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WORLD BRIEFS



SOUTH KOREA An AP investigation shows that rapes and killings of children and the disabled three decades ago at a South Korean institution for so-called vagrants, the Brothers Home, were much more vicious and widespread than previously realized.

CHINA The world's largest wireless carrier, reported an increase in profit after adding as many 4G subscribers as there are people in the U.K. China Mobile's net income gained 0.5 percent to 23.9 billion yuan (USD3.7 billion) in the three months ended March 31, the company said yesterday.

LAOS, one of the world's last communist nations, has elected its top government leaders at a meeting of its newly seated National Assembly.



JAPAN Searchers found a man's body yesterday in a landslide-hit area in southern Japan, bringing the death toll to 48 from two powerful earthquakes last week. Three people remain missing.

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Hong Kong malls search for new identity after golden decade ends

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Hengqin presses ahead in plan for local cars

The director of the Hengqin New Area's Administrative Committee, Niu Jing, has said that the authority has completed a draft plan that would allow vehicles from Macau to access the island. "Plans and details regarding its management method and how it should be implemented are now basically stipulated and the construction of the supporting facilities is almost ready," Niu told reporters at the sidelines of a press conference. However he cautioned that authorities are yet to set an official launching date. "The official launching date has to be jointly and officially announced by the Guangdong provincial government and the SAR government so I don't have a timetable for now," he added, cited by TDM.

Rubber Duck to arrive in town

The Rubber Duck, created by Dutch public artist Florentijn Hofman, will be displayed on the stretch of sea between the Macau Science Center and Kun Iam Ecumenical Center, every Friday to Sunday from April 29 to May 27. A press conference was held yesterday at the Science Center to introduce the event, which will include a themed picture exhibition, a coloring contest, and weekend game booths. Moreover, Susana Lee, director of Macau Culture Creativity & Arts Association said the "Rubber Duck Macau Tour" could attract local residents and tourists, as well as enhance the city's cultural and creative industries.

Taiwanese lawmakers criticize China, Macau customs

SEVERAL Taiwanese lawmakers slammed China for Macau customs officials' recent decision to refuse entry to a Taiwanese woman whose passport bore a sticker that read "Taiwan is my country."

The woman, surnamed Su, is a dancer. She and her troupe arrived in Macau on Thursday last week for performances on Friday and Saturday, Apple Daily reported.

Su was taken into a small room for questioning and was allegedly told, "You are asking for trouble by challenging China's authority."

Su told Apple Daily that she had placed the sticker on her passport when she was still studying abroad in 2012, and had no trouble entering Japan, South Korea and European nations in the past four years. However, she was asked to sign an affidavit and was put on the next available flight back to Taiwan, despite expressing her willingness



to remove the sticker so as to not jeopardize her chances of entering Macau for her performances.

Democratic Progressive Party Legislator Ho Hsin-chun stated on Facebook that the incident had exposed China's ugly side of being "truculent and unreasonable," just over a month before the upcoming swearing-in of the new Taiwanese government, headed by the Democratic Progressive Party's Tsai Ing-wen, on May 20.

"Because of this sticker, a young dancer was deported by

Macau customs officials, which affected her work," Ho said. "I demand that the Straits Exchange Foundation lodge a protest and negotiate with China, and that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' personnel stationed in Macau also take their complaints to the Macau government and customs, to safeguard our citizens' freedom, personal security and right to work," Ho added, cited by the Taipei Times.

Meanwhile, New Power Party Legislator Freddy Lim claimed that the incident has highlighted China's deliberate attempts to single out Taiwanese people and make things difficult for them.

"Unless there is evidence that there have also been cases of U.S. or Japanese citizens being denied entry when seeking to enter Hong Kong or Macau with sticker-adorned passports, it is without doubt that the policy only targets Taiwanese," Lin said. Conversely, Eleanor Wang, a spokeswoman of Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs explained that any unauthorized modifications made to a passport could hamper its identification purposes and global credibility, emphasizing that Taiwanese passports currently enjoy visa-free or landing visa status in 164 countries.

According to the spokeswoman, Macau's customs officials this year refused entry to 16 individuals due to stickers on their passports. **Staff reporter**

Shorts back out of Melco Crown as Macau outlook improves

Bears Pull Back Macau Bets

Melco Crown short interest at lowest in more than a year



Bears are cutting their losses on Melco Crown Entertainment Ltd. as the Macau casino operator has rebounded as much as 46 percent in the past 10 weeks. Short interest in the U.S.-traded stock is around 4 percent of outstanding shares, a 13-month low and down from a peak of 11 percent in December. The sentiment shift comes as data show that Macau casinos' strategic shift to attract more mass-market gamblers instead of junket-supported VIP players may be starting to take hold and Melco Crown expands its operations outside the gambling enclave.

MGM Resort's IPO REIT debuts

MGM Resort has launched a controlled Real Estate Investment Trust - REIT (MGM Growth Properties). According to "Seeking Alpha," an online investment research platform, "the REIT is essentially a nifty piece of financial engineering, superior in concept to other hotel/gaming/REITs."

Interviewed by the Times in November 2015, MGM Resorts chairman and CEO Jim Murren explained that the REIT would be a way for the company to shift casino assets and debt to the new property company, and then lease the properties back from the trust.

"We own over 700 acres of land on the prized Las Vegas Boulevard, and it has been a really rewarding but complicated exercise to conclude how best

to allow investors to realize the value of this untapped, unlocked potential. We decided early on that a spin-off is not a good idea. A spin-off would be if we had taken our resorts and spun them [off], or given them to shareholders, or sold them to another entity that we did not control and in some cases, would not even manage. So instead, we came up with the structure of a company that can simply move many of our resorts into a subsidiary of MGM," Murren said.

MGM Growth Properties prices its IPO at USD21 per share. The pricing is on the high end of the expected range. The new real estate firm will raise \$1.05 billion in the offering at the NY exchange. MGM Resorts holds a 76 percent stake in MGM Growth Properties.

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

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

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ADMINISTRATOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

SECRETARY Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com

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

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Daniel Beitler

PANAMA PAPERS

NEXT to Singapore, Dubai and Hong Kong, Macau is one of Asia's biggest global offshore banking centers. The issue was highlighted recently by the Panama Papers leak, which revealed around two dozen local entities to be linked to Panamanian law firm, Mossack Fonseca.

According to some reports, more than one-third of Mossack Fonseca's business came from China, including the two SAR territories. This is nothing new for Macau, which has existed for some time as a low-tax offshore destination for wealthy corporations and individuals.

Among these is Macau magnate Ng Lap Seng – currently standing trial over allegations of bribery of a United Nations official – who has been involved with the Clinton family as a 'donor' over the past few decades.

While many of the intentions behind holding assets or money in offshore accounts are perfectly within the scope of the law for most countries, the mysterious and hidden world of the ultra-wealthy sometimes facilitates less tasteful activities. Undisturbed offshore accounts can sometimes be used for tax evasion, money-laundering or to bypass international or criminal sanctions, as is believed to be the case with Russia and North Korea.

Macau's Decree-Law number 58/99/M, informally entitled "Offshore Regime of Macau," specifically forbids the engagement of activities



A marquee on a building in Panama City lists the Mossack Fonseca law firm

restricted to credit institutions, investment companies and financial intermediaries. Under Article 65, it adds that offshore commercial and auxiliary institutions are "specifically forbidden to provide services to third parties other than the institution of which they are a subsidiary or branch."

However, under the same law, companies can be fully tax-exempt as long as they do not operate in MOP, do not target Macau residents, and do not focus on other com-

panies in the MSAR. In other words, they must "focus only on non-Macau markets."

If the government cannot tax the companies and transactions, then "there is no real benefit to the local community of having offshore companies in Macau," Albano Martins, a local economist, told the Times.

"They [offshore entities] only provide a benefit to the shareholders, with the possible exception of a small employment benefit. For example, some companies have

a minimum amount of staff [required] for operating in Macau."

According to the website of local accountancy firm, HMV & Associates, very little is required to set up an offshore in Macau: MOP25,000 in registered capital, the disclosure of the company owner (only to the licensing authority), a minimum of one director and one shareholder, and around three months' waiting time for the permit application and entity incorporation.

"But there are firms in Macau that have these companies ready to go," said Martins. "They hold these [newly created] companies and sell them to whoever is interested."

In the absence of any measurable benefit to the local community, the danger is that these organizations may be used for illicit purposes, he added.

"In fact the environment facilitates these illicit operations because it has almost no [government] supervision at all."

The Macau government has been quiet on the issue. After the news broke, the Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lionel Leong, told reporters that the government needs more time and information before commenting on the issue. Leong said that he has "no knowledge of the involvement of any local companies in this [Mossack Fonseca] scheme."

However, Macau's links with other popular offshore destinations are well-documented. According to data compiled

in the Macau Yearbook 2015, the three biggest holders of foreign direct investment stock in Macau are the Cayman Islands, the British Virgin Islands and Hong Kong – all notorious for the existence of offshore entities.

As individual entities, their investment stock – accumulated over years of direct investment in Macau – exceeds that of mainland China, and is unrivalled among the documented countries and territories. The British Virgin Islands, the smallest of the three to

“The environment facilitates these illicit operations because it has almost no [government] supervision.**”**

ALBANO MARTINS
ECONOMIST

invest in Macau, holds nearly twice as much stock as China (MOP41.6 billion in 2013), while the Cayman Islands holds more than three times as much (MOP66 billion in 2013).

Martins speculates that many of these sources "probably originate with local residents" who themselves own offshore companies in other parts of the world.

He warned that the system can be used to for the misapplication of resources in Macau. "Some transactions, that can benefit the government in terms of taxation, can be avoided through the use of offshore companies."

While offshore entities are not allowed their tax exemption status if dealing directly in the market, once one organization has the rights to a resource in Macau – such as a plot of land – there is the danger of it being sold through a network of companies that are largely unregulated.

"The interests [of offshore organizations] are well-developed [entrenched] in Macau," said Martins. "It means 'business under the table' and it should not be allowed."

ONE SHOT NEWS



Construction in progress near Nam Van Lake. During the December 2015 Policy Address presentation, the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Alexis Tam, announced that the area abutting the lake – which is near the government headquarters – will have cafes with outdoor zones managed by the Cultural Affairs Bureau.

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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN' "

Daniel Beitler

ART

Tibetan art exhibition to open in renovated gallery

A Himalayan-themed art exhibition will open tomorrow night to coincide with the formal re-opening of the iAOHiN Gallery, following its three-month refurbishment. The exhibition, titled “Tibet Revealed: an in depth look at art from the roof of the world,” will exhibit contemporary and traditional Tibetan art, including Tibetan Buddhist art and works by current ‘Tibetans-in-exile’.

Exhibition curator Simon Lam says, “Through more than 20 contemporary paintings and 30 thangka [Tibetan Buddhist paintings on cotton or silk] we will present to visitors how Tibetan culture and religion are preserved both at home and in exile [...] and how Tibetan history is seen through a Tibetan perspective.”

Among the exhibiting artists is Amsterdam-based Tashi Norbu, whose contemporary art contrasts the traditional and the materialistic “mainstream” with iconic Tibetan-style clouds and natural scenery.

“It is a contradiction of sorts,” he tells the Times in an interview, “between traditional Tibetan Buddhism and materialism.”

“One is being threatened by the other, but they must [ultimately] belong together. In this world we can’t stop [them from intermingling],” he explained.

One such painting depicts a Tibetan Buddhist monk alongside the superhero character Spider-Man, both encircled by traditional clouds. This symbolizes a lack of clarity, according to Tashi Norbu.

“We [Tibetans] are very proud of our heritage [...] and the influence we have had on the rest of the world, especially since the 1960s,” he said. “Today we have the potential to contribute greatly to the world in terms of our [unique] philosophy.”

Norbu arrived in Macau about 15 hours before speaking with the Times, and surprised gallery director Florence Lam with a brand new, unfinished painting, depicting the city of Macau in his recognizable style.

Norbu will work on the painting, which features the Grand Lisboa and the



Tashi Norbu sits next to a painting made specifically for the exhibition



Li Ben Ta Shi stands in front of a traditional Thangka

Macau Tower, and may finish it during tomorrow’s opening.

In contrast to Norbu’s contemporary fusion stands Li Ben Ta Shi, a thangka master from a place in Tibet that is known as “Art City,” he tells the Times through a translator.

He stresses the religious influence on his works,

Artists should have the freedom to express what they want to say.

FLORENCE LAM

some of which contain liquefied gold, and all of which are composed of thousands of intricate details.

“Thangka is about a story of the Buddha,” he says. “The works tell a story, and one painting can recount the whole life of a person through its many dimensions.”

Li Ben Ta Shi explains that his broader motivation is to encourage more people to take up the traditional art form in a bid to preserve the culture.

“Much of my art is about themes of redemption.

[It is about] encouraging us to commit few sins, to be a good person and to do something good for society,” he explains to the Times.

By far the most controversial of the works on display is a painting in the “Tibet Revealed” collection by Australian-based Tibetan exile Karma Phuntsok, who was born in Lhasa in 1952.

The painting in question appears to depict the Chinese military’s crack-down during the Lhasa Uprising in 1959, though the artist, who is not able to attend the exhibition, was unable to confirm this.

Chinese soldiers are portrayed with blood dripping off their ends of their rifles and staining the ground beneath them as they march through the Tibetan capital.

“We are really testing the boundaries with this one,” said Simon Lam. “Some of these works are basically forbidden to be shown in the mainland.”

“Artists should have the freedom to express what they want to say,” Florence Lam told the Times in relation to the controversial painting. “Works [like these] can’t be created when one has to think about censorship or rules.”

In response to repeated questioning from the Times, Florence Lam said, “This could be the most

controversial piece [in the exhibition] ... but I still don’t see anything wrong with it.”

Some of the paintings

will be moved to the gallery’s warehouse near Red Market which, according to Simon Lam, is “probably the biggest

in Macau for such activities, at 1200 square meters.” They will be displayed there for up to two months.

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The two buildings beside the public hospital planned for demolition

AL PLENARY

Infectious diseases building location up for more debate

LAWMAKERS passed three motions during yesterday's debate in the Legislative Assembly (AL) requesting further debate on the location of the infectious diseases building, which was planned to be built near the Conde de São Januário Central Hospital (CHCSJ). The proposed location has generated controversy, with many groups and residents opposing the construction, while the government has been stressing

the urgency of building the public health facility.

The proposals were raised by Leong Veng Chai, Song Pek Kei, and Au Kam San. Au Kam San wondered why the facility would have to be located in such a densely populated area, instead of Coloane. Moreover, since the discussion regarding the program commenced several years ago, the lawmaker elected by a group linked to the New Macau Association asked why the officials are

only urging the facility to move forward now.

Ng Kuok Cheong voiced his support for Au's motion, saying that the government law enforcement caused citizens to lose confidence. He questioned the necessity of such a big project.

Other lawmakers like Lei Cheng I and Kwan Tsui Hang also supported the motions, saying that if the society is debating the matter, the government should also discuss it.

Physician Chan Iek Lap criticized the lawmakers who disagreed with the location, saying that they did not care about the safety of the nurses and doctors. In response, Pereira Coutinho emphasized again the topic of government transparency, saying that troubles arising from the projects are all caused by the government itself.

Representatives of the Macau Civil Servants Association and the New Macau Association, as well as concerned residents, held a demonstration last month in S. Francisco Garden and on the rooftop of a residential building to protest the construction of the proposed infectious diseases facility. ANM questioned the necessity of such a large complex, and added that the new Islands Hospital has forecast a similar date of completion to that of the controversial building.

On the government's part, the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Alexis Tam, has repeatedly said that, after considering population safety and heritage protection, the two buildings beside the public hospital should be demolished to give space for the infectious diseases building.

Plans to build a facility for the treatment of infectious diseases were initially discussed after the 2003 outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in neighboring regions. The planned building will have an area of 5,565 square meters. The 12-storey building will include 120 wards specially equipped for infection control and treatment of patients, as well as world-class medical facilities. **Staff reporter**

Unlicensed ownership of endangered species penalized

A proposal to increase the fine imposed on unlicensed holders of endangered fauna and flora was approved yesterday by the Legislative Assembly (AL).

The Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lionel Leong, proposed the implementation of the international Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

The proposal for the new fine was passed during the debate. The current fine – which stands currently at a maximum of MOP5,000 – will be increased to between MOP200,000 and MOP500,000.

Lawmaker Pereira Coutinho questioned the secretary whether all departments would conduct unified operations when endangered items are seized, and if the authorities will provide pictures of the items online. He repeatedly called for increased government transparency. Leong claimed that posting pictures online before completing all legal procedures would be complicated, but he approved the suggestion.

The lawmakers also questioned the departments about the transfer of live animals between regions. The representatives acknowledged that there are no regulations under CI-



Lionel Leong (second row, center) smiles

TES, although the authorities do indeed conduct bilateral operations with some regions.

Economic Services director Tai Kin Ip said that in terms of seized items, 350 kilograms worth of items from endangered species were destroyed, 150 kilograms are currently awaiting destruction, and 200 kilograms were handed over to Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau. Ip added that the items cannot be auctioned while in the possession of the Macau government, according to CITES, but that the government would be obliged to use them for research and education purposes.

After yesterday's general approval, the bill will undergo detailed discussion at one of the AL's commissions.

ON THE LAWMAKERS' AGENDA

GOV'T TRANSPARENCY

Sio Chi Wai, Pereira Coutinho and Leong On Kei urged the authorities to improve the transparency of their work; including budgets, audits, purchases, and outsourced contracts. Following the latest reports of the Commission of Audit and the Commission Against Corruption, which reveal abuses on public tenders, the lawmakers consider the current related laws – which have been used for the past 30 years – to be unsuitable. They further urged civil servants to improve their disciplinary awareness, since they frequently claim to be unaware of the law when residents complain about public programs.

TRANSPORTATION

Ma Chi Seng and Song Pek Kei asked the government to solve both traffic and taxi issues. The lawmakers noted that the number of local vehicles has increased to 250,000, making the city's traffic a headache for both citizens and the authorities. Nonetheless, the lawmakers suggested that the government give priority to buses by adding more buses, extending the working time of the drivers and setting up exclusive bus lanes. Last year, 5,079 penalties were issued to taxi drivers, double the verified occurrences in 2014. Meanwhile, lawmakers have agreed on the recent taxi regulation proposals, but expressed their understanding toward taxi drivers complaining about the difficulties of carrying passengers due to the limited taxi spots.

SMEs

Chan Hong, Au Kam San and Ho Ion Sang appealed to the government to simplify the procedures of SME registration and to encourage entrepreneurial activities. For new registered businesses, finishing all paperwork could take at least two months, and in some cases more than a year. Applicants need to complete tasks that involve several departments, giving rise to complaints that registration departments are unreasonably picky or avoid responsibilities. The lawmakers have requested that the government reduce the number of sections involved and to clarify the obligations of each department. Nevertheless, the government has been offering MOP300,000 loans to new entrepreneurs, which many consider to be paltry.



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Malaysia Air CEO cites reasons beyond his control' for exit

Kyunghee Park

CHRISTOPH Mueller, the chief executive of Malaysia Airlines Bhd., told his staff he was leaving the national carrier for reasons that are personal and "beyond my control," according to a letter he wrote to them.

"The show must go on," Mueller wrote to employees Tuesday, informing them he was leaving the carrier in September, according to a copy of the letter seen by Bloomberg News. The resignation is for "personal reasons, which are beyond my control," Mueller wrote without elaborating.

Mueller's unexpected resignation comes as the carrier is beginning to turn around after two plane crashes in 2014 dented its sales and reputation, prompted the government to buy out all shareholders and take the company private. A veteran of a turnaround effort at Aer Lingus Group Plc in Ireland, Mueller was charged with reviving a carrier that was racking up losses even before hundreds of people died in the two crashes.

"The company is making very good progress and we are on track with our plan," Mueller wrote. "We have delivered our financial budget for the first three months of 2016, our on-time performance is increasing and very stable and our customer service index is recovering with more significant improvements in the pipeline."

After cutting 6,000 jobs, reducing pay, and trimming capacity by 30 percent, the onus is now on Malaysia's government to find a successor to continue the revival plan put in place by



Christoph Mueller

Mueller, who became CEO-designate in March 2015. State sovereign-wealth fund Khazanah Nasional Bhd. took the carrier private by buying out small shareholders to help the Sepang, Malaysia-based company return to profit.

Malaysia Air is on track to return to profitability as the airline's restructuring effort is proceeding as planned and the company is finished laying off employees, Mueller said in an interview in February. The carrier wants to buy and own some aircraft once its targets are met, as its existing fleet structure is skewed toward leased planes, he said.

Mueller intends to remain with the company as a non-executive director and will serve a six-month notice period until September to facilitate an orderly transition, the airline said. The board has appointed Chief Operations Officer Peter Bellew as an executive director, it said.

Malaysia Airlines was already losing money before passenger confidence was shattered after Flight MH370 vanished on March 8 while en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing. The carrier lost another aircraft when MH17 was shot down over Ukraine four months later.

Bloomberg

Mitsubishi admits to manipulating fuel test data

Ma Jie and Yuki Hagiwara

MITSUBISHI Motors Corp. admitted to manipulating test data involving 625,000 vehicles in order to improve fuel-economy claims.

The affected models include those supplied to Nissan Motor Co., which discovered the manipulation, according to a statement by Mitsubishi Motors. The two companies are discussing compensation and Mitsubishi is also checking whether the cheating affected overseas models.

Mitsubishi Motors is suspected of manipulating the load placed on the tires of four different models in order to make their fuel economy performance appear better, Kyodo news

It's not the first time for Mitsubishi to have this kind of issue, and this definitely won't help them rebuild their reputation.

SEIJI SUGIURA



The Mitsubishi Mirage first shipment to Japan

reported, citing an unidentified person. The company's manipulation of tests would further intensify scrutiny of the auto industry after Volkswagen AG's admission last year that it rigged diesel models with software to meet U.S. emissions standards.

"This may be different from Volkswagen's issue, but the market has become very sensitive to such kind of news," Seiji Sugiura, an analyst at Tokai Tokyo Research Center, said by phone. "It may have a similar impact in terms of sales and the company's reputation."

Mitsubishi Motors' shares fell 15 percent, the most in more than a decade, in Tokyo trading. The stock, down 29 percent this year, has a market value of 721 billion yen (USD6.6 billion). An internal company probe revealed the mishandled testing involved four models including the eK minicar, Kyodo said.

Mitsubishi Motors President Tetsuro Aikawa and two other executives bowed in apology at a briefing in Tokyo. Nissan, which rebadges the eK model

and sells the car as the Nissan DayZ in Japan, declined to comment.

Mitsubishi Motors's disclosure risks doing further damage to consumers' trust in car companies' fuel economy claims. Hyundai Motor Co. and Kia Motors Corp. agreed to pay fines and forfeit emissions credits in late 2014 to settle U.S. claims they overstated mileage ratings. Ford lowered ratings for hybrid models in both 2014 and 2013.

The Japanese automaker has been seeking to restore confidence in its vehicles for more than a decade after a series of scandals more than a decade ago led the carmaker to seek multiple bailouts from Mitsubishi group companies. Mitsubishi Motors had covered up defects involving flawed axles that could lead wheels to detach.

"It's again bad for the company's image," Sugiura said. "It's not the first time for Mitsubishi to have this kind of issue, and this definitely won't help them rebuild their reputation." **Bloomberg**

corporate bits

MGM MACAU LAUNCHES 'FUN FOR EVERYONE'



MGM is set to launch its new "Fun for Everyone" campaign this month. The campaign includes a sculpture collection by

legendary French artist Edgar Degas exhibited at MGM Art Space, complemented by the highly anticipated return of the

large and colorful butterflies hovering above the Grande Praça.

A highlight of Le French May, "Edgar Degas Figures in Motion" presents 74 pieces of bronze sculpture never before seen in Asia, including the famous "Little Dancer Aged Fourteen." Degas is known as one of the founders of the Impressionist movement and is famous for his paintings, sculptures, prints and drawings.

MGM added in a press release that over 160 vibrant Monarch and Morpho butterflies, created using synthetic glass, will hover above young laurel trees and swivel among datura blossoms in Grande Praça. The installation is designed by Stephen Stefanou, a U.S.-based maestro of oversized visual display art.

LEXMARK TO BE BOUGHT AT USD3.6 BILLION BY APEX, PAG ASIA



Lexmark International Inc., a computer-printer maker, agreed to be acquired by an investment consortium led by Apex Technology Co. and PAG Asia Capital in a transaction

that values the company at USD3.6 billion.

The all-cash deal, worth USD40.50 per Lexmark share, will be financed through equity contributions from the

buyers and debt financing, the company said Tuesday in a statement. The transaction, approved by Lexmark's board, is expected to close in the second half of 2016 and is subject to certain shareholder and regulatory approvals. Legend Capital Management Co. is also a member of the consortium.

The purchase price represents a 17 percent premium on Lexmark's closing share price of USD34.66 on Tuesday.

Lexmark reported USD968.8 million in fourth-quarter sales, with about 83 percent coming from its Imaging Solutions and Services unit, which houses its printing division, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. The company's software division reported USD160.8 million in quarterly revenue.

Joe McDonald, Shenzhen

THE Chinese automaker that sold more electric cars last year than Tesla, Nissan or GM is taking a back road into the American market on a battery-powered bus.

Detouring around the cost and risk of consumer sales, BYD Co. has quietly built a U.S. business supplying rechargeable buses to environmentally-minded transit agencies. Its factory north of Los Angeles, opened in 2013, is on track to deliver 300 this year.

The company has dipped its toe into the U.S. auto market by launching test fleets of plug-in electric taxis in Chicago and New York City.

Consumer sales are coming but BYD has yet to decide when, said Michael Austin, its vice president for the United States. He said it might start developing a sales network in the next two years.

“We have the manufacturing scale that can drive the cost to a point where we can bring vehicles to export markets including the United States, Latin America and Europe that will be game-changing,” said Austin at BYD’s headquarters in this southern city adjacent to Hong Kong.

Once that comes, “we get brand recognition because people already are riding our buses,” said Austin.

BYD — the name stands for “Build Your Dreams” — is part of an emerging wave of Chinese companies that stand to profit from global demand for solar and wind power, electric cars and other clean and renewable energy.

They benefit from rising consumer interest abroad and heavy spending at home by the ruling Communist Party. Chinese leaders see what they call “new energy” as a field where China still can win a profitable leading role.

“I have no doubt BYD eventually can crack the market in Europe or the U.S.,” said Cosmin Laslau, who follows the electric vehicle market for Lux Research in Boston.

It might take five to 10 years to achieve an “equal footing” with GM, Nissan or Tesla, “but it’s surely doable if we look sufficiently far out,” Laslau said.

“By deploying these buses first [in the United States], BYD can get an early lesson in how its batteries fare,” he said. “And if they are successful, they can point to that and say the battery you are going to get in your electric vehicle has already done a half-million miles in buses.”

In 2014, China spent USD83.3 billion in renewables, nearly one-third of the global total. That includes construction of hydro dams and wind farms, research

Electric carmaker enters US market by selling buses



Performers take part in an event to introduce the Yuan, the latest Plug-in Hybrid mini SUV from BYD in Beijing

grants to manufacturers and subsidies to customers.

China surpassed the United States last year as the biggest market for electrics by number of units sold, boosted by government subsidies of up to 60,000 yuan (\$9,500) per vehicle.

BYD’s sales rose to 61,722 autos, beating Tesla Motors Inc.’s sales of 50,580 plug-in vehicles and more than triple the 15,393 Volts sold by

China surpassed the US last year as the biggest market for electrics

General Motors Co. Nissan Motor Co. says sales of its Leaf over the past five years total 211,000, which based on previous data suggests about 56,000 were sold last year.

Unlike startups that are burning cash, BYD is profitable. The company, in which Warren Buffett’s Berkshire Hathaway Corp. owns a 10 percent stake, has yet to release 2015 results but said in January profit rose about 500 percent from a year earlier.

BYD’s consumer models are, like the Volt, “dual mode” hybrids — plug-in electri-

cs with a small gasoline generator to extend the range beyond one charge’s 150 to 200 miles (250 to 300 kilometers).

The company started out as a battery developer, founded in 1995 by engineer Wang Chuanfu and 20 co-workers from a state-owned company. It grew to supply about half the global market for mobile phone batteries before expanding into electric vehicles with the 2002 purchase of a small producer of gasoline cars that became BYD Auto Ltd.

Last year marked the first time BYD Auto supplied more than half of BYD’s revenue. The rest comes from sales of batteries, solar panels, mobile phone components and power-management technology.

BYD’s workforce of 180,000 includes 15,000 engineers in battery development. At its Shenzhen headquarters, a spiral parking structure has 400 spaces to charge taxis and employee cars. The company has its own test track for buses, modeled on the U.S. Department of Transportation’s bus testing site in Altoona, Pennsylvania.

The first two buses out of the BYD factory in Lancaster, California, went to the nearby Antelope Valley Transit Authority, which plans to become the first all-electric U.S. fleet.

The agency is buying 85 BYD buses for a total of \$72

million. They include 14 60-foot-long (18-meter-long) articulated buses that can carry 120 people with a range of up to 200 miles (320 kilometers) on one charge, 30 commuter coaches and 41 40-foot (12-meter) standard buses.

The 40-foot (12-meter) buses cost \$660,000, compared with \$500,000 for a diesel hybrid, according to the agency’s executive director, Len Engel. But maintenance is cheaper: Most buses need new tires after as little as 20,000 miles (32,000 kilometers) but the BYD vehicles are still on their first set after 50,000 miles (80,000 kilometers).

“It’s slightly more expensive,” said Engel. But with annual savings of up to \$50,000 on maintenance “that is paid back in three years and after that we are making money.”

Other buyers include transit agencies in Los Angeles, Long Beach and Gardena in California, Denver and St. Albert in western Canada.

Several Silicon Valley technology companies are talking with BYD about possible double-deck commuter buses for employees with coffee bars, leather interiors, video games and work stations, said Peter Mobley, BYD’s marketing director for North America.

Outside North America, BYD buses are in use at Amsterdam’s Schiphol Airport and in

Japan, Hong Kong, Finland, Denmark and Uruguay.

BYD’s consumer models are, like GM’s Volt, “dual mode” with plug-in charging and a small gasoline engine to generate extra power if needed to help extend the range.

BYD’s workhorse is the e6, a boxy, midsize all-electric hatchback used by taxi companies in China and Europe. The company has a test fleet of 20 in Chicago and is preparing 50 in New York City.

The brand also is moving upmarket. A family of SUVs ranging from subcompact to luxury and named for Chinese dynasties including the Song, Yuan and Tang have leather interiors and rear-view video.

To reach American consumers, BYD will need to “bring something new to the table,” said Laslau. He said a newcomer might target budget-minded buyers with a model priced under \$35,000 with a range of at least 200 miles (320 kilometers) on a charge.

Austin said BYD can meet that today but thinks the price has to be even lower — below \$30,000.

“We’re not a toy for the rich,” he said. “We’re going after the mass market. And if you are delivering that, you have to be cost-competitive.”

BYD’s batteries are heavier than its competitors’ but the company says their iron phosphate chemical mix is safer than those made of lithium and cobalt that sometimes can catch fire if punctured.

Aboard, BYD faces more hurdles in countries that don’t promote electric vehicles as aggressively as China does.

In its home city of Shenzhen, the local government has bought 200 electric buses and thousands of taxis. The state-owned utility installs charging stations — something BYD cannot count on in other markets.

In the United States, BYD faces a “very large undertaking” of setting up a sales and service network before consumer sales could start, said Austin, a “battery guy” who joined BYD in 2007 from Motorola Inc., where he had helped manage purchases of the Chinese company’s batteries for mobile phones.

“Our success in 2015 has probably accelerated some of our plans to bring consumer electric vehicles to export markets,” he said. “We have a big job preparing ourselves for that.” AP

Hong Kong malls search for new identity after golden decade ends

Frederik Balfour

AFTER 27 years of serving rib-eye steak and apple pie to American cuisine lovers in Hong Kong, Dan Ryan's Chicago Grill has closed its doors at the city's Pacific Place mall. Taking its place: a trendy new Italian restaurant called Opetta.

"I don't know why they had to leave," said Ho Kwan-lun, a urologist who took selfies with his friends in front of Dan Ryan's before going in for one last meal the day it closed on April 10. "It's a shame. This place has been here so long."

Landlord Swire Properties Ltd.'s decision not to renew Dan Ryan's lease wasn't about squeezing more rent from a new tenant. Instead, it's an attempt to refresh its tenant mix to woo new visitors in response to Hong Kong's deepest retail sales slump since 2003, when the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome disease emptied malls.

The million-dollar question for landlords: How to keep mall traffic flowing when wealthy mainland shoppers have turned lukewarm toward Hong

Customer spending patterns have changed, and we are constantly revisiting the trade mix.

FIONA SHIU
GENERAL MANAGER
OF PACIFIC PLACE



Hong Kong's Pacific Place mall

Kong and the local economy is slowing in tandem with China's? Developers are searching for the answer by bringing in new tenants offering free yoga classes, champagne and caviar pop-up bars, and gelato.

"Our high-end retailers have been facing challenges in recent months," said Fiona Shiu, general manager of Pacific Place. "Customer spending patterns have changed, and we are constantly revisiting the trade mix."

It's a scenario playing out at luxury malls around Hong Kong, where double-digit rent increases were the norm during a decade when sales were powered by hordes of mainland Chinese shoppers loading up on Louis Vuitton handbags and Dior jewelry. With those tourists taking their spending to Paris, London and Tokyo, and with online competition gaining ground, mall ow-

ners are staring at steep rental declines.

"The biggest challenge for shopping malls is to keep them occupied," said Eva Lee, a UBS Group AG property analyst. "A lot of rentals were signed when the market was still great, and they have not adjusted to the new reality of weaker retail sales."

Lee expects rents in prime locations to fall as much as 25 percent in the next two years.

Falling rents are only half the equation for developers. Because most leases entitle the landlord to a share of retail receipts, when sales are weaker for tenants, the malls earn less, too.

The locations that were the biggest beneficiaries of the Chinese boom are now suffering the most. Arrivals of Chinese tourists fell 18 percent during the first two months of 2016 compared with the same

period last year, according to Hong Kong government data, while their retail spending fell 8.3 percent in 2015, after nearly a decade of double-digit growth.

Take Wharf Holdings Ltd.'s mammoth Harbour City mall complex in Kowloon, which in 2014 boasted the highest sales per square foot in the world and accounted for about 7.1 percent of all retail sales in Hong Kong that year. In 2015, Harbour City sales slumped 12 percent.

The average retailer occupancy cost ratio at Harbour City jumped to its highest level in 16 years in 2015, according to data from Bloomberg Intelligence. Rents there could fall by as much as 40 percent in the next five years, says UBS's Lee.

"In the past 10 years, most shopping centers were driven by mainland shopper requirements for gold, jewelry, luxury

labels and cosmetics," said Helen Mak, senior director of retail services for Hong Kong at Knight Frank LLP. "It's probably the end of that chapter."

The new chapter is about bringing back local shoppers. At Hongkong Land Holdings Ltd.'s upscale Landmark mall in Central, cashmere sweater maker Pringle of Scotland has moved out and Mak Mak, a Thai restaurant, has moved in. Lululemon Athletica Inc. has opened a flagship store at Hysan Place mall in Causeway Bay, where it holds free weekly yoga classes on Sunday mornings.

At Harbour City, Wharf Holdings hosts a new Eslite bookstore and bakery, one of more than 40 new concept stores introduced since 2015, the landlord said in an e-mail. Its Times Square mall has introduced a floor dedicated to kids' shops.

At Pacific Place mall, Tea WG Salon & Boutique now occupies Coach Inc.'s old space. Pop-up champagne and caviar bars as well as gelato kiosks now populate the landings between escalators. Swire Properties plans to increase food and beverage outlets by 50 percent in the next two years. Whether that's the right formula remains to be seen.

"If you take a luxury shop and make it into a tapas bar, base rents are generally lower," says Sebastian Skiff, executive director of retail development and asset management for Asia at Colliers International Group Inc. "You still need higher rent retailers to support that foot traffic."

Meantime, other Dan Ryan's outlets in Taipei and Singapore, as well as in the Harbour City and Festival Walk malls in Hong Kong, are set to keep serving up American-size portions - for now, at least. **Bloomberg**

Official spending on perks well under budget last year

AMID an ongoing austerity drive, China's once-lavish government spending on overseas travel, vehicles and entertainment was almost 15 percent below budget last year, the Finance Ministry said yesterday.

Just 5.37 billion yuan (USD826 million) was spent in 2015 out of a bu-

dget of 6.31 billion (\$970 million), according to a report on the ministry's website.

Although this year's budget for the three items, known colloquially as the "three publics," is only slightly lower, spending will continue to be tightly controlled, it quoted an unidentified ministry spokesman as saying.

"The 'three publics budget' is only an upper spending limit. All departments must strictly control 'three publics' spending within the budget range and in conformity with all relevant management regulations," the spokesman was quoted as saying.

With China's economy slowing sharply from the

runaway growth of the last decade, belt-tightening has been ordered across the government - with a special focus on what are widely seen as perks open to abuse. Last year's economic growth declined to a 25-year low of 6.9 percent and the International Monetary Fund expects the figure to drift down to 6.3 per-

cent this year.

In one sign of the cutbacks, spending on China's powerful and hugely influential military is set to rise this year by just 7.6 percent, the smallest increase in six years.

President Xi Jinping has also ordered officials to cut back on banquets and other non-essentials, while his sweeping

anti-corruption campaign has further reduced spending and abuses of privilege among nervous officials.

The ministry said other factors, including changes in the international situation and a new policy restricting most new auto purchases to domestic brands, also held down spending. **AP**

Stephen Wright, Jakarta

INDONESIA

New mill raises doubts about APP's forests pledge

A landmark commitment by one of the world's largest producers of tissue and paper to stop cutting down Indonesia's prized tropical forests is under renewed scrutiny as the company prepares to open a giant pulp mill in South Sumatra.

To fanfare more than three years ago, Asia Pulp and Paper (APP) promised to use only plantation woods after an investigation by one of its strongest critics, Greenpeace, showed its products were partly made from the pulp of endangered trees.

Greenpeace welcomed the announcement as a breakthrough and the company, long reviled by activists as a villain, rebranded itself as a defender of the environment, helping it to win back customers that had severed ties. At the same time, it was pressing ahead behind the scenes with plans to build a third pulp mill in Indonesia.

When it went public with its plans for the OKI mill in 2013, APP announced it would produce 2 million tons a year and then earlier this year acknowledged the mill's capacity could in the future increase to 2.8 million tons.

New research released yesterday by a dozen international and Indonesian environmental groups estimates that APP will

face a significant shortfall in its supply of plantation-grown wood after the new mill begins operating, even at a 2.0 million ton capacity. The company could then face a choice between using higher-cost imported wood or looking the other way as its suppliers encroach upon virgin forests.

"APP, while it has been presenting itself as a champion of zero deforestation, is building one of the world's biggest pulp mills," said Christopher Barr of Woods & Wayside International, one of the organizations involved with the report.

"There will be a great deal of pressure to ensure it receives adequate supplies of wood to keep it operating at full capacity," he said. "Our analysis shows the group's existing planted area in South Sumatra is unlikely to produce the volumes of wood the mill is expected to consume at projected capacity levels."

How the mill, which could operate for more than half a



In this Nov. 4, 2007 file photo, a worker talks on his radio near a pile of acacia logs at a pulp and paper mills in Riau province, on Sumatra island

century, is fed will be a factor in the survival of Indonesia's tropical forests and the endangered wildlife they shelter. More generally, the draining and destruction of peatlands for forestry or agriculture will over decades release vast amounts of carbon that could jeopardize

Indonesia's ability to meet its emission reduction targets under an international agreement due to be signed within days.

The report estimates that APP's plantations in South Sumatra have never produced half of the wood needed to feed a 2.0 million ton a year pulp ope-

ration. That shortfall is compounded by devastating forest and peatland fires across Indonesia last year that destroyed more than a quarter of APP's planted trees in South Sumatra, according to an on-the-ground survey by Hutan Kita Institute and other civil society groups.

Greenpeace forests campaigner Andy Tait said APP has maintained it will only supply the mill with plantation or imported wood. But he acknowledged that APP's assessment that its plantation wood supply is adequate predates last year's "horrendous" fires, which heavily affected the company.

"We don't see any sign of APP pulling back from its commitments on no deforestation at this stage and it would obviously be commercial suicide for them to do so," he said. "But this mill construction raises a number of critical questions that need to be addressed."

The company said it would respond to concerns about the mill. **MDT/AP**

INDIA

Heat wave kills more than 160

Omer Farooq, Nirmala George, Hyderabad

WEEKS of sweltering temperatures have caused more than 160 deaths in southern and eastern India, officials said on Tuesday, warning that any relief from monsoon rains was still likely weeks away.

Most of the heat-wave victims were laborers and farmers in the states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa, though temperatures elsewhere in India have also hit 45 degrees Celsius.

Schools were closed last week in Orissa until at least April 26. Officials in Andhra Pradesh were giving out free water and buttermilk to help people stay hydrated. And everywhere, people have been urged to stay indoors during the hottest hours of the day.

Y.K. Reddy, a state meteorological official, said the temperatures were about 4-5 degrees Celsius hotter than normal for April. "Normally such high temperatures are recorded in the month of May," he said.

Police have reported 55 heat-related deaths in Orissa and at least 45 in Andhra Pradesh. Sixty-six were reported in Telangana, though the state's deputy chief minister, Mohammed Mahmood Ali, said the causes of death were still being verified.

Meanwhile, a 12-year-old girl in the drought-stricken western state of Maharashtra died from the heat while fetching



An Indian vendor selling onions on a sidewalk rests under the shade of a tree on a hot summer day in Hyderabad yesterday

water, Indian broadcaster NDTV said yesterday.

Making matters worse, India is grappling with severe water shortages and drought affecting more than 300 million people — a quarter of the country's population. Thousands of distressed farmers have committed suicide, tens of thousands of farm animals have died, and crops have perished, with rivers, lakes and ponds drying up and groundwater tables sinking.

Scrambling to deal with the crisis, officials have sent tankers of water to parched farming communities in Maharashtra, banning people from drilling deep wells and ordering farmers to shift away from growing water-guzzling sugarcane crops.

The heat wave in India coincides with record-high temperatures across the globe. On Tuesday, the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

said March's average global temperature of 12.7 degrees Celsius was not only the hottest March, but continues a record 11-month streak that started last May.

For southern India, this is the second consecutive year marred by a deadly heat wave. Last year, around 2,500 people died in scorching temperatures before the monsoon rains began in the Indian subcontinent in early June.

But while heat waves are relatively common during Indian summers, authorities have done little to ensure water security or prepare urban populations for the risks. This year, Orissa's capital of Bhubaneswar and Maharashtra's city of Nagpur joined Gujarat's Ahmedabad in launching a heat wave program to educate people on how to stay cool, provide shelters and train medical workers on dealing with heat-related illnesses like sun stroke and dehydration. **MDT/AP**

PAKISTAN

Gunmen kill 7 policemen in Karachi

GUNMEN on motorcycles shot and killed seven police officers yesterday in two separate attacks in the port city of Karachi, police said.

The slain officers had been deployed to protect health workers administering polio vaccinations. No health workers were harmed in the attacks in Karachi, the capital of southern Sindh province, local police official Mohammad Ijaz said.

Another senior police officer, Feroze Shah, said authorities had no plans to suspend the polio campaign despite the attack.

Earlier, provincial Home Minister Suhail Anwar also told the Pakistani Geo news network that the seven officers were killed minutes apart. He said the attackers targeted police who had been deployed in the city in connection with the polio campaign, which was launched to vaccinate children.

Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif strongly condemned the "terrorist attack" on police in Karachi.

In a statement, he said police officers sacrificed their lives to secure the future of our coming generation. **AP**

Japanese whisky at USD920 a bottle driving rice farmers to drink

Aya Takada, Monami Yui and Hiromi Horie

JAPAN'S burgeoning whisky business is driving rice farmer Hiroshi Tsubouchi to hit the booze. With domestic rice consumption sliding, Tsubouchi, 36, says he's getting on the whisky bandwagon - or, at least, switching to the barley used to make it. With Japanese whiskies ranking among the best - and most expensive - in the world, the profits of the local distillery industry are beginning to flow to the country's farmers.

Tsubouchi will reap his first crop next month, joining a dozen farmers in central Japan testing barley's potential to bolster incomes and help feed the nation's malt-hungry spirit-makers. Japan is the world's fourth-largest importer of the grain and second-biggest buyer of malt, the barley product that's mashed and fermented to make whisky and beer. Imports of whisky-making malt jumped 20 percent last year and have almost quadrupled over the past decade, spurred by demand for Japanese whiskies from San Francisco to Hong Kong.

"I never expected our Japanese whiskies to be so popular overseas," said Ichiro Akuto, 50, whose single malts sell for as much as 100,000 yen (USD920) a bottle. His distillery, Venture Whisky Ltd., in Chichibu in Saitama prefecture, is working with local farmers to establish a supply chain for a malting plant he built in 2013. "I want to produce whisky with the flavor of Chichibu - something I believe would be admired around the world."

Akuto has already gained that level of recognition - winning awards every year from 2007 to 2012. In Jim Murray's Whisky Bible for 2015, Yamazaki Sherry Cask 2013, a single malt made by Tokyo-based Suntory Holdings Ltd., was named "World Whisky of the Year," while Asahi Group Holdings Ltd.'s Nikka Taketsuru 17 Years

I never expected our Japanese whiskies to be so popular overseas.

ICHIRO AKUTO



Japanese whisky being bottled

won the "World's Best Blended Malt" title at the World Whiskies Awards last year.

That's propelled the popularity of Japanese whiskies, leading to shortages and surging prices. While global sales volumes from all producing countries increased an average of 5 percent a year from 2009 to 2014, they advanced at a 5.6 percent clip in Japan, data from Euromonitor International show. While most Japanese whisky is consumed domestically, last year the country sold a record 10.4 billion yen (\$95 million) of it abroad, an eleven-fold increase over the past decade.

"Two years ago, if you searched online for Japanese whisky in Hong Kong, you wouldn't find anything," said Aaron Chan, who collects the amber liquid and sells it in Club Qing, a bar he owns in the city. "Now in Chinese or English, you see interviews, articles on new whisky bars or PR statements about it. Japanese whisky is definitely getting more and more exposure."

Even the 12-year-old Yamazaki whisky that Chan considers "entry-level" is difficult to find and, where it is available, it goes for HKD1,200 (\$155) a bottle, compared with a recommended price in Japan equivalent to about HKD700.

A bottle of 1960 Karuizawa sold for HKD918,750 at Bonhams in Hong Kong last August, setting an auction record for a Japanese whisky. One of only 41 bottles ever made, and after being aged 52 years in casks, the Karuizawa is considered the holy grail of Japanese whiskies by collectors.

Whisky supplies have become so tight that Suntory Holdings President Takeshi Niinami has asked his staff to follow his lead and try abstaining from the company's premium malts. The need to conserve sales inventory trumps the executive's desire to consume it himself, Niinami told reporters in January. "Hibiki is my favorite, but I can't," he said.

Suntory, the country's biggest distiller, will spend 5 billion yen in 2016 to expand production, adding to the 7 billion yen spent on expansions since 2010, said spokeswoman Hasumi Ozawa.

Whisky maker Akuto, who worked at Suntory until 1995 as a salesman, expects shipments from his Chichibu distillery to increase by 20 percent a year. Last year, he sold 100,000 bottles - a third of which went overseas to customers mostly in the U.K., France, the U.S. and Taiwan.

Increasing whisky production has been a boon for U.K. farmers, whose barley has become the backbone of Japanese distilling operations. Japanese malt imports totaled 4,744 tons last year, worth about 437 million yen.

Akuto's Venture Whisky imported 152 tons from England, Scotland and Germany last year. That reliance will lessen if his plan to source malt locally works.

He wants to replace 10 percent of the distillery's grain requirement with barley grown by farmers in Chichibu. Even if it costs five times more to produce malt from locally grown barley than to import it, changing the source may improve

the perception of the quality of the whisky, Akuto said.

Japanese whisky is a subject of "increasing national pride, due to rising international recognition and a TV dramatization of the life of Masataka Taketsuru, a pioneer in Japanese whisky distilling," Euromonitor said in a report in October.

Also, farmers in Chichibu may be able to double their income by planting barley straight after they have harvested rice or buckwheat - the grain used to make soba noodles. Farmland typically stays idle for six months after the rice and buckwheat harvest in November, a window that barley could fill in a crop-rotation program, says rice farmer Tsubouchi.

A restaurateur who began

Two years ago, if you searched online for Japanese whisky in Hong Kong, you wouldn't find anything.

AARON CHAN

growing rice in 2011, Tsubouchi says barley may eventually be more lucrative than rice, consumption of which has been declining by about 80,000 tons a year in Japan, tracking the country's shrinking population.

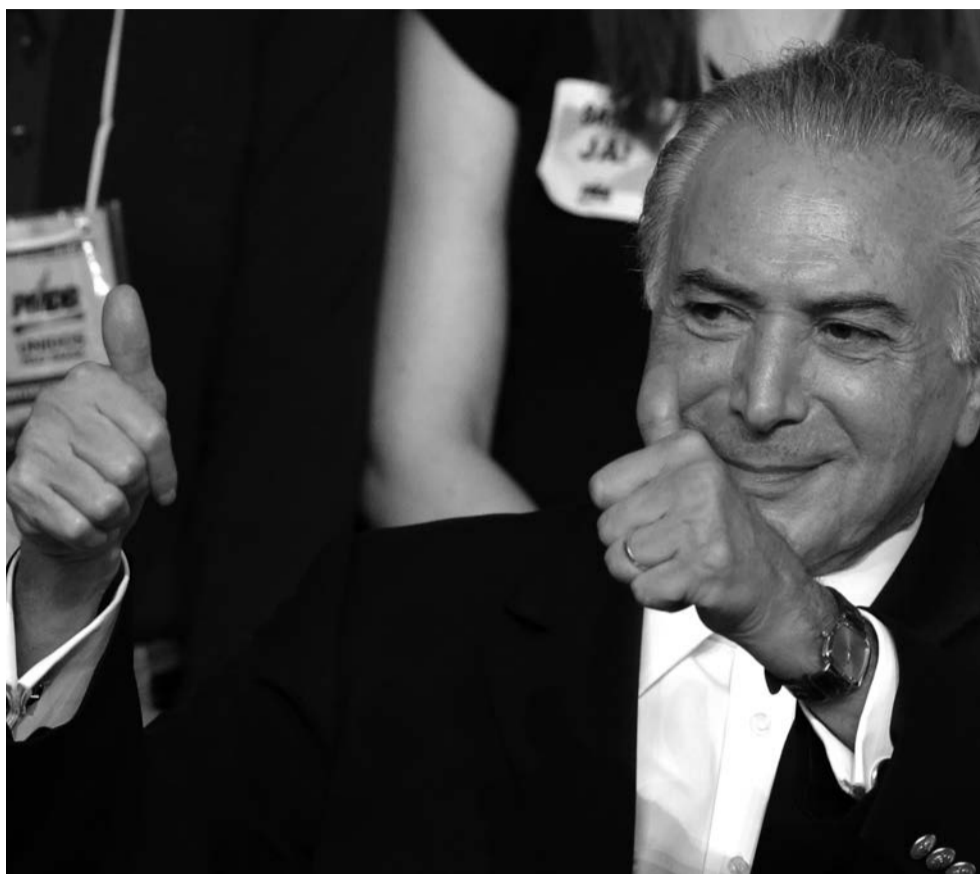
"I feel very proud of becoming a supplier to a whisky-maker," Tsubouchi said in an interview. He bought and rented 0.6 hectares of uncultivated land from nearby farms to grow barley for Venture Whisky. He's planting Golden Melon, a malting-barley variety recommended by Saitama agriculture authorities, who preserved the seed after farmers grew it successfully in the prefecture four decades ago.

If all goes to plan, 1.2 tons of grain will be harvested in May, Akuto said. That will be used in his Chichibu malting plant - a 20 million-yen facility that has the capacity to produce 50 tons of malt a year.

"I am the happiest person in the world as my whisky is not only giving people a lot of pleasure, it is also creating a new industry here and reinvigorating farming," he said. **Bloomberg**



Ichiro Akuto, president of Venture Whisky



Michel Temer flashes two thumbs up during the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party national convention in Brasilia



A man pushes a cart loaded with garbage for recycling in front of a mural depicting Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff and Vice President Michel Temer

Mauricio Savarese, Rio de Janeiro

THE man who may become Brazil's next president is almost as unpopular as the leader facing impeachment now, and stained by scandals of his own.

Vice President Michel Temer, who hasn't won an election on his own in a decade, is famed as a backstage wheeler-dealer, and detractors say he's leading the plot to replace his boss, embattled President Dilma Rousseff.

The lower house of Brazil's Congress voted on Sunday to impeach Rousseff and if the Senate agrees to consider the measure, she'll be suspended while a trial is conducted.

That means Temer would take over during the trial and possibly through the end of Rousseff's term in 2018 — assuming he can avoid ouster himself.

He signed off on some of the allegedly illegal budget measures that led to the impeachment drive against Rousseff and has been implicated, though never charged, in several corruption investigations.

The son of Lebanese immigrants, Temer is one of the country's least popular politicians but has managed to climb his way to the top, in large part by building close relationships with fellow politicians as leader of the large but fractured Brazilian Democratic Movement Party.

While the 75-year-old's reserved manner has earned him the nickname of "butler," he is not without flash. His wife is 32-year-old Marcela Temer, an ex-beauty pageant contestant who tattooed Temer's name on her neck.

Allies, such as former Rio de Janeiro Gov. Wellington Morei-

Possible next Brazil leader is dealmaker and scandal-tainted

ra Franco, say Temer's ability to cut deals will help him unify the country at a time when deep polarization has exacerbated the worst crisis to face Latin America's largest economy since the 1930s.

"Michel is a man of common sense," Franco told The Associated Press. "He never wanted to be in this position, but he feels someone needs to end the division soon."

Critics, and there are many, say Temer is anything but a statesman simply looking out for the future of his nation.

Like some 60 percent of Congress' 594 members, Temer faces allegations of corruption

"Captain of the coup," former Finance Minister Ciro Gomes called Temer, using the term used by Rousseff to describe the impeachment process.

"If [Temer] becomes president, I will campaign for his impeachment the next day," Gomes recently told reporters.

While Rousseff and Temer have long had a frosty relationship, their political alliance formally ruptured last week

when Rousseff publicly accused him of plotting against her. Temer has said he won't address the impeachment matter until the Senate decides.

And amid months of political maneuvering on all sides, one incident involving Temer stands out as bizarre: a 13-minute audio of him rehearsing an inauguration speech days before the impeachment vote. Temer said it was "accidentally leaked," though detractors say more likely it was done to gauge public sentiment.

As president, Temer would inherit a long list of problems. The economy is expected to contract by nearly 4 percent, the Zika virus has ravaged poor northeastern states, and sharp budget cuts combined with political instability are fueling worries about the country's readiness to host the Summer Olympics in August.

For months, the business community has been hoping that Temer would take over from the leftist Rousseff. But whether he'll have the ability or appetite to take on major reforms, such as overhauling a costly pension system, is unclear.

"I think that Temer is not going to be able to govern if he assumes the presidency," said Jandira Feghali, a Rousseff ally and Brazilian Communist Party representative, arguing that Temer won't have legitimacy without a presidential election.

Like some 60 percent of Congress' 594 members, Temer

faces allegations of corruption, including in the massive kickback scheme at the state oil company Petrobras. In a recent plea bargain by a key senator, Temer

If [Temer] becomes president, I will campaign for his impeachment the next day.

CIRO GOMES
FORMER FINANCE MINISTER

was accused of supporting one of the company's former directors involved in overpricing contracts for bribes. Investigators suspect the payments went to Temer and his party.

The vice president has also been accused of involvement in an illegal ethanol-purchasing scheme and of being on a list of secret payments made by constructor Camargo Correa, presumably for contract favors. Temer has denied wrongdoing.

As an elected official, he enjoys a high level of immunity; only the country's highest court can decide to try him.

A respected constitutional scholar, Temer got into politics in the 1960s. His first govern-

ment job was in the education department for Sao Paulo, Brazil's most populous state.

He worked during the administration of Gov. Adhemar de Barros, whose management style was described by many Sao Paulo residents as "steal but get things done."

He entered Congress in 1987 as Brazil was drafting its post-military-dictatorship constitution and remained in the lower house, with the exception of a two-year gap, until 2010.

In 2006, the last time he ran for an election on his own, Temer was one of the least voted-for deputies from Sao Paulo. Still, because his party was crucial in the governing coalition, he became speaker a third time in 2009 and was Rousseff's running mate in the 2010 and again in 2014.

Only 2 percent of Brazilians said they'd vote for him for president in 2018, according to a recent nationwide poll by Datafolha. The April 9 poll also found that 58 percent of Brazilians would want him impeached if he takes over for Rousseff. The margin of error was 2 percentage points, and 2,779 people were interviewed in 170 cities.

"If he goes out and says he won't run for re-election, he'll be given the status of a statesman," said Marcos Troyjo, a professor at Columbia University's School of International & Public Affairs. "That would give his government a grace period." AP

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what's ON



CANTONESE OPERA
TIME: 7:30pm
VENUE: Teatro Alegria
ADMISSION: Free entry with ticket
ENQUIRIES: 6681 0071

THE CHARMS OF FLOWERS – EXHIBITION OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE FLOWER ARRANGEMENT
TIME: 10am-6pm (no admission after 5:30 pm, closed on Mondays, open on public holidays)
UNTIL: July 31, 2016
VENUE: Avenida do Conselheiro Ferreira de Almeida, No. 95 C-D, Macau
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 2852 2523

INK WASH OF THE FORBIDDEN CITY – PAINTINGS BY CHARLES CHAUDERLOT
TIME: 10am-7pm
(No admittance after 6:30 pm, closed on Mondays)
UNTIL: June 19, 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

MACAU GIANT PANDA PAVILION
TIME: 10am-1pm and 2pm-5pm daily
(Except Mondays, closed on the following day instead if a public holiday falls on Monday and no admission after 4:45 pm; six viewings per day)
VENUE: Seac Pai Van Park, Coloane
ADMISSION: MOP10
ENQUIRIES: Civil and Municipal Affairs Bureau (853) 2833 7676

THE COLLECTION EXHIBITION OF TAI FUNG TONG ART HOUSE
TIME: 2pm-6pm daily (Except Mondays)
VENUE: Tai Fung Tong Art House, Calçada da Igreja de S. Lázaro 7
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 2835 3537 / 2834 6626

Offbeat

MISSING INGREDIENT FOR MILLENNIALS: DOWN PAYMENT SAVINGS

Short of savings and burdened by debt, America's millennials are struggling to afford their first homes in the face of sharply higher prices in many of the most desirable cities.

Surveys show that most Americans under 35 lack adequate savings for down payments. The result is that many will likely be forced to delay home ownership and to absorb significant debt loads if they do eventually buy.

Steadily rising home values in recent years have eclipsed pay increases, making it especially difficult to buy in major growth areas for jobs, such as San Francisco, Denver and Seattle.

Nationally, 37 percent of millennial renters have saved nothing at all for a down payment, according to a survey of 30,000 renters released yesterday by Apartment List, a company specializing in rental home searches. At the same time, 79 percent of millennial renters say they aspire to own a home, illustrating a troublesome gap between expectations and financial realities.

Even those diligent enough to set aside money are still short the cash to buy a home.

Among larger metro areas, millennial renters who are saving have put aside an average of just USD5,830. This marks less than one-fifth the savings needed for the typical 20 percent down payment on a starter home costing \$175,000. The lack of savings raises doubts about whether the under-35 crowd will also delay marriage and children, said Andrew Woo, a data scientist at Apartment List. **AP**

TV canal macau

13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
15:00	RTPi Live
18:05	Fillers
18:10	Helena's Shadow (Repeated)
19:00	Montra do Lilau (Repeated)
19:30	Soap Opera
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	TDM Talk Show
21:40	Comedy
22:10	Helena's Shadow
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Variety
23:50	Fillers
23:55	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
00:30	RTPi Live

cinema



CINETEATRO

21 APR - 26 APR

BUDDY COPS

ROOM 1

2.30, 4.30, 7.30, 9.30 pm

Director: Peter Chik

Starring: Bosco Wong, King Kong Li,

Charmaine Fong

Language: Cantonese (Cantonese/English)

Duration: 97min



THE BOY

ROOM 2

2.15, 4.00, 5.45, 9.30 pm

Director: William Brent Bell

Starring: Lauren Cohan, Rupert Evans

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 97min

10 CLOVERFIELD LANE

ROOM 2

2.30, 4.30, 7.30, 9.30 pm

Director: Dan Trachtenberg

Starring: Mary Elizabeth Winstead, John Goodman

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 106min

MY WIFE IS A SUPERSTAR

ROOM 3

2.15, 4.05, 5.55, 9.45 pm

Director: Shirley Yung

Starring: Annie Liu, Chau Pak Ho, Alex Lam,

Jacky Cai

Language: Cantonese (Cantonese/English)

Duration: 105min

ZOOTOPIA

ROOM 3

7.45 pm

Director: Byron Howard, Rich Moore

Language: Cantonese (Cantonese/English)

Duration: 108min

MACAU TOWER

24 MAR - 26 APR

BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE

1.15, 4.00, 6.45, 9.30 pm

Director: Zack Snyder

Starring: Amy Adams, Jesse Eisenberg, Diane Lane

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 153min

this day in history



1945 RED ARMY ENTERS OUTSKIRTS OF BERLIN

Russian troops have captured some outlying suburbs of Berlin at the beginning of what promises to be a bitter battle for control of the city.

The Red Army approached the German capital from three directions, north, east and south-east. The northeastern suburb of Weissensee is the closest to the center being only three miles away.

The Nazi minister of propaganda, Josef Goebbels, has issued a statement saying Berlin will be defended to the last.

He said anyone who showed cowardice, hoisted the white flag or attempted sabotage would be treated as outlaws.

The Germans are understood to be terrified of what might happen to them if Berlin falls into Soviet hands. Since 1941 Nazi forces have laid waste to large parts of the Soviet Union.

The Soviet troops under Marshal Georgi Zhukov are pushing towards Berlin from the north and east and Marshal Ivan Konev and his forces from the south. They are both keen to achieve the honour of capturing Berlin, the heart of the Nazi movement.

American forces are also pushing towards Berlin from the west and are now said to be only hours away from joining up with Russian troops.

Reports from Berlin say shells have begun to fall in the centre of the city. Correspondents say they have been fired from southern positions taking the Germans by surprise. They had been expecting Marshal Konev's forces to press on towards Prague and Dresden.

The Russian advance has been supported by its air force. Although the weather has been poor it has not stopped its low-level attack aircraft, the Stormoviks, sweeping the enemy lines and the improved Soviet dive-bombers are also halting counter-attacks.

The final assault on Berlin began on the night of 15/16 April when Soviet forces launched a powerful artillery barrage against the German forces dug in west of the Oder River and to the east of the city in an area known as the Seelow Heights.

A German military spokesman said they were attacking under what he called a permanent "air umbrella" with "fresh Soviet troops coming forward as though on a conveyor belt."

After two days of fighting and failing to make any significant breakthrough at Seelow, however, Marshal Konev's forces were ordered south and Marshal Zhukov's to the north thus bypassing the German 9th Army at Seelow and surrounding Berlin.

Hitler is reported to have celebrated his birthday yesterday in his underground bunker in the city, cut off from the reality of the fighting above his head.

Reports say Marshal Konev's forces to the south of Berlin have taken more than 10,000 prisoners in the past four days. They also claim to have captured 96 aircraft and more than 150 tanks and self-propelled guns.

Marshal Zhukov's troops, heading from the north and east, claim to have taken more than 13,000 prisoners. They have captured 60 aircraft and more than 100 tanks and self-propelled guns.

But in their haste to capture Berlin many Soviet soldiers have also been killed and tanks lost.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Hitler ordered a counter attack. But the Wehrmacht's 9th Army was cut off by Marshall Konev's forces in the forest south of Berlin, near the small town of Halbe.

Over 50,000 soldiers and civilians died. Their bodies were left piled high beside the narrow paths in the forest.

The Red Army meanwhile pressed on into the heart of Berlin. Zhukov's and Konev's troops were still racing to be first to capture the city and in their haste many lives appear to have been needlessly lost.

Figures vary but one source says the battle for Berlin cost the Red Army some 70,000 troops.

They used tanks to force their way into the city but these were very vulnerable to Germans firing bazookas from destroyed buildings. Ultimately, however, the German forces, mostly made up of old people and members of Hitler Youth were no match for the Soviet forces.

As the Red Army took control it also wreaked revenge on the people of Berlin. Hospital records suggest some 100,000 women were raped in Berlin in the last six months of the war.

Hitler and his mistress Eva Braun committed suicide in his bunker on 30 April only hours after they were married.

By 2 May the old German parliament building, the Reichstag, had fallen. Marshal Zhukov claimed the honor of being Berlin's conqueror.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Set your sights high. Why charm your way into an extra long lunch or a new cubicle when you could get so much more? It's the right time to pitch a new project or initiate a legal document with punch.

Taurus April 20-May 20 You need constancy, not energy spikes. And certainly not a flat line! Fluctuating between overdoing it and being lazy is taking a toll on your career. Do what you can to achieve consistency.

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 The last thing you want to do with all your high energy is bundle it up and put it in a desk chair. Let someone else wrap up a few projects that need finishing while you find a way to avoid bouncing off the walls.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Sometimes showing up isn't 95 percent of work. There are new projects to start but colleagues are just waiting to pounce. You'll have to be more than just the early bird to get this particular worm.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 You and a colleague are a good combination and both of you secretly know it. Don't be afraid to make a plan to discuss work over lunch. In fact, make it a date.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 You just can't win over an indecisive colleague. Whether you make a big splash or have a deep and meaningful conversation, they're stuck on the fence. If you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 You're enjoying a flirtatious colleague. Has it been as long as all that since you've had attention from others? Don't let a little playful banter distract you from more important matters.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 Giving in is the easy solution of the day, but will only cause the headache of tomorrow. Toss ideas back and forth until you find a solution that doesn't involve acquiescence.

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 Don't let yourself get the short end of the stick. People in the office should stay fair, even without recourse to a lawyer. But if that's what it takes, then don't hesitate to get some legal advice.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 You can't see the end result everyday, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't be plugging away at it. No matter how much energy you put into work today, you just can't connect with an end result.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 First things first. Sometimes being intellectual is the wrong approach. You can connect with a colleague on a more gut level if you let yourself, then gradually move up, to the head.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 You could use some help. Colleagues owe you some favors, but pulling in your chits is sapping your energy. Pick a path in between nagging and letting go if you want to get anything accomplished.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy Sudoku grid with numbers 5, 2, 7, 6, 8, 7, 1, 5, 3, 5, 3, 6, 7, 7, 4, 2, 1, 8, 8, 1, 3, 9, 3, 1, 4.

Easy+ Sudoku grid with numbers 4, 7, 9, 2, 5, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 8, 6, 1, 7, 8, 7, 2, 5, 4, 2, 6, 5, 6, 1, 5, 2.

Medium Sudoku grid with numbers 1, 4, 8, 8, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 5, 3, 8, 1, 2, 5, 4, 9, 9, 7, 2, 5, 6, 4, 1, 2, 3, 7, 2, 6.

Hard Sudoku grid with numbers 5, 7, 6, 8, 2, 4, 2, 6, 7, 1, 3, 1, 7, 5, 7, 5, 4, 2.

WEATHER

Weather forecast table with columns: MIN, MAX, CONDITION. Rows include CHINA (Beijing, Harbin, Tianjin, etc.) and WORLD (Moscow, Frankfurt, Paris, etc.).

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Immense; 5- Monetary unit of India; 10- Western Indians; 14- London greeting; 15- Corbeled bay window; 16- ___ avis; 17- Good earth; 18- Playwright Pirandello; 19- Former spouses; 20- Place in a bank account; 22- Do away with; 24- Aussie hopper; 25- Conditions; 26- Monument; 29- ___ kwon do; 32- Mock, annoy; 36- Florence's river; 37- Opening word; 39- ___ Zeppelin; 40- In spite of; 43- Unit of corn; 44- Visions; 45- Latin being; 46- Honeybee; 48- Organ of sight; 49- Satisfies; 50- Stumblebum; 52- TKO caller; 53- Craftsperson; 57- Kernel of a filbert, e.g.; 61- Letter opener; 62- Tribal emblem; 64- Arthur Ashe's alma mater; 65- Eye problem; 66- ___ evil...; 67- Streetcar; 68- Afternoon affairs; 69- Blender brand; 70- Currency unit of France and Germany, among others;

DOWN: 1- South African grassland; 2- Lotion additive; 3- Smack; 4- The day following today; 5- Salk's conquest; 6- Stuck in ___; 7- Second sequel tag; 8- Nintendo rival; 9- Excuse; 10- Threatening words; 11- Cab; 12- Mined materials; 13- Cumberbund; 21- Male offspring; 23- Many times; 26- Worked with wicker; 27- Bellowing; 28- Emcee's job; 29- Little laugh; 30- Analyze a metallic compound; 31- Words on a Wonderland cake; 33- Elite group; 34- Inward feeling; 35- Peripheries; 37- Orch. section; 38- Barker and Bell; 41- Concepts; 42- Unable to hear and speak; 47- Sounds; 49- What the sun does in the west; 51- 1980 Dom DeLuise film; 52- Gossip; 53- Gal Fri.; 54- Ceremony; 55- ___ Little Tenderness; 56- Denials; 57- Hawaii's state bird; 58- Sandy hue; 59- Chemical used on trees; 60- ___ -shanter (Scottish cap); 63- Asian occasion

Yesterday's solution crossword grid with filled-in letters.

Large crossword puzzle grid with numbers 1-70.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999
Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
Fire department 28 572 222
Water Supply - Report 1990 992
PJ (Open line) 993
Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333
Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944
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Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
IACM 28 387 333
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CRICKET Australia (CA) has scheduled day-night test matches against South Africa and Pakistan in a revamped southern summer that will break with tradition by starting in Perth.

CA yesterday released a program including a three-test series against South Africa, opening in Perth on Nov. 3 and moving to Hobart before a proposed — yet to be confirmed — day-night match in Adelaide. A second three-test series against Pakistan will begin with a day-nighter in Brisbane on Dec. 15 before moving to Melbourne and Sydney in the traditional Boxing Day and New Year's timeslots.

In between those series, Australia will play New Zealand in three limited-overs internationals.

Australia will host Pakistan in five ODIs in January before concluding the domestic summer with three Twenty20 internationals against Sri Lanka.

The Gabba in Brisbane has become the recognized venue to open the summer in recent decades and has become a fortress for the Australians, who have not lost a test match there since 1988 and have been defeated just eight times in 58 tests.

The South Africans have never won a test in Brisbane and

CRICKET

Australia schedules day-night tests v South Africa, Pakistan

■ **Brisbane has become a fortress for the Australians who have not lost a test match there since 1988**

have never lost in Perth, having two victories and a draw in their three previous tests at the WACA Ground.

"The decision to start the international season in Perth allows us to do so with a bang," Cricket Australia chief executive James Sutherland said. "It gives Western Australian cricket fans, including a strong local South African community, the chance to see two of the world's best sides, while allowing us to broadcast the match in prime time to



Adelaide Oval hosted the inaugural day-night Test between Australia and New Zealand in 2015

the east coast of Australia."

The first ever day-night test was staged in Adelaide last year, with Australia beating New Zealand in a low-scoring match using a pink ball.

It was a TV ratings success and attracted a record crowd for a non-Ashes test in Adelaide, but players from both

teams had concerns about the pink ball and its visibility and movement at certain times of the game. The South African players' association has expressed reservations about playing a day-night test with a pink ball and there's no agreement yet that the third test of the series will be played under those con-

ditions.

"Understandably, there is some concern from the South African players, but day-night test cricket is all about the fans and a day-night match in Adelaide will be a bigger test match crowd than the South African players will have ever experienced," Sutherland said. "The success of Adelaide last year demonstrates the huge potential the format has in revitalizing test cricket all over the world, and it's for that reason that it is our desire to stage another test under lights at that venue."

Pakistan has committed to the day-night test in sub-tropical Brisbane, where Sutherland said the climate is ideal for the format.

"We've had a number of pink ball trials under lights in Brisbane and believe that the time is right," he said. "Pakistan should be applauded for committing to and supporting the day-night test initiative." AP

ATHLETICS

Doping law passed by Kenya parliament



In this January 31 file photo, junior athletes run past a sign for Athletics Kenya at the Discovery cross country races, an annual race held to identify up-and-coming young talent, in Eldoret

Tom Odula, Nairobi

KENYA appears likely to avoid sanctions by the World Anti-Doping Agency after its parliament finally passed a law criminalizing doping on Tuesday.

Sports minister Hassan Wario announced that the anti-doping bill — which had been held up for months — had been approved by lawmakers. It now only needs to be signed by the president to be adopted as law, appeasing WADA.

Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta has said previously that he will sign the legislation, and personally drove the bill through parliament with Kenya's sports reputation on the line. Presidential spokes-

man Manoah Esipisu confirmed on Tuesday that the president would approve the law.

The anti-doping law is one of the things Kenya needs to have in place by a final May 2 deadline to avoid being declared non-compliant with WADA's global code. It calls for prison sentences in some cases for using or providing performance-enhancing drugs.

The East African country, home to the world's top distance runners, was also told by WADA to set up and properly fund a national anti-doping agency. The doping legislation was the most problematic of the reforms, though, and Kenya missed deadlines in February and earlier this month because of delays in parlia-

ment approving the law.

WADA demanded Kenya strengthen its overall anti-doping program after a surge in doping cases, and allegations of extortion and cover-ups by top track federation officials. Forty Kenyans have been banned for doping since the 2012 Olympics in London, and WADA's compliance committee said it would recommend to the agency's board that Kenya be declared non-compliant if the improvements weren't made by May 2.

Although a declaration of non-compliance by WADA would not immediately affect Kenyan athletes, IAAF President Sebastian Coe has said the track and field governing body would be willing to ban Kenyans from international competitions if the country consistently failed to comply with WADA regulations.

A ban now would likely put Kenya's athletes, including major stars like reigning 800-meter Olympic champion David Rudisha, out of the Games in Rio de Janeiro in August.

Kenyan sports minister Wario said that President Kenyatta was expected to sign off on the doping legislation by the end of this week.

"Today is a great day," Wario said. "The anti-doping bill has been passed. Olympics here we come." AP

ITF president says hearing scheduled in Sharapova case

Graham Dunbar, Lausanne

INTERNATIONAL Tennis Federation president David Haggerty says a disciplinary hearing has been scheduled in Maria Sharapova's doping case, with a ruling possible before Wimbledon.

Haggerty tells reporters the independent Tennis Integrity Unit typically takes "two to three months" to process a case. That could deliver a verdict in June.

Haggerty says he has not been told details of the case, including when and where the hearing will be held.

Sharapova was provisionally suspended after announcing on March 8 that she tested positive for meldonium at the Australian Open in January.

The Russian said she had been prescribed the blood-flow boosting drug since 2006, and had been unaware the World Anti-Doping Agency had prohibited its use from Jan. 1.

The drug, which is typically recommended for heart disease patients, was banned for 2016, prompting at least 172 failed tests worldwide.

Ivars Kalvins, who created the drug, said not everyone takes



Maria Sharapova speaks about her failed drug test during a news conference in Los Angeles

meldonium in order to enhance athletic performance.

"If we talk about male athletes, many of them take meldonium in order to improve their sexual performance rather than to enhance their sports performance," Kalvins said. "We need to take this into account."

Kalvins said he was disappointed by the World Anti-Doping Agency's decision to ban the drug and said he has written to WADA asking for meldonium to be taken off the list. MDT/AP

opinion

HK Observer
Robert Carroll



Don't shoot the messenger

"Did you watch [the film] 'Ten Years?'" "No... If I ever want low budget Dystopian Visions I watch Government announcements"

That was how SCMP cartoonist Harry's characters laughed off the brouhaha about the film "Ten Years"; 2016 Hong Kong Best Film Awards winner and blockbuster here, and... uh... "a thought virus" in China.

Having worked many years in television here and as a viewer squirmed at the really bad local official announcements, I think I can say authoritatively Harry's got both dysfunction of how the government talks down to us via these inanities while taking a dig at the paternalistic attitude of our rulers. However the film raises more crucial issues.

Firstly the movie which is set in a dystopian Hong Kong in 2025 sent a clear and reasonable message: We are scared of the way you are squeezing us more and more. But it was disregarded by China. Secondly there seems to have been interference in freedom of expression. Thirdly such repeated over-reactions from the mainland just serves to remind people why they couldn't stand living in fear under Chinese communist rule and fled to Hong Kong.

The reaction from China proved the film theme's poignancy but there was more. When "Ten Years" cinema's screenings were abruptly stopped while it was in the middle of a runaway success, for spurious reasons, many rightly smelt a rat. It's one thing to criticize a film, ban mainland viewing of this year's Hong Kong Film Awards but another to censor what can and cannot be seen at Hong Kong cinemas. Freedom of expression is supposedly guaranteed under the Basic Law.

The logic seems like this. You had made a film which misrepresents Hong Kong people's views and sheds a bad light on the relationship between the SAR and Beijing therefore regardless of freedom of expression it should not be shown.

This disregards salient facts. The film - although it was not of the highest artistic merit in terms of cinema art in the traditional senses - was a huge commercial success in the short time it was screened, touching a raw nerve among the people and certainly among industry professionals too. The proof of that was the awarding of Best Film; more, the crowd at the ceremony were united in enthusiastic applause when the winner was announced. The local naysaying counter-reactions criticizing the award to "Ten Years" came mostly from film moguls with big fingers in the mainland film pie. The voters for the award and audience knew too that this sort of film for local audiences would perhaps not be easily made again. In which case it was something of a last hurrah for what has become a dying industry; films tailored to local preoccupations, as opposed to those aimed at the mainland market.

Of course there's no proof that the film did not continue to be shown by the direct intervention of mainland officials, or whether it was self-censorship but that's immaterial. The same motivation would be at work in both scenarios - do not jeopardize your film industry collaborations with us.

Yes the shoe-string budget film could have been done much better; no one denies that. Moreover it's been criticized for the highly exaggerated possible future it purports to show in 2025; for example with Red Guard kids policing here according to mainland politically correct values. But that's not too far from the historical reality of many here before they left China and reflective of the fears of growing erosion of freedoms here and of ever-increasing mainland influence.

It's long been said that just because you don't like the message it's no use shooting the messenger.

THE MUSEUM GETS ONLY KNOWN FILM OF LOUIS ARMSTRONG IN STUDIO

The Louis Armstrong House Museum has acquired the only known film of the jazz great in a recording studio after it was discovered in a storage facility.

The 33-minute film captures Armstrong recording his 1959 album "Satchmo Plays King Oliver" for Audio Fidelity. The record producer, Sid Frey, had the film made but wound up not doing anything with it or telling anyone about it.

Michael Cogswell, the museum's executive director, calls it "a ground-breaking discovery."

Frey's daughter, Andrea Bass, helped the museum acquire the film. She first learned about its existence in a chat room discussion of her father's company. A person who bought the contents of abandoned storage facilities informed her that he had it.

Unbeknownst to Bass, her sister had put the film in storage with other family items.

Prince William rejects criticism he is 'work shy'



Prince William (centre) and Prince Harry look at a Star Wars character

Danica Kirka, London

PRINCE William has rejected criticism that he doesn't put enough time into royal duties in interviews before Queen Elizabeth II's 90th birthday today.

Dismissing the moniker of "work-shy William," the second-in-line to the throne said in an interview broadcast yesterday that he's balancing his royal duties with those of a husband, father and air ambulance pilot. William says when the queen is ready to hand over tasks, he'll be the "first person to accept them."

"I think, in the queen I have an extraordinary example of somebody who's done an enormous amount of good and she's probably the best role model I could have in front of

me," he told the BBC.

In another interview with Sky News, he offers tribute to the queen and credits her with helping him through

We are a normal family.

PRINCE WILLIAM

the loss of his mother, Diana, Princess of Wales.

The interviews mark a moment of celebration for the family as the monarch celebrates a milestone, but also underscore that the young royals will carry on what is sometimes described as the "Firm," - the family business. William was peppered

with questions about what he would ultimately like his reign to be like and whether he plans to modernize the monarchy.

"I think the royal family has to modernize and develop as it goes along and it has to stay relevant," William said. "And that's the challenge for me ... I have no idea when that's going to be, and I certainly don't lie awake waiting or hoping for it, because it sadly means that my family have moved on and I don't want that."

William was asked if his son, George, has any sense yet that he's not part of an ordinary family - whether William and his wife, the former Kate Middleton, have begun to prepare him to accept the fact that he's in the line of succession.

"Well, as far as we're concerned, within our family unit we are a normal family," William said. "I love my children the same way any father does, and I hope George loves me the same way any son does to his father, so we are very normal in that sense."

"There'll be a time and a place to bring George up and understand how he fits in the world, but right now it's just a case of keeping a secure, stable environment around him and showing him as much love as I can as a father." AP

THE DECISIVE MOMENT



Greek actress Katerina Lehou (right), playing the role of High Priestess, lights a cauldron with the Olympic Flame during yesterday's dress rehearsal for the flame lighting ceremony of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, at the site of ancient Olympia, Greece.

Station	Air quality
Roadside	35-55 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	50-70 Moderate
Ambient	40-60 Moderate

WORLD BRIEFS

PHILIPPINES Representatives of women's groups file a complaint at the Commission on Human Rights against the front-runner in the Philippine presidential race for his remark about wanting to rape an Australian missionary who was assaulted and killed by prisoners during a hostage-taking in 1989.

ZAMBIA Calm returned to Zambia's capital following two days of riots and looting targeting mainly Rwandan shop-owners that left two people dead, the government said. The authorities sent in the army to support the more than 1,000 police officers deployed to prevent further unrest.

AFGHANISTAN The Interior Ministry says the death toll from Tuesday's Taliban attack in Kabul has risen sharply overnight to 64. The previous official death toll on Tuesday had been 28.

PAKISTAN Gunmen on motorcycles killed seven police officers in two separate attacks in the port city of Karachi, police says. More on p12



USA Reassuring an anxious ally, President Barack Obama sat down yesterday for a meeting with King Salman as he opened a trip to Saudi Arabia shadowed by the kingdom's deep opposition to his Iran nuclear deal and skepticism about his approach to Syria.

GERMANY The government says it's trimming its growth forecast for 2017 due to fragilities in the global economy. Economy Minister Sigmar Gabriel said yesterday that Berlin now expects Europe's biggest economy to grow 1.5 percent, down from the 1.8 percent it had predicted in October. The forecast for 2016 is unchanged at 1.7 percent.