-fisted military rule since 1962. For decades the junta kept Myanmar in isolation and economic stagnation while refusing to listen to international counsel or homegrown demands for democracy.

■ Suu Kyi's entry into the government is a remarkable turn of fortunes for the Nobel Peace Prize laureate

Suu Kyi came to prominence in 1988 when popular protests were building up. The junta crushed the protests that had turned into anti-government riots, killing thousands of people and placing Suu Kyi under house arrest in 1989.

The junta called elections in 1990 but refused to hand over power when Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party won overwhelmingly. Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize a year later.

As Myanmar continued to wallow under military rule, Suu Kyi was released and re-arrested several times. The junta finally started loosening its grip on power in 2010, allowing elections that were won by a military-allied party after the NLD boycotted the polls as unfair.

After more reforms, another general election was held last Nov. 8 and was swept by the NLD, a reflection of Suu Kyi's widespread public support. The constitutional clause that denied her the presidency excludes anyone from the position who has a foreign spouse or children. Suu Kyi's two sons are British, as was her late husband. The clause is widely seen as having been written by the military with Suu Kyi in mind.

The democracy that Suu Kyi and her colleagues are building is still not a complete package. The military has reserved 25 percent of the seats in parliament for itself, guaranteeing that no government can amend the constitution without its approval.

Also, it ensured that one of Htin Kyaw's two vice presidents is a former general, Myint Swe, a close ally of former junta leader Than Shwe. Myint Swe remains on a U.S. Treasury Department blacklist that bars American companies from doing business with several tycoons and senior military figures connected with the former junta. **AP**



Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc (left) gestures as he walks along with Vice Chairwoman of the National Assembly Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan, after they paid tribute to late President Ho Chi Minh at his Mausoleum in Hanoi on Monday

VIETNAM

Prominent blogger put on trial for anti-state posts

A prominent Vietnamese blogger who is a former police officer and the son of a late government minister will be put on trial this week for alleged anti-state postings, his lawyer said yesterday.

Nguyen Huu Vinh and his assistant, Nguyen Thi Minh Thuy, are accused of abusing democratic freedoms to infringe on the interests of the state, an offense punishable by up to seven years in prison, said the lawyer, Ha Huy Son.

Vinh, 59, and Thuy, 35, will stand trial today in Hanoi, Vietnam's capital. They have been in jail since they were arrested in May 2014.

Vinh, better known as Anh Ba Sam, was a police officer with the Ministry of Public Security in Hanoi. He quit in 1999 and set up a private investigation firm. His father was a government minister and Vietnam's ambassador to the former Soviet Union.

In 2007, Vinh set up the Ba Sam blog. He later launched two others — Dan Quyen, or Citizens' Rights, in 2013, and Chep Su Viet, or Writing Vietnamese History, in early 2014. The blogs provided links to news on political, social, economic and cultural issues from state media as well as activists.

According to state media, the indictment says two dozen articles posted on Dan Quyen and Chep

Su Viet had "untruthful and groundless content" and "distort the lines and policies" of the ruling Communist Party. It also says the articles "present a one-sided and pessimistic view, causing anxiety and worry, and affecting the people's confidence" in the party and government.

The two defendants have denied the charges, saying they "have no relations" with the postings, according to Son.

The trial was originally scheduled for Jan. 19, but was postponed on the eve of the Communist Party's congress, which elected Vietnam's new leaders and charted the country's course for the next five years.

International human rights groups and some Western governments, including the United States, have often criticized Vietnam for jailing dissidents for peacefully expressing their views. Hanoi denies the charges, saying only those who break the law are put behind bars.

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have called for the release of both defendants. "The trial and continuing detention of a blogger and his assistant who have already spent almost two years in jail is farcical and a blight on the country's human rights record," Amnesty said in a statement yesterday. **AP**

India has the most people without clean water, report says

INDIA has the world's highest number of people without access to clean water — imposing a major financial burden for some of the country's poorest people, according to a report released yesterday.

The international charity Water Aid says 75.8 million Indians — or 5 percent of the country's 1.25 billion population — are forced to either buy water at high rates or use supplies that are contaminated with sewage or chemicals. That accounts for more than a tenth of the 650 million people worldwide without clean water access — more than any single country in Africa or China, where 63 million have no access.

The situation worldwide has improved since 1990, with 2.6 billion people gaining access to clean water since then. But the report urged more action in "a world where one in 10 people are trapped in a cycle of poverty and disease for want of a safe, affordable water supply of their own." **MDT/AP**

GAYS are a contagion, declares the banner in bold red and black lettering that hangs on the sidewalk of a bustling neighborhood in the Indonesian capital close to embassies, luxury hotels and the homes of some of the country's leaders.

Erected by an ultra-conservative Islamic group, it's the latest manifestation of a virulent campaign of denigration against gays, lesbians and other sexual minorities that has entered the mainstream and is testing Indonesia's image for moderation.

Echoing venomous headlines in conservative newspapers, government officials and leaders in areas from psychiatry to religion also have heaped condemnation on homosexuality. The defense minister even said gays and lesbians were a more serious threat to national security than nuclear war.

The fevered atmosphere began emerging in late 2015 when top academics attacked gay support groups at universities. By February it had become an onslaught. Pressure from Islamic hardliners forced the closure of an Islamic boarding school for transgender students in Yogyakarta last month.

"Everyone in society is reading the propaganda of hate," said Augustine, a veteran lesbian activist who goes by one name. "They forget LGBT are human." She said that for several weeks, she has received phone calls late at night or before dawn from men who threaten to kill her if she does not close the advocacy organization she works for.

Augustine said she has not felt so abused over her sexual orientation since she fled her own father's anti-gay violence in the late 1990s.

Indonesia's human rights commission has deplored the outpouring of hatred, but President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo has been silent. He was elected on a platform that included human rights and respect for diversity as a top priority.

Kyle Knight, a researcher for

Virulent anti-gay remarks test Indonesia's moderate image



In this March 17, 2016 photo, a man walks past an anti-LGBT banner in Jakarta that reads "Indonesia is on LGBT emergency" and "Gay people are a contagion, save the young generation from LGBT people"

New York-based Human Rights Watch, said it feels like the cause of equality has been set back by a generation. Bigoted officials "actually do ruin people's lives," he said.

Among the startling announcements from officials, the minister for technology, research and higher education said LGBT people should not be welcome on university campuses. Harking back to medical theories discredited decades ago, the head of the psychiatry association called homosexuality a mental condition that could be treated, earning a rebuke from professional associations abroad.

Smartphone messaging app Line pulled stickers showing same-sex couples from its Indonesian emoji store in a response to a quixotic order from officials to stop the spread of gay and transgender imagery.

Homosexuality is not illegal in Indonesia, which is the world's most populous Muslim nation and embraces both

democracy and moderate Islam. Some of the archipelago's ethnic groups have centuries-old traditions of same-sex love. Transgender women, known as waria, are familiar to many people and extended tolerance by the majority. Some of the stickers abruptly censored by Line were created with the help of waria, whose slang has been widely adopted in popular culture.

But daily life is lived under an uneasy status quo that tolerates LGBT people as long as they are not too visible. Activism has largely focused on areas such as preventing the spread of HIV and reducing social isolation rather than pushing for specific rights such as anti-discrimination measures. Violence has forced some gay people to flee Aceh, a Sumatran province that practices a form of Shariah law and canes people for behavior such as adultery, gambling and drinking alcohol.

Many activists believe conservatives in Indonesia's ruling cir-

cles are unnerved by incremental liberalization in neighboring Southeast Asian countries and the advance of gay rights in Western nations, including the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling last year in favor of same-sex marriage.

Some misunderstand homosexuality as being a disease or cultural trend and fear the idea of an Indonesian gay movement, said Dede Oetomo, who founded Indonesia's first gay-rights groups in the early 1980s.

A U.N. report in 2014 on the status of gay rights in Asia that estimated Indonesia has more than 100 LGBT groups was probably also unsettling to some a country where ignorance about sexuality is widespread, he said.

"They are afraid LGBT will recruit their children," said Oetomo.

Some government ministers have grudgingly spoken out against the anti-gay onslaught, saying LGBT Indonesians have the same rights as anyone else.

"We have to treat them as citi-

zens of Indonesia," said Luhut Pandjaitan, coordinating minister of legal, political and security affairs. "This is something naturally happening. I don't think we can stop this one. But to contain, we can do it to some extent."

He said he prays daily that none of his grandchildren are gay because "nobody wants to be like that."

Groups that represent foreign businesses in Indonesia hope the current controversy will blow over, like previous episodes of social panic about alcohol and prostitution.

Despite being one of the biggest economies in the developing world, Indonesia lags behind neighbors such as Singapore and Thailand in attracting foreign investment. If the anti-gay hysteria mounts or produces legal measures at the national level, it could add to perceptions of the country as unpredictable and deter some foreign executives from working in the country. **MDT/AP**

AUSTRALIA

Premier clashes with predecessor over record

Rob McQuirk, Canberra

AUSTRALIA'S prime minister and the man he replaced clashed yesterday in an indication that splits in the ruling party are still wide as the country heads into a possible early election in July.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull announced on Monday that he

will call an early election on July 2 unless the Senate agrees to pass contentious legislation next month.

The opposition argues that Turnbull had effectively kicked off a 15-week election campaign, with key senators talking down the prospects of legislation to create a construction industry watchdog getting majority

support.

Tony Abbott, the unpopular prime minister who was replaced by Turnbull in September after two years in power, claimed credit for the center-right government's main achievements. These included stopping asylum seekers from reaching Australia by boat and free trade agreements with China, Japan and

South Korea.

"Fundamentally the Turnbull government is seeking election on the record of the Abbott government," Abbott told Sky News late on Monday.

Turnbull said yesterday that his administration was different from the one Abbott had led.

"The bottom line is there is continuity and the-

re is change, and there are many policies that have been announced and many initiatives that have been undertaken that were either not policies or not being pursued by Mr. Abbott," Turnbull told Australian Broadcasting Corp. radio.

The center-left Labor Party opposition leapt on the disagreement between the leader and his

predecessor. Opposition leader Bill Shorten said the ruling Liberal Party was "at war with itself."

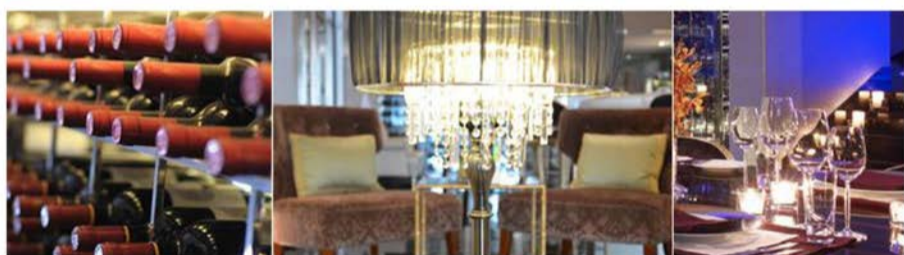
"The truth of the matter is that Mr. Turnbull wants to have an early election on July 2, he doesn't have a plan for Australia, all he has is plan for his own re-election," Shorten told reporters.

The government trailed the opposition in opinion polls until Turnbull became prime minister, although his popularity has waned as observers have criticized his slow pace of reform. **AP**



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Explosions rock Brussels airport, subway; 31 reported dead

Lorne Cook, John-Thor Dahlburg, Brussels

EXPLOSIONS, at least one likely caused by a suicide bomber, rocked the Brussels airport and subway system yesterday, prompting a lockdown of the Belgian capital and heightened security across Europe. At least 31 people have been reported dead.

A spokesman for the Brussels Metro said 15 people were killed and 55 injured in an explosion on a train, and Belgian media reported at least 13 dead in two explosions at the airport, with many others injured.

Belgium raised its terror alert to the highest level, diverting planes and trains and ordering people to stay where they were. Airports across Europe immediately tightened security.

"We are at war," French Prime Minister Manuel Valls said after a crisis meeting called by the French president. "We have been subjected for the last few months in Europe to acts of war."

European security officials have been bracing for a major attack for weeks, and warned that the Islamic State group was actively preparing to strike. The arrest Friday of a key suspect in the November attacks in Paris heightened those fears, as investigators said many more people were involved than originally thought, and that some are still on the loose.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for yesterday's attacks, and Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel said there was no immediate evidence linking key Paris suspect Salah Abdeslam to them. After his arrest Friday, Abdeslam told authorities he had created a new network and was planning new attacks.



In this photo provided by Georgian Public Broadcaster and photographed by Ketevan Kardava, two women are shown wounded in Brussels Airport in Belgium, after explosions were heard

Belgian media reported that at least 13 people were killed at the airport, where two explosions splattered blood across the departure lounge and collapsed the ceiling. The explosions hit during the busy morning rush. Smoke was seen billowing out of the terminal.

Anthony Deloos, an airport worker for Swissport, which handles check-in and baggage services, said the first explosion took place near the Swissport counters where customers pay for overweight baggage. He and a colleague said the second blast hit near the Starbucks cafe.

"We heard a big explosion. It's like when you're in a party and suddenly your hearing goes out, from like a big noise," Deloos said, adding that shredded pa-

per floated through the air as a colleague told him to run.

"I jumped into a luggage chute to be safe," he said.

Tom De Doncker, 21, check-in agent intern, was near the site of the second explosion.

"I saw a soldier pulling away a body," he said. "It felt like I was hit too" from the concussion of the blast.

Zach Mouzoun, who arrived on a flight from Geneva about 10 minutes before the first blast, told BFM television that the second, louder explosion brought down ceilings and ruptured pipes, mixing water with victims' blood.

"It was atrocious. The ceilings collapsed," he said. "There was blood everywhere, injured people, bags everywhere."

"We were walking in the debris. It was a war scene," he said.

Near the entrance to Brussels' Maelbeek subway station, not far from the headquarters of the European Union, rescue workers set up a makeshift medical treatment center in a pub. Dazed and shocked morning commuters streamed from the metro entrances as police tried to set up a security cordon.

"The Metro was leaving Maelbeek station for Schuman when there was a really loud explosion," said Alexandre Brans, 32, wiping blood from his face. "It was panic everywhere. There were a lot of people in the Metro."

Francoise Ledune, a spokeswoman for the Brussels Metro, said on BFM television there appeared to have been just one ex-

plosion on the subway in a car that was stopped at Maelbeek. Spokesman Guy Sablon said 15 were killed and 55 injured in that attack.

At the airport, passengers fled as quickly as they could.

Amateur video shown on France's i-Tele television showed passengers including a child running with a backpack dashing out of the terminal in different directions as they tugged luggage. Another image showed a security officer patrolling inside a hall with blown-out paneling and what appeared to be ceiling insulation covering the floor.

Marc Noel, 63, was about to board a Delta flight to Atlanta, to return to his home in Raleigh, North Carolina. A Belgian native, Noel says he was in an airport shop buying automobile magazines when the first explosion occurred 50 yards away.

"People were crying, shouting, children. It was a horrible experience," he told AP. He said his decision to shop might have saved his life. "I would probably have been in that place when the bomb went off."

With three runways in the shape of a "Z," the airport connects Europe's capital to 226 destinations around the world and handled nearly 23.5 million passengers in 2015.

Passengers were led onto the tarmac and the crisis center urged people not to come to the airport.

Authorities told people in Brussels to stay where they were, bringing the city to a standstill. Airport security was also tightened in Paris, London and other European cities.

In Paris, France's top security official said the country was immediately reinforcing security at airports, train stations and metros. **MDT/AP**

GUNMEN launched an attack on Monday evening on the European Union military training mission's headquarters in the Malian capital, Bamako.

Armed forces killed at least one man, who lay outside the hotel in jeans and a shirt in a pool of blood next to a Kalashnikov rifle. His backpack lay beside him. Cmdr. Modibo Naman Traore, a spokesman for the Malian special forces, said three other attackers were still being sought. Sgt. Baba Dembele from

Gunmen attack EU mission in Mali capital; 1 attacker dead

the anti-terrorism unit in Bamako told an Associated Press reporter at the scene that it was believed some attackers had entered the Hotel Nord-Sud, where the mission is headquartered.

The EU training mission later released a statement saying it had come under attack by

small arms fire but no personnel had been wounded, and that Malian security forces were securing the area.

EU soldiers, the Malian army, national police and other security forces stood outside the hotel.

The assault comes about four months after jihadists attacked the Radisson

Blu hotel in Mali's capital, killing 20 people. Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb and al-Mourabitoun claimed responsibility for that attack, saying it was their first joint attack since al-Mourabitoun joined al-Qaida's North Africa branch in 2015.

In January, extremists from the same militant

groups attacked a cafe near a hotel popular with foreigners in Burkina Faso's capital, killing at least 30 people. And just last week, al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb claimed responsibility for an assault on a beach in Ivory Coast that left at least 19 dead, identifying the three attackers as mem-

bers of al-Mourabitoun and Sahara units.

Over the past year, the jihadists have mounted a growing wave of violent attacks against U.N. peacekeepers who are trying to help stabilize the country.

The EU launched a training mission to help support and rebuild the Malian armed forces in February 2013 at the request of Malian authorities. The training is carried out in Koulikoro, about 60 kilometers (37 miles) northeast of the capital. **MDT/AP**

what's ON



MACAU ARTS WINDOW -RESTRAINED HUGS
 – INSTALLATION BY ELLA LEI
 TIME: 10am-7pm
 (no admittance after 6:30 pm, closed on Mondays)
 UNTIL: April 10, 2016
 VENUE: Macau Museum of Art,
 Av. Xian Xing Hai, s/n, NAPE
 ADMISSION: MOP5
 (Free on Sundays and public holidays)
 ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

“GETTING INTO SALON”
 – EXHIBITION OF PHOTOGRAPHIC WORKS
 BY KONG IU LAM AND HIS STUDENTS
 TIME: 9am-10pm (Institute for Tourism Studies,
 Colina de Mong-Ha); 12pm-10pm (Educational
 restaurant, Institute for Tourism Studies, Colina de
 Mong-Ha)
 UNTIL: April 30, 2016
 ADMISSION: free
 ENQUIRIES: (853) 2856 1252

‘WONDERFUL TIME’
 – CHEONG SOU MAN ART EXHIBITION
 TIME: 10:30am-6:30pm
 (Closed on Mondays and public holidays)
 UNTIL: May 29, 2015
 ADMISSION: Free
 VENUE: 10, Calçada da Igreja de S.Lázaro, Macao
 ENQUIRIES: (853) 2835 4582

ONE CENTURY OF AUSTRIAN ART 1860-1960
 TIME: 10am-7pm
 (Closed on Monday, no admission after 6:30 pm)
 UNTIL: April 3, 2016
 VENUE: Macau Museum of Art,
 Av. Xian Xing Hai, s/n, NAPE
 ADMISSION: Adult MOP5
 (Free admission on Sundays and public holidays)
 ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

**“HEART CARVING - XUE YIHAN’S SCENES
 OF MACAU PRINTMAKING EXHIBITION”**
 TIME: 12pm-8pm (Tuesdays to Sundays); 3pm-8pm
 (Mondays, open on public holidays)
 UNTIL: April 22, 2016
 VENUE: Albergue SCM – A2 Gallery, Calçada da
 Igreja de São Lázaro No.8, Macau Gallery A2
 ADMISSION: Free
 ENQUIRIES: (853) 2852 2550 / 2852 3205

Offbeat

THIEVES IN SWEDEN APPEAR TO
BLOW UP BUILDING FOR ATM CASH

Robbers in Sweden are suspected of blowing up the walls of a building in an apparent effort to empty an ATM. But police say they're not sure any money would have survived the blast.

Regional police spokesman Calle Persson says they were alerted to the explosion in the small southern town of Genarp after 3 a.m. on Monday. They sent a bomb squad to check the site before officers began an investigation.

He said no one was hurt but the blast destroyed two walls of the red-brick building. People in neighboring houses reported they saw “a few men” at the site immediately after the explosion and heard a car pull away.

It was not clear if the damaged ATM had contained any money.

TV canal macau

13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:30	RTPi Live
18:05	Trail of Lies (Repeated)
19:00	TDM Entrevista (Repeated)
19:30	Non-Daily Portuguese News (Repeated)
19:35	Soap Opera
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	Montra do Lilau
21:30	Criminal Minds Sr.9
22:10	Trail of Lies
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Drama
00:20	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)

cinema

CINETEATRO

17 MAR - 23 MAR



KUNG FU PANDA 3_

ROOM 1
 (2D) 2.15, 4.00, 7.30 pm
 (3D) 5.45 pm

Director: Alessandro Carloni, Jennifer Yuh
 Language: Cantonese (Cantonese/English)
 Duration: 95min

GODS OF EGYPT_

ROOM 1

9.30 pm

Director: Alex Proyas

Starring: Brenton Thwaites, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau,

Gerard Butler

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 127min

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



THE TAG ALONG_

ROOM 3

2.15, 5.45, 9.30 pm

Director: Wei-hao Cheng

Starring: Wei Ning Hsu, River Huang, Yin-Shang Liu

Language: Mandarin (Cantonese/English)

Duration: 93min

LONDON HAS FALLING_

ROOM 3

4.00, 7.30 pm

Director: Babak Najafi

Starring: Gerard Butler, Aaron Eckhart,

Morgan Freeman

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 99min

MACAU TOWER

03 MAR - 23 MAR

GODS OF EGYPT_

ROOM 3

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

1981 NEW MEASURES TO
CONTAIN FARM DISEASE

The government has banned all animal transport on the Isle of Wight and in southern Hampshire in an attempt to contain a new outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease.

The move follows Sunday's slaughter of 400 infected animals on the Isle of Wight and last week's discovery, the first in Britain for 13 years, of infected animals on Jersey.

The outbreak on the Isle of Wight was declared at Hamstead farm near Yarmouth on Saturday.

Some cattle, now thought to be infected, were sent to Shaftesbury market on the mainland before the disease was found and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) is now tracing them.

“We know exactly where they all are. Most were local purchases. There are some in the Midlands. If those 16 animals were infected there would be danger for all other animals at that market,” said MAFF's David Kyle.

The outbreak is believed to be a result of the disease being carried a record 150 miles by wind from France.

“We have been very unlucky. The wind is something we cannot control. It is one of the possible causes we may have to consider, also birds maybe. You can virtually exclude the movement of contaminated meat,” said MAFF's Chief Veterinary Officer Howard Rees.

The ban on movement is expected to last for three weeks, to cover the time the disease can be incubated for.

All hunts and races in the area have also been cancelled.

The President of the National Farmers Union, Richard Butler, said: “Every safeguard must be taken against the possibility of this terrible disease spreading.”

The last major outbreak of foot-and-mouth was in 1967. The government paid out £27 million in compensation for the 400,000 animals that were destroyed.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The ban on animal movements to prevent the spread of foot-and-mouth was lifted a month later.

The move was successful as no new cases were reported outside the sealed off areas in the Isle of Wight and Hampshire. In 2001 the UK was struck by foot-and-mouth again.

There were over 2,000 cases reported and an estimated four million animals were slaughtered across the UK.

In 2002 the Anderson report was published. It looked at the government's handling of the foot-and-mouth outbreak.

One of the recommendations was for animals to be vaccinated against the disease - something farmers have wanted for years.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Having a predictable routine used to feel so mundane. Now you're happy to be doing something predictable for a change. Appreciate that you once again have more to count on than your morning cup of coffee.

Taurus April 20-May 20 Money may have done you wrong, but you still have some affection for it. In fact, it's looking pretty attractive right about now. Make sure you don't let yourself get duped. Look for substance.

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 You have a lot of chores to attend to today, and bills are just the beginning. Someone may want to waste your time with chatter, but you don't have any to spare. Shake off the busybodies or risk financial penalties.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Now that you're over some of the larger hurdles, you can do more than sigh with relief. You get to focus on some of the smaller issues that have been lost in the shuffle. It's like finding quarters under the sofa cushions.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 If you think being thrifty is a phase, think again. You've lost your taste for big spending, even if you can swing the budget for it. Finances have once again changed your whole way of thinking about life.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 Be sure to stay on top of things. Everything in your life needs to be organized, from your finances right down to the thoughts in your head. Your time should be on the top of the list.

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 Learning to be self-sufficient can only be healthy for you in the long run. In the short term, it's excruciating. No pain, no gain. Consider yourself enrolled in financial boot camp.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 A friend needs a favor but won't ask for it. You know them well enough by now to figure it out. A small gesture here or there can slip under the radar for both of you. Bag of groceries, anyone?

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 The small details will trip you up. You're in a big hurry, but you need to slow down and take a breath. It's more important than ever to know what you're signing before considering the dotted line.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 No amount of research can dig up the numbers you need. It's like looking for water with a divining rod or panning for gold. In fact, it never was a more exact science than that, as the bottom line has come to prove.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 The more things change, the more they stay the same. Some apparently haven't learned their lesson yet. Take care when dealing with money. Not everyone is once burned, twice shy.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 You can't be too critical. Each and every expense should be analyzed from top to bottom. If you're tempted to just make a move before knowing all the facts, you're just jumping into quicksand.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy

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9 | 3 | 4 | | 2 |
1 | | 7 | | | 9 6

Easy+

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5 | 7 | | 3 | | |
| | 4 | 5 | 1 | 6 | |
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Hard

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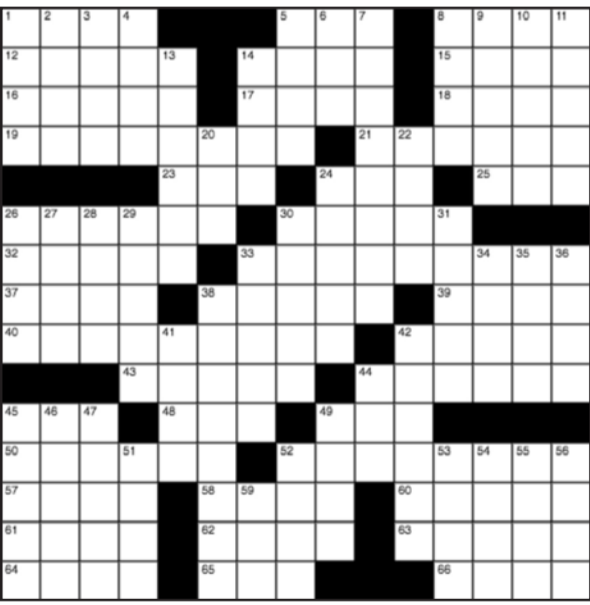
WEATHER

Table with columns: MIN, MAX, CONDITION. Rows for CHINA (Beijing, Harbin, Tianjin, etc.) and WORLD (Moscow, Frankfurt, Paris, etc.).

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Turkish titles; 5- Fallen space station; 8- Fail to hit; 12- Pale purple; 14- Where heroes are made; 15- 1975 Wimbledon winner; 16- The end of ___; 17- Gripped; 18- James of "The Godfather"; 19- Edible snail; 21- Standards of perfection; 23- Captive soldier; 24- Very cold; 25- Average grade; 26- Classified; 30- Depressed spirits; 32- Tip off; 33- Pellet of precipitation; 37- Coscant's reciprocal; 38- Stiff bristles; 39- Stout relatives; 40- Female servant; 42- Darken; 43- Desolate; 44- Greek goddess of the moon; 45- Health club; 48- They appear before U; 49- Building add-on; 50- Fermented soybean cake; 52- Evading; 57- Hamburg's river; 58- Woe ___; 60- Thin as ___; 61- Prefix with drama; 62- Neet rival; 63- Starbucks order; 64- Observed; 65- Student stat; 66- "It's ___ real";

DOWN: 1- Caesar's wings; 2- Cotton deseeders; 3- One of the Baldwin brothers; 4- Gilbert of "Roseanne"; 5- Run into; 6- Ailing; 7- Make fun of; 8- Cliblike weapon; 9- Designer Mizrahi; 10- Oil source; 11- Inward feeling; 13- Floor covering; 14- Arab sailing vessel; 20- Deity; 22- Stains; 24- Troy story; 26- Scarf; 27- Potpourri; 28- Bausch & Lomb brand; 29- Lock of hair; 30- Fabric hand-dyeing technique; 31- Madame de ___; 33- Soul mate?; 34- Ye ___ Shoppe; 35- Dresden denial; 36- Salinger girl; 38- Wonderful; 41- French 101 verb; 42- Satan; 44- ___pitch softball; 45- Stalks; 46- Martinique volcano; 47- Mosey; 49- Always; 51- Unskilled laborer; 52- What ___ mind reader?; 53- Dull; 54- Must've been something ___; 55- Evening, informally; 56- Secluded spot; 59- Tree syrup



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Water Supply - Report 1990 992
PJ (Open line) 993
Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333
Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944
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Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
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Beth Harris, Los Angeles

THE tournament director of the BNP Paribas Open who said women's pro tennis players "ride on the coattails of the men" resigned this week, ending his 29-year association with the event.

Tournament owner Larry Ellison said in a statement that Raymond Moore was quitting as chief executive officer and tournament director of the USD7 million event featuring men's and women's players in the California desert. Moore informed Ellison of his decision when they spoke earlier in the day.

"Ray let me know that he has decided to step down from his roles as CEO and tournament director effective immediately," Ellison said. "I fully understand his decision."

A tournament spokesman could offer no further details on Moore's resignation, citing only Ellison's statement.

Moore apologized after he was roundly criticized by executives from the women's and men's pro tours, players Serena Williams and Victoria Azarenka and on social media for his comments on Sunday.

The 69-year-old former touring pro from South Africa had been CEO of the tournament since 2012. He was involved with the event for 29 years as a former owner and managing partner before assuming his most recent post. He oversaw the operations of the tournament and the Indian Wells Tennis Garden, which Ellison also owns. Years ago, Moore and fellow ex-player Charlie Pasarell started PM Sports Management, which oversaw the tournament as it expanded.

"In my next life when I come back I want to be someone in the WTA because they ride on the coattails of the men. They don't make any decisions and they are lucky. They are very, very lucky," Moore said. "If I was a lady player, I'd go down

AP PHOTO



Tournament director Raymond Moore gestures while speaking at the BNP Paribas Open tennis tournament in Indian Wells, California

TENNIS

Tournament director quits after criticizing women professionals

every night on my knees and thank God that Roger Federer and Rafa Nadal were born, because they have carried this sport."

He also referred to women's players as "physically attractive and competitively attractive." Moore later apologized, calling his comments "in extremely poor taste and erroneous."

"I am truly sorry for those remarks, and apologize to all the players and WTA as a whole," the statement said. "We had a women's final today that reflects the strength of the players, especially Serena and Victoria, and the entire WTA.

Again, I am truly sorry for my remarks."

Moore clearly had no intention to leave his post based on comments he made to reporters on Sunday on the last day of the two-week tournament. Before the backlash over his controversial comments began, he was asked how long he planned to remain in charge.

"Firstly, I love what I'm doing. I'm passionate about it. I enjoy it," Moore said. "Who knows who the face of the tournament will be down the road. But I don't think that, oh, I'm going to stop next year or three years."

Ellison, a billionaire and co-

Moore apologized, calling his comments 'in extremely poor taste and erroneous.'

founder of Oracle Corp., credited Billie Jean King, Martina Navratilova and Serena and Venus Williams, as well as other female athletes, for their

leadership in treating women and men equally in sports.

"I'm proud to say that it is now a decade-long tradition at our tournament at Indian Wells, and all the major tennis tournaments, to pay equal prize money to both the women and the men," Ellison said in his statement.

Ellison thanked the "great women athletes" who fought so hard in pursuit of equal prize money in pro tennis.

"All of us here at the BNP Paribas Open promise to continue working with everyone to make tennis a better sport for everybody," he said. **AP**

FOOTBALL

Belgium team cancels practice after Brussels attacks

BELGIUM'S national soccer team called off a practice session in Brussels yesterday after the city was hit by what authorities are calling terror attacks. (More on page 15.)

"Our thoughts are with the victims. Football is not important today," the Belgian soccer federation wrote in a Twitter message. "Training cancelled."

Belgium will host Portugal in a friendly match next Tuesday at the

King Baudouin Stadium in Brussels. The game is scheduled as a warmup for both teams ahead of this year's European Championship.

The Portuguese soccer federation said it was in contact with Belgian authorities about security arrangements for the match.

Three explosions yesterday at the Brussels airport and a metro station have been called terror

attacks by Belgian authorities. At least 15 people died and 55 were injured by a bomb at the Maelbeek metro station near European Union offices.

"Prayers & thoughts go to all families and friends of the victims," Belgium midfielder Axel Witsel posted on his Twitter account.

One international soccer player was at the Zaventem airport where two explosions were re-

ported. Norwich forward Dieumerci Mbokani, who is from Congo, was "unharmed but shaken by the tragic events," the English club said in a statement.

Mbokani was visiting family in Brussels, where he played for Anderlecht for two seasons until 2013.

Belgium is now on high terror alert ahead of cycling's peak season for one-day classic road ra-

ces, including the Tour of Flanders on April 3.

The spring season starts today with the Dwars door Vlaanderen (Across Flanders) race, which covers a 200-kilometer (124-mile) route around Waregem in west Belgium.

Organizers met with police yesterday and later said in a statement the second-tier race would go ahead as planned.

"For the moment, Dwars

door Vlaanderen will take place [today], despite the terrorist attacks that took place in Brussels on Tuesday morning," the statement said. "The organizers mourn with the victims of these terrible acts. More information in due time."

It was unclear if all riders and team officials intending to travel via Brussels airport would be able to arrive for the race. **AP**

opinion

Macau Matters

Richard Whitfield



UNIVERSITY INDUSTRY COLLABORATION

I am currently coaching hospitality students at a local university in research projects to develop service blueprints for banqueting services in hotels. I have asked student teams to each find a hotel banqueting manager to interview to investigate how banquets are managed in practice.

A service blueprint is a well known and popular method for analyzing and understanding the interactions between customers and service providers. It provides a graphical way to summarize the sequence of what happens during a service encounter, who the customer interacts with, and what background work has to be carried out to support the service delivery.

I have several reasons for wanting students to do this research. Firstly, students learn more when they are actively involved in their learning, rather than simply listening to lectures or reading textbooks. Secondly, universities are good at teaching theory but are often ill-prepared for "real world" work and this research gives students a taste for what practical banqueting management is all about. Thirdly, I want to see how well banqueting management in practise matches what is in the textbooks.

Universities often hear complaints that graduates are not "practical" or well prepared for business roles. This kind of applied research is one way of addressing these concerns. A better approach is for students to do internships, but as I have complained about before in these pages, the labour laws in Macau stupidly prevent international students from doing internships here, and many of the students I am coaching are from Mainland China.

Banquets can be an important part of the operations of hotels and hotels are a major industry in Macau. Hotels and hotel management can also be an important "export" industry for Macau - providing consulting and other hotel services to the region. It is in everybody's interest to help build up this local industry, and applied research is one useful way of achieving this goal.

I have been quite pleased with the response from hotels concerning this research. Most hotel banqueting managers have been very helpful and have spent significant time with the students. I am sure that they see this activity as part of their community service obligations. Unfortunately, some have not been helpful and others have been secretive about sharing information - for some reason they consider their banquet event order forms to be secret, but this kind of document is very widely used in the industry and can easily have customer names and other details blacked out.

I believe that it is in the hotel industry's best interests to cooperate with university research to build up the industry as a whole, to maintain good relations with the local community and to make contact with prospective future employees. I am pleased to see that most hotel banqueting managers in Macau understand this and are willing to contribute.

THE BOARDWALK DESPAIR: ATLANTIC CITY MAYOR WARNS OF SHUTDOWN AMID PUSH FOR STATE RESCUE

Atlantic City's mayor said workers won't be paid and non-essential services will be shut down for about a month beginning April 8 as the distressed gaming hub pushes for New Jersey to rescue it from the brink of insolvency.

No employees would be paid until at least May 2, when the city will get its next installment of taxes, Mayor Don Guardian said in an e-mailed statement. While essential services such as public safety and revenue collections will continue, other functions will cease and City Hall

will close 4:30 pm local time on April 8.

"We are making every effort to find solutions" prior to that date, Guardian said.

Moody's Investors Service warned that the city could default on debt as early as next month without state action, and local officials have floated the possibility of filing for bankruptcy. Bills that would provide the city with a cash infusion and give the state control over its operations are pending in the New Jersey legislature.



Cuban President Raul Castro checks his watch near the end of a joint news conference with President Barack Obama at the Palace of the Revolution

HISTORY IN THE MAKING

Cubans marvel at rare questioning of Castro

CUBANS were glued to their televisions yesterday [Macau time], many watching in a state of shock as President Raul Castro faced tough questions from American journalists who challenged him to defend Cuba's record on human rights and political prisoners.

In a country where publicly questioning the authority of Castro and his brother and predecessor Fidel is unthinkable for most, and where the docile state-run media almost always toe the party line, the live broadcast was must-see TV. Some also marveled at tough questioning of President Barack Obama, simply unaccustomed to seeing any leader challenged in such a way.

"This is pure history and I never thought I'd see something like this," said Marlene Pino, a 47-year-old engineer. "It's difficult to quickly assimilate what's happening here. For me it's extraordinary to see this."

"It's like a movie, but based on real life," said Ricardo Herrera a 45-year-old street food vendor.

In one eye-catching moment, Castro's response suggested that perhaps Havana is not always perfect on human rights. He argued that no country is, said it is incumbent on all to try to do better and defended his government's support of what it considers important human rights issues: providing universal, free education and health care.

At an outdoor cafe in the Vedado neighborhood, about a dozen Cubans and tourists watched in awed silence as both Castro and Obama spoke. One stunned woman held a hand to her mouth.

"It's very significant to hear this from our president, for him to recognize that not all human rights are respected in Cuba," said Raul Rios, a 47-year-old driver who also expressed agreement with the president's more nuanced explanation about rights and his argument that that no country is perfect.

"We are living in historic times, the United States and Cuba," Rios added. "Nobody could have imagined this in

the past. I think this marks a before and after."

It's extremely rare for Castro to hold a news conference, though he sometimes takes questions from reporters spontaneously when the mood strikes. He's known as a much more cautious and reluctant public speaker than his loquacious older brother Fidel, who was given to talking for hours at a time and often directly with journalists.

The Cuban government and the Communist Party control nearly all media in Cuba, including TV and radio channels and print newspapers. There are a handful of independent online outlets, though more critical ones like dissident blogger Yoani Sanchez's 14ymedio are blocked on the island — and certainly never get access to the president or other top officials.

The news conference also included an exchange between Castro and CNN reporter Jim Acosta, a second-generation Cuban-American, who asked about political prisoners in Cuba.

Castro testily addressed Acosta directly, saying "After this meeting is over, you can give me a list of political prisoners, and if we have those political prisoners, they will be released before tonight ends."

Nudging Cuba toward democracy, President Barack Obama will cast a spotlight on political repression and economic misery here today when he meets with dissidents and speaks to the Cuban people at the close of a trailblazing trip. MDT/AP



Violeta Arango and her son Oscarito watch U.S. President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Obama arrive at Jose Marti airport, broadcast live on Cuban television inside their home in Havana

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

SOURCE: DSI/MG

WORLD BRIEFS



SOUTH KOREA reported yesterday the country's first case of the Zika virus in a 43-year-old man who recently returned from Brazil, according to a statement from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

PAKISTAN A police officer in Pakistan says at least 17 Hindus have died after consuming illegally-made alcohol during religious celebrations in the south of the country.



TAJIKISTAN's president, Emomali Rahmon, has suggested three new public holidays on consecutive days to honor wrestlers, horse riders and the planting of flowers. According to Asia-Plus, a national wrestling tournament was held in the country's capital yesterday.

EU A UK exit from the European Union would cause a "serious economic shock", potentially costing the country 100 billion pounds and nearly one million jobs, according to a report commissioned by the Confederation of British Industry.

AFGHANISTAN The new commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan apologized yesterday to the people of Kunduz for the deadly attack on a hospital in the city last year that killed 42 people.

CONGO Former Congolese rebel leader Jean-Pierre Bemba has been found guilty of war crimes in a landmark trial at the International Criminal Court. The once vice-president of the Democratic Republic of Congo will remain in custody until sentencing.