

OKADA CONFIDENT ON FILIPINO MARKET
 Okada Manila opened this week for public preview. An official opening is scheduled for the first quarter of 2017
 P5 GAMING

THEATRE HIKOSEN RETURNS
 Theatre Hikosen has returned to Macau to present The Wonderful Wizard of Oz at the Cultural Centre
 P7

RECORD DEFENSE BUDGET APPROVED
 P11 JAPAN

FRI. 23
Dec 2016
 T. 15°/ 21° C
 H. 60/ 85 %
 facebook.com/mdtimes
 + 11,000
 N.º 2709
MOP 7.50
HKD 9.50

MacauDaily 澳門每日時報®
Times
 FOUNDER & PUBLISHER Kowie Goldenhuys EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Paulo Coutinho
 www.macaudailytimes.com.mo

China • Macau • HK
 Share Data Plan
 Monthly Rental \$198/3GB
 Note: CTM reserves the right to make the final decision in case of any dispute.
CTM

“THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’”

WORLD BRIEFS

CHINA has targets for just about everything, from ethanol production to reaching Mars. Now the top economic planning body wants to get more tourists to hit the road, and has even announced targets for skydiving, water skiing and mountain climbing, as authorities push for more consumer spending to aid the economic transition away from old industrial drivers. *More on p10*



PORTUGAL's fragile economy is getting a tonic from tourism this year, with revenue up by more than 10 percent through October including a 20 percent jump in visitors from the United States. Tourism minister Ana Mendes Godinho says the sector brought in some USD11.5 billion in the first 10 months of 2016 – about 1 billion euros more than the same period last year.

JAPAN and the U.S. marked a partial return of the land used by American troops to Okinawa in a ceremony yesterday on the southern island, but there was no sign the move was helping to lessen protests against the island's heavy U.S. military presence. Nearly 10,000 acres, or half the U.S. military “northern training area” on the island, was returned to Okinawa in exchange for the construction of Osprey aircraft helipads nearby. Residents say the deal only transfers the burden.

More on backpage

CE cautiously hopeful about economy in 2017

P2 MSAR'S 17TH YEAR



SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE
Breakaway from Taiwan paves way to Forum Macau . P3



Extra
Smog alert
times
Extra
 weekend Guide
 INSIDE

AFA to host 9th anniversary exhibition

Art For All (AFA) society will present a special exhibition tonight at the Macau Art Garden in celebration of its 9th anniversary. Starting at 6:30 p.m., "AFA 9th Anniversary Members Exhibition" will showcase a total of 24 artworks by 20 members of the society, including oil paintings, watercolors, line drawings, sculptures, acrylics, videos and installation works. Over the last nine years, AFA membership has grown significantly from its original five founders to encompass a great many art lovers around and within the territory according to a statement from the organizer. Instead of choosing a specific theme for the exhibition, AFA asked participating artists to decide the theme of their artwork for themselves in the name of creative diversity. The exhibition will be open to the public until January 22, 2017.

Alexis Tam denies responsibility in heritage issue

The Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Alexis Tam, told the media that they should direct their queries on a high rise building in the Calçada da Guia to the relevant departments, according to a report by All About Macau. The building is located in the vicinity of the Guia Lighthouse, which is protected as cultural heritage. Recently, New Macau Association members were in Paris to discuss the issue with UNESCO representatives, as the Times reported. When questioned by the media, Tam said that matters of urban planning are not his responsibility. The secretary reaffirmed that the work which is the responsibility of his department has already been appropriately recognized by UNESCO.

Macau single-plated cars enter Hengqin

Macau's single-plated cars were officially allowed to enter Hengqin on the region's handover anniversary, on Tuesday. The authorities received dozens of applications for the new vehicle scheme and the first nine vehicles permitted to enter Hengqin made the journey on Tuesday. Speaking in Hengqin during the scheme's launch ceremony, the Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, expressed his belief that more than 240,000 of Macau's single-plated cars will enter Hengqin in the near future which will help to ease Macau's traffic congestion. The scheme – in which qualified Macau-registered motor vehicles can enter Hengqin – will be implemented in several phases, said Wong.

MSAR'S 17TH ANNIVERSARY

Chui reflects on city's resilience to economic downturn



The flag-raising ceremony occurred, as usual, at Golden Lotus Square



A reception to celebrate the MSAR's 17th anniversary was held at the Macau Tower

Daniel Beittler

A flag-raising ceremony was held Tuesday morning at Golden Lotus Square to celebrate the completion of the Sino-Portuguese handover process 17 years ago.

Chief Executive (CE) Chui Sai On who spoke at the Macau Tower during an official ceremony later in the day, took the occasion to commend how Macau has weathered significant economic changes in recent years, and to thank the Central Government for its role in supporting the MSAR.

Representatives of the government, led by the CE, were accompanied during the Golden Lotus Square ceremony by officials from the Chinese military in addition to residents and visitors. All present were entertained by several performances. Together the gathered individuals honored the handover celebration day and reflected on the city's changes since

1999.

Following performances at Golden Lotus Square, a reception was hosted at the Macau Tower by the CE, who delivered a speech expressing sentiments on these changes. In particular, he praised the progress that Macau has witnessed since the handover, with specific reference to the apparent recovery from the gaming downturn in the last few months.

"Recently, affected by the complicated external environment, Macau is experiencing deep economic adjustment," said Chui. "Despite the uncertainties facing the global economy in the coming year, we are still cautiously optimistic about Macau's economic outlook. We believe Macau will achieve stable economic development in 2017."

"Thanks to the joint efforts of Macau society, we have succeeded in maintaining overall economic stability this year, and even reversed

the downward trend during the latest quarter," he added.

Aside from a pledge for the government to "review and improve any shortcomings in our work [...] and be accountable," Chui's speech was notably absent of commentary on the recent allegations of corruption rocking his administration.

When queried by reporters on this matter after the ceremony, the CE said that he wouldn't comment on the allegations of nepotism concerning Secretary for Administration and Justice, Sonia Chan, and her predecessor, Florinda Chan.

According to public broadcaster TDM, Chui hinted that it would be inappropriate to comment before an investigation into the allegations has begun. Although this comment in itself was revealing, as it implies that there will be an investigation.

"People are concerned about the existence of un-

LEONG STRESSES HEALTHY ECONOMY

COMMENTS MADE by Secretary for Economy and Finance Lionel Leong after the handover reception hosted by the government stressed the stable business environment of the territory and the high employment rate. The secretary said that despite uncertainties in issues related to Macau's economy, the outlook

remained positive. He added that issues relating to the livelihood of Macau residents would continue to be a top priority of the government. Separately, Leong informed that a government decision on whether to renew the contract of the Macau (Yat Yuen) Canidrome would be settled prior to July 20, 2018.

We are still cautiously optimistic about Macau's economic outlook.

CHUI SAI ON

CELEBRATION NOT WITHOUT PROTESTS

NOT ALL residents shared Chui's vision of a prosperous and economically successful MSAR on Tuesday. During the celebration holiday several groups took to the streets demanding greater protection for local workers who they feel are being neglected in favor of non-resident workers. An estimated 600 people marched from Iao Hon to the government headquarters, demanding that the rights and interests of resident workers be protected. Meanwhile, Pearl Horizon pre-buyers staged a protest of their own held outside the office of the site's developer, Polytec. Protesters called on the government to propose a solution to the ongoing disputes before the Lunar New Year next month.

fairness and recruitment procedures based on favoritism," he said, as cited by TDM. "For my part I support central recruitment where there's openness and fairness."

In a statement released later in the day, the Government Information Bureau said that Chui is seeking to "set an example of morality and integrity even higher than that required by local laws and regulations."

With an eye on the coming year in his speech at the Macau Tower, the CE promised to strengthen the rule of law, improve education policies, and reform the public administration. He expressed his gratitude to the Central Government for various policies that came to fruition this year, including the yacht visa scheme between Macau and Zhongshan and the recent scheme to allow registered Macau cars to drive on Hengqin Island.

Chui concluded his speech by professing his love for his country, China, and toasting to the prosperity of Macau, which he says is certain to have "a bright future."

www.macaudailytimes.com.mo

+ 4 Million page views
PER MONTH

Thank You!

+11,000 like us on facebook.com/mdtimes

MacauDaily 澳門每日時報

Times

DIRECTOR AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF_Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com
MANAGING EDITOR_Paulo Barbosa paulo.barbosa@macaudailytimes.com
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS_Eric Sautedé, Leanda Lee, Severo Portela
DESIGN EDITOR_João Jorge Magalhães magalhaes@macaudailytimes.com | NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS
Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Daniel Beittler, Emilie Tran, Grace Yu, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Joseph Cheung, Julie Zhu, Juliet Risdon, Lynzy Valles, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Rodrigo de Matos (cartoonist), Sandra Norte (designer), Viviana Seguí | ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS
JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | NEWS AGENCIES_Associated Press, Bloomberg, Financial Times, MacauHub, MacauNews, Xinhua | SECRETARY_Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

A MACAU TIMES PUBLICATIONS LTD PUBLICATION

ADMINISTRATOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

SECRETARY Denise Lo denise@macaudailytimes.com

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

Advertisement advertising@macaudailytimes.com

For subscription and general issues:

general@macaudailytimes.com | Printed at Welfare Printing Ltd

SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE

Breakaway from Taiwan paves way to Forum Macau

Daniel Beittler

SÃO Tomé and Príncipe has announced that it will sever formal relations with Taiwan in favor of abiding by the mainland's "One-China" policy, in what has become the latest diplomatic rebuff to the island-state.

The move is expected to pave the way for the African nation to join the Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (Forum Macau).

São Tomé and Príncipe is the only Portuguese-speaking country that has been excluded from active participation in Forum Macau (though being permitted as an observer) on the basis of its former recognition of Taiwan.

Taiwan, which receives diplomatic recognition from less than two-dozen countries as of today, lost another ally this

week after São Tomé and Príncipe revoked its formal ties. The decision comes less than a year after Beijing resumed relations with the African country of Gambia which had formally severed its ties to Taiwan in 2013.

The Chinese foreign ministry has welcomed the decision and commended the African nation for reverting to "the correct path of the 'One-China' principle."

However, Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen condemned Beijing's "diplomatic suppression," writing that "such conduct will not help the long-term development of cross-strait relations. Deliberately ignoring and dwarfing Taiwan in the international arena will only make [the] Taiwanese feel humiliated and infuriated."

The government of São Tomé and Príncipe did not specify the reason behind the sudden announcement, but Taiwan's



foreign minister David Lee accredited the policy shift to increasing financial demands in the relationship between the two states. The West African nation, like most of Taiwan's remaining friends, is a recipient of economic aid, with the total sum over the last 19 years amounting to around USD200 million.

The People's Republic of China and Taiwan have engaged in a decades-long battle to win over friends by enticing them through financial assistance. As China's economic might has grown, Taiwan has found it increasingly difficult to compete.

Analysts speculate that Vati-

can City, Taiwan's only source of diplomatic recognition on the European continent, could be next to reverse its position on the island given the already increased efforts of Beijing to woo the walled enclave over.

However, Taiwan's deputy foreign minister, Javier Hou, said that that outcome is not yet decided.

"The Holy See is different. It's not a secular state, and the pontiff is the supreme leader. So no problems exist like dollar assistance," he said, as cited by South China Morning Post. "At least in the short term, the Holy See will not sever ties with Taiwan."

Lei Ka-Meng appointed visiting scholar at Harvard

Born and raised in Macau, Lei Ka-Meng, a lecturer under the 'Macau Fellow' program at the University of Macau, will be a visiting scholar at Harvard University for a two-year term from mid-2017. During his stay, Dr. Lei will explore a parallel nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) platform that combines advanced microfluidic, magnetic-sensing and integrated circuits technologies, in an effort to substantially reduce the cost and time of NMR experiments. In 2017, Lei will receive the Predoctoral Achievement Award from the IEEE Solid-State Circuits Society, which is awarded to an elite group of outstanding graduate students in the field of solid-state circuits.

Hong Kong changes visa entry policy for Indians

Hong Kong has amended the visa entry requirements for Indian nationals whereby, from January 23, they will not be eligible for visa-free entry to the HKSAR. Instead, a "pre-arrival registration" process has been established, and Indian nationals intending to visit Hong Kong can access the service online. "Indian nationals must apply for and successfully complete pre-arrival registration online before they can visit or transit the HKSAR visa-free," Hong Kong's immigration department announced on its website. "Pre-arrival registration is not required for Indian nationals in direct transit by air and not leaving the airport transit area." The pre-arrival registration is valid for six months but successful applicants will be able to visit Hong Kong multiple times in that period.

AD



ST REGIS
MACAO • COTAI CENTRAL

LOBSTER & CHAMPAGNE BRUNCH AT THE MANOR

Enjoy our luxurious alternating 10-course lobster-themed degustation menus served to the table along with an alluring Crustacean Bar, prime meat and seafood signatures and indulgent desserts at The Manor.

Every Sunday, from 12.00 noon to 3.30 pm

- ◆ MOP588+ includes wines and cocktails
- ◆ MOP788+ includes house Champagne
- ◆ To elevate your brunch experience with Krug starting from MOP1,188+

All packages include bottomless wines, vodkas, punch and sangria drippers, juices and soft drinks

25% discount for teenagers under 18 years;
50% discount for children under 12 years and complimentary for 5 years and below.



BOOKINGS AND INQUIRIES
853.8113.2777
THEMANOR.MACAO@STREGIS.COM
THEMANORMACAO.COM



Tourist still in hospital after bus crash on Tuesday

TWENTY-NINE tourists from a Hunan tour group left Macau on Tuesday after being involved in a tour bus accident the same day. According to a statement issued by the Tourism Crisis Management Office, 34 tourists from a Shandong tour group were also involved in the incident, of which two were hospitalized. The remainder also left the region on Tuesday. Yesterday the bureau confirmed that one of the two hospitalized individuals had been discharged while the other remains in a stable condition and is expected to be discharged in the next one or two days.

Once the individuals are discharged from the hospital, they will depart Macau.

The crash occurred between two tour buses and a private vehicle in Avenida Marginal Flor de Lotus



Representatives of the Public Security Police Force and the Fire Services Bureau give an on-site briefing regarding Tuesday's serious traffic accident

in Taipa on Tuesday afternoon.

The accident sent 57 mainland visitors to the public hospital for bone fractures and bruise treatments.

However, only two suffered serious injuries and they were both conscious and stable while being taken to the hospital.

"There was a car in front of me [...] then it stopped and so I followed suit.

Then the tour bus crashed into me," said the driver of the car to reporters, as cited in TDM.

"I didn't know if that private car had crashed or not. It stopped and I was behind it. I didn't even manage to make a quick brake," the tour bus driver said.

Eleven emergency vehicles were called in response to the incident.

Firefighters broke the

windows of the second tour bus to rescue the injured passengers using a variety of specialised tools.

"A double wrench had to be used to rescue the injured people. We also had to use medical equipment. Therefore, we sent for different types of vehicles," said Chan Chi Man, district chief at the Fire Services' Taipa station.

The Public Security Police speculated that the second tour bus failed to brake in time, crashing against the first tour bus in front of it, in turn causing it to run into the car.

"As for the final cause of the traffic accident, we will investigate the testimony of the individuals on the scene and surveillance recordings and others before we reach a conclusion," said Ma Chio Hong, chief of the police's Traffic Department.

Jobless migrants must exit within eight days

A new policy, spearheaded by Macau's Immigration Services, decrees that non-residents who leave their employment or are fired will have only eight days to depart from the MSAR. The revision is down from the previous 10 days.

Furthermore, if non-residents have been working in Macau for less than half a year, they will only be able to remain in the territory for two days after their employment is terminated.

According to a report from TDM, the International Labor Organization (ILO) has expressed concern over the decision, warning that it might foster unequal employment relationships. The organization advocates that non-residents ought to receive the same treatment as local workers.

Their concerns are echoed by non-resident workers and rights activist groups in the city, some of whom have been claiming since 2010 that the previous 10 days were not sufficient for workers who planned to challenge unfair dismissal.

Macau's Labor Affairs Bureau told TDM that they regularly meet with migrant workers to explain their rights. However, they were keen to stress that the new policy is being driven by the Immigration Services.

AD



CENTRO MÉDICO PEDDER
◆ 仁德醫療中心 ◆



We bring high quality of medical service to Macau

General Surgery : Dr. Fok Manson, Dr. Lai Cheuck Seen Edward, Dr. Lau Wing Kee Peter, Dr. Nie Fu Zhong, Dr. U Chong San, Dr. Lei Chin Chong, Dr. Kwong Man

Breast Surgery : Dr. Leong Iat Lun

Urology : Dr. Lo Kwong Yin Richard, Dr. Zhao Yun Qiao

Paediatric Surgery : Dr. Yeung Chung Kwong

Paediatrics : Dr. Leung Ping Maurice, Dr. Zhang Zhiqin

Obstetrics & Gynaecology : Dr. Fong Kuan Io

Plastic & Aesthetic Surgery : Dr. Lam U Lin

Orthopaedic Surgery & Sports Medicine : Dr. Lam Kun Kuan

Cardiology : Dr. Wong Kwok Yiu Chris, Dr. Jin Chun, Dr. Leong Man Kin

Gastroentero-Hepatology : Dr. Zhan De Juan

General Medicine : Dr. Ng Kam Hong

Anaesthesiology : Dr. Ning Siu Kei Eric, Dr. Chan Wai Han

Dietitian : Chan Lai U Joey

Avenida da Praia Grande No 599, Edifício Comercial Rodrigues 14 e 15 Andar, em Macau
T. 2832 2298 / 2832 2229 Website: www.peddermacau.com
Opening Hours: Mon - Fri 10:00 - 19:00 Sat 10:00 - 14:00 Sun & PH closed



優悅牙科護理中心
ICQ Oral Health Center
I Care for Quality

ICQ dental team is a group of dental specialists with internationally recognized qualifications. We provide all range of dental services:

- Oral examination and radiology investigation
- Restorative and Cosmetic Dentistry
- Children Dentistry
- Orthodontic Treatment
- Oral and Dental implant Surgery
- Endodontic Treatment
- Periodontal Treatment
- Emergency Treatment

We are committed to deliver high quality dental services with personalized care. We ensure the highest level of infection control.

Website: www.icqoral.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/icqoral

CONSULTATION BY APPOINTMENT: OFFICE HOUR: 10:00AM-19:00PM
CLOSE ON SUN, TUE AND PUBLIC HOLIDAY

Rm1907, 19/F, AIA Tower, Nos. 251A-301, AVENIDA COMMERCIAL DE MACAU, MACAU SAR
TEL: (853)28373266 FAX: (853)28356483 EMAIL: INFO@ICQORAL.COM WWW.ICQORAL.COM

New Sunshine Cleaning Services Ltd.




Residence Cleaning

Glass Cleaning

Carpet Cleaning

Pest Control

Call : 2883 3008

Member of General Association of Macao Cleaning Service Industry

GAMING

Philippine casino market could surpass Singapore, Okada says

Ian Sayson, Siegfried Alegado

UNIVERSAL Entertainment Corp. Chairman Kazuo Okada said the Philippine gaming market could ultimately surpass Singapore as the Japanese tycoon prepares to open a USD2.4 billion casino in Manila.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's move to thaw relations with China as well as his efforts to fight drugs and crime will help increase the number of Chinese visitors, Okada said in an interview in Manila Wednesday. At the same time, the businessman sounded a note of caution about jumping into the world's newest casino market in Japan.

"A lot of Chinese are coming into the Philippines, and that will improve more as improving bilateral relations between China and the Philippines increase tourism here," the 74-year-old said. Okada Manila opened this week for public preview and official opening is scheduled for the first quarter of 2017.

The Philippines is vying with Macau and Singapore to become a gambling hub targeting Asia's rising middle class, even as the prevalence of high-stakes Chinese gamblers has been hurt by government crackdowns on corruption and capital outflow. Competition in the region is set to become more crowded, with Japan's parliament passing a bill legalizing casinos this month, paving the way for billions of dollars of potential investments.



Universal Entertainment Corp. Chairman Kazuo Okada

Philippine gross gaming revenue will probably reach \$3 billion this year and may rise to \$3.6 billion in 2018, said Rommel Rodrigo, an analyst at Maybank ATR Kim Eng. That's still less than revenue from Singapore's two casino resorts, which totaled \$4.8 billion in 2015, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. Macau remains the world's largest center for gambling despite a two-year slump, raking in \$28.9 billion in 2015.

Okada Manila, which missed its previous deadline to open in November, will be the Philippine capital's largest casino resort with over 26,000 square meters of gaming space, and the third to open in Entertainment City,

a 120-hectare site along the city's bay that the government is developing into a casinos and leisure hub.

Okada said he expects the casino to become profitable in its first year of operations and to give a return on his investment in three to five years. It could seek a listing on the Philippine Stock Exchange in a year, he said.

Universal Entertainment shares rose 6.5 percent to 3,180 yen in Tokyo yesterday, the steepest increase since Oct. 3. The benchmark Topix index fell 0.1 percent.

That profitability outlook may be a "very optimistic" forecast as the gaming market in Asia isn't as strong as three years

earlier, as the region faces rising political and economic uncertainties and China continues to curb gambling activity, said Justino Calaycay, head of research at A&A Securities Inc. In October, Chinese authorities detained 18 employees of Australia's Crown Resorts Ltd., as the government clamps down on casinos that woo its citizens to gamble overseas.

■ The Philippines is vying with Macau and Singapore to become a gambling hub targeting Asia's rising middle class

"With China's crackdown still ongoing, one has to be skeptical if there will be a big flood of players coming from China," Calaycay said.

For Japan, CLSA Ltd. analysts estimated that potential gaming revenue could eventually reach more than \$25 billion a year. Details of Japan's casinos, or so-called integrated resorts, must still be laid out in an implementation bill before any casinos can be built -- meaning none are likely to open their doors in time for the 2020

Tokyo Olympics.

"I am very much interested in investing in Japan also for a casino - but I feel that the rules would take a year to be fully-established, so we will consider it for one year," said Okada, whose company is a manufacturer of gaming machines known as pachinko. "It's one way to promote tourism to Japan, and it's also a way in Japan to provide a different form of gaming other than pachinko to the people."

While Yokohama and Osaka have been touted as potential venues for Japan's first casino resorts, Okada said he sees the northern city of Sapporo as an attractive location due to its natural resources and good seafood, and its existing popularity with tourists. "I don't have very high expectations when it comes to the gaming industry in Japan because economic growth has been very stable," he said.

Still, the potential of casinos in Japan has drawn interest from the world's largest gaming companies such as Wynn Resorts Ltd., MGM Resorts International and Las Vegas Sands Corp., as they eye the country's large and wealthy population.

Duterte, who assumed office in June 30, has made a pivot to China in a bid to attract investments from the world's second-largest economy and thaw relations that cooled in the previous six years due to a territorial dispute. Yet, the Philippine president has also started his own anti-gambling campaign, vowing to destroy online gambling and electronic gaming parlors that have been loosely regulated.

"Our initial target is to have 30 percent of the guests from the international segment, but we would eventually like to bring that up to 50 percent," said Okada. "We are looking at China, Taiwan, Korea and Japan - if you think about it from proximity, a lot of our guests will initially be coming from China and Taiwan." **Bloomberg**

Narae Kim

FOR those wondering whether to raise or lower bets on Macau's VIP gaming business, look no further than China's real estate market.

According to Nomura Holdings Inc.'s analyst Richard Huang, the two markets are "strongly correlated" and a series of property tightening measures in the mainland will dampen the industry that has just recently begun to recover from three "brutal" years.

Not only that, Nomura's gaming, lodging & leisure research analyst for Asia ex-Japan noted that VIP gross gaming revenue growth is also strongly in

China property market puts Macau's VIP gaming recovery at risk

line with the price movement of China's commodities market as well as the global oil market.

"I think there's a logical explanation here because after all, it means a lot of Chinese people are earning wealth from the property market as well as the commodities market," said Huang in an interview. "And part of the money would flow into Macau's VIP gaming."

As a result, Huang ex-

pects the recent pick-up in the VIP gaming segment to be short-lived.

Having been slashed by two thirds to about USD10 billion this year from \$30 billion in 2014, the analyst said, the VIP gaming market has begun to recover in the second half of this year. "Because of the recent recovery, some are turning bullish on its growth prospect, but we do not share that optimism," said Huang. "Our

in-house view is that the property market will soften next year, which will have a negative impact on the VIP segment."

The country's overheated property market shows signs of cooling after Beijing introduced tightening measures to more than 20 cities in the third quarter. New-home prices in Shenzhen, the nation's hottest property market earlier this year, fell 0.3 percent in November from Oc-

tober, the second straight month of declines.

In addition, Beijing's latest efforts to contain capital outflows bode ill for its recovery, according to Huang, as the growth of the VIP gaming sector is a "direct consequence" of capital outflows from China.

"Having seen the recent recovery [of the VIP segment], the central government may have been encouraged to roll out more

tightening measures to curb outflows, which we have already seen lately," said Huang.

The policy direction doesn't help either, according to Huang, as both the Macau government and the central government have been trying to "diversify the local economy" toward non-gaming, and, within gaming, toward mass gamblers and away from VIP clients.

"A recovery in the VIP market goes directly against what Beijing and the Macau government are looking for," he said, concluding that he expects 5 percent growth to be what both governments are willing to tolerate. **Bloomberg**

COMPOSED BY
BILL WHELAN

PRODUCED BY
MOYA DOHERTY

DIRECTED BY
JOHN MCCOLGAN

The 20th Anniversary World Tour

Riverdance

24 JANUARY - 5 FEBRUARY THE VENETIAN THEATRE
TICKETS FROM MOP 288
+853 2882 8818 cotaiticketing.com

WWW.RIVERDANCE.COM

Coorganisers: 鳳凰演藝, JOYWAY

Supporter: MGM

THE VENETIAN MACAO

知得更多

KNOW
MORE
LIVE
BETTER

活得更好

MACAUCLOSER.COM
生活藝術雜誌 LIVING & ARTS MAGAZINE

follow us available on

Unleash your beauty at Tria

Are you seeking immediate benefits and lasting results? Our wide range of beauty treatments will give you the result you're looking for. Try our signature HydraFacial to promise remarkable results and a visible difference after one session.

Reserve now at (853) 8802 3838 or visit mgm.mo/triaspa for the latest privileges.

mgm.mo

TRIA 禪潔

MGM 美高梅

Traffic expected to worsen due to roadworks



NEARLY 1,000 construction projects involving roads will be conducted next year, according to a statement released by the Transport Bureau (DSAT) this week. The department predicts that the city's traffic congestion will become severe over the next year.

The Road Construction Co-ordination Group has so far received plans for 711 road construction projects from governmental departments and institutions, all due to begin in 2017. Moreover, there will

be several private projects and urgent maintenance tasks of public projects that will add to this number.

The DSAT explained that a multitude of developments are occurring next year since many big public infrastructure projects will commence or be completed next year alongside energy supply, information development, urban planning, and other projects.

The DSAT issued a reminder that the projects will involve arterial roads and that the construc-

tion periods will be relatively long. Additionally, the length of many of the roads undergoing work will be altered.

Seventeen projects involving arterial roads will take between 140 to 1,000 days depending on their progress. The main roads impacted will be Avenida do Almirante Lacerda, Rua do Visconde Paço d'Arcos, Avenida da Ponte da Amizade, Avenida do Conselheiro Borja, Avenida de 1 de Maio, Avenida de Veneslau de Moraes, Avenida do Dr. Rodrigo Ro-

drigues and Avenida Dr. Sun Yat Sen.

According to the DSAT, nearly half of the projects will take approximately six months to complete.

Around 500 of the aforementioned 711 projects will be conducted in the Macau Peninsula, while 234 will take place on the islands.

In order to shorten the construction period and reduce the impact on people moving around the city, the Road Construction Co-ordination Group has introduced a reward and punishment mechanism to the project operators.

Lam Hin San, director of the DSAT, when asked by the media about whether the department was worried that the projects would be criticized for worsening traffic, said that coordinating road projects was difficult, however the projects must be done.

Lam noted that many projects will be conducted in the northern districts. **JZ**

ARTS

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz altered for int'l audiences

Lynzy Valles

THEATRE Hikosen has returned to Macau to present *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* at the Cultural Centre, opening tonight with shows running until Christmas day.

Having toured through some 20 countries, the Japanese company has previously presented *Peter Pan*, *Treasure Island*, and the musical *Chibi Maruko Chan*, in the region.

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, a puppet musical based on the classic American tale, will take children three years old and above into the magical world of Dorothy and friends through its own rendition of the adventure.

At the meet-the-press conference yesterday, the theater's director Watanabe Mitsuro explained that as the group travels to perform in different regions, they try to adapt their show to local languages.

Originally targeting Japanese audiences, Mitsuro said that it is significant for the play to adapt to the local language to ensure that children are



From left to right: Cast member Ishikawa Shin, Watanabe Mitsuro, Najima Ayumi and executive producer, Dono Ken

receptive to the story.

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz has been staged for 30 years and is currently in its third edition.

"We try to ensure that the quality will be the same in the Japanese and international tours. [We] have been revising and adjusting the script to make it more lively," he told the press.

Mitsuro noted that the play to be performed tonight had already undergone adjustments from its recent show in Hong Kong.

"We are trying to adapt new ele-

ments in the play as time goes by," he explained. "Even when comparing to this coming performance to the last one we had in Hong Kong, they are little bit adjusted already," he continued.

Since this is the fourth time the theater company has come to Macau, Ishikawa Shin, a cast member of the play, noted that Japanese children are more disciplined and introverted when compared to audiences from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau.

"Japanese [children] react in a more disciplined and quieter way, but children [in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau] are more active. They just rush to the cast," he explained.

Through its magical setting, dressed in their trademark masks and costumes, Hikosen's performers will interpret the piece which brims with a variety of imaginary creatures, from witches to winged monkeys.

From India to Russia, Australia and Japan, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is an all-time children's classic that has been translated and adapted into more than 50 languages.

WHAT TO DO?

Celebrating Christmas with festive offerings

Lynzy Valles

THE yuletide season has long arrived with many cheers for the awaited Christmas offerings that are within everyone's reach.

With just two days to go before Christmas, here is a list of some of the seasonal offerings by gaming operators and local authorities:

For family friendly activities, Sands Resorts Cotai Strip has unveiled a show at The Venetian Macao's lagoon area. The show will run every 30 minutes nightly from 6 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. until January 1, 2017.

At The Parisian Macao, the Eiffel Tower's Grand Illumination Show Christmas Spectacular will also run until January 1 and features two Christmas programs based on seasonal hits "Jingle Bell Rock" and "All I Want for Christmas is You" for visitors.

Shoppers visiting Sands Shoppes will also be able to see two Swarovski Sparkling Christmas trees – one inside St. Mark's Square and one at The Parisian Macao's Champs Elysee. The sparkling Christmas tree features over one million handcrafted crystals from Austria.

City of Dreams has opened a new mall just in time for last-minute Christmas shopping. Drawing on the concept of a department store at the heart of downtown Macau, the new mall is divided into different themed zones aiming to match shoppers' different styles.

Christmas shoppers can enjoy Galaxy Macao's "Christmas Shopping Rewards" program, which will run until January 2. When spending MOP/HKD5,000 at The Promenade Shops, shoppers are entitled to one lucky draw entry at its Christmas Giant Gumball Machine for the chance to win prizes.

For alcohol connoisseurs, the resort's Macallan Whisky Bar & Lounge and Cascades have prepared a wide selection of Christmas cocktails to enjoy throughout this season.

For gourmet food and spa fans, MGM is celebrating Christmas with pampering holiday treats. At Rossio, diners can celebrate this festive season with a lavish Christmas buffet that offers both traditional and innovative Christmas dishes. Chef's special festive recipes include "smoked turkey waldorf salad, Caribbean rum glazed ham" and the must-have Christmas comfort food, "roasted organic whole turkey with chestnut stuffing."

MGM's Aux Beaux Arts is offering a four-course Christmas Set Dinner exclusively on December 24 and 25. A full sense of Christmas dishes that commences with "langoustine tartar with caviar and Cream of carrot soup with pan seared foie gras" will be served to diners.

Moreover, the resort's Tria spa is offering the festive "Holiday Warm-up Spa Package" throughout the entirety of December.

Throughout this festive month, the city will be bathed in light as the "Macau Light Festival 2016 - Treasure of Light" features four video mapping shows, namely 'Sailing,' 'Inheritance,' 'Source of Water' and 'Carrying-on.'

Being staged at the Nam Van Lake Nautical Centre, the Mandarin's House, Lilau Square and Barra Square until December 31, the festival features seven sets of light installations at various locations. The 'Lake of Treasure' exhibition uses 360 LED glow balls, in addition to having five interactive games.

Meanwhile, the Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau (IACM) has also arranged a "Christmas Market 2016" at Tap Seac Square to offer Christmas stalls and entertainment to the public. The market will feature performances until Saturday, and will then re-open on Monday until December 31.

In Albugue SCM, various Portuguese merchandises will be available for purchase at its Christmas market from Saturday to Sunday, open from mid-day to 9.30 p.m.

Gambling industry hopes casino mogul in White House pays off

Wayne Parry, Atlantic City

DONALD Trump will be the first U.S. president to have ever owned a casino, and the gambling industry is wondering how he will handle three major issues: internet gambling, sports betting and daily fantasy sports.

The industry has sent its wish list to the president-elect. The American Gaming Association told The Associated Press it has asked Trump for fewer regulations, approval of sports betting, a crackdown on illegal gambling, tax reform and immigration policies that don't dry up the flow of overseas gamblers — and workers — to U.S. casinos.

"President Trump, his administration and Congress will unquestionably implement policies that will directly impact our industry for years to come," Whitaker Askew, the association's vice president, told the AP.

Kirk Blalock, a lobbyist who worked for the George W. Bush administration, said Trump "comes to the table with a good, solid understanding of how the



A billboard welcoming President-elect Donald Trump in Atlantic City, N.J., where he used to own three casinos

industry works and what the challenges are."

Just three states — New Jersey, Nevada and Delaware — allow internet gambling, and well-financed opponents, backed by billionaire casino magnate and Trump backer Sheldon Adelson, want to ban it nationwide.

Trump and his daughter, Ivanka, formed a company in New Jersey to explore the possibility of offering internet gambling in New Jersey before the state legalized it in 2013, but ne-

ver applied for a license to do it.

In a brief interview in September, Trump told the AP he had not settled on a position regarding online gambling. "I have a lot of friends on both sides of this issue," he said.

His transition team did not respond to several recent requests for comment. The gaming association does not take a position on internet gambling.

Sports betting is currently legal in four states: Nevada, Oregon, Delaware and Montana. And

dozens of states are grappling with whether daily fantasy sports, in which players put up money to compete with each other to assemble teams of athletes who accrue points based on their real-world performances, constitutes a game of skill that does not need to be regulated, or gambling, which does.

In a November 2015 interview with Fox Sports 1, Trump indicated he would not oppose sports betting or daily fantasy sports. "I'm OK with it because it's ha-

ppening anyway," he said.

Trump owned three casinos in Atlantic City, as well as one in Indiana for a time. Two of his former Atlantic City casinos, Trump Plaza and the Trump Taj Mahal, have closed. The third, Trump Marina, was sold to Texas billionaire Tilman Fertitta, who now runs it as the Golden Nugget.

Steve Norton, an Indiana casino consultant who worked with Trump in the 1980s, predicted he will ultimately oppose nationwide approval of internet gambling, due in part to Adelson's opposition, but said he does not think Trump would move to strip it from states that already offer it.

"Sports betting, on the other hand is a multibillion-dollar industry, mostly illegal," Norton said. "I believe the positives of oversight, taxing and ensuring fair odds outweigh any negatives, and hopefully Mr. Trump will support individual states rights, and help overturn" a federal ban.

Norton predicted daily fantasy sports will be "a non-issue" for Trump, who will leave it to states to regulate or not.

The association's letter asks Trump to make sure Yucca Mountain in Nevada is not reconsidered as a repository for the nation's nuclear waste because it is just 90 miles from Las Vegas. **AP**

E-COMMERCE

US puts Alibaba back on 'notorious markets' blacklist

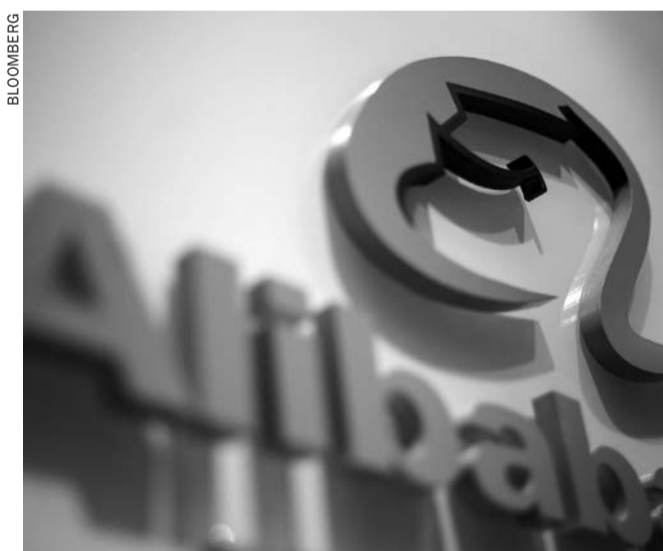
CHINESE e-commerce giant Alibaba Group is back on the U.S. government's annual list of "notorious markets" that sell pirated goods.

The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative said Wednesday that Alibaba's on-line marketplace Taobao sells "high levels" of counterfeit goods and is slow to respond when companies complain about the knockoffs.

USTR took Alibaba off the blacklist in 2012, but several U.S. trade groups successfully sought to get it reinstated.

"There are a lot of victims here," including U.S. companies that lose sales to fakes and consumers who wind up with shoddy goods, said Stephen Lamar, executive vice president at the American Apparel & Footwear Association, which wanted Alibaba back on the list.

Alibaba Group President Michael Evans said the



company is "disappointed." Alibaba polices the market more effectively than it did four years ago, he said.

Evans questioned whether the USTR decision was "based on actual facts or was influenced by the current political climate." During the presidential campaign, Donald Trump blasted China for stealing intellectual property.

In 2014, Alibaba sold

USD25 billion worth of stock on the New York Stock Exchange in the biggest initial public offering on record. Winding up on the notorious markets listing again is another blow to its reputation. In 2015, Chinese regulators issued an unusual, scathing report that accused Alibaba of failing to do enough to prevent the sale of fakes on its websites. **AP**

China's Uber for trucks Huochebang fetches USD1 billion valuation

Lulu Yilun Chen

TRUCK Alliance Inc., an Uber-type service for trucks known in China as Huochebang, raised about USD115 million in a financing round that valued the startup at \$1 billion.

The two-year-old company backed by Tencent Holdings Ltd. and Hillhouse Capital secured the capital in a round led by new investors International Finance Corp. and All-Stars Investment Ltd. Tencent, Genesis Capital and DCM Ventures also participated, the startup said in a statement.

Trucking remains by far the primary means of ferrying goods across China. More than 80 percent of goods are delivered via roads in a country whose logistics sector was worth \$1.6 trillion in 2013, Deloitte has estimated. But the industry remains fragmented and inefficient. Huochebang compe-

tes against 200 rival applications trying to minimize the amount of time that cargo-haulers stand empty, a rate that currently hovers around 40 percent, according to Industrial Securities Co.

"As one of the earliest investors, Tencent is optimistic about the prospects of integrating the logistics industry with the internet," said Li Zhaohui, an investment manager at Tencent, which remains the largest shareholder at Huochebang. Tencent, the developers of WeChat, will help build the startup's computing and big data platform, he added.

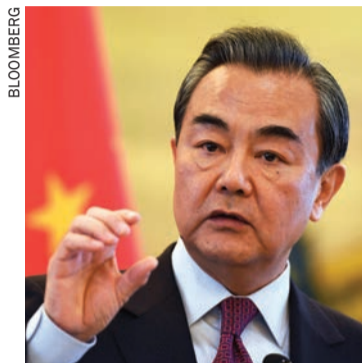
Based in the southwestern province of Guizhou, Huochebang - which means "truck gangs" - wants to match the country's 20 million trucks with commodities in need of transport, vacant parking lots and service centers it operates. That's essential because more than 90 percent of the nation's road

haulers are owned by individuals, according to the Industrial Securities report.

Huochebang works with 2.3 million trucks and handles as much as 100,000 orders daily to haul everything from seeds and farming tools to bulkier items such as cement and coal. The company processes as much as \$120 million in shipping fees daily and has about 1,000 service centers sprinkled across China supporting drivers. Largest rival Yunmanman has said it is also in the process of raising funds, and already counts Sequoia, Yunfeng Capital and Wang Gang - Didi Chuxing's angel investor - among its backers.

Unlike Uber, which takes a cut from every ride, Huochebang makes money primarily from selling toll cards, taking a cut from the card top-ups, and helping truckers with financing. **Bloomberg**

Beijing says it will cooperate with Trump but warns on Taiwan



Foreign Minister Wang Yi

Gerry Shih

CHINA'S foreign minister yesterday warned that ties with the U.S. will likely see new complications and that the only way to maintain a stable relationship is by respecting each other's "core interests."

Foreign Minister Wang Yi's remarks appeared to underscore that China's position on Taiwan is nonnegotiable, weeks after President-elect Donald Trump suggested that he could re-evaluate U.S. policy on the status of Taiwan.

Wang told the Communist Party mouthpiece, the People's Daily, he will strive to boost cooperation with the U.S. but foresaw "new, complicated and uncertain factors affecting bilateral relations" under the Trump administration.

China complained after Trump this month questioned a U.S. policy that sin-

ce 1979 has recognized Beijing as China's government and maintains only unofficial relations with Taiwan.

The president-elect's comments on Taiwan, combined with accusations that China is manipulating its currency and threats of imposing hefty tariffs against Chinese imports, have rattled relations between the world's two largest economies.

Trump's transition team announced Wednesday that Peter Navarro, a University of California, Irvine, economist who has accused China of effectively waging economic war against the United States, would head a trade policy council inside the White House.

Still, U.S.-China relations are generally trending toward stable cooperation and mutual benefit, Wang said. He quoted a Chinese poem — previously used by President Xi Jinping as a metaphor for U.S.-China ties — depicting a river that flows inevitably, regardless of mountainous obstacles.

Beijing regards the self-governing island as part of China. It has long used the "core interest" formulation to signal that its position on Taiwan will be upheld under any circumstances and any move by Taiwan toward formal independence could be met with military force. **AP**

Four in China cleared after two successful death sentence appeals

FOUR men in eastern China accused of murder and rape have been exonerated after a 16-year legal ordeal in the latest instance of Chinese courts overturning deeply flawed verdicts.

A Jiangxi province high court announced yesterday it cleared the men accused of killing a woman in 2000, apologized and offered them an opportunity to seek compensation.

The men had been sentenced to death by a municipal court in 2003 based on dubious confessions and successfully appealed. The same lower court reheard the trial and sentenced the defendants to death again the following year, only to be overruled again by the provincial court in 2006.

The provincial court re-

viewed the case this year and determined that forensic evidence did not match confessions given by the defendants, who said they had been tortured.

A string of stories about wrongful convictions has surfaced in recent years in China, where the government has sought to strengthen a criminal justice system wracked by police and prosecutorial misconduct. Human rights monitors say suspects are often tortured by police to extract confessions and cases are swayed by political interference.

And in court, prosecutors almost always win: China has a 99.9 percent conviction rate, according to official statistics — one of the highest in the world. **AP**

ADVERTORIAL

SANDS CHINA NEWS

Sands China Awards Creative Arts Competition Winners and Opens Exhibition

Works explore Macao's past and present

Sands China Ltd. announced the winners of its creative arts competition Dec. 15 with an awards presentation and opening of an exhibition displaying the awarded works at The Venetian® Macao.

Launched in August, **Sands China Presents: Macao's Past & Present Creative Arts Competition** was created in support of Macao's art and cultural industries, and was open free of charge to local Macao residents.

Organised by Sands China Ltd., the competition was co-organised by the Macau Artist Society, the Macao Multimedia Photographic Association, and the Macao Designers Association, with the Cultural Affairs Bureau (ICM) and the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) as supporting entities.

The competition and exhibition are part of Sands China's initiatives to promote the local art scene and support the Macao government's call to develop industrial diversification. They seek to raise public awareness and understanding of Macao's world heritage sites and its historic centre, to boost Macao's cultural tourism, and to contribute to the city's transformation into a world centre of tourism and leisure.



Officiating guests cut the ribbon at the exhibition opening for the Sands China Presents: Macao's Past & Present Creative Arts Competition Dec. 15 at The Venetian Macao.



Winners of the Sands China Presents: Macao's Past & Present Creative Arts Competition gather Dec. 15 at The Venetian Macao for the awards presentation and exhibition opening ceremony.

"We were very pleased with the quality of the works submitted, and I think it has resulted in an exhibition that the public will really enjoy viewing," said Dr. Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China Ltd. "Sands China is always eager to support Macao's cultural and creative industries, and to contribute to Macao's diversification and its rise a world centre of tourism and leisure."

The competition asked members of the public to create compelling and elegant art pieces demonstrating the unique local charm of Macao's past and present. Entries could be submitted in artistic and creative forms such as painting, photography and sculpture, and artists were encouraged to approach their pieces with an

open, innovative and experimental spirit.

Guests attending the awards presentation and exhibition opening ceremony included U Weng Hong, division head of the division of visual art, department of exhibition and museums, MSAR Cultural Affairs Bureau; Christina Lau, head of the public relations division for the Macao Government Tourism Office; Lok Hei, vice president of the Macau Artist Society; Lou Kam Ieng, president of the Macao Multimedia Photographic Association; James Zhu, president of the Macao Designers Association; Dr. Wong; Scott Messinger, senior vice president of marketing for Sands China Ltd.; and Winnie Wong, vice president of corporate communications and community affairs for Sands China Ltd.

Entries were reviewed by a jury panel of noted artists and professionals from Macao and overseas in the categories of drawing and painting, photography, and sculpture/3D arts. Winners were chosen from each category, including a special award in each category for entries themed on The Parisian Macao, Sands China's newest integrated resort. Winners received valuable prizes totalling over MOP 150,000 and an invitation to the award ceremony, with their winning works now displayed at the exhibition.

One aim of the competition was to attract Macao's arts enthusiasts to submit art pieces that may eventually turn into commercial products for Sands China, with the goal of diversifying the artists' design presentation and increasing their exposure in the market — part of Sands China's corporate social responsibility initiative of supporting local companies and entrepreneurs.

The competition's theme sought to encourage Macao residents to pay more attention to Macao's cultural legacy and to appreciate its beauty and unique cultural value.

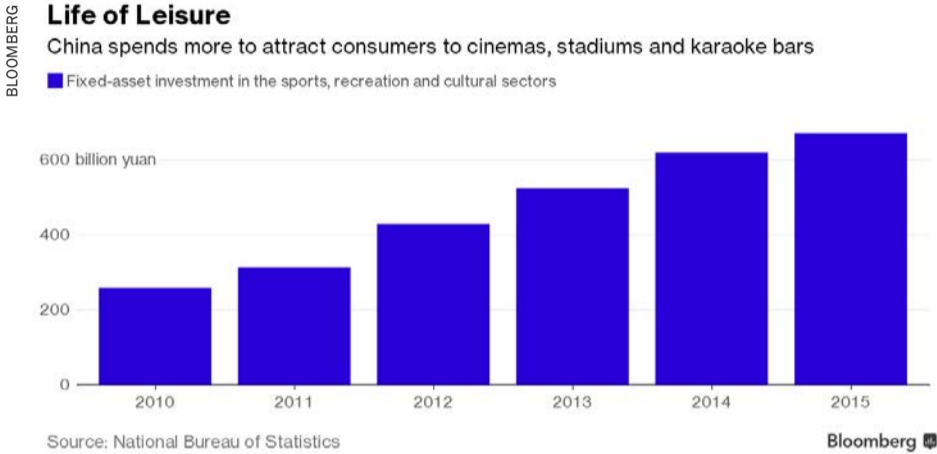
Winning works can be viewed at the exhibition at The Venetian Macao from now until Dec. 29, 2016.



Sands China President Dr. Wilfred Wong views the exhibition of the Sands China Presents: Macao's Past & Present Creative Arts Competition Dec. 15 at The Venetian Macao after an awards presentation and exhibition opening ceremony.

Economy boost by getting people to jump out of planes

Shanghai Tower resolves issues that delayed opening



CHINA has targets for just about everything, from ethanol production to reaching Mars.

Now the top economic planning body wants to get more tourists to hit the road, and has even announced targets for sky-diving, water skiing and mountain climbing, as authorities push for more consumer spending to aid the economic transition away from old industrial drivers.

The goal is for 7 trillion yuan (USD1 trillion) in tourism spending in 2020 and 20 percent average annual growth in investment in the industry by then, the National Development and Reform Com-

mission said this month. The planning body also wants to make outdoor activities a 900 billion yuan industry by decade-end.

Authorities have even more specific annual targets for 2020: total output of 200 billion yuan from airborne sports, 300 billion yuan of aquatic activities, and 400 billion yuan of mountain sports such as hiking, climbing and biking, NDRC officials said at a recent briefing in Beijing.

All those targets are intended to serve an overarching objective: President Xi Jinping's plan to double 2010 gross domestic product by 2020 and keep the

world's second-largest economy chugging along with average growth of at least 6.5 percent for five years.

"Chinese residents have moved from waves of emulative spending to more individualized, diverse and high-quality consumption" in sectors ranging from tourism to culture to sports, Cong Liang, director of the NDRC's national economy department, told reporters at a recent briefing. "There's a huge potential to unleash."

China, host of the 2022 winter Olympics outside the capital, wants to get 300 million people on the ski slopes, generating a projected 600 billion yuan by 2020. Authorities also plan to build 2,000 recreational vehicle camp grounds by the end of the decade.

The country is increasingly relying on consumers to drive growth. Such spending accounted for 71 percent of economic expansion in the first three quarters of 2016.

Airborne sports are "high-technology, fashionable, and can clearly drive related sectors," according to a government document outlining its plans. The goal is to build 2,000 "flying camps," create 1,000 clubs for airborne activities and lure 20 million people to participate in airborne sports. **Bloomberg**

THE Shanghai Tower, China's tallest skyscraper, said it has resolved fire-safety issues that have delayed its full opening for 18 months.

Fire inspections have been completed for all of the 632-meter building, located in Shanghai's Lujiazui financial district, except for two upper areas that house a hotel, Shanghai Tower Construction & Development Co. said in a statement dated Dec. 20. It didn't give an opening date for the building's full opening.

The tower is the latest addition to a city skyline that already boasts some of the world's tallest skyscrapers including the 492-meter Shanghai World Financial Center.

While the lowest five floors were opened in April, various technical issues have pushed the 125-story building's full opening well past its original mid-2015 schedule. In May, a glass plate fell from the upper floors while being replaced and injured a passerby, leading to longer inspections.

"Being the first property project more than 600 meters high in China, there are many technical difficulties," the operator said in the statement. "The existing inspection standards don't apply to some new techniques and materials used in the tower, so we had to advance the inspection work step by step." **Bloomberg**

AD

Merry Christmas!

澳電 **cem**

中新广州知识城创新创业大会2016
SSGKC LaunchPad 2016
Presents
DCIC
Delta Creativity & Innovation Celebration

An Event by

角铃 SAN JIAO LING LETS CULTURAL DISTRICT

In Cooperation with

Official Partners

QR codes for DCIC Presentation and Registration Form

info@sanjiaoling.com

Isabel Reynolds,
Emi Nobuhiro

JAPAN

Record defense spending approved amid China tensions

JAPAN'S cabinet approved a record defense budget of just over 5 trillion yen (USD42.5 billion) for the year starting April, as tensions with China simmer over disputed islands in the East China Sea.

The figure marks the fifth straight rise in annual military spending - a trend that started after Prime Minister Shinzo Abe took office in late 2012. Separately, an extra spending package approved for the current financial year included 171 million yen for defense, with the focus on ballistic missile defense as fears grow over North Korea's nuclear and missile capabilities.

Defense Minister Tomomi Inada said last month that while the



Members of the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) ride a 203mm self-propelled howitzer-equipped vehicle

government didn't have a concrete plan to introduce a U.S. missile defense shield, it was considering the option. De-

ployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system in the country could hurt ties with Russia and China,

which have both opposed its planned introduction in South Korea.

Here are the main points of the two spending packages, which must be now passed by parliament:

Defense budget for year starting April rises 1.4 percent to 5.1 trillion yen. New submarine model with improved sensor capability to be developed at a cost of 72.8 billion yen; Japan to expand its fleet to 22 submarines from 16; Japan to budget for a further six Lockheed-Mar-

tin F-35 fighter aircraft at a cost of 88 billion yen; F-35 squadron to be established at Misawa, northern Japan; 14.7 billion yen budgeted for procurement of new ship-based ballistic missile interceptors known as SM-3 Block II; A Defense allocation in third extra budget for current fiscal year to be 171 billion yen, of which 33 billion yen will be spent on upgrading ballistic missile defense. This includes an improved version of PAC-3 ground-based interceptors and

research into future missile-defense systems.

Japan is also increasing the budget for its coast guard as China steps up its presence around East China Sea islands known as Senkaku in Japan and Diaoyu in China.

The Coast guard budget for next year will rise by 12 percent to 211 billion yen, of which about 48 billion yen is to be allocated for new ships, including one capable of carrying a helicopter. Personnel numbers will be increased by 118 to 13,744. **Bloomberg**

SOUTH KOREA

Court holds hearing on impeached president

SOUTH Korea's Constitutional Court yesterday held its first preparatory hearing in the trial of impeached President Park Geun-hye, whom lawmakers voted to remove over an explosive corruption scandal that saw millions of people protest in past weeks.

The court confirmed it will hear allegations that Park colluded with longtime confidante Choi Soon-sil to extort money and favors from major South Korean companies and allowed Choi to interfere with government affairs from the shadows.

The court also said it would review accusations in the impeachment bill that Park was responsible for media restrictions and government inaction during a 2014 ferry sinking that killed more than 300 people, mostly teenagers on a school trip.

After discussions with Park's lawyers and with lawmakers, who are the prosecutors at her impeachment trial, the court decided to summon as witnesses Choi and two former presidential aides. Both were arrested earlier for allegedly helping Choi extort from companies and passing her confidential government information.

The court has up to six months to decide whether Park should permanently step down or be reinstated. Her presidential powers are sus-



A supporter holds a portrait of South Korean President Park Geun-hye during a rally opposing her impeachment

ended until then, with the prime minister assuming the role of government caretaker. The next preparatory hearing in Park's trial is scheduled on Dec. 27.

Lawmakers, who have been grilling key suspects to the scandal in weekly hearings broadcast on live TV, plan to take their hearings on Monday to two detention centers where Choi and the two former presidential aides are being held in a desperate effort to question them. The three suspects have refused to attend the hearings held at the National Assembly, citing health and other reasons.

South Korea's opposition-controlled parliament voted to impeach the president on

Dec. 9 as the scandal grew. The investigation has widened with a special prosecutor since Wednesday conducting raids at the offices of the national pension fund and trying to detain Choi's daughter, Yoora Chung, who is believed to be in Germany.

Choi is suspected of exploiting her presidential ties to get Chung, an equestrian athlete, into an elite university despite questionable qualifications. Lee Jae-yong, the scion of Samsung, South Korea's largest business group, has apologized over the use of corporate funds to buy a horse for Chung, but denied that Samsung sought favors from Choi or Park's administration. **AP**

MALAYSIA | THAILAND

Man tied to 1MDB scandal freed from Thai prison

Kaweewit Kaewjinda, Bangkok

A Swiss man convicted of blackmail linked to a Malaysian financial scandal was freed this week after serving over a year in a Thai prison.

Xavier Justo was one of around 30,000 inmates released early under a pardon by Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradevarangkun to mark his ascension to the throne on Dec. 1. Justo's lawyer said his client will be deported to Switzerland.

Justo was convicted in August 2015 of blackmailing his former employer, a Saudi oil exploration company, by threatening to sell to the media documents related to the company's dealings with Malaysia's 1MDB state development fund unless the company paid him USD2.47 million.

The 1MDB fund has been the focus of investigations in the U.S., Switzerland, Singapore, and other countries over allegations of a global embezzlement and money-laundering scheme.

The U.S. Justice Department says people close to Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak stole at least \$3.5 billion from 1MDB, which was meant to promote economic development projects. The department acted in July to seize \$1.3 billion it says was diverted from the fund to buy assets in the U.S. Najib has



Swiss national Xavier Justo, left, is escorted by Thai Corrections officers as he leaves the Bangkok South Criminal Court

stymied government investigations into the fund, denies any wrongdoing and rejects calls for his resignation.

Thai police had said Justo confessed to handing over documents to Sarawak Report, a London-based news website opposing the Malaysian government. He was originally set to be jailed for six years, then his sentence was halved for pleading guilty and commuted further for good behavior. Stories in Sarawak Report and The Wall Street Journal first revealed the fund's problems.

Justo, who said he's "very happy" about the release, cannot board a plane back home immediately because he needs to buy a ticket and sort out paperwork, but Justo's lawyer said he'll probably return home before Christmas. He is meanwhile being held at Bangkok's immigration detention center. **AP**



STILL THE BIGGEST POKER NIGHT OF THE WEEK

PokerStars LIVE Macau hosts the Saturday SuperStack with a HK\$100,000 guaranteed prize pool. With a buy-in of HK \$3,000, you start with a huge 15K starting chip stack.

Don't miss out on the biggest tournament of the week. Every Saturday from 16th November to 5th January.



Level 2,
Estrada do Istmo,
Cotai Macau SAR

All tournaments are subject to regulatory approval.



C&C LAWYERS
C&C 律師事務所



合伙人 PARTNERS:

官樂怡 Rui José da Cunha • 山度士 Álvaro Rodrigues • 馬天龍 Nuno Sardinha da Mata • 趙魯 Zhao Lu ••

聯營律師 ASSOCIATES:

馬傑安 João N. Marques
高文軒 Adelino Correia •
羅善齡 Zelina Rodrigues
馬德龍 Nuno L. Martins
白秀蘭 Susana Batalha
杜慧盈 Rita Andorinho
馬潔冰 Maria J. Marques
陶義德 António I. Azeredo

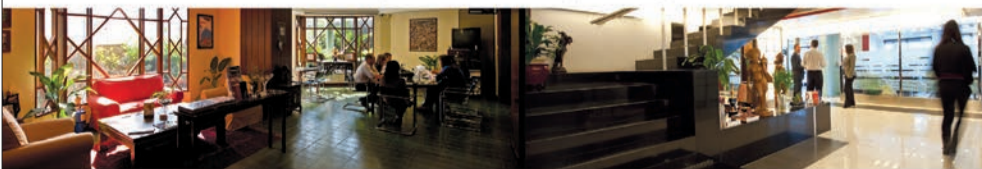
白穎怡 Iclia Berenguel
冼玲鳳 Mariana A. Esteves
薛明恩 Maria A. Giestas
飛嘉華 Carlos S. Ferreira
黃保毅 Wong Pou Ngai, Karen
杜力信 Nelson de Azevedo
宋哲言 João Gonçalves Assunção
羅桃 Luo Tao, Elina
巴慧雅 Vera Bastos
曹樂萌 Cao Lemeng, Rui

莫永誠 Rui Velez de Moura

實習律師 TRAINEE LAWYERS:

楊越華 leong Ut Wa
羅成軒 José J. Rodrigues
歐文傑 Miguel Evaristo
王洋玲 Ema Wong
陳祖恩 Joana Chan
顏曉蓉 Teresa, Xiaorong Yan

• 私人公證員 Notary Public • 中國委託公證人 China Appointed Attesting Officer



WWW.CCADVOG.COM
TEL: (853) 2837 2642 / 2837 2623



Sole to soul

Sink into blissful serenity while we pamper your aching soles.

1.5-hour package includes

15-minute Foot cleansing with scrub
60-minute Foot Massage
15-minute Paraffin treatment for feet and relaxing Shoulder and Neck Massage

Reserve now at (853) 8802 3838 or visit mgm.mo/triaspa for the latest privileges.

mgm.mo

TRIA 禪潔



Eric Talmadge, Pyongyang

NORTH KOREA

Huge but empty pyramid hotel a sphinx-like mystery

PYONGYANG'S pyramid-shaped Ryugyong Hotel, which poetically enough was built with some help from Egyptians, is one of the world's strangest landmarks and most conspicuous construction-project fails. Intended to be the world's tallest hotel, it has yet to host a guest, even though it's nearly as old as leader Kim Jong Un.

The perennial mystery: Will it ever? Nearly 30 years after ground was broken, the tower looms eerily dark in the Pyongyang night, a single light at its very top blinking a silent warning to aircraft. By day, residents walk quickly to and from the nearby subway station with nary a glance upward at its 105-story presence.

Earlier this month, however, a video showing lights toward the top of the tower, combined with a visit to Pyongyang by the hotel's Egyptian investors, sparked speculation among foreign Pyongyang watchers that construction was resuming and the hotel might even open in 2017. Not to be outdone, some British tabloids were soon reporting that the hotel had already opened its doors for guests.

Fact check: It hasn't. And those lights on the upper floors have gone dark again.

But the idea that Kim might be interested in finally finishing the biggest project started in the name of his grandfather, "eternal president" Kim Il Sung, isn't particularly outlandish. Since assuming power five years ago, Kim has ordered the construction of a number of skyscrapers that have significantly changed the Pyongyang skyline.

And while the possibility something is afoot at the Ryugyong can't be ruled out, for the time being Kim appears to be putting his money elsewhere. An apartment building is now nearing completion in the newest project, on



Residents pass by the towering Ryugyong Hotel in Pyongyang

Ryomyong Street. It's about 70 stories and the North's tallest building outside of the Ryugyong. Earlier this year, a cluster of new, futuristic-looking high-rises was completed on Scientists' Street, including one at 50 stories.

Construction of the Ryugyong tower began in 1987 and was supposed to take about two years.

For various reasons, it drew on until 1992, which was a very bad year — and the beginning of a very bad decade — for North Korea. The Soviet Union collapsed in late 1991, taking with it most of the North's communist bloc

benefactors and setting the stage for a major economic crisis heightened by a series of droughts and a famine that brought North Korea to the verge of collapse.

The country survived what it now euphemistically calls the "arduous march," but construction of the Ryugyong didn't start up again until 2008.

With a \$30 million injection of funds from Egypt's Orascom Telecommunications Holdings — which was in the country to pursue a joint venture to establish a North Korean cellphone network — the building's exterior was completed in 2011.

In a prospectus from June 2012, Orascom said it expected the partial completion of the Ryugyong's 360,000 square meters of floor space, which would include apartments and offices along with hotel facilities, by the end of the year. It added that Orascom was planning to kick in another \$15 million loan "to be repaid when the tower becomes operational."

Presumably, they're still waiting. Simon Cockerell, general manager of Koryo Tours, which operates in North Korea, is one of the few foreigners to have seen the hotel from the inside.

"When I visited the site first, we had a meeting with the project director. He showed us this video of what it was supposed to look like. Wouldn't give us a copy though, or let us film it," he said of his visit in 2012. "It showed the hotel as they imagine it in the future, but he did say some things from the original plans had changed — no more external elevators, no five revolving restaurants, now just three — and he said they didn't have the funding to complete it. Simply a money issue."

Cockerell said he has not heard of any significant activity at the Ryugyong since then. "I have only heard snippets — various claims in the media, really, and some guesswork from some of the Koreans I know," he said. "There is clearly not a lot of vehicles going onto the site, meaning that major work cannot have been going on. Perhaps some smaller work, but nothing on the scale that would have been needed to get this done properly."

Others who deal regularly with North Korean tourism officials were also cautious. "As far as we are aware, the situation officially remains, 'They are working on it,'" said Troy Collings, managing director of another North Korea tourism agency, Young Pioneer Tours. "We've not heard any mention of it from our partners and I dare say if the hotel was preparing to open they'd be very excited to inform us and get us trying to attract guests."

In the meantime, the hotel continues to be the world's largest unoccupied building. **AP**

Van explodes outside office of Australian Christian Lobby

Kristen Gelineau

Avan carrying gas cylinders exploded outside the headquarters of a Christian lobbying group in Australia's capital, though there did not appear to be any political or religious motivations behind the incident, police said yesterday.

The driver, a 35-year-old Australian man, was the only person injured in Wednesday night's explosion, which seriously damaged the van and blew out windows in the two-story building, Australian Capital Territory police said.

The driver ignited several gas cylinders that were

inside the van, causing the explosion, Deputy Chief Police Officer Mark Walters said. He then walked to a hospital, where he was in critical condition with serious burns. Police have not released his name, saying only that he was not previously known to authorities.

"As a result of our con-

versations with the man, we have been able to establish that his actions were not politically, religiously or ideologically motivated," Walters told reporters in Canberra.

Walters declined to elaborate on why they have ruled out any sort of political motive, and would not say whether the man

had any connection to the Australian Christian Lobby, a conservative advocacy group. An investigation into what prompted him to ignite the cylinders was underway, Walters said.

The head of the Australian Christian Lobby said his group had received anonymous threats over the past year because of its opposition to gay marriage and equality for transgender students.

"I don't know the motivation of last night's attack, but the context of what I see here is in the

context of multiple death threats and threats of violence that my staff have endured over the course of this year," managing director Lyle Shelton told reporters.

The group has locked the building for most of this year after never doing so for at least eight years, Shelton said, calling the incident a "truly shocking situation."

Police said they were investigating the threats against the group.

The van was removed from the scene early yesterday. **AP**

Germany had monitored Berlin truck attack suspect for months



A trail of devastation is left behind in Berlin, Germany, on Tuesday, the day after a truck ran into a crowded Christmas market and killed several people

Frank Jordans, Berlin

GERMAN officials had deemed the Tunisian man being sought in a manhunt across Europe a threat long before a truck plowed into a Christmas market in Berlin — and even kept him under covert surveillance for six months this year before halting the operation.

Now the international manhunt for Anis Amri — considered the prime suspect in Monday's deadly rampage — is raising questions about how closely German authorities are monitoring the hundreds of known Islamic extremists in the country.

The issue puts new pressure on Chancellor Angela Merkel, who is running for re-election next year. Critics are lambasting her for allowing hundreds of thousands of asylum-seekers to enter the country, allegedly without proper security checks.

Among them was Amri, a convicted criminal in both Tunisia and Italy with little chance of getting asylum who successfully evaded deportation from Germany even as German authorities rejected his asylum application and deemed the 24-year-old a possible jihadi threat.

He is suspected in the attack that left 12 people dead and 48 injured Monday evening in Berlin. Health officials said 12 of the injured had very serious wounds.

After German media pub-

lished photos of him and a partial name, federal prosecutors issued a public appeal for information along with the promise of a USD105,000 reward for his arrest.

Within hours it emerged that the man authorities warned could be "violent and armed" had in fact been known to them for months as someone with ties to Islamic extremists who used at least six different names and three different nationalities.

"People are rightly outraged and anxious that such a person can walk around here, keep changing his identity and the legal system can't cope with them," said Rainer Wendt, the head of a union representing German police.

Authorities had initially focused their investigation on a Pakistani man detained shortly after the attack, but released him a day later for lack of evidence. After finding documents belonging to Amri in the cab of the truck, they issued a notice to other European countries early Wednesday seeking his arrest.

According to Ralf Jaeger, the interior minister of North Rhine-Westphalia state, Amri arrived in Germany in July 2015 as the influx of asylum-seekers was nearing its peak.

Although registered in the west of the country, near the Dutch border, Amri had moved around Germany regularly since February, living mostly in Berlin, said Jaeger.

Within months of his arrival,

authorities had added Amri to a growing list of potentially violent Islamic extremists, not all of them asylum-seekers.

"Security agencies exchanged information about this person in the joint counter-terrorism center, the last time in November," said Jaeger.

State prosecutors in Berlin even launched an investigation of Amri on March 14 following a tip from federal security agencies, who warned that he might be planning a break-in to finance the purchase of automatic weapons for use in a possible future attack.

Surveillance showed that Amri did deal drugs in a notorious Berlin park and was involved in a bar brawl, but no evidence was found to substantiate the original warning.

The surveillance measures were called off in September, by which time Amri had disappeared from his regular haunts in Berlin, prosecutors said.

Separately, Amri's asylum application was rejected in July. German authorities prepared to deport him but weren't able to do so because he didn't have valid identity papers, Jaeger said. In August they started trying to get him a replacement passport.

"Tunisia at first denied that this person was its citizen, and the papers weren't issued for a long time," Jaeger said. "They arrived today."

It wasn't clear whether Germany was aware of Amri's

previous brushes with the law, both in his homeland and in Italy, where he lived until last year. Tunisia's Mosaique FM radio reported that he was sentenced to several years in prison in both countries for violent crimes.

The Italian news agency ANSA reported that Amri was ordered expelled after his prison time in Italy. However, Tunisian authorities didn't finish all the paperwork in the required time, so Amri never was sent back to Tunisia, it reported.

The Islamic State group, which claimed responsibility for Monday's attack, did not identify Amri as the man witnesses saw fleeing from the truck, but described him as "a soldier of

the Islamic State" who "carried out the attack in response to calls for targeting citizens of the Crusader coalition."

Germany's Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere cautioned that he was "a suspect, not necessarily the perpetrator."

"We are still investigating in all directions," he said.

A spokesman for Tunisia's anti-terrorism judicial police said they questioned Amri's family members at their home Wednesday in the central Tunisian town of Oueslatia.

Spokesman Sofiane Selliti did not say how many people were questioned. His family lives in poverty and his parents are divorced, according to Tunisia's Mosaique FM radio, which reported that the father said he had no contact with his son, although his other sons did.

Some German lawmakers have called for consequences regardless of whether Amri turns out to have been behind the wheel of the truck in Berlin.

"In my view we experienced a major shift on Monday," said Stephan Mayer, a member of Merkel's center-right bloc. "Terrorism has reached a new level in Germany. It's shaken the nation and citizens are worried. I think citizens wouldn't accept it if we simply returned to the political order of the day."

Mayer proposed extending the period that people can be held in detention prior to deportation, to give authorities more time to gather the necessary paperwork. He said authorities should also be able to deport people deemed a threat to public order.

Germany's Federal Criminal Police Office currently considers 549 Islamic extremists capable of committing "politically motivated crimes of considerable significance."

Wendt, the police union official, said keeping tabs on all of these people was a major challenge.

"From a manpower perspective it would [...] be unimaginable to keep all potential threats under police surveillance round the clock," he said. **AP**

CHRISTMAS MARKET REOPENS TO PUBLIC



THE BERLIN Christmas market that was attacked has reopened to the public three days after a deadly truck attack killed 12 people and injured 48. Concrete blocks have been put in place at the roadside to heighten

security. Organizers decided to reopen the market next to the central Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, though without party music or bright lighting. Berliners and visitors have laid candles and flowers at the site in tribute.

Maria Verza, Christopher Sherman

Mexicans mourn dead, seek relatives, after fireworks blast

SOME brought photos of their missing loved ones to the Mexican fireworks market where a series of explosions killed at least 33 people, while others who had already claimed their dead began to mourn their loss.

Friends and relatives of Ernesto Ornelas, 67, gathered in the narrow street in front of his house in the Mexico City suburb of Naucalpan late Wednesday to pray, sing and mourn his loss in the deadly blasts, whose cause has still not been determined.

Authorities in Mexico State said the death toll could rise further because 12 people were listed as missing and some body parts were found at the scene of Tuesday's tragedy in the San Pablito fireworks market in the city of Tultepec.

Ornelas had been shopping for fireworks with his son Cesar Ornelas and his 15-year-old grandson Francisco when the explosions occurred. They became separated in their dash to escape. Cesar and Francisco suffered minor injuries and only later saw Ernesto, bleeding from his head and with his clothing burned, loaded into an ambulance.

After learning which hospital he'd been taken to they were told he had died of a head injury, Ce-



This image made from video recorded from a passing car shows an explosion ripping through the San Pablito fireworks' market in Tultepec

sar Ornelas said Wednesday. "We don't know if it was from a fall or if a flying rock hit him."

Investigators were focusing their attention on ignored safety measures that led to vendors displaying fireworks outside their concrete stalls in the passageways that divided the sellers. The passageways were supposed to prevent exactly the sort of devastating chain reaction that occurred.

Juana Antolina Hernandez, who

has run a stand for 22 years in San Pablito next to one operated by her parents, escaped the market in a mad dash when the explosions began. On Wednesday, she was one of the disconsolate residents waiting outside a local morgue.

"I can't find my father, and my mother is very badly burned," said Hernandez, 49. "I am waiting here for them to tell me if my father is here, but up to this point, nothing."

Of the 33 dead, the state listed 10

as unidentified. In some cases, the bodies were so badly burned that DNA identification will be necessary.

San Pablito was especially well stocked for the holidays and bustling with hundreds of shoppers when the blast reduced the market to a stark expanse of ash, rubble and the scorched metal. Dramatic video of the explosion showed a towering plume of smoke that was lit up by a staccato of bangs and flashes of light, the third such incident to ravage the market on the northern outskirts of Mexico's capital since 2005.

Refugio Leon, whose family ran seven stalls in the market, said vendors commonly stacked displays of bottle rockets and firecrackers outside their establishments in the passageways — even though the rules supposedly forbade putting merchandise in what were supposed to be safety buffers. "Everybody did it," Leon said, speculating that it may have played a role in the rapid spread of the ex-

plosions.

Video and photos of the stalls from previous years showed concrete-block enclosures with open dirt passageways between them; later photos showed the passageways filling up with fireworks and awnings.

On Dec. 12, the city of Tultepec issued a statement calling San Pablito "the safest market in Latin America." It said 100 tons of fireworks were expected to be sold during the high season, which runs from August to New Year's.

Deadly fireworks explosions have also occurred elsewhere in Mexico: In 2002, a blast at a market in the Gulf coast city of Veracruz killed 29; in 1999, 63 people died when an explosion of illegally stored fireworks destroyed part of the city of Celaya; and in 1988, a fireworks blast in Mexico City's La Merced market killed at least 68; and in 2013 a rocket struck a truck loaded with fireworks for a religious procession in Tlaxcala state, killing 17 people. AP

AD

Merry CHRISTMAS PARTY

LOTTO BAND LIVE PERFORMANCE

MOËT & CHANDON CHAMPAGNE

D2 CLUB
www.d2club-macau.com

Macau Fisherman's Wharf, Edf. New Orleans III
澳門漁人碼頭新奧爾良館 III
Tel: (853) 2872 3777

PLAYMATE'S CLUB

WILD WARS

Deluxe Nightclub Packages
\$1480

Business hours:
8:00PM-04:00AM

No admission under age 18

Address: Basement, Hotel Guia, Macau Tel: 28532081 www-macauplaymatesclub.com

TV canal macau



FRIDAY

13:00	TDM News (Repeat)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:50	RTPi Live
17:30	Castle S6 (Repeated)
18:10	Precious Pearl (Repeated)
19:00	TDM Talk Show (Repeated)
19:30	Soap Opera
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:15	Documentary Serie
22:10	Precious Pearl
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Portuguese Movie
00:55	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
01:45	RTPi Live

Offbeat

17 STOLEN MASTERPIECES RETURNED TO ITALY WITH ONLY SCRATCHES



Carabinieri and police officers pose with one of the recovered paintings

Seventeen masterpieces valued at USD17.7 million were returned to Italy from Ukraine on Wednesday after being stolen by masked, armed robbers from a Verona art museum last year.

Italian Culture Minister Dario Franceschini, who traveled to Kiev to retrieve the paintings — which included works by Rubens, Tintoretto and Mantegna — said the possibility of ever recovering them once seem remote. Still, the paintings returned with little more than scratches after their long ordeal, according to an art expert.

“It’s an important day, because the works are all returning to Verona intact,” Franceschini said. “It was an ugly story that became a beautiful story.”

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko handed over the paintings to Franceschini in a ceremony in Kiev, saying “the theft of masterpiece paintings is akin to stealing part of the city’s heart.”

The paintings, wrapped in plastic bags, were recovered in May by Ukrainian border guards who intercepted them on a small island on the Dniester River during an attempt to smuggle them into Moldova.

They were stolen in November 2015 when three armed robbers entered the Castelvecchio Museum, located in a medieval castle, at closing time just before the alarm system was activated. The robbers calmly removed the paintings before escaping in a security guard’s car.

A guard at the museum, Pasquale Silvestri Riccardi, was convicted of armed robbery and sentenced to 10 years and eight months in prison earlier this month. Five others were also convicted, including Riccardi’s Moldovan girlfriend, who received six years, and his twin brother, who was sentenced to eight months.

Two Moldovans are on trial in their home country for the thefts.

Franceschini credited strong cooperation between law enforcement in the three countries for recovering the paintings and finding the thieves, giving particular praise to Italy’s Carabinieri art squad. The culture minister also announced the government would introduce legislation this week making the theft or damage of Italy’s cultural heritage specific crimes with elevated penalties.

Curator Ettore Napione traveled to retrieve the paintings, studying them carefully with gloved hands before wrapping them for the homeward journey. The works were displayed in simple wooden frames made for them after they were recovered, because the thieves had cut the canvasses from their original frames, which they then discarded.

“They suffered scratches, nothing very serious,” Napione said.

The paintings are to be shown together at their home in the Castelvecchio Museum for about a month beginning Friday before undergoing restoration and reframing. AP

cinema



CINETEATRO

22 Dec - 28 Dec

ROUGE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY

ROOM 1

2.15, 4.45, 9.45pm

Director: Gareth Edwards

Starring: Filicity Jones, Diego Luna, Ben Mendelsohn, Donnie Yen

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 133min



ASSASSIN'S CREED

ROOM 1

4:00, 7:45, 9:45pm

Director: Justin Kurzel

Starring: Michael Fassbender, Marion Cotillard

Language: English

Duration: 140min

FALLEN

ROOM 3

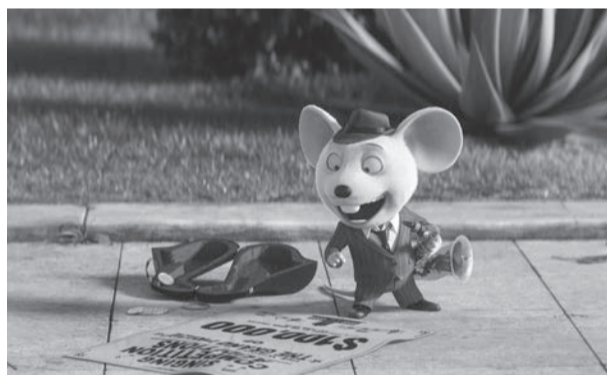
2:45, pm

Director: Scott Hicks

Starring: Addison Timlin, Jeremy Irvine, Harrison Gilbertson

Language: English

Duration: 91min



SING

ROOM 3

2:15pm, 5:45pm, 7:45pm

Director: Garth Jennings

Starring: Matthew McConaughey, Reese Witherspoon,

Seth MacFarlane

Language: Cantonese (English)

Duration: 108min

ROUGE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY

ROOM 3

(3D) 7:15 pm

Director: Gareth Edwards

Starring: Filicity Jones, Diego Luna, Ben Mendelsohn,

Donnie Yen

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 133min

MACAU TOWER

22 Dec - 28 Dec



ROUGE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY

ROOM 3

(3D) 2:00, 4:30, 7:00, 9:30pm

Director: Gareth Edwards

Starring: Filicity Jones, Diego Luna, Ben Mendelsohn,

Donnie Yen

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 133min

this day in history



1972 EARTHQUAKE WREAKS DEVASTATION IN NICARAGUA

Ten thousand people are feared dead after a two-hour earthquake ripped through the Nicaraguan capital of Managua.

Initial reports suggest whole communities have been wiped out as an estimated 80% of buildings have been flattened with little hope of finding survivors.

The earthquake which reached 6.5 on the Richter Scale has sparked huge fires causing fears those who survived the initial attack may not escape the flames. Nicaragua was struck at 1240 local time when all electricity and water supplies to the country were cut. Telegraph and telephone links have also been severed.

Aid workers are trying to clear the area to prevent the spread of diseases such as typhoid so that experts can search for survivors and get food and water to the hundreds now homeless.

Among the ruins and rubble are two of the city’s three main hospitals. Relief workers at the scene are trying to bury the dead in makeshift graves to curb a growing stench.

An evacuation order has been placed on the city and authorities are expected to close off the area while a clean-up operation takes place. The city is still affected by occasional tremors, and cracks in the road are hampering emergency relief efforts.

Officials have said they need medical aid and anaesthetic more than anything else at present. The United States, Mexico and neighbouring countries to Nicaragua are preparing to send aid, food and medicine.

The capital city is above a geological fault which has made it susceptible to tremors and earthquakes. Managua has twice been destroyed in earthquakes in 76 years, leading to speculation the country may have to move its capital.

Parts of the country have already suffered the worst drought of the century this year. And the partial failure of the cotton crop, which with coffee is the staple of the Nicaraguan economy, has led to unemployment and poverty.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

More than 25 countries responded with aid worth several millions of pounds.

But the magnitude of the devastation meant it was not distributed well and began being stockpiled despite the desperate situation facing thousands of people.

Most of the original foreign aid money never reached the victims of the earthquake and the death toll is estimated to have been between 5,000 and 10,000.

The devastation caused by the earthquake was blamed on badly built high-rise buildings which collapsed.

Central Managua was never rebuilt, instead a sprawl of markets and businesses developed where people had set up home.

Small parks and squares have been built to try to draw people back to the city centre and plans for new infrastructure include a limit of three-storey-high buildings.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Here's another day that's astrologically perfect for letting the world know just how good you are at your chosen area.

Taurus April 20-May 20 Today could be an instant replay of yesterday, complete with all the drama -- or even melodrama.

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 Go easy when it comes to tossing that verbal charm around. You're already so disarmingly glib that you really should be licensed to operate that mouth of yours.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 This would be the perfect evening to have the whole crew over. You know there's something -- and maybe someone -- you'd love to show off.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 You're still sitting on top of the world, and if you think you're happy now, just you wait until the next weekend off gets here.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 If this secret thing goes on much longer, it's going to make you crazy. You want to tell a certain someone about a certain issue, but you're not sure that you should -- and uncertainty isn't your usual state of affairs.

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 You're looking toward the future with a happy heart and an optimistic attitude -- and there's really no better way to do it.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 You're not panicking -- not yet, anyway -- but you are starting to get nervous.

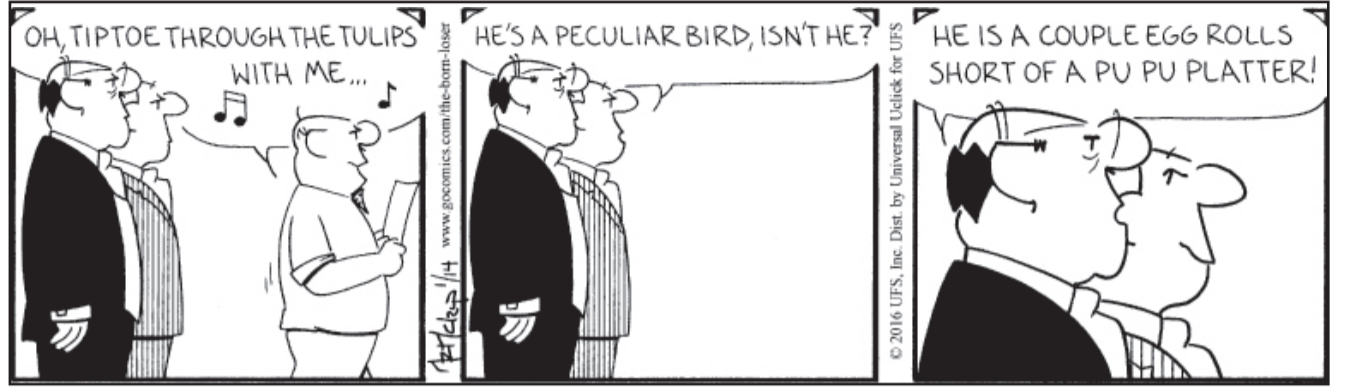
Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 That travel bug hasn't gone anywhere just yet. In fact, you're beginning to wonder if it hasn't infiltrated your bloodstream.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 You've been thinking over how to handle this attraction you're feeling for a certain someone, and you've come up with a plan.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 A certain someone you spend an awful lot of time with is about to let you know that every minute you've invested has and will be well spent.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 You've known this person for a long time, most likely in far more than just a friendly way.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Sudoku puzzles categorized as Easy, Easy+, Medium, and Hard. Each category contains a 9x9 grid with some numbers pre-filled.

WEATHER

Weather forecast table with columns for MIN, MAX, and CONDITION. It lists temperatures for various cities in China and the World.

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Member of a largely Middle Eastern people; 5- 24 hour periods; 9- Herring type; 14- Valley, Calif.; 15- Robt. ...; 16- Link with; 17- Shake ... (hurry); 18- What you do to a shadow; 19- Photographer Adams; 20- Execute; 22- Not blind; 24- Cream-filled cookies; 26- Corp. bigwig; 27- Broadway opening; 30- Bald; 35- Pic; 36- Entice; 37- Way out; 38- Loser to DDE; 39- Seesaws; 42- Land in la mer; 43- Pouches; 45- Meets one's maker; 46- Claw; 48- Staircase; 50- To a greater extent; 51- Cinque follower; 52- Pitchers; 54- Moment; 58- Like some jacks; 62- Highway stop; 63- On the disabled list; 65- Director Ephron; 66- Separated; 67- Not ... many words; 68- Farming prefix; 69- Unordered; 70- Psychic; 71- Glasgow gal; DOWN: 1- Prontol; 2- Make angry; 3- From the U.S.; 4- Sasquatch; 5- Formal order; 6- 1836 siege site; 7- Absolutely!; 8- Hardens; 9- Person of experience; 10- Tiny aperture; 11- Take five; 12- Fit to ...; 13- Tattled; 21- Ready ...; 23- More frigid; 25- Sleep; 27- Make ... at; 28- Swindle; 29- Puccini opera; 31- Son of Zeus in Greek mythology; 32- Banishment; 33- Grain stores; 34- Dictation taker; 36- "Star Wars" princess; 40- Newsman Newman; 41- Grocery, e.g.; 44- Nuns; 47- Weapons supply; 49- Property; 50- Wise counselor; 53- More unfavorable; 54- Mosque leader; 55- Uh-uh; 56- RR stops; 57- Michael Moore's "Downsize ...!"; 59- Indian exercise method; 60- Drops the ball; 61- Speaker's spot; 64- French article;

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

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999
Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
Fire department 28 572 222
Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993
Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333
Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944
S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
IACM 28 387 333
Tourism 28 333 000
Airport 59 888 88



FOR SALE and FOR RENT advertisement for JML Property, including website and contact information.

Real estate listings for various properties in Macau, including Manhattan E Unit, Taipa Warehouse, Nova Taipa Tower, and others.

JML Property logo and branding, including the text '卓雅物業' and 'since 1994'.



FOLLOWING THE MAP ISN'T YOUR STYLE

THE ALL-NEW Crossover-SUV **X-TRAIL**



PERFORMANCE FOR EVERY ADVENTURE

X-TRAIL combines high efficiency with bold performance. Designed for effortless driving, the twin VTCdirect injection engine and XTRONIC CVT work seamlessly together for a thrilling ride. The advanced engine with both delivering responsive power and outstanding fuel economy. With X-TRAIL, you're all set for any adventure.

XIN KANG CHENG MOTORS LTD.

Advenida 1 de Maio, The Bayview Bloco 4, R/C, C-D, Macau Tel: 2871 9838



Mari Yamaguchi, Tokyo

Olympic organizers in Tokyo disclose total cost estimate

ORGANIZERS of the Tokyo Olympics estimate the total cost of hosting the 2020 Games will be between 1.6 and 1.8 trillion yen (USD13-\$15 billion).

The official cost estimate announced Wednesday was below the promised 2 trillion (\$17 billion) cap, while organizers said they will try to come down further.

"This is Version 1," said Toshiro Muto, chief executive officer of the organizing committee. "We will continue our cost-cutting effort toward our Version 2."

Details of cost-sharing among the three parties — the organizing committee, Tokyo and central governments — can be now worked out, Muto said.

The cost estimate includes 590 billion yen (\$5.5 billion) to build permanent and temporary venues and other facilities, and 410 billion yen (\$3.8 billion) for "soft" costs such as transportation, security and other operational expenses. It takes into account 500 billion yen (\$4.7 billion) of revenue from sponsorship, ticket sales, licensing and IOC contributions.



AP PHOTO Photographers take a photo of the site of new national stadium after a groundbreaking ceremony in Tokyo

It also calls for a backup budget of 100-300 billion yen (\$1-\$2.8 billion) to cover "contingency" costs such as possible anti-heat measures that may be needed to cope with Tokyo's hot weather, officials said.

International Olympic Committee vice president John Coates had criticized the \$17 billion cap as too high. Coates, via a videoconference link from Australia, joined chief organi-

zer Yoshiro Mori, Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike and Olympic Minister Tamayo Marukawa for Wednesday's announcement.

Coates praised their effort and said he was "very, very pleased" with the outcome, which is a substantial reduction from an earlier prediction. He noted the taxpayer money would be from 1.1 to 1.3 trillion yen (\$10.3-\$12.1 billion) and that the total cost also includes "considerable legacy."

While Coates would not give a numerical target, he said more details are needed in areas such as transport, security and games operations for further cost reduction.

"We need to do more work there. But the feeling we have is that there are savings to be found there," he said.

Tokyo's Olympic costs have soared amid Japan's reconstruction from the earthquake and tsunami in 2011, the year the city launched its bid for the games. Tokyo secured the games in 2013. The trend in the construction industry is expected to continue until the Games, officials said.

A Tokyo government panel has warned the eventual total cost could exceed \$30 billion — four times the initial estimate — without drastic cuts. The outspoken governor, Koike, has spearheaded a cost-cutting ef-

fort, proposing a review of three costly venues.

The IOC is facing pressure to reduce costs to help entice cities to bid for future games. The \$51 billion price tag associated with the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi, Russia, led numerous cities to drop out of bidding for the 2022 and 2024 Olympics. The IOC is encouraging cities to make maximum use of existing and temporary facilities.

Koike has agreed to keep all three venues — for rowing and canoe sprint, swimming and volleyball — at their planned sites in Tokyo, rather than moving them outside the capital. Yet, she said the review led to a 40 billion yen (\$340 million) savings and that she is seeing further reductions in line with IOC policy.

"I hope this will be a wisely-spent, sustainable event," she said. **AP**

FOOTBALL

Bayern still bossing Bundesliga but wary of new challengers

Ciaran Fahey, Berlin

FEW imagined at the start of the season that a fifth-tier club upon its foundation in 2009 would prove Bayern Munich's biggest obstacle to an unprecedented fifth straight Bundesliga title.

But Leipzig has got the rest of the league sitting up and taking notice, even if it failed its biggest test Wednesday by losing 3-0 in Munich.

"A lesson," Leipzig coach Ralph Hasenhuettl called it, as a sense of normality returned to the top of the league.

Elsewhere, however, the big clubs are struggling, with Leipzig trailed by a host of unlikely candidates as sheer graft and untiring teamwork prove their worth over underperforming stars.

Modest Freiburg, which won the second division ahead of Leipzig last season, is enjoying its best season since 2012-13 despite a net investment of just 5 million euros (USD5.2 million) on transfers following promotion.

Coaches have been paying the price for their sides' ineptitude. Borussia Moenchengladbach's Andre Schubert became the se-

venth Bundesliga coach to lose his position this season on Wednesday, and it's unlikely he'll be the last with counterparts at Wolfsburg and Bayer Leverkusen facing uneasy Christmases.

One man who'll enjoy the festivities is Bayern president Uli Hoeness, back in charge after serving half of his 42-month prison term for tax evasion.

More than 97 percent of 7,152 club members voted for the 64-year-old Hoeness to take his old position in November and the club bounced back from two straight defeats the next day. Bayern has won each of its six games since his return.

TITLE RACE

It seems only Leipzig can stop Bayern from claiming yet another title with the likes of Borussia Dortmund, Bayer Leverkusen, Moenchengladbach, Wolfsburg and Schalke all faltering.

Carlo Ancelotti made the best start by any Bayern coach, winning seven competitive games straight before Atletico Madrid ended his run in the Champions League.

That's where his tenure will be judged after prede-

cessor Pep Guardiola failed to capture Europe's biggest prize in three seasons at the Bavarian club.

Ancelotti has had to listen to some criticism as Bayern no longer looked as dominant as in previous seasons, but the Italian is experienced enough to have heard it all before.

Leipzig's original aim for the season was stability in the top flight, but now Europa League or even Champions League football is a real possibility. The title is probably just one dream too many for Hasenhuettl's side.

PICK OF THE PLAYERS

Leipzig's push at the top of the table would not be possible without the contribution of Naby Keita.

The combative Guinea international, who arrived from sister club RB Salzburg in the summer, has been producing standout performances from the outset, pulling the strings in Leipzig's midfield, acting as a pivot between defense and attack, and chipping in four goals as well as setting up two more.

Keita was laboring with a strain before the Bayern



AP PHOTO Bayern's Thiago, left, and Leipzig's Diego Demme challenge for the ball during the German Bundesliga match between FC Bayern Munich and RB Leipzig

game and uncharacteristically caught in possession for one of the goals. Clearly not fully fit, he was taken off at half time as Leipzig slumped to only its second defeat in his absence.

EMERGING TALENT

Serge Gnabry is showing that he made the right decision to switch from Arsenal to Werder Bremen in the summer.

The 21-year-old striker has bagged seven goals and set up two more for Bremen, almost all of them important for a side battling relegation. Gnabry scored again for the second successive game on Wednesday, his late strike against Hoffenheim securing another draw.

Gnabry also announced his presence on the international scene with a hat trick on his Germany debut against San Marino. Bayern is undoubtedly

paying attention.

SURPRISES

Not even Austrian billionaire Dietrich Mateschitz could have imagined when he bought fifth-tier side SSV Markranstaedt and rebranded it in his company's livery to create Leipzig, that the club would be top of the standings 11 games into its Bundesliga debut seven years later.

Mateschitz, who made his fortune through energy drinks manufacturer Red Bull, financed Leipzig's progress through the lower leagues, but this season's immediate success in the top flight is unexpected for everyone involved.

"It's also surprising for us," Hasenhuettl told The Associated Press.

Not everyone is happy with the side's investment-enabled progress. Leipzig's team bus has been pelted with

stones, had paint thrown at it by masked assailants, its players have been taunted, and a severed bull's head was thrown during a cup match against Saxony rival Dynamo Dresden early in the season.

But Leipzig's performances have earned respect, too, and it looks as if the young club is here to stay.

POINTS TO PROVE

After raising expectations again in his first season at Dortmund, coach Thomas Tuchel is coming under pressure to meet them in his second, despite working with a young, unsettled team after a summer of intense transfer activity.

Dortmund fans whistled Tuchel's side off the pitch after Tuesday's draw at home to Augsburg. It was the team's third consecutive league draw and it highlighted its inconsistency after brilliant displays earlier in the season.

Dortmund beat Bayern in the league, topped a Champions League group containing Real Madrid and routed Legia Warsaw 8-4 in a goal-fest that displayed the side's attacking potential.

That potential, clearly displayed on various occasions, is what's causing frustrations with Dortmund's inability to grind out wins even when it dominates games.

Dortmund is already 12 points behind Bayern at the halfway stage. **AP**

opinion

Bizcuits

Leanda Lee



ROLLING, ROLLING, STEAMROLLING

The power of political control has won over sensitivities as Japan takes its first steps towards legalising gaming.

The Japanese Diet, in an "extended, embittered session" to the early hours of 15th December, voted for enacting the private members' gaming promotion bill after it had been debated in the Lower House Cabinet Committee late November. It passed the Lower House Committee vote on Friday 2nd December before success in the plenary session on 6th December. The LDP managed to negotiate modifications, obtaining agreement from the DP to put the Bill to the vote last Thursday thus passing into law the IR Promotion Bill, something the LDP previously could not achieve without universal Komeito support. Such support is now merely preferable, as the LDP holds majority control of both the upper and lower houses.

Described as "a diabolic wager", "divisive", "rammed through", the process of deliberation "hardly deemed fitting", "a sign of arrogance", "tantamount to staining the legislature's own authority", "lacking dignity" and something for the government to "stop and reconsider [...] seriously", the decision, as unpopular as it might seem at home, has investors, sell-side protagonists and foreign commentators excitedly taking up the theme and visualising a wind-fall (if not a bumper harvest) future.

MGM offered "sincere congratulations to the Diet on its tireless and successful effort in passing the IR Promotion bill" as it foretells of opportunities for growth in travel, tourism and jobs. The company highlighted its investment in Japanese artistic and cultural events both in the US and Japan to underpin its readiness to commit to Japan. Expect to see more such announcements of commitment, collaboration and relationship building by firms keen to partake of the Japanese gaming pie. Steve Wynn's statement says it all: "To us, the opportunity is thoroughly Japanese and thoroughly delicious."

The Global Times suggests that passing the Bill into law has ended 15 years of political debate. Certainly, it has taken a long time to bring the Bill to the vote, but far from being settled this is where the debate, activity and jostling really begins.

It was always going to be an unpopular decision with "exceptionally thin public support" (Financial Times). An NHK survey found that 44 percent of respondents were against the Bill, with only 12 percent supporting it. Kyodo news reported that support for Abe's cabinet tumbled from 60.7 percent in November to 54.8 percent, in part due to the casino legalisation. In this two-day Kyodo survey, 69.6 percent were found opposed to the law, with 24.6 percent in support. Interestingly, 75.3 percent said they did not want a casino in their backyard. The major social concerns are for gambling addiction leading to crimes, suicide, juvenile delinquency and family collapse; the temporariness of the economic benefits; a decline in public safety; and risks of money laundering.

The next bet shall now be on for when the Implementation Bill is to be enacted, spurring a media and analyst industry of its own. So far we have 2017 as the "expected", "most likely" time that the government "looks set to submit" the Bill to the Diet. However, with a public ingrained with a work ethic of productivity and contributing added value to the economy, it will take some lengths and concerted public-level 'nemawashi' for such a non-productive wealth-redistribution industry with uncertain and potentially unwholesome repercussions to sufficiently convince nay-sayers.

The main Opposition complaint has been that even after so many years, the process has been too hasty. This last month, we have not seen much of the often snail's pace, deliberate, consultative and circumspect Japanese modus operandi for momentous decision making: political will pushed this forward. As the Promotion Bill requires the Implementation Bill to be enacted within 12 months, the slow and deliberate mode will have to make way for some very agile and expeditious public debate, research and discussion; a big change for Japan.

THE BUZZ PUERTO RICO AWAITS USD230M INVESTMENT IN FOUR SEASONS HOTEL

Puerto Rico's governor says developers are investing USD230 million to build a long-awaited Four Seasons resort in the island's northeast coast.

Alejandro Garcia Padilla said Wednesday that the hotel will be based in Fajardo and will open by the end of 2018. He said various issues previously delayed construction of the hotel to the point where the original infrastructure had to be demolished.

He said the project will generate some 800 temporary and permanent jobs.

The announcement comes as Puerto Rico seeks to boost its tourism sector amid a decade-long economic crisis that has spooked many investors. The U.S. territory has reported a record number of cruise ship passengers, added 1,000 hotel rooms this year and welcomed 11 new flights to the island.

MUSIC

James Taylor cancels Manila concert over Duterte's drug war



Musician James Taylor

JAMES Taylor has cancelled his February concert in Manila, saying reports of summary executions of suspected drug offenders in the Philippines without judicial proceedings are "deeply concerning and unacceptable."

The American singer-songwriter tweeted Wednesday that he had been looking forward to performing in Manila and that it saddened him to cancel the concert. He apologized to his Filipino fans and said all tickets sold for the Feb. 25 performance at Manila's Mall of Asia Arena would be fully refunded.

Taylor said his scheduled concerts in Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia and New

Zealand would not be affected.

Since taking office in June, President Rodrigo Duterte has overseen a crackdown on illegal drugs that has left more than 6,000 people dead, alarming Western governments and human rights watchdogs. Philippine government officials have defended police actions during the crackdown.

While acknowledging that drug addiction is a worldwide problem that seriously harms society, Taylor criticized the anti-drug campaign.

"For a sovereign nation to prosecute and punish, under the law, those responsible for illegal trade in drugs is,

of course, understandable, even commendable," Taylor tweeted. "But recent reports from the Philippines of summary executions of suspected offenders without trial or judicial process are deeply concerning and unacceptable to anyone who loves the rule of law."

Dozens of tweets from people reacting to Taylor's message praised the musician and voiced respect for his stand. Others urged other artists to follow his lead, while a handful of Duterte supporters said Taylor should see the situation for himself instead of basing his opinion only on media reports. **AP**

Station	Air quality	
Roadside	30-50 Good	😊
High Density Residential Area	55-75 Moderate	😞
Ambient	40-60 Moderate	😊

SOURCE: D5IMG

WORLD BRIEFS



SOUTH KOREA'S Constitutional Court held its first preparatory hearing in the trial of impeached President Park Geun-hye, whom lawmakers voted to remove over an explosive corruption scandal that saw millions of people protest in past weeks. **More on p11**

THAILAND A pro-democracy activist in Thailand has been rearrested after his bail was revoked in a case accusing him of sharing online a Thai-language BBC story about the country's new king.

AFGHAN police say gunmen have stormed the home of a lawmaker in the capital, killing eight people and leaving the parliamentarian wounded after he jumped from the roof to escape.

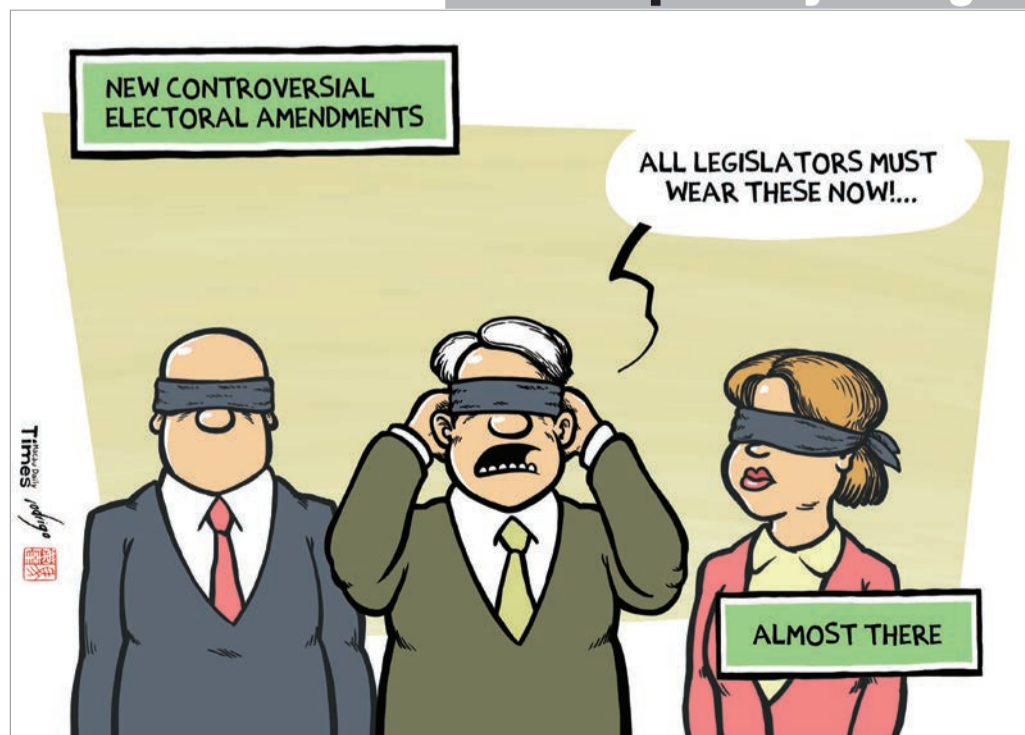


CONGO security forces have killed at least 34 people this week amid protests against President Joseph Kabila's extended rule, a rights group said yesterday, as mediators urged the ruling and opposition parties to find a way out of the political crisis.



TURKEY'S president implicated a U.S.-based Muslim cleric in the killing of Russia's envoy to Turkey, saying the policeman who carried out the attack was a member of his "terror organization."

times square by rodrigo



HOLIDAY TIMES

Macau Daily Times will not be published on Monday. The Times will be back on the stands on December 27. However the MDT website will be updated with breaking news during the recess period. We wish our readers, advertisers and friends the best of times.