



ILLEGITIMATE PERMITS DENOUNCED

The New Macau Association wants to know if local IDs were obtained through permits sold by a Hebei official

P2



SCAMMER TRICKS EMPLOYMENT AGENCY

The Judiciary Police arrested a man who fouled a mainland employment agency by promising to find jobs in Macau

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HONG KONG: JOURNALISTS QUESTION EDITOR'S DISMISSAL

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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'"

WORLD BRIEFS



NORTH KOREA A

Washington envoy said the U.S. and China are united in their opposition to the North's nuclear tests and worked together to develop the tough sanctions imposed in March. Sung Kim, the U.S. government's top envoy for North Korea, told reporters in Beijing that China took as much part in drafting the U.N. Security Council's March resolution as Washington or the Security Council did.

SOUTH CHINA SEA

China's Defense Ministry appeared yesterday to confirm a test of an intercontinental missile over disputed waters in the South China Sea. A three-sentence statement posted on the ministry's website posed the question of whether China had fired an ICBM in the area of the South China Sea. **More on p10**

CHINA is increasingly becoming a nation of town and city dwellers, with more than 55 percent now living in urban areas, the government says. China's transformation to a predominantly urban society is key to realizing the government's goals of boosting consumption and raising living standards amid slowing economic growth.

JAPAN Officials raided an office of Mitsubishi Motors following the revelation that the carmaker had falsified its fuel economy data. The officials searched its plant in the central Japanese city of Okazaki. Mitsubishi has admitted that employees altered data to flatter mileage rates on more than 600,000 vehicles.

More on backpage

Gaming regulator to recruit 50 inspectors

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Stephen Stefanou's 'Butterfly Garden' aims to awe visitors

P5



BEIJING AUTO SHOW An affair with SUVs

China's love affair with SUVs is helping to reshape the face of an increasingly polluted city in the rest of its crowded auto market. According to a group of that sector, automakers from General Motors, Ford and Volkswagen led by local players Great Wall and BYD are making SUVs the star of this month's Beijing auto show. #2

Extra times

weekend Guide

INSIDE

CE to attend AL meeting today

The Chief Executive, Chui Sai On, will attend a plenary session of the Legislative Assembly (AL) today to answer legislators' questions on government policy and social issues. The session will start at 3 p.m. and will be broadcast live on the television and radio channels of public broadcaster TDM. In addition to attending plenary sessions of the Assembly every November to deliver the Policy Address relating to the following fiscal year, Chui Sai On also attends similar sessions in April and August each year.

Real estate agency made 1,300 transactions in Q1

Ricacorp Properties' housing data from the first quarter shows that the company made around 1,300 transactions, corresponding to an annual increase of 23 percent, Macao Daily News reported. So far, April sales are showing a 50 percent decline in comparison to March, when over 600 deals were closed. Transactions involving big houses comprised the majority of sales during April. According to government statistics, sales in the first two months amounted to 690, representing a 3.2 percent increase year-on-year. The average price per square meter sits at MOP73,399.50, a drop of 16 percent when compared with the same period last year.

New two-star guest house to be built

Construction of a two-star guest house will take place at Rua do Almirante Sérgio, as indicated in a note that was signed by the Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário, and published in the Official Gazette this week. The project has been assigned to the local company Ellsworth Macau Limited, and is expected to be eight stories tall and to span an area of 195 square meters, with one floor planned as a basement.

Local band to perform at countryside festival

Zhuhai is inviting the bands the High Rollers (Macau), Mario Bernardo (Hong Kong), Electric Religions (Sweden), Greybeards (Sweden), Fergessen (France) and Moncho (Colombia) to perform in Zhuhai for Guangdong's first countryside music festival from April 30 to May 1, according to a Southern Metropolis Daily report. Three Guangdong bands will also perform. The festival will take place at Zhuhai's Shi Li Lian Jiang tourist attraction, which boasts acres of paddy fields. According to the organizer of the event, the Doumen District Tourism Bureau, the festival seeks to provide a short weekend trip for tourists traveling around Macau, Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta cities.

Gaming bureau to recruit 50 new inspectors

THE Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) got the nod from the Secretary for Economy and Finance to recruit 50 new gambling inspectors, an official source has told the Times.

According to our source, the rules and regulations around public recruitment will be published in May in the Official Gazette and the whole process will take about one year.

Currently there are around 120 inspectors working for the DICJ, a number that was



Paulo Chan

deemed "insufficient" by the gaming commissioner, Paulo Chan, after he took over the position from Manuel Neves on December 1.

With the new inspectors, the DICJ "will have at least one

With the new inspectors DICJ will have at least one inspector per casino

inspector per casino, on every shift," the source explained.

Today, the MSAR has a total of 36 casinos. **PC**

ANM demands MP action on illegitimate permits

THE New Macau Association (ANM) yesterday presented a criminal complaint to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) and requested that the public body investigate individuals who have allegedly obtained Macau identification cards through one-way permits sold by a Hebei official.

According to an ANM statement, the submission of the complaint yesterday was in response to the unearthing of a case in which a Hebei province official, Zhang Yue, allegedly sold "Permits for Proceeding to Hong Kong and Macau," or one-way permits, for between RMB1.5 million and RMB2 million each.

Those who are granted one-way permits to Hong Kong or Macau may migrate to the territories and are eligible for non-permanent ID cards in the respective regions.

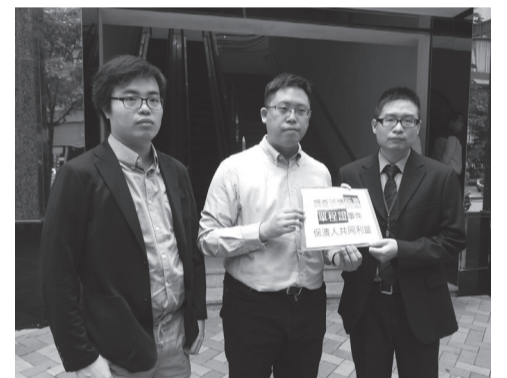
According to Hong Kong's Passion Ti-

mes, China's Central Commission for Discipline Inspection posted the accusations against Zhang on its website on the weekend, alleging a "serious violation of discipline," but did not elaborate further.

The same report says that Zhang was permitted to approve a certain number of passports every year via special channels of processing.

ANM claims that one-way permit holders who illegitimately acquired their right to stay in the MSAR now have access to the same benefits as "legitimate" Macau residents. These include access to the cash-handout scheme and, after becoming a permanent resident, a Macau SAR passport that grants its holders greater access to many parts of the world than the Chinese passport.

In light of this, ANM is requesting that the MP launches an investigation into the alleged criminal activities.



New Macau members file the complaint

"To protect the common interests of legitimate Macau residents and to ensure fairness for all applicants for one-way permits, the New Macau Association hopes that the Public Prosecutions Office will bring Macau ID cardholders connected to the Zhang Yue case to justice," the association said in a statement. **DB**

Leung Iok Sam appointed as Commissioner of the CB

THE inauguration of the new Commissioner of Macau's Fire Services (CB), Leung Iok Sam, was held yesterday at the Judiciary Police facilities in Cotai. The former deputy-commissioner has now become the head of the department.

Leung's service officially started last Wednesday, having been assigned a one-year term. When speaking about the new leader, the Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, said that Leung is capable of dealing with the upcoming fire security challenges posed by the opening of several hotels and casinos next year. Wong also



Leung Iok Sam (center)

declared that he expects total cooperation between Leung and his team. "I hope the whole staff will support their new leader," he said. The secretary repeatedly praised Leung for his previous "brilliant accom-

plishment in his work." Raising the fact that 45,221 incidents occurred during 2015, he mentioned that he trusted the new commissioner to cut down on the overuse of ambulances.

Leung, who holds a master's

degree in mechatronics engineering, told the media about the measures taken recently by CB. He stressed that the department is purchasing new equipment, including several ambulances.

"We will technologically enhance the strength of our team," he announced, adding that the department will also improve the professionalism of frontline workers and do better regarding the overuse of ambulances.

Leung Iok Sam joined CB in 1989. He also served in the Macau Security Forces Training College between 1998 and 2001.

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Sands China misses forecast on China slowdown

Daniela Wei

SANDS China Ltd., the Macau-based casino unit of Las Vegas Sands Corp., reported first-quarter profit missed analysts' estimates as China's economic slowdown hurt visitor spending, even as its billionaire chairman Sheldon Adelson saw future improvement from mass market gamblers and tourists.

The shares slumped in Hong Kong trading yesterday. Sands China's adjusted property earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization shrank 2.5 percent to USD517.9 million from \$531 million a year earlier, the Las Vegas-based parent said in a statement yesterday. That compares with the \$547 million median estimate of four analysts surveyed by Bloomberg.

"The mass market has increased. It's performed better, and I think we can look forward to more of that and as far as the non-gaming is concerned, people have to eat, they have to sleep. They want to be entertained," Adelson said in a conference call. "There are non-gaming elements that I think will pick up again and do better in the future."

Macau has seen tightened money flows as the \$30 billion casino industry struggles with almost 22 months of slumping revenue. Chinese President Xi Jinping's anti-graft campaign, as well as heightened scrutiny of junket operators, have

“The mass market has increased. It's performed better, and I think we can look forward to more of that.”

SHELDON ADELSON



sent gambling revenue plunging. Operators such as Galaxy Entertainment Group Ltd. and Wynn Macau Ltd. are turning to tourists by building new resorts.

Sands China fell as much as 4.9 percent to HKD29.05, compared with the 0.7 percent rise in the benchmark Hang Seng Index. The shares have plunged about 48 percent since June 2014, when Macau reported the first drop in gross gaming revenue after China's government launched its crackdown on corruption.

"Sands China's first quarter is weaker than expected, primarily due to poor performance in non-gaming business and higher bad debt expense," Sanford C Bernstein & Co LLC's analysts led by Vitaly Umansky said in a note after the results. While the gaming business is stabilizing, its profit margin contracted on lower retail rental income and lower hotel occupancy rate, the analysts wrote.

Chinese tourism and consumer numbers are "pretty depressing across the globe" and softer than the company had hoped in Macau, said Las Vegas Sands Chief Operating Officer Robert Goldstein on the call, promising a return to better results in the second quarter.

Sands China is targeting to open its \$2.7 billion

Parisian Macao in mid-September this year, featuring non-gaming aspects such as retail shops and meeting space in addition to the casino, even as it faces intensifying competition including from Wynn Macau, whose project is scheduled to start in June after a series of construction delays.

Retail sales in Macau is being hurt by China's economic slowdown which "is affecting the amount of money that people are spending," Las Vegas Sands chairman Adelson said on the call. Still, the casino tycoon is adamant that the impact is temporary.

"I don't see that this is going to be permanent. When we open the Parisian I'm completely confident, more than confident," said the 82-year-old Adelson, who is also chairman and chief executive officer of Sands China. "Everything is cyclical - we've been in Macau for 12 years now, and there have been times over the 12 years that people thought that the business was going down, and then it's going to go up."

Despite the downturn, Sands China "stands out among Macau casino operators" for its focus on the mass market and significant non-gambling business, which have helped support its higher profitability compared with its peers during the

last two year's gambling downturn, said Bloomberg Intelligence analyst

Tim Craighead.

Sands China gained the most market share in

the first quarter among Macau operators as February's week-long Lunar New Year holiday boosted business, Credit Suisse analysts led by Kenneth Fong wrote in a note on April 19. The company's focus on the mass market helped lift its share to 23.3 percent from 22.5 percent a quarter earlier, they wrote.

The Parisian plans to attract visitors with facilities such as a half-size Eiffel Tower replica accessible to the public before September's official opening, Sands China President and Chief Operating Officer Wilfred Wong said in February. The company is hoping the Macau government will allocate 250 or more new gambling tables for the project, he said in an interview.

Las Vegas Sands's profit fell to 45 cents a share, excluding some items, the company said Wednesday, missing the 63-cent average of analysts' estimates compiled by Bloomberg. Revenue shrank 9.8 percent to \$2.72 billion, missing projections of \$2.88 billion. **Bloomberg**

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RENATO MARQUES



Some of the documents apprehended by the police

CRIME

Scammer tricks employment agency at their own game

Renato Marques

THE Judiciary Police (PJ) yesterday arrested a Chinese citizen working in Macau for allegedly scamming the owner of an employment agency on the mainland.

The man, aged 39, is a civil construction worker who managed to pull off a scam involving around 200 people, pocketing a large sum of money by following the same rules that brought him to Macau in the first place.

During a press conference held yesterday, the PJ explained that the suspect had searched for the services of an employment

agency located in the city of Jiangmen back in 2014. Through the agency, he managed to find a job in the civil construction sector in Macau.

In 2015 the suspect contacted the victim, the agency owner, saying that due to his position he could easily help to introduce new people to the contractor to help them get a job in Macau, saying that he could place around 200 of them.

In exchange the suspect was asking for RMB4,000 per person as a commission and document-handling fee.

According to the victim, the agency paid the suspect around RMB720,000, both

in cash and via bank transfers, between August 2015 and April 2016 in order to support the fees of around 170 people whom they had recommended to take the jobs in the territory. However, those people never got their jobs.

In addition to sending the payments, the agency also sent to the suspect all the requested personal documents such as passports, ID Cards and others.

Tired of delays and evasive answers from the suspect and suspecting that something was not right, the agency owner filed a complaint with the PJ on April 15, which initiated the process.

On April 20, with the help of the Public Security Police Force (PSP), the suspect was intercepted at the Cotai border crossing.

Once in custody the suspect confessed to the scam, stating that he had already gambled away the money he received.

A further search to the suspect's house revealed a total of 195 Chinese passports as well as other documents that match the ones that the agency on the mainland claimed to have sent.

The investigation is not yet closed, and the PJ suspects that the number of victims of the scam might continue to grow.

GAMING

Growth swings astonish podcasters

SEAN O'Reilly and Vincent Shen of financial services analyst Motley Fool recently dedicated a segment of their "Industry Focus: Consumer Goods" podcast to a discussion of Macau's gaming growth and slowdown, as well as the upcoming openings of new resorts by MGM, Sands China and Wynn Resorts.

The two admitted that they had not visited Macau but compared it to Las Vegas, and were astonished at the extent of the gaming slump, which they equated to more than a year of gaming revenue in Vegas.

"[In 2013, gross gaming revenue] peaked at about USD45 billion, and in 2015 it's fallen back down to about USD29 billion," said Motley Fool's Shen. "So you can see how significant that is. The amount that they've lost in terms of gaming revenue in the last two years is far more than Vegas sees in an entire year."

The duo also shared their fascination with what they see as the Central Government's deliberate decision to transform the MSAR into a "big gaming mecca."

"It's always been interesting to me [to see] how planned it was, and how the purpose was clearly to be this enormous mecca," said O'Reilly during the podcast, in contrast to "how Vegas was this, like, desert stopover thing that just popped up after World War II."

O'Reilly and Shen also noted the "huge" new luxury resorts that will open in Macau, some of which are from the biggest players in the MSAR's gaming sector. **DB**

PJ investigation into pawnshops deposits



THE Judiciary Police (PJ) has received 16 reports from residents who claim to have been cheated by pawnbrokers. Now the police are investigating some HKD35 million of alleged embezzled deposits, after pawnshop owners failed to pay due interest to investors.

TDM reported that, according to complaints filed last week, in 2007 the victims started depositing large sums of money in four pawnshops in the ZAPE area. In return they were promised interest rates that could be up to 15 percent.

The Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak, commented on these illegal deposits: "This sort of situation is bound to happen and it could happen at any time. As such, our tackling mechanism will always lag behind. What we have to do is to react quickly and make sure to be up to date," he said.

The situation resembles the investments made by residents in the junket operator Dore, in return for high interest rates. After an internal theft, the Dore group was unable to return the illegal deposits.

EDUCATION

New rules may allow 'double degrees'

THE adoption of a new credit system at local universities may allow students to obtain "double degrees" and "double majors."

Yesterday's detailed discussion of the Higher Education Bill, which passed its first reading in February 2015, discussed the possibility of allowing parallel studies in two tertiary education courses for students with high grades. Another of the advantages attributed to this new system is the possibility for students with missing credits to be able to complete those units and finish their courses in a timely manner.

The president of the 2nd Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly (AL), Chan Chak Mo, said that the legislation's aim is to give some flexibility to both students and universities to manage this whole process, and rejected the idea that this may result in a lower-quality education.

"If the student can pass the exam or test, fine. It has nothing to do with the number or quality of courses. A student can be a hard worker and if he wants to take another course and has good grades after his first year, and if he can manage the scheduling, it is all

right," Chan said, quoted by TDM.

One of the requirements of participation in this system is having an average grade result of "very good" or having revealed "special capabilities" during the first year of studies.

Questioned as to whether this system might be "too flexible," Chan considers that it is the role of the government to define those limits. He added that the committee's "main problem" was "to ensure that the courses with a duration of less than four years could be recognized, and that has been solved."

ENTERTAINMENT

'Butterfly Garden' aims to awe visitors

CONSIDERED a master of oversized visual display art, Stephen Stefanou is embellishing MGM's Grande Praça with colorful butterflies. The installation is expected to reach completion over the weekend, with the official opening planned for the beginning of May.

In an exclusive interview with the Times, Mr Stefanou, president and design director of Dallas-based Design Solutions, said that the theme for the "butterfly garden" was inspired by the yearly migration of billions of monarch butterflies from Canada to Mexico. "When they fly from Canada, they fly in a pattern called laminar flow, so this is all inspired by laminar flow flight; they're flying around the room from one end to another," he said.

Stefanou told the Times that he was aware of his potential as a designer from an early age. However, he never thought of design as something that he wanted to do. "I still don't know what I want to do; I'm just doing it. So, I don't create with an objective in mind, I create with a collaboration in mind [...]. When you're creative in a collaborative sense, you never really know what you are doing," he revealed.

The habit of only choosing high-quality materials, products, ideas and such strongly contributed to the designer's success.



Stephen Stefanou



This is all inspired by laminar flow flight; they're flying around the room from one end to another.

STEPHEN STEFANO

He believes that the most important thing when designing and curating is to "make it and let it be the best that it can be."

Stephen Stefanou, who is also the designer of the aquarium at Grande Praça, explained that the collaboration with MGM Macau started when he was recommended by the Las Vegas MGM Grand's board of directors.

"So Grant Bowie [CEO of MGM China] brought me in. [...] And the assignment was 'I need something fabulous, I need something that will be an attraction. I need something that will make people from mainland China, when they see this in the media, want to come here to see what this is,'" explained the designer.

When asked about the strengths of the venue in relation to the work he wanted to bring in, Stephen stressed that the property's Grande Praça area is the main advantage of the designs and exhibitions MGM has been holding, as it is suitable for installations and events.

The designer also emphasized that he sees no differences in designing for an American or a Chinese client.

"For me there's no difference because I'm coming from the same place, I'm coming from what would be beautiful. What would

be beautiful to a mainland Chinese client and a New Yorker is different, but for me I would still behave the same way," explains the designer.

The "Butterfly Garden" creator also revealed that he is constantly searching for inspiration, stressing that he would attend Milanese furniture shows, Tucson mineral shows, fashion collections or displays of arts, antiques and

jewelry..

"I gather ideas [...] what I have is an inspiration. I'll be inspired with a color palette, color material, particular artists," said the creator of the Giant Pinwheel Trees at the MGM.

Stefanou also encourages local artists not to be bound by their traditions: "You will always have the opportunity to break out beyond where you are; it's

your choice. So if you believe this is all you could do, then that's all you can do," he said.

The "Butterfly Garden" will feature a kaleidoscope of butterflies with wingspans of 4' by 8', with six specially-placed large butterflies (wingspan of 24' by 24' for the largest of the six) suspended at a lower elevation in the heart of Grande Praça.

Staff reporter

AD

Inflation growth slows in March

MACAUS composite consumer price index (CPI), a main gauge of inflation, grew 3.31 percent in March from a year earlier, according to official data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) revealed yesterday. This is a decrease of 0.57 percentage points from the 3.88 percent year-on-year growth recorded in February.

DSEC attributed this growth to rising tobacco taxes, tuition fees, rental costs of parking spaces and motor car prices, which drove up the price indexes of Alcoholic Beverages & Tobacco, Education and Transport by 37.36pct, 8.97pct and 7.70pct respectively.

The CPI for March fell by 0.36 pct month-to-month. The price indexes

of Recreation & Culture and Clothing & Footwear fell by 7.97pct and 1.96 pct respectively, partially as a result of reduced package tour prices following the Lunar New Year and seasonal sales of winter clothing. On the other hand, the price index of Transport increased by 2.66pct due to higher rental costs for parking spaces and dearer prices for motorcars, while declining airfares limited that increase.

The DSEC figures indicate that the average CPI for the first quarter of 2016 increased by 3.67pct year-on-year, with the price indexes of Alcoholic Beverages & Tobacco, Education and Transport rising by 38.56 pct, 8.93pct and 6.72pct respectively.



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Julien-Loïc Garin (left) and Andrew Yuen



Auguste Borget's painting depicts A-Ma Temple, Macau

ENTERTAINMENT

'Le French May' hopes to involve locals

THE 24th edition of "Le French May" is set to commence in May and run until June with more than 120 programs in Hong Kong and Macau.

In a press conference yesterday at the Mandarin Oriental Macau, Andrew Yuen, chairman of the board of Le French May, presented the highlights of the event.

The event's extension to Macau will include a showcase of a collection of 74 bronze sculptures by Edgar Degas in "Ed-

gar Degas: Figures in Motion". There will also be treasures and realistic paintings of southern China in "Auguste Borget: A Painter-Traveller on The South China Coast," a piano recital by Michel Dalberto, and the cinema program entitled "Dream of Another World - Utopias."

"I believe our festival has become a major player in the growing arts arena of Hong Kong and Macau. 'Le French May' continues to play an important role in nourishing our

local artists as well as promoting art appreciation among the general public," said Andrew Yuen.

Meanwhile the Consul General of France in Hong Kong and Macau, Eric Berti, stressed to the Times that the event aims to involve local people in the French cultural event.

"The festival was created in Hong Kong and it grew [...] so we expanded to Macau and Shenzhen, but now there is a specific demand in Macau, so

we want to address that [...]. The new idea is to create more exhibitions and performances in Macau."

This year, Le French May has again collaborated with the Macau Arts Festival to bring "Disabled Theater" to the territory. In addition, dedicated menus and wine pairings featuring the refined cuisine and wine from the Alsace region will be presented by various Macau restaurants, Michelin-starred chefs and wine merchants in the "GourMay" section of the event.

Mr Julien-Loïc Garin, CEO of "Le French May," emphasized the uniqueness of the Edgar Degas exhibition, which will be exclusively presented at MGM Macau, and expressed the hope that it will help increase tourism interest in the city.

"We dedicate some important projects to Macau every year. For this edition of 'Le French May,' we are presenting unique artworks in Macau, such as sculptures by Edgar Degas and paintings by Auguste Borget," he said. **Staff reporter**

OVER 1M VISITORS PER YEAR

ESTABLISHED IN 1993, Le French May is a cultural event that "attracts over 1 million visitors each year," according to the organizers. The festival aims to "explore imagination of new rules, new stories and new worlds through paintings, sculptures, design, music, theatre, cinema and gastronomy under the theme of 'Dreams and Wonders,'" according to a press release.



PORTUGUESE wines are fast becoming trendy and even overtaking French wines for a few top awards, and

Macau is reportedly one of the best places to find them.

Just last year, six Portuguese wines and ports

Portuguese wines more than just a trend

were included in Wine Spectator's top 100 list. The world's most powerful wine magazine awarded Portuguese wines three of the four 'most popular' awards.

David Higgins is the owner of MacauSoul, a cozy wine bar near the Ruins of St Paul's. He opened the bar in 2008 with his wife with the aim of providing to customers a sense

of "being in a Portuguese place" by focusing on an exclusively Portuguese wine list.

"Sadly, Portuguese wines around the world are not fully appreciated for their complexity, their diversity and their tremendous value," Higgins told the South China Morning Post.

With MacauSoul offering more than 600 differ-

ent labels, Higgins stated that its importers have sprung up over the past few years. "When we first opened, there must have been five wine importers in town. Now there must be 90," Higgins said. "There are far too many not-very-good wines on the market here. I have to work pretty hard to weed out the bad ones."

Meanwhile Just Wong,

wine sommelier at The Ritz-Carlton Macau, has claimed it is not just a trend to drink Portuguese wine in the city, but rather a culture.

"We have a portion of people living here who are Portuguese, and drinking wine is a daily habit for most Portuguese people. So, it's not just a trend, but also a local culture," Wong told the SCMP.

AD



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RETAIL

Sands's Adelson mulls Singapore mall sale after restriction ends

GAMBLING tycoon Sheldon Adelson, whose Las Vegas Sands Corp. owns Singapore's landmark Marina Bay Sands, said he's considering selling the casino resort's retail assets after a

government-imposed moratorium expires next year.

The company has spoken with potential buyers, Chairman Adelson said in a conference call after Las Vegas-based Sands announced first-quarter results yesterday (Macau time).

"We have been approached. We have been talking

to people," said Adelson. Capitalization rates at the 800,000 square-foot mall, located in Singapore's prominent downtown district, "are attractive, and we may or may not sell a portion."

Las Vegas Sands "always have thoughts of monetizing anything" except its core casino assets, Adelson

said. The company's casino license in Singapore doesn't allow it to do so until 2017, and the 82-year-old said he will discuss this when he meets the city-state's government in May.

In Singapore, casino revenue at Marina Bay Sands plunged 28 percent to USD453.1 million

in the first quarter, while mall revenue decreased 2 percent to \$39 million, according to the parent company's statement. Hotel room revenue slipped 0.8 percent to \$88.9 million, even as occupancy rose 3.1 percentage points to 97.9 percent.

Bloomberg

PROPERTY

More Americans are expected to remodel their homes this year

Arising number of Americans are preparing to renovate their homes this year, a potential boost for the economy, according to projections released yesterday by Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies.

The report estimates that spending on remodeling and repairs will climb 8.6 percent this year to USD310 billion. The gains would bring renovations close to the 2006 peak of an inflation-adjusted

\$327 billion.

The additional spending would likely contribute to broader economic growth, creating more jobs for construction workers and building supply firms.

Driving the increased spending on contractors are rising home sales: The home renovators include both people preparing to put their homes on the market and new owners seeking to customize their homes.

The projected rise also indicates that existing homeowners are upgrading kitchens and bathrooms, rather than focusing on necessary repairs for roofs.

"So long as we're seeing growth in sales and prices, that should be contributing to remodeling activity," said Abbe Will, a research analyst at the housing center.

Existing homes sold at an annual rate of 5.33 million in March, up 1.5 percent from a year

ago, the National Association of Realtors said Wednesday. The median sales price rose 5.7 percent over the past year to \$222,700.

The findings appear a bit more optimistic than the results of another remodeling index released this week by BuildZoom, an online market for contractors, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Urban Economics Lab.

The BuildZoom index, which also studies how intensively a home is remodeled, rose 2.6 percent last year, compared with the 4.4 percent measured by Harvard's housing center.

The Chicago, New York, Phoenix and San Jose, California metro areas all reported double-digit growth in permits for renovations, while Las Vegas experienced a dip, according to the BuildZoom index. **AP**

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REAL ESTATE MATTERS

The best places to live in Macau
Part 3

Juliet Risdon is a Director of JML Property and a property investor.

Having established the company in 1994, JML Property offers Investment Property & Homes. It specializes in managing properties for owners and investors, and providing attractive and comfortable homes for tenants.



JULIET RISDON

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Welcome back to the third part of this article on the most popular places to live in Macau for expatriates. Last week we highlighted property in Macau, Taipa and Cotai. This week we will focus on Taipa, namely Nova City, Ocean Gardens and Supreme Flower. Of course there will always be pros and cons in any property and location, so its good to know what is essential and what is desirable to make it a good choice for you.

NOVA CITY, TAIPA

a. Area: Central Taipa Area residential.
b. Amenities: Walking distance to restaurants, supermarkets, banks, healthcare, and schools. Bus Stops and taxis nearby. New local park and under ground Public Park are right outside.
c. Building facilities: Gym, pool, tennis courts, entertainment rooms, security personnel. Car Parking available in the building, children's play areas.

d. Property Features: Good size living space in a large complex.
e. Rental Prices: Mid Range.
f. Advantages: Convenient location and value for money.
g. Drawbacks: Bumping in to everyone you work with.

OCEAN GARDENS, TAIPA

a. Area: Outskirts of Taipa.
b. Amenities: Local children's play areas, supermarket 7/11, restaurants are nearby. There is also a shuttle bus service.
c. Building facilities: Access to members' only gym and pool. Car Parking available.
d. Property Features: Good layout and floor plans, good views for apartments situated along the front. Some apartments are recently renovated.
e. Rental Prices: Mid Range.
f. Advantages: Bigger apartments.
g. Drawbacks: Aging facili-

ty, location can be isolated.

SUPREME FLOWER CITY, TAIPA

a. Area: Central Taipa.
b. Amenities: Walking distance to restaurants, supermarkets, banks, healthcare, schools. Bus Stops nearby. New local park and under ground public park are walking distance.
c. Building facilities: None but this is reflected in the relatively reasonable rental prices.
d. Property Features: Good quality kitchens with ovens. Large windows making the properties light and airy.
e. Rental Prices: Mid- high Range.
f. Advantages: Great quality apartments, convenient location.
g. Drawbacks: No club facilities.

In the remaining article we look at the final three most popular areas for expatriates in a mix of locations in Taipa and Macau Peninsula.

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ASIA GAMING AWARDS NOMINATION PROCESS NOW OPEN

Asia Gaming Brief, producers of the Asia Gaming Awards in association with G2E Asia and The Innovation Group, announced that nominations are now open for each of the ten award categories.

All industry stakeholders are invited to submit their nominations for the different categories by clicking on the link available on the website (www.asiagamingawards.com). The Judging Panel will also submit their nominations.

The collation of the data received from the Judging Panel and industry stakeholders will facilitate the process of shortlisting nominees for each award category. A total of five nominees per category will be shortlisted for voting.

The final nominees will be scored against five criteria by the industry and the Judging Panel. A list for the esteemed judges of the Asia Gaming Awards can be found here.

Nominations close on April 26 at 6.00 pm. The shortlisted nominees for each category will be announced shortly afterwards and voting will begin on May 3.

CTM LAUNCHES NEWEST LG FLAGSHIP SMARTPHONE

CTM recently launched the newest LG flagship smartphone, the LG G5, and hosted a "CTM x LG G5 Experience Day" at the Praia Flagship, showcasing its key distinguishing features while offering customers a first-hand experience to enjoy its entertainment performance. The LG G5 was only unveiled to the Macau market recently. The brand-new design features a slide-out battery, a modular-type design and a sleek, metal uni-body. It has two cameras on the rear: one with a standard 78-degree lens and another with a 135-degree wide-angle lens, the widest available in any smartphone according to LG.

Thousands puff for legal pot at 4/20 parties throughout US

Paul Elias, San Francisco

THOUSANDS sent up a cheer and a collective plume of marijuana smoke at the stroke of 4:20 p.m. Wednesday (yesterday, Macau time) in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park.

They gathered at the park's "Hippie Hill" to toke up, eat and drink the afternoon away into the night. A plane dragging a banner encouraging attendees to "smoke weed" circled overhead, while unlicensed vendors set up tables and makeshift tents to sell all types and strains of bud, not to mention T-shirts, pipes and food.

This year's celebrations of all things marijuana throughout the U.S. come amid loosening restrictions and increasing tolerance for the plant's use from Alaska to Massachusetts.

Fans of the drug have long marked April 20 as a day to roll weed or munch on pot-laced brownies and call for increased legal access to it.

In San Francisco, a man was



asking USD100 for an 8-inch bud of marijuana he said weighed more than 3 grams. Nearby, liquid tinctures said to contain the active ingredient in marijuana were selling for \$10 for a 4-ounce bottle. There were plenty of laced Jolly Ranchers, baked goods and other edibles available.

Marlene Manning, pushing a stroller with her 6-month-old granddaughter, was glad to be back in her native California for the annual 4/20 celebration. She wasn't partaking, but said she was celebrating freedom.

"This is so refreshing," the 50-year-old woman said, adding that she just relocated from Florida, where "everything is against the law."

It could be the last unofficial pot holiday on which users have to call for legalization in California, with a pot initiative expected on the November ballot. The drug's use for medical purposes got approved in 1996.

Voters in Nevada, Arizona and Massachusetts also are expected to consider marijuana legalization measures. And the Vermont Legislature is discussing a proposal to legalize the possession of up to 1 ounce.

Recreational use already is legal in Colorado, Washington, Oregon and Alaska.

In Anchorage, Alaska, a downtown marijuana pot club has scheduled a "420 Blaze Party" in a state where recreational use is legal but sales of weed aren't until later this summer.

"We're a private club, we're an events club and our members can consume their own product," said one of the owners, Theresa Collins. The club is offering a free shuttle home for

attendees.

Police in Burlington, Vermont, said several hundred gathered on the University of Vermont campus to celebrate. In New Hampshire, dozens of people smoked marijuana on the Statehouse lawn in Concord.

Several Las Vegas marijuana businesses held grand opening ceremonies, including the Cannabis Chapel, which offered customers a pot-themed wedding package complete with a silk cannabis bouquet — all for \$104.20. Nevada voters legalized medical marijuana use in 2000, but it wasn't until 2013 that lawmakers created rules allowing for dispensaries.

One new dispensary, Blum, opened its pristine shop yesterday in a gritty industrial park a few blocks from the Las Vegas Strip. Dispensaries are banned in the tourist corridor, so owners are banking on shuttles to bring them some of the more than 40 million who visit the city each year. **AP**

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Christopher Bodeen, Beijing

BOLSTERING his status as China's most powerful leader in decades, Chinese President Xi Jinping has assumed a more direct role as head of the country's powerful armed forces with the new title of commander in chief of its Joint Operations Command Center, state media and analysts said yesterday.

Xi's new position was revealed in news reports that featured prominently on national news broadcasts Wednesday and yesterday in which he appeared publicly for the first time in camouflage battle dress wearing the joint center's insignia.

During his Wednesday visit, Xi called on the center's staff to "closely follow the trends of global military revolution and strive to build a joint battle command system that meets the need of fighting and winning an informationized war," the official Xinhua News Agency said.

Officers should "change their ideas, innovate and tackle difficulties, in a bid to build a joint battle command system that was absolutely loyal, resourceful in fighting, efficient in commanding and courageous and capable of winning wars," Xinhua quoted Xi as saying.

Battle command capacities should be measured by "the standards of being able to fight and win wars," Xi said, stressing the need to prepare for conflicts, analyze possible security risks, and handle effectively "all sorts of emergencies."

The joint center, reportedly located underground in the western outskirts of Beijing, is under the direct supervision of the ruling Communist Party's Central Military Commission, which is headed by Xi and oversees the 2.3-million-member People's Liberation Army, the world's largest standing armed forces.

Xi was accompanied on his visit by the commission's two vice chairmen, Gen. Fan Changlong and Gen. Xu Qiliang.

Among his several other titles, Xi is also leader of the ruling Communist Party and chair of a recently created National Security Council, which gives him greater control over the domestic security

Xi moves to take more direct command over military



Chinese President Xi Jinping is displayed on a screen as Type 99A2 Chinese battle tanks take part in a parade commemorating the 70th anniversary of Japan's surrender during World War II held in front of Tiananmen Gate

services.

As head of the military, Xi has overseen a reorganization of the PLA's command structure into five theater commands aimed at better integrating the different services. He has ordered a 300,000-person reduction in forces that will see the elimination of many outdated and non-combat units, and shift the emphasis further from ground forces to the navy, air force and missile corps.

Xi's appearance in battle dress with insignia Wednesday emphasized his more direct role in military affairs. When appearing simply as head of the Central Military Commission he routinely wears olive green tunics, shirts and trousers without insignia or decoration, as did his predecessors.

Xi's new choice of apparel "indicates that he not only controls the military, but also does it in an absolute manner, and that in wartime, he is ready to command personally," said Ni Lexiong, a military affairs expert at Shanghai's University of Political Science and Law.

Three years since taking on the

presidency, Xi is widely seen as having accumulated more power and authority than any Chinese leader since Deng Xiaoping in the late 1980s. A cult of personality has also sprung up around him to rival that of the founder of the communist state, Mao Zedong, with his slogans, sayings and signature political themes widely disseminated in the media.

Yet his reputation has also been called into question by anonymous letters, allegedly from Communist Party members, calling for his resignation. Revelations in the international media about vast wealth accumulated by members of his extended family have meanwhile flown in the face of his relentless campaign against corruption in the party, military and state industries.

Xi's new title and his visit to the joint center were "more political than military" in significance and don't imply he will take charge of the day-to-day running of the PLA, said Andrei Chang, Hong Kong-based editor of the magazine Kanwa Asian Defense and a close observer of Chinese military affairs.

Xi's [new apparel] indicates that he not only controls the military, but also does it in an absolute manner, and that in wartime, he is ready to command personally.

"Throughout Chinese history, political power has always been founded on control of the military," Chang said. "This was a visit to show off his muscle to his potential enemies and show that he is tough and in charge."

Xi's new title and appearance in battle dress may also be a deliberate message to China's chief rivals, including the U.S., Japan, the Philippines and the self-governing island of Taiwan that China has vowed to conquer by force if necessary.

"The combat uniform is not only to show he is in charge of the military, but also shows that China is ready for a fight amid a tense external situation. It is a bit like telling China's opponents that he is ready for a combat," Ni said.

Along with his structural and personnel reforms, Xi has highlighted the PLA's importance with frequent, highly publicized visits to military bases and a massive parade last September that saw the army's latest equipment wheeled through the center of Beijing while warplanes and helicopters roared overhead.

Xi enjoys special cachet with the armed forces, partly due to his late father's status as a military commander and Xi's own brief service as a uniformed aide to a former defense minister, but also because his muscular foreign policy is popular among Chinese nationalists and the defense establishment.

That's been especially true in the disputed South China Sea, which China claims virtually in its entirety and where it has constructed island airfields on former coral reefs and sought to limit the U.S. Navy's ability to operate in the area.

Xi has remained resolute in that approach despite it being blamed for raising tensions with China's Southeast Asian neighbors and prompting the U.S. to devote more resources to Asia and strengthen its cooperation with traditional allies and even former foe Vietnam.

"The most important message he meant to send to the world is that he will not make a concession on the issue of territory even at the cost of a war," Ni said. **AP**

SOUTH CHINA SEA

Defense Ministry appears to confirm new missile test

CHINA'S Defense Ministry appeared yesterday to confirm a test of an intercontinental missile over disputed waters in the South China Sea.

A three-sentence statement posted on the ministry's website posed the question of whether China had fired an ICBM in the area of the South China Sea, which is claimed

almost entirely by China.

In its response, the ministry said China maintains that "technological research experiments conducted according to plan within China's boundaries are normal and are not aimed at any specific nations or targets." Media reports about the location of the test were "purely speculation," it said.

The statement follows a report in the U.S. newspaper Washington Free Beacon that quoted unidentified Pentagon officials as saying China tested its longest-range DF-41 missile with two multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles on Tuesday. The report did not say where the test took place, but referenced

recent tensions between China and the U.S. over Beijing's actions to shore up its claims to the South China Sea.

Chinese Defense and Foreign Ministry spokesmen sometimes respond to outside reports on China's activities in vague or abstract terms as a way of affirming their essential correctness without con-

firmed any of the facts contained within.

However, the Free Beacon report was not widely distributed in China, strengthening the impression that the ministry wished to make public its latest missile test.

Chinese military analyst Ni Lexiong said the ministry appeared to be seeking to advertise China's capa-

bilities and boldness while leaving room for speculation about its actions and intentions.

That approach aims to show that China is "prepared for conflicts and even combat, though unwilling to see it actually happen," said Ni, who teaches at Shanghai's University of Political Science and Law. **AP**

JOURNALISTS' unions in Hong Kong said yesterday they were troubled by the dismissal of a veteran editor of a newspaper that published a report on the Panama Papers document leak revealing offshore business dealings of the rich and powerful, exposing new concerns about press freedoms in the semiautonomous Chinese territory.

A statement of concern from the Ming Pao Staff Association followed the dismissal of Keung Kwok-yuen, the paper's No. 2 editor, on Wednesday, purportedly to save operating costs.

Expressing "extreme dissatisfaction and anger," the association questioned whether the dismissal was actually about "punishing staff members who have different opinions on editorial issues."

On Wednesday, Ming Pao carried a front page report on Hong Kong politicians and businessmen named in documents leaked from a Panama law firm and published by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, which have been reported by newspapers around the world. The union didn't mention the Panama papers in the statement posted on its Facebook page.

Eight other Hong Kong journalist associations said in a joint statement that they were shocked by Keung's dismissal and that Ming Pao's management owed its readers and the public an explanation.

"Mr. Keung is a veteran journalist who has spearheaded the coverage of major controversies in Hong Kong in the past decades," the statement by the eight unions, including the Hong Kong Journalists Association, said. Hot-button



A man walks past placards in Chinese which read "Cannot comprehend" outside the Ming Pao newspaper's office building

HONG KONG

Journalists question dismissal of top editor

issues covered by the paper have included mass street protests calling for electoral reform and opposing a national security law, and a proposed public school curriculum criticized as an attempt to boost support for the communist government in Beijing.

"If a journalist as moderate and professional as Mr. Keung cannot be tolerated, what does it say about the press freedom of Hong Kong? We are deeply disturbed and worried," the statement said.

Recent years have seen

growing anxiety among many Hong Kong journalists and politicians about the growing influence of Beijing on the Hong Kong, which retained its own civil liberties when handed over from Britain in 1997. Media groups with close business and personal ties to Bei-

jing have been accused of soft-pedaling their coverage of issues potentially embarrassing to China and its allies in Hong Kong.

In January 2014, Ming Pao's then chief editor Kevin Lau was abruptly dismissed, sparking fears that the newspaper's owners were moving to curb aggressive reporting on human rights and corruption in China.

A month later, he was attacked with a cleaver in a daylight attack. Two men who fled to mainland China subsequently received 19-year prison terms for theft and causing grievous bodily harm with intent. They said they had been paid to carry out the attack but refused to say by whom. AP

TRADE

Regulators tell banks to lend to expand steel exports

REGULATORS told Chinese banks yesterday to finance steel exports to help reduce a supply glut in a move that could worsen trade tensions with Europe and the United States. Beijing faces pressure from the United States and Europe to stop what they complain is a strategy of trying to clear away a backlog of steel by exporting at unfairly low prices. Washington imposed anti-dumping duties last month on Chinese steel.

The latest order to finance exports is part of instructions from the Chinese central bank and financial regulators to lenders to support the overhaul of state-owned steel and coal industries.

Beijing is trying to shrink bloated companies, many of them state-owned, in industries including steel, coal, glass, cement and aluminum in which supply exceeds demand. That has led to price-cutting wars and heavy losses.

Last month, Washington announced anti-dumping tariffs of up to 266 percent on some Chinese steel.

Britain's government faces pressure to act after Tata Steel cited low-cost Chinese competition when it annou-



nced plans this month to sell money-losing operations there that employ 20,000 people. In Brussels, European steelworkers have protested outside the European Union headquarters.

Chinese bank support to steel and coal companies can include "syndicated loans, export credit and project financing," according to the order by the central bank and the securities, banking and insurance regulators.

It gave no financial targets but said financing might be extended for shifting operations abroad.

China's minister of human resources announced plans in February to eliminate some 1.8 million jobs in coal and steel. Beijing announced a 100 billion yuan (USD15 billion) fund last week to cushion the blow to workers who lose their jobs in the restructuring and help them find new jobs.

Targets for other industries have yet to be announced.

China pushed back against its trading partners this month, announcing anti-dumping duties on steel from the European Union, Japan and South Korea. AP

New Zealand tourist industry signed multi-million-dollar deal with China

NEW Zealand tourism chiefs were celebrating yesterday after the mountain resort town of Queenstown won a major contract to host 10,000 salespeople of a Chinese company, Xinhua News Agency reported. Amway China will be sending 10,000 of its top salespeople to Queenstown, in the South Island, for five days, as a reward for hard work. Chief executive of the government's Tourism New Zealand agency, Kevin Bowler, said the contract would be a major boost to the economy.

The 50 million NZ dollars (USD34.83 million) in value is estimated just from the company's spend on the incentive alone, Bowler said in a statement, adding that each of the 10,000 staff will also contribute additional personal spend while in the country bringing the total even higher.

"China is now our second-largest and fastest growing tourism market, contributing nearly 1.7 billion NZ dollars to the economy in 2015. And Chinese tourists have the highest daily spend of any of our visitors," read the statement, quoted by Xinhua.

Binaj Gurubacharya, Kathmandu

NEPAL

Virtually no gov't rebuilding one year after quake

THE violence of the 7.8-magnitude earthquake left countless towns and villages across central Nepal in shambles. Almost one year later, in shambles they remain.

The country has made almost no progress in rebuilding hundreds of thousands of homes, schools and government buildings, as well as some 600 historical structures, including ancient Hindu and Buddhist temples, monuments and palaces.

Nearly a million children still have no school to attend. Millions of villagers were forced to winter in flimsy pop-up tents and corrugated tin shacks, erected haphazardly at high altitudes and across the rolling plains.

The government's reconstruction agency has so far approved zero projects. Some citizens have started rebuilding on their own, but most are still waiting — either because they are afraid of running afoul of new, promised building regulations, or because they still hope to receive government grants.

Many of them are still living in rows of temporary shelters made from salvaged wood covered with corrugated metal sheets that are likely to be their only protection when the rainy season returns in two months.

"This has been home for all of us for the past year and it looks like we are going to be here for a long time. All we hear is the government is going to give us money to rebuild our homes, but when is that going to happen? Our kids are getting sick and we have no money, job or a government that is going to come to our rescue," said Keshar Narayan, a farmer living with eight family members in a tin shed on the outskirts of Kathmandu.

The government was quick to promise help after the April 25, 2015, earthquake, which killed nearly 9,000 people, but a year later only a few families in Dolkha district have begun to get the money. They have each received 50,000 rupees (USD467), the first installment of the 200,000 rupees promised by the government to each family who lost their home. Dolkha was among the hardest-hit districts and the epicenter of another ma-

major quake that struck May 12.

As they wait for help, even prayer can be dangerous. Many in the deeply spiritual Himalayan nation seek comfort in now-ramshackle stone temples left standing askew, sometimes held up just by wooden beams.

"Every time I come to pray in the temples, I am not sure if I will even leave in one piece. We have to risk our lives just so we can pray," housewife Shanti Shrestha said in Kathmandu while holding her temple offering of a stick of burning incense and a marigold flower. "We all are very angry ... for a year nothing has been done."

The lack of progress isn't for want

Every time I come to pray in the temples, I am not sure if I will even leave in one piece. We have to risk our lives just so we can pray.

SHANTI SHRESTHA
HOUSEWIFE

of money. Nepal, facing an estimated \$6.6 billion reconstruction bill, has received \$4.1 billion in pledged donations so far.

The problem, officials and aid workers say, is tangled bureaucracy and government malaise. Some frustrated donors have simply given up.

"We just lost a donor who wanted to give \$400,000," said UNESCO's representative to Nepal, Christian Manhart. "Everything seems to be blocked because there are very lengthy government pro-



In this combination of two photos (on left), debris is seen at Durbar Square after an earthquake of magnitude-7.8, in Kathmandu

cedures."

The UNESCO office alone has about \$1.8 million budgeted for Nepal, still waiting to be spent.

The government has been embroiled in political infighting while facing months of ethnic protests in which more than 50 people were killed. Since the earthquake, there has been a change of government and a new constitution adopted that took seven years to craft.

It took nearly nine months for Nepal just to set up a department to deal with quake reconstruction. But there are still no guidelines for how to approach the task. It also isn't clear which buildings are even being considered for reconstruction funds.

A Nepalese law requiring that government contracts go to the lowest bidder is also a problem, said Suresh Suras Shrestha, head of the world conservation section at the government's Department of Archaeology, which is charge of monuments and heritage sites. The lowest bidder may not have the skills or knowledge to take on structures dating back to the 5th or 6th century.

"The donors who want to rebuild our monuments need to follow our rules and procedures," Suresh Suras Shrestha said.

They will also have to keep waiting to find out what those rules and procedures are.

The Department of Archaeology has defended its efforts, noting that its workers have reinforced some buildings that weren't hea-

vily damaged. It has also opened the public bidding process for 39 projects, and expects about \$20 million in funding to be released for the first phase of work once the contracts are finalized. There is no clear indication of when that might happen. Restoring all monuments is expected to cost about \$200 million.

"The politicians just don't care about our temples. If the king was still ruling these temples and palaces would have already been built," Hindu priest Ram Singh said, referring to the monarchs who acted as guardians of Nepal's monuments until the monarchy was abolished in 2008.

Piles of crumbling red brick are all that remain of the four-story Kastamandap, the 10th-century temple from which the capital of Kathmandu got its name.

Just to the east of that, hundreds of devotees still visit the temple palace of the Kumari, a girl revered by both Hindus and Buddhists as a living goddess, though its brick walls are precariously propped up by dozens of wooden beams. The Kumari, who continues to live in the temple palace, is among dozens of girls who have held the honor for the past four centuries; each steps aside once she reaches puberty.

Bricks, stones and splintered wood collected from the rubble left by the collapse of Kathmandu's 10th-century Durbar Square palace remain in storage until architectural experts can sort through

them and put them back in place. Nothing has been done to fix the damaged palace in the medieval town of Bhaktapur, east of the capital.

Many of the small Buddhist temples, stupas and monasteries surrounding the 5th-century hilltop shrine of Swayambhuna lie in ruins. It is also called the "monkey shrine" for the thousands of monkeys that congregate on the spot at the northwest edge of Kathmandu. One of its damaged dome-shaped stupas, Tashi Golma, remains covered in wire mesh and corrugated tin to protect it from deteriorating further and from theft.

In Nepal, where majority of the people are Hindu, these monuments and temples are important for cultural, religious and historical reasons. People visit temples regularly and go there for festivals, weddings and coming-of-age ceremonies.

Tired of waiting for government help, some local officials and communities are doing what they can on their own. Residents of Bhaktapur are already rebuilding a 17th-century temple to the Hindu god Vishnu, relying on volunteer labor and funds. It's unclear how much it will cost, said local heritage department official Ram Govind Shrestha, but local officials plan to solicit donations and start charging tourists for visiting.

"It is really difficult to look at our damaged heritage," he said. "So we just decided to begin." AP

INDONESIA

China asks Jakarta to extradite Uighur prisoners

CHINA has asked Indonesia to extradite four Uighur men in exchange for returning a graft fugitive recently arrested in Shanghai, the top Indonesian security minister said yesterday.

Coordinating Minister for Politics, Legal and Security Affairs Luhut Pandjaitan said Indonesia will



Coordinating Minister for Politics, Legal and Security Affairs Luhut Pandjaitan (center)

allow China to question the men, who are serving prison sentences for collaborating with Indonesia's most wanted militant, Abu Wardah Santoso.

He said China's request was made during negotiations for the deportation from China of corruption fugitive Samadikun Hartono.

Pandjaitan said Indone-

sia would talk with China separately about the four members of China's Muslim Uighur minority "because it is a different case." They were arrested in September 2014 in Central Sulawesi.

Hartono fled from Indonesia in 2003 after the Supreme Court sentenced him to four years in pri-

son for misappropriating government bailout funds during the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis.

Indonesia expected he will be deported from China yesterday.

Starting in around 2009, groups of Uighur have traveled across Southeast Asia from their homeland of Xinjiang, a region in northwestern China, hoping to reach Turkey to claim asylum from what they say is persecution by Chinese authorities. AP



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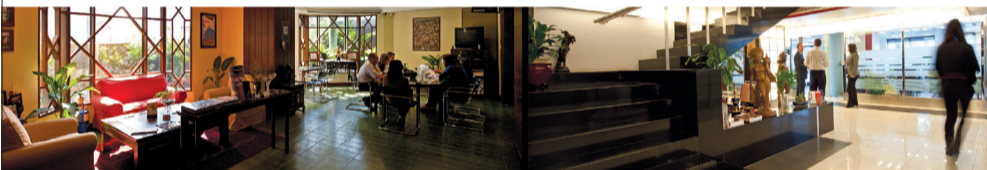
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ENVIRONMENT

Paris climate deal on track for early start



French President Francois Hollande (right), French Foreign Minister and president of the COP21 Laurent Fabius (second right), United Nations climate chief Christiana Figueres (left), and United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon hold their hands up in celebration after the final conference at the COP21, the United Nations conference on climate change

Karl Ritter & Cara Anna,
United Nations

ABOUT 160 countries are expected to sign the Paris Agreement on climate change today in a symbolic triumph for a landmark deal that once seemed unlikely but now appears on track to enter into force years ahead of schedule.

U.N. officials say the signing ceremony will set a record for international diplomacy: Never before have so many countries inked an agreement on the first day of the signing period.

That could help pave the way for the pact to become effective long before the original 2020 deadline — possibly this year— though countries must first formally approve it through their domestic procedures.

“We are within striking distance of having the agreement start years earlier than anyone antici-

pated,” Brian Deese, an adviser to President Barack Obama, said in a speech last week at Reed College in Portland, Oregon.

The U.S. and China, which together account for nearly 40 percent of global emissions, have said they intend to formally join the agreement this year. It will enter into force once 55 countries representing at least 55 percent of global emissions have done so.

“There’s incredible momentum,” former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark, who heads the U.N. Development Program, told The Associated Press. “We’re moving as quickly as possible to action.”

She said her agency is working with more than 140 countries on climate change-related issues, and that financing to make the Paris Agreement a reality is “critical, and let’s hope everyone lives up to commitments made.”

The agreement, the world’s response to hotter temperatures, ri-

sing seas and other impacts of climate change, was hammered out in December outside Paris. The pact was a major breakthrough in U.N. climate negotiations, which for years were bogged down with disputes between rich and poor countries over who should do what to fight global warming.

The mood was so pessimistic after a failed 2009 climate summit in Copenhagen, Denmark, that U.N. climate chief Christiana Figueres said she thought a global deal wouldn’t happen in her lifetime. Now she expects the Paris Agreement to take effect by 2018.

Under the agreement, countries set their own targets for reducing emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. The targets are not legally binding but countries must update them every five years.

That’s because scientific analyses show the initial set of targets that countries pledged before Paris don’t match the long-term goal

of the agreement to keep global warming below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), compared with pre-industrial times. Global average temperatures have already climbed by almost 1 degree C. Last year was the hottest on record.

“Even if the Paris pledges are implemented in full, they are not enough to get us even close to a 2-degree pathway,” said John Sterman, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. “I don’t

■ The U.S. and China, which together account for nearly 40 percent of global emissions, have said they intend to formally join the agreement this year

think people understand how urgent it is.”

The latest analysis by Sterman and colleagues at the Climate Interactive research group shows the Paris pledges put the world on track for 3.5 degrees C of warming. A separate analysis by Climate Action Tracker, a European group, projected warming of 2.7 degrees C.

Either way, scientists say the consequences could be catastrophic in some places, wiping out crops, flooding coastal areas and melting glaciers and Arctic sea ice.

Small island nations and other vulnerable countries managed in Paris to get others to agree to an

aspirational goal of keeping the temperature rise below 1.5 degrees C, which many analysts say won’t be possible without removing vast amounts of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

“In Paris they reached what was possible diplomatically and maybe went a little bit beyond it,” Sterman said. “I think we should celebrate it. But the physics of the climate are relentless.”

There is some good news. Global energy emissions, the biggest source of man-made greenhouse gases, were flat last year even though the global economy grew, according to the International Energy Agency. Some say that shows countries are finally driving their economies forward without burning massive amounts of oil, coal and gas.

Still, those fossil fuels are used much more widely than renewable sources like wind and solar power.

After signing the agreement, countries need to formally ratify it. Procedures for doing that vary among countries. The U.N. says about 10 countries, most of them small island developing states, will deposit their instruments of ratification today and that the world body will have a better idea by the end of the day which other countries intend to ratify the agreement this year.

The Obama administration says the deal is consistent with existing U.S. law and doesn’t require the approval of the Republican-controlled Senate, where it would likely face stiff resistance. The administration is expected to treat the deal as an executive agreement, which needs only the president’s approval.

Analysts say that if the Paris Agreement enters into force before Obama leaves office in January, it would be more complicated for his successor to withdraw from the deal, because it would take four years to do so under the rules of the agreement. **AP**

U.S. paper money is getting a historic makeover.

Harriet Tubman, an African-American abolitionist born into slavery, will be the new face on the USD20 bill.

The leader of the Underground Railroad is replacing the portrait of Andrew Jackson, the nation’s seventh president and a slave owner, who is being pushed to the back of the bill.

And Alexander Hamilton, the nation’s first Treasury secretary who’s enjoying a revival thanks to a hit Broadway play, will keep his spot on the \$10 note after earlier talk of his removal.

The changes are part of a currency redesign announced yesterday by Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew, with the new \$20 marking two

HISTORIC MAKEOVER

Harriet Tubman to be face on USD20 bill

historic milestones: Tubman will become the first African-American on U.S. paper money and the first woman to be depicted on currency in 100 years.

“This gesture sends a powerful message, because of the tendency in American history, the background of excluding women and marginalizing them as national symbols,” said Riche Richardson, associate professor in the Africana Studies and Research Center at Cornell University. “So even the symbolic significance of this cannot be overstated.”

Lew also settled a ba-

cklash that had erupted after he had announced an initial plan to remove Hamilton from the \$10 bill in order to honor a woman on the bill. Instead, the Treasury building on the back of the bill will be changed to commemorate a 1913 march that ended on the steps of the building. It will also feature suffragette leaders Lucretia Mott, Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Alice Paul.

The back of the \$20, which now shows the White House, will be redesigned to include the White House and Jackson, whose statute

stands across the street in Lafayette Park.

The \$5 bill will also undergo change: The illustration of the Lincoln Memorial on the back will be redesigned to honor “events at the Lincoln Memorial that helped to shape our history and our democracy.”

The new image on the \$5 bill will include civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., who gave his famous “I have a dream” speech on the steps of the memorial in 1963, and Marian Anderson and Eleanor Roosevelt. Anderson, an African-American opera singer, gave a concert at the memorial



Harriet Tubman, between 1860 and 1875

in 1939 after she had been blocked from singing at the then-segregated Constitution Hall. The Lincoln Memorial concert was arranged by Mrs. Roosevelt.

An online group, Women on 20s, said it was encouraged that Lew was responding to its campaign to replace Jackson with a woman. But it said it wouldn’t be satisfied unless Lew committed to issuing the new \$20 bill at the same time that the redesigned \$10 bill is scheduled to be issued in 2020.

Lew didn’t go that far. But he pledged that at least the designs for all three bills will be accelerated so they’ll be finished by 2020 — the 100th anniversary of passage of the 19th amendment giving women the right to vote. **AP**

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FRIDAY

13:00	TDM News (Repeat)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
15:00	RTPi Live
18:05	Fillers
18:10	Helena's Shadow (Repeated)
19:00	TDM Talk Show (Repeated)
19:30	Soap Opera
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:15	Documentary Serie
21:45	Miscellaneous
22:10	Helena's Shadow
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Portuguese Movie
01:05	Fillers

SATURDAY

10:30	Young Children
10:55	Drama
11:30	Young Adult
12:00	Miscellaneous
13:00	TDM News (Repeat)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
15:00	Soap Opera
18:00	Classic Music
18:30	Contest
19:25	Miscellaneous
20:00	Documentary Serie
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	Drama
22:00	Intelligence S.1
22:45	Documentary Series
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Brother's & Sister's S5

SUNDAY

10:30	Young Children
11:00	Sunday Mass
12:00	Miscellaneous
13:00	TDM News (Repeat)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:30	Zig Zag
16:25	Miscellaneous
16:40	Comedy
17:00	Miscellaneous
17:25	Documentary Series
18:20	Non-Daily Portuguese News
19:10	Documentary Serie
19:40	Comedy
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	Contraponto
22:00	Me & My New Brain
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Non-Daily Portuguese News
23:45	UEFA Europa League 2015/2016 - Magazine Programme

offbeat

McDONALD'S QUASHES ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT FRIES REPORTS

McDonald's Corp. is quashing reports that a coming Missouri restaurant will test all-you-can-eat fries, saying the endless spuds will be available for a limited time only to promote the site's scheduled July grand opening.

The buzz is around a reported "test" of unlimited fries for customers at the pending location in St. Joseph, north of Kansas. But McDonald's spokeswoman Lisa McComb says no such test is in the works.

McComb says the 6,500-square-foot Missouri restaurant will be unique because it will allow its customers to place their orders at digital kiosks and customize their burgers and desserts. McComb said more details will be available closer to the restaurant opening.

Messages left yesterday with the Missouri location's franchise owner, Chris Habiger, were not immediately returned.

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 - 27 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



1997 TROOPS STORM EMBASSY IN PERU

Troops have stormed the Japanese embassy in Peru and freed all but one of 72 hostages held inside, ending a four-month siege of the building by anti-government rebels.

All 14 Tupac Amaru rebels were killed, including their leader, Nestor Cerpa Cartolini.

One hostage - supreme court judge Carlos Giusti Acuna - died, as well as two Peruvian soldiers.

The end to the hostage crisis came at 1530 local time (2030 GMT) as about 15 soldiers in ski masks swarmed over the roof of the building.

A series of explosions shortly afterwards left a gaping hole in the roof of the embassy. Several smaller explosions were said to be caused by booby traps left by the rebels.

The assault lasted 40 minutes. As gunfire echoed around the compound, the hostages staggered, crawled or were carried out of the embassy. Several were injured.

They included the Peruvian Foreign Minister, Francisco Tudela, and the Japanese Ambassador, Miori Aoki.

As the gunfire died away, jubilant soldiers tore the Tupac Amaru rebel flag from the roof of the embassy and the Peruvian President, Alberto Fujimori, joined some of the former hostages in singing the national anthem.

The president has taken sole responsibility for the surprise decision to send in the troops.

It was a massive risk: the Japanese government, one of Peru's main trading partners, had been pressing him for a negotiated settlement to the crisis.

In the end, he went ahead without even letting them know.

The Japanese Prime Minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, expressed regret at that decision, but also thanked President Fujimori.

"It is not important whether we had prior knowledge of the move. The important thing is that the hostages were freed," he said.

The siege began on 17 December when the Marxist rebels stormed a diplomatic cocktail party, seizing more than 400 guests, most of whom were freed in the next few days.

They are believed to have chosen the Japanese embassy because of Japan's support for President Fujimori, who is of Japanese immigrant parentage.

Mr Fujimori has made his political reputation by taken a strong line against Shining Path and Tupac Amaru rebels in Peru.

He is likely to use the successful outcome of the siege as a vindication of his tough stance on terrorism.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

It emerged that security forces - helped by the British SAS - had prepared for the attack up to two weeks in advance. They dug a network of tunnels under the embassy to install surveillance equipment, pinpointing the whereabouts and movements of both hostages and rebels.

Most of the guerrillas were killed when a tunnel packed with explosives blew up under their feet as they played football.

Alberto Fujimori resigned in November 2000 after a bribery scandal involving his former intelligence chief, Vladimiro Montesinos.

Montesinos himself went into hiding for eight months.

During this time, in March 2001, the bodies of all 14 rebels involved in the Japanese embassy siege were exhumed amid allegations that troops shot some of them after they had surrendered.

The subsequent investigation concluded that at least three of the rebels were executed.

In 2002, Montesinos was charged with ordering his intelligence officers to kill them.

The charges are among 70 outstanding allegations against Montesinos, and he has yet to stand trial for them.

He is already serving a 15-year jail sentence for embezzlement, conspiracy and corruption.

YOUR STARS

Aries
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Initiating something at the office takes some boldness. But while you don't want the sparks to fly, you don't want actual combustion. Be very careful how you state your case.

Taurus
April 20-May 20
When a coworker acts pompous and you act arrogant, you're just going to bounce off of each other's puffed up chests. What you both need to get the job done is to form an attachment instead of stoking your egos.

Gemini
May 21-Jun. 21
A little playful banter never hurt anyone. Fun debating sets the mood for the day. Whether you're arguing over accounts or the best type of doughnut, keeping things light is the best approach.

Cancer
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
You may deserve a break, and who doesn't. But can you afford it? Work stacked on your desk will just make you nervous, even if you're away from it. Wait until you can breathe a bit easier.

Leo
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Feeling less than confident? One big achievement is all it takes to set things right. Visualize yourself as skipping stones instead of sinking, just to set in motion the ripple effect.

Virgo
Aug. 23-Sept. 22
With so much happening at the office, you just can't afford to stand rigid, but that doesn't mean you should be spineless. Think of yourself as a tree in a gale, and be flexible without breaking.

Libra
Sep.23-Oct. 22
Don't just sit there, waiting for direction. Be more active and start taking the initiative. In fact, you could start directing colleagues. They're already looking to you for answers.

Scorpio
Oct. 23 - Nov. 21
Some bosses remain a big problem until you challenge them to a duel. That's not as gory as it sounds, but if you do need to throw down the gauntlet, then be prepared for a showdown.

Sagittarius
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
What was once exciting is now ho-hum. How sad. Try to drum up some acceptance if not enthusiasm. Travel can be a drain but it does have its advantages, like being cooked for and cleaned up after. Dwell on them.

Capricorn
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Even the type who thrives on problems has their limit, and you're hitting yours. It's just not a good day. Business is business, but if you just can't stomach it today, then forward all calls and ignore the emails.

Aquarius
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Fixed ideas and creativity – those are contradictions. You'll never fix a certain problem if you keep trying the same solution over and over. Call in a colleague for a fresh perspective.

Pisces
Feb.19-Mar. 20
Fellow workers may be a problem but their diets shouldn't be. How many doughnuts they eat and whether or not they go to the gym is none of your beeswax, unless it affects your work.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy

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

Easy+

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

Medium

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

Hard

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	15	25	clear
Harbin	4	14	cloudy
Tianjin	14	24	clear
Urumqi	13	25	clear
Xi'an	12	23	cloudy/overcast
Lhasa	5	17	shower/cloudy
Chengdu	14	22	drizzle
Chongqing	16	20	moderate rain
Kunming	12	24	shower
Nanjing	15	27	cloudy
Shanghai	16	26	cloudy
Wuhan	16	22	cloudy/drizzle
Hangzhou	15	25	cloudy/overcast
Taipei	22	30	drizzle
Guangzhou	22	26	moderate to heavy rain
Hong Kong	23	28	cloudy/shower
WORLD			
Moscow	1	11	drizzle
Frankfurt	5	18	clear/overcast
Paris	12	21	overcast/drizzle
London	5	13	overcast/drizzle
New York	15	23	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Doc bloc; 4- Gave a speech; 10- More than one female sheep; 14- Test site; 15- Pull out; 16- Grandma; 17- "___ tu" (Verdi aria); 18- Universality; 20- R&R provider; 21- Wings; 22- French beans?; 23- Spud; 25- French port; 28- ER staffers; 29- Meager; 30- 1836 siege site; 31- Marquand sleuth; 32- Tending to have accidents; 35- Ltr. holder; 36- Laughing syllable; 37- Portly; 44- Nailed obliquely; 45- Kama ___; 46- Goblet part; 48- Put ___ fight; 49- Actress Berger; 50- Inventor Nikola; 51- Herring type; 53- Jug; 55- Final: Abbr.; 56- Peculiarity; 59- Cooking container; 60- Dirty look; 61- Happenings; 62- Regret; 63- Icelandic epic; 64- Doohickey; 65- ___ standstill;

DOWN: 1- Native Alaskans; 2- Cooking wine; 3- Of the absence of life; 4- Academy award; 5- Genuine; 6- Fit for the stage; 7- Mideast capital; 8- Tokyo, once; 9- "Runaway" singer Shannon; 10- Suffix with exist; 11- One who slings hash; 12- International accord; 13- States as fact; 19- Addams Family cousin; 24- Hosted; 26- CPR expert; 27- Actress Loren; 30- Counsel; 31- Gloomy; 33- Roadhouse; 34- Campaigned for office; 37- Like Flanders Fields; 38- Having knowledge; 39- 252 wine gallons; 40- Spoken; 41- Pencil sketch; 42- As above; 43- Betrayal; 44- Scuffle; 47- Country singer Kathy; 49- Actor Erwin; 50- Romantic rendezvous; 52- Mogul capital until 1658; 54- Suffix with cigar; 57- Drumstick; 58- Actress Gardner

Yesterday's solution

V	A	S	T	P	A	I	S	A	O	T	O	S
E	L	L	O	O	R	I	E	L	R	A	R	A
L	O	A	M	L	U	I	G	I	B	O	L	E
D	E	P	O	S	I	T	A	B	O	L	I	S
C	A	I	R	N	T	A	E	T	A	S	E	
A	R	N	O	S	E	S	A	M	E	L	E	D
N	O	T	W	I	T	H	S	T	A	N	D	I
E	A	R	D	R	E	A	M	S	E	S	S	E
D	R	O	N	E	E	V	E	S	A	T	E	S
A	R	T	I	S	A	N	N	U	T	M	E	A
S	I	R	S	T	O	T	E	M	U	C	L	A
S	T	Y	E	S	E	E	N	O	T	R	A	M
T	E	A	S	O	S	T	E	R	E	U	R	O

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- PJ (Open line) 993
- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
- Customs 28 559 944
- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IACM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
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Nicholas Paphitis, Ancient Olympia

OLYMPICS

THE flame for South America's first Olympics was kindled yesterday at the birthplace of the ancient games in Greece, heralding the start of a 15-week journey that will culminate with the August 5 opening ceremony in Rio de Janeiro.

International Olympic Committee leaders and Brazilian organizers attending the flame-lighting in the ruins of Ancient Olympia voiced strong confidence that Brazil will stage successful games, despite a political crisis which forced Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff to cancel a scheduled appearance at the ceremony.

Rousseff faces possible impeachment before the games over alleged accounting tricks in managing the federal budget. The host country is also beset by corruption scandals, a deep recession and the Zika virus outbreak, while games-related problems include spending cuts, slow ticket sales and delays in some venues.

Brazilian Sports Minister Ricardo Leyser said the country's woes will have "no impact" on the games.

"It will be a big party and people will forget the other problems and just focus on the games," he told reporters. "So I don't think it's really a problem for the games."

Carlos Nuzman, head of the Rio organizing committee, said the Olympics will help unite Brazilians and pledged that the host city "is ready to deliver history."

"We are incredibly proud to have come so far, sailing through some of the most challenging waters the Olympic movement has seen," Nuzman said, adding that the Olympic flame "brings a message that can and will unite our dear Brazil."

The IOC insists that the Rio Games will be a success, maintaining that preparations are already at an operational phase.

IOC President Thomas Bach said Rio will provide "a spectacular stage" for the Olympics.

"These Olympic Games will be

Flame for Rio is lit at birthplace of ancient Games



Former Brazilian volleyball player Giovane Gavio (left), and Greek gymnast Eleftherios Petrounias (right), show off their torches with the Olympic flame

a message of hope in troubled times — and indeed the flame will carry this message into all corners of Brazil and, indeed, all the world," he said. "Despite the difficulties that Brazil is facing today, the flame is a timeless reminder that we are all part of the same humanity."

Bach said 98 percent of all infrastructure is ready and the test events are going well, adding that he is "very confident" on the games' success.

The flame was lit outside the 7th Century B.C. Temple of Hera in Olympia by Greek actress Katerina Lehou, in a long pleated dress impersonating a pagan high priestess. After a mock prayer to the ancient Greek gods, she used a concave mirror to focus the sun's rays on her torch, and the ceremony continued in the ancient sta-

■ Brazilian Sports Minister Ricardo Leyser said the country's woes will have 'no impact' on the games

dium — which was used at the 2004 Athens Games as the shot put venue.

The flame-lighting ceremony, a key part of the Olympic pageantry, dates to one of the more awkward moments of the modern games, the 1936 Berlin Olympics conducted by Nazi Germany.

The first torchbearer, Greek world gymnastics champion Eleftherios Petrounias, took delivery of the flame and handed it to Brazilian former volleyball great Giovane Gavio at the beginning of a relay involving hundreds.

The relay will traverse Greece for six days until the April 27 handover to Brazilian officials in Athens, at the refurbished ancient stadium where the first modern games were held in 1896.

"This is the beginning of [...] the last stretch of the organization," Bach said. "We're really looking forward to the moment when this flame is finally burning in the Olympic cauldron in Rio de Janeiro."

In a nod to the global refugee crisis, the Greek leg will include a stop at a camp in Athens

that is home to 1,500 refugees and migrants trapped in Greece — one of whom will participate in the relay — while a young Syrian boy from another camp will accompany the torchbearer in a small town just north of Olympia.

For the first time at the Rio Games, the IOC will allow a group of 5-10 refugee athletes to participate, marching behind the Olympic flag at the opening ceremony. IOC officials say there are 42 potential participants, and the final selection will be made in June.

"We thought that this is the responsibility of the International Olympic Committee to send a signal of solidarity with refugees who are fleeing their homes from war and from violence," Bach said. "We wanted to give [them] a home in the Olympic village. We wanted to give them a flag, with the Olympic flag [...] an anthem to identify with — the Olympic anthem."

After a brief stopover in Switzerland, the flame will start its travels through Brazil on May 3, starting in the capital of Brasilia. Organizers say it will reach most of the vast country's 200 million population, covering 20,000 kilometers by road and 16,000 kilometers by air to reach hundreds of cities and towns in a giant effort involving 12,000 torchbearers.

In a departure from customary practice, Rio will have two stadiums: the Maracana for the opening and closing ceremonies and soccer, and the Olympic Stadium across town, which will be used for track and field. After the first night in the Maracana, the flame will depart for an undisclosed downtown location for the rest of the games. **AP**

TENNIS

Nadal beats Montanes to reach Barcelona Open quarterfinals



Rafael Nadal

RAFRAEL Nadal advanced to the quarterfinals of the Barcelona Open by beating Albert Montanes 6-2, 6-2 yesterday.

The Spanish players exchanged early breaks in the first set but the top-seeded Nadal soon took control to secure victory at the clay-court tournament.

Nadal had 24 winners against only nine for the 35-year-old Montanes, a wild-card entry this week.

"I started off very well, and it felt really good," the fifth-ranked Nadal said. "I had a great forehand today and the conditions were much better than yesterday."

Nadal, coming off his first title of the year at

the Monte Carlo Masters last week, will next face 12th-seeded Fabio Fognini of Italy, who defeated eighth-seeded Viktor Troicki of Serbia 6-3, 6-2.

Fognini eliminated Nadal in the third round of last year's tournament in Barcelona. The 31st-ranked Italian beat Nadal three times last year,

including in a five-set match in the third round at the U.S. Open.

Nadal is trying to win his ninth title at the Barcelona Open, and first since 2013.

Also, Malek Jaziri converted only two of 12 break points but was still able to defeat Alexander Zverev of Germany 7-6 (5), 6-4. **AP**

opinion

Kapok
Eric Sautedé



DO AS I SAY NOT AS I DO

In his first second-term policy address in March 2015, Mr Chui Sai On gave the assurance that consultative bodies would from now on be better regulated. The pledge was twofold: limit the number of consultant positions concurrently held by the same person to a maximum of three and limit the number of years of service in such positions to a maximum of six. A brand new team of Secretaries having been sworn in, the rationale was that if much needed and imaginative public policies were to be put in place, cells of resistance and possible conflicts of interest had to be subdued within these consultative bodies.

When things are decided by the happy few, consultation processes become a life-line. During an official ceremony marking the 65th anniversary of the Communist regime in September 2014, Mr Xi Jinping himself praised "consultative democracy" as China's unique way of allowing the people to participate in governance. Even if the President's understanding of democracy was clearly derived from Marxism-Leninism, his urge for a well-established feed-back mechanism coming from the masses was genuine.

In Macao, dozens of public consultations concerning all kinds of governmental decisions have been organised, with varying degrees of soundness, relevance and legitimacy, despite a thorough revamping of the rules in August 2011. Moreover, consultative bodies have mushroomed, totalling now 46 such institutionalised gatherings placed under the direct authority of either the Chief Executive or one of the five Secretaries. With 17 consultative bodies under him, the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture tops them all. These organs do not hold any actual power, but their members do influence the decision-making processes and ultimately the policies themselves.

In mid-March, All About Macau, a liberal-minded Chinese newspaper, came up with the story proving that prominent businessman Paul Tse was actually sitting on more than three such bodies, contrary to Chui's commitment. Then, the same online outlet published a list of 24 personalities sitting on at least three boards of public agencies and consultative committees. Paul Tse was listed with seven such positions and so was lawyer-turned-legislator Vong In Fai, who was also Mr Chui's chief campaigner in 2014. Chui Sai Peng, the very own cousin of Mr Chui Sai On and also a legislator, appeared on the list as well, and his name appeared again in the headlines on April 11 when it was discovered that an association he is heading had received important public funding to publish textbooks without going through a public tender. Possible conflicts of interest come in many guises in Macao but often originate in business circles, the Legislative Assembly and these consultative bodies.

Ever since the unravelling of the Ao Man Long scandal, the prevention of corruption at the highest echelon has been advertised as a priority: Chui Sai On's first "real" policy address in November 2010 was all about "sunshine government" and "scientific administration." If the enduring results of the latter had been always seriously doubted, the former was somehow being given credence, at least until February this year: the arrest of former prosecutor-general Ho Chio Meng on charges of fraud and abuse of power is now casting a long shadow on the system as a whole.

A conflict of interest - a personal interest taking precedence over the community's - does not equate with corruption, but in the words of the European Parliament it can be "considered an indicator, a precursor and a result of corruption." When the secretary for Administration and Justice Sonia Chan asserts that there are less than ten personalities who participate in more than three consultative bodies and that this is being taken care of gradually, should we trust her, especially when the time spent in any given position is not even questioned? What about the issue of patronage? Indeed, the very same Chui Sai Peng sits on a staggering 143 boards of associations! And what about a standing committee member of the CPPCC sitting concurrently on boards of three universities in Macao?

The "small world" excuse is just that: an excuse. After all, the Athenian Democracy was designed for a city half the size of Macao.

THE BUZZ LEIBOVITZ IMAGES MARK QUEEN ELIZABETH II'S 90TH BIRTHDAY

Queen Elizabeth II is surrounded by young grandchildren and great-grandchildren in 90th birthday portraits by photographer Annie Leibovitz.

One of the images, released yesterday by Buckingham Palace, shows the queen with two grandchildren and five great-

grandchildren. The queen cradles Prince William's 11-month-old daughter Princess Charlotte in her lap, while Mia Tindall - 2-year-old daughter of the queen's granddaughter Zara Phillips and her husband Mike Tindall - stands clutching the monarch's black handbag.



Pop superstar Prince dies at his Minnesota home

AP PHOTO



Prince

POP superstar Prince, who was widely acclaimed as one of the most inventive musicians of his era, was found dead at his home on yesterday in suburban Minneapolis, according to his publicist.

His publicist, Yvette Noel-Schure, told The Associated Press that the music

icon died at his home in Chanhassen. No details were immediately released.

The man born Prince Rogers Nelson stood just 5 feet, 2 inches and seemed to summon the most original and compelling sounds at will, whether playing guitar in a flamboyant style that openly drew upon Jimi

Hendrix, switching his vocals from a nasally scream to an erotic falsetto or turning out album after album of stunningly original material. Among his other notable releases: "Sign O' the Times," "Graffiti Bridge" and "The Black Album."

He was also fiercely protective of his independence, battling his record company over control of his material and even his name. Prince once wrote "slave" on his face in protest of not owning his work and famously battled and then departed his label, Warner Bros., before returning a few years ago.

"What's happening now is the position that I've always wanted to be in," Prince told The Associated Press in 2014. "I was just trying to get here."

In 2004, Prince was inducted into the Rock and Roll of Fame, which hailed him as a musical and social trailblazer.

"He rewrote the rulebook, forging a synthesis of black funk and white rock that served as a blueprint for cutting-edge music in the Eighties," reads the Hall's dedication. "Prince made dance music that rocked and rock music that had a bristling, funky backbone. From the beginning, Prince and his music were androgynous, sly, sexy and provocative." AP

Station	Air quality
Roadside	40-60 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	50-70 Moderate
Ambient	30-50 Good

SOURCE: DSI/MG

WORLD BRIEFS

AP PHOTO



HAWAII A pilot is preparing to take off for a flight from Hawaii to California with no jet fuel aboard his plane. The Swiss-made Solar Impulse 2 is scheduled to leave Hawaii today to continue its circumnavigation of the globe using only energy from the sun.

USA The CIA is expanding survivor benefits for agency employees and contractors killed in the line of duty overseas in acts of terrorism.

AP PHOTO



USA paper money is getting a historic makeover: Harriet Tubman will become the first African-American to adorn U.S. currency. More on p15

AP PHOTO



EU After the European Central Bank's decision to keep its interest rates unchanged at record lows, President Mario Draghi said the bank can deploy more stimulus if global troubles threaten to push a modest economic recovery off the rails and further weighs on inflation. Overall, though, he sounded a relatively optimistic - and firm - tone that helped the euro rise 0.6 percent to USD1.1373.

AP PHOTO



SPAIN A hospital on the island of Mallorca says that James Bond movie director Guy Hamilton has died at age 93. Hamilton directed "Goldfinger," "Diamonds Are Forever," "Live And Let Die" and "The Man With The Golden Gun." He lived on Mallorca and the Hospital Juaneda Miramar in Palma de Mallorca said in a statement yesterday that Hamilton died there a day earlier.

times square by rodrigo

