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# Times

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**WORLD BRIEFS**



**INDONESIA** A court ruled yesterday that the blasphemy trial of the minority Christian governor of the country's capital will proceed. Gov. Basuki "Ahok" Tjahaja Purnama is charged with insulting Islam and desecrating the Quran by using one of its verses to boost his chances of winning re-election. More on p12

**CHINA** Authorities handed down prison sentences to nine protesters in a fishing village that's received international attention for its demonstrations against land seizures, state media reported yesterday. More on p10



**PHILIPPINES** The coast guard pressed its search yesterday for 18 crewmen from a cargo ship that sank at the height of Typhoon Nock-Ten, which struck the country on Christmas Day. The Starlite Atlantic sought cover in an anchorage area as the typhoon passed and its crew decided to move to safer waters but encountered huge waves and fierce winds, causing their ship to sink.

**SOUTH KOREA** While lawyers desperately tried to restore the impeached South Korean president's powers, politics advanced without her as parties and potential candidates postured for elections that could take place in just months. More on p13

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# Coutinho back to politics after sons arrested

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# Obama, Japan's Abe to seek reconciliation at Pearl Harbor

P11

Renato Marques

**L**EGISLATOR Pereira Coutinho clarified that the recent outcome of a case related to drug trafficking that involves his two sons will not affect his work and duties as lawmaker and president of The Macau Civil Servants Association (ATFPM).

The statement came during a crowded press conference held yesterday afternoon at the ATFPM headquarters.

“My behavior will not change in any way regarding the functions that I’m holding and that I will continue to hold for one more year as lawmaker at the Legislative Assembly [AL]. I’ll continue to be the same person and to execute my duties. Do not expect any slowdown from my side as I have a commitment with Macau citizens,” he said.

Questioned by the press if the case that involves both his sons, aged 31 and 27, would affect in any way his political career, possibly even jeopardizing the 2017 AL election run, Coutinho said: “Personally I’m not worried about any outcome from next year’s elections... I believe that in a democratic system we must be able to live with what people think of those that are working to serve Macau,” adding “I believe that people in Macau know how to distinguish between what I do personally, and the responsibilities that I assume [in office]. Equally, members of my family will have to assume their own responsibilities.”

Coutinho suggested that he was confident of his position due to the large number of

# Coutinho claims duties ‘unaffected’ by sons’ arrests

supportive messages he received during the last few days, saying also that one of the primary goals of his press conference was to express his gratitude for this support. He noted: “I’m psychologically and emotionally in shape to face the future challenges.”

Regarding the question of whether he still plans to be a candidate for the AL, Coutinho replied, “Yes, I’m interested in running [for a new mandate] because I have a

“**My behavior will not change in any way regarding the functions that I’m holding.**”

PEREIRA COUTINHO

dream which is that the six standing committees of the AL have their doors open and allow journalists to have full access to the meetings and discussions of the laws that affect the citizens of Macau,” adding “that’s my mission for the time being and I’ll strive for that... On the day that the six standing committees start to have their doors open to



Rita Santos (left) and Pereira Coutinho

the press and that I see that there are more people that would identify with our way of acting in the AL I could consider to change my role.”

Coutinho did not make many comments regarding the case that involves his two sons. He didn’t disclose any details about the case, claiming it is subject to legal confidentiality. “The case is still under investigation and so there isn’t a formal accusation as of yet,” he added.

According to Coutinho the older son (31) is currently subjected to preventive custody measures, while the younger one (27) was eventually released on bail.

In a statement issued by the lawmaker and distributed to the press on site, Coutinho also pointed out that he has been serving the community and solving their problems that “might have prevented me from paying enough attention to my own sons.”

According to previous media reports, the two sons of

Coutinho were arrested on December 15 while picking up drugs claimed to be cannabis. The combined weight of the seized items was 1 kilogram and the drugs had an expected market value of about MOP500,000.

The case was later (on December 22) disclosed by the Judiciary Police (PJ) who claimed the brothers were the masterminds of a criminal group that was aiming to sell the drugs in night clubs across the territory.

## Lawmakers’ freedom of speech threatened

**D**URING the press conference held yesterday, legislator Pereira Coutinho still had time to point the finger at what he called “the censorship and the cut of the freedom of speech” from legislators.

Coutinho was referring to the case involving his stand partner Leong Veng Chai that saw the agenda of spoken enquiry of December 15 amended by the AL to exclude the names of Secretary Sonia Chan and former Public Prosecutor General Ho Chio Meng.

According to Coutinho, the case is “particularly dangerous when it involves a legislator [Leong Veng Chai] that was elected by the people of Macau,” adding “my colleague had his text censored by the president of the AL and this cannot be unchallenged.” The lawmaker remarked that the reply of the president of the AL, in which he blamed a staff member for the amendment, is unsatisfactory.



Aspect of the audience during yesterday’s press folder conference

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## Hundreds of tourists stranded in Hokkaido due to heavy snow

**A**PPROXIMATELY 500 tourists from Macau and Hong Kong were stranded at the New Chitose Airport in Hokkaido over the Christmas weekend because of the heavy snow that hit northern Japan last week.

According to Chinese reports the tourists were kept in the airport for three consecutive nights from last Thursday as a consequence of the heaviest snowfall over Hokkaido in the last 50 years.

Until Christmas Eve, hundreds of flights were cancelled, leaving thousands of passengers at the airport.

According to Tourism Crisis Management Office (GGCT), over 50 local residents stranded at the airport sought assistance from the department until 9 p.m. on Christmas Eve.

Moreover, according to a report by CCTV13, the Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China brought food and water to the Macau and Hong Kong residents after it received

requests for help from Hong Kong residents.

The Deputy Consul General of the Consulate-General of China in Sapporo, Zhang Yiping, said "all our Hong Kong and Macau fellow citizens have expressed their thanks to our timely assistance. They said, from the bottom of their hearts, that after all China is good [at taking care of us], that the motherland is good [at taking care of us]."

According to Chinese reports, approximately 100 mainland tourists caused chaos at the New Chitose Airport last Friday night, after their flights were cancelled.

A number of mainland tourists were in the boarding area and became involved in physical clashes with the Japanese police on duty at the airport.

The chaos remained until Christmas morning, although nobody was arrested. The incident did not cause any injuries but two people were sent to the hospital for feeling unwell.

## PH consulate operating on Sundays permanently



Filipino consulate

Lynzy Valles

**T**HE Philippine Consulate in Macau has heeded the demands of overseas Filipino workers in the region, and confirmed it will regularly operate on Sundays starting from next year.

The consular service which represents Manila's government informed the public yesterday that together with all its associated agencies, it would continue to provide regular consular services from Sunday to Thursday.

December 18 was suppo-

sed to be the last Sunday that the Consulate was open on a weekend as the office was only operating on a three-month trial phase.

The Philippines' Consul General in Macau, Lilybeth Deapera, briefly replied to the Times to note that the request to operate more regularly was approved by the Philippine's Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). The reply implied that the embassy initiated operations on Sundays due to public demand.

"Basically, the Home Of-

fication, she messaged.

Back in August a Filipino migrant group, Migrate Macau, urged the consulate to open on Sundays citing that it was the day on which most migrant workers were able to visit the Consulate due to their work schedules.

The Consulate opened its doors on Sundays a few years ago, but only a few Filipino migrants requested services over the weekend. A representative from Migrate Macau told the Times yesterday that the group was pleased with the announcement.

"We're extremely happy because we won this petition. There were some [Filipino] organizations who didn't support us but we are thankful for the 2,832 signatures that we've gathered," said the association's chairperson, Emerlina de Lina.

Earlier this year, the migrant group association amassed the signatures from Filipino citizens re-

siding in the MSAR to be filed in a petition letter that was then handed to the Consulate.

"The last time we held dialogues with them, they asked us to just wait but we did not have a definite answer on whether they will regularly open on Sundays," she said.

According to de Lina, Filipino migrant workers indicated that the service was indeed required on weekends. "The consulate is full of Filipino workers on Sundays. On December 11, they did not know how to accommodate the overflowing number of Filipinos requesting services," she added.

When questioned about their next move, de Lina noted that the association is currently waiting for the results of the document they sent to Manila via the Consulate requesting a government-run shelter for Filipino migrants.

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## New deputy directors appointed to SARs' affairs office

Zhou Bo, previous deputy director of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office (HKMAO) of the State Council, has been removed by the State Council from his position, the State Council announced yesterday. Zhou, born in 1956, had been in the position since 2013. Song Zhe, the Hong Kong commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Huang Liuquan, director general of the HKMAO's law department, will replace Zhou. No reason was offered in the State Council's announcement for the decision made.

## Fire burns down almost 90 scooters

Around 90 motorcycles were left in ashes after a blaze broke out yesterday in the Area Preta neighborhood. The Fire Services arrived at the scene soon after the fire was reported at 4 a.m. The incident also affected a dozen nearby cars.

## GAMING | CAMBODIA

# NagaWorld VIP success may make it key challenger to Macau



Daniel Beittler

**NAGAWORLD**, Phnom Penh's only casino-hotel, is increasingly appearing as a key challenger to Macau as it reports growth in earnings that consistently outperform the MSAR's integrated resorts.

While the Cambodia-based casino remains small compared with others in the region, it registered a 24 percent year-on-year increase in net profit in the first half of 2016 to USD125.2

million, with its gross gaming revenue (GGR) up 10 percent to \$227 million.

The figures are still dwarfed by some of the Macau-based operators, which recorded a combined MOP107.8 billion (\$13.5 billion) in GGR in the first half of the year. However, in the same period, Macau's total diminished by 11.4 percent year-on-year.

The success of NagaWorld, run by Hong Kong-listed NagaCorp, has been in driving its focus on drawing VIP players from Sou-

theast Asia and China.

Riding on the back of Chinese President Xi Jinping's anti-corruption campaign, VIP gamblers from China pour into Phnom Penh's single house of baccarat where they often find better offers than those they are accustomed to in Macau – even though the deals are promoted by many of the same junkets operating, or formerly operating, in the MSAR.

The upper echelons of Chinese society have sought gaming locations other than the 'ill-reputed' Macau since the anti-graft crackdown commenced in 2012. Company executives from NagaCorp openly note that their business growth is the direct consequence of the casino tapping into the now under-served market from the mainland.

Earlier this year, gaming analysts Union Gaming Securities Asia praised the company's strong growth in this market segment. However, the analysts also cast doubts over whether the growth rate of the operator would continue at such a pace into this year's second quarter.

Analyst doubts have done little to dent the expansion plans of NagaCorp. The operator is planning to open second complex, named "Naga 2", which will feature an additional 200-300 gaming tables and more than 1,000 rooms. It is expected to open next year, with further prospects for a Naga 3 addition in the future, with even the possibility of a theme park.

The expansion is aided by the security afforded to NagaCorp's by its 70-year casino monopoly in the Cambodian capital – an agreement arranged with the government that prohibits competitors from setting up shop in a 200-kilometer radius of the city center.

Still, lawmakers in Cambodia have stressed that the corporation's monopoly is unacceptable and the possibility remains that a change in government might one day see the concession revoked.

In the meantime, Cambodia's central location in Southeast Asia and its apparent ability to draw high-rollers from China is an enduring strategic advantage for the Phnom Penh casino.

Moreover, the country still has no law on gambling and no gross gaming revenue tax. Even if one is implemented next year, many analysts are confident that it is unlikely to exceed 4 percent, while others say it may even remain unchanged.

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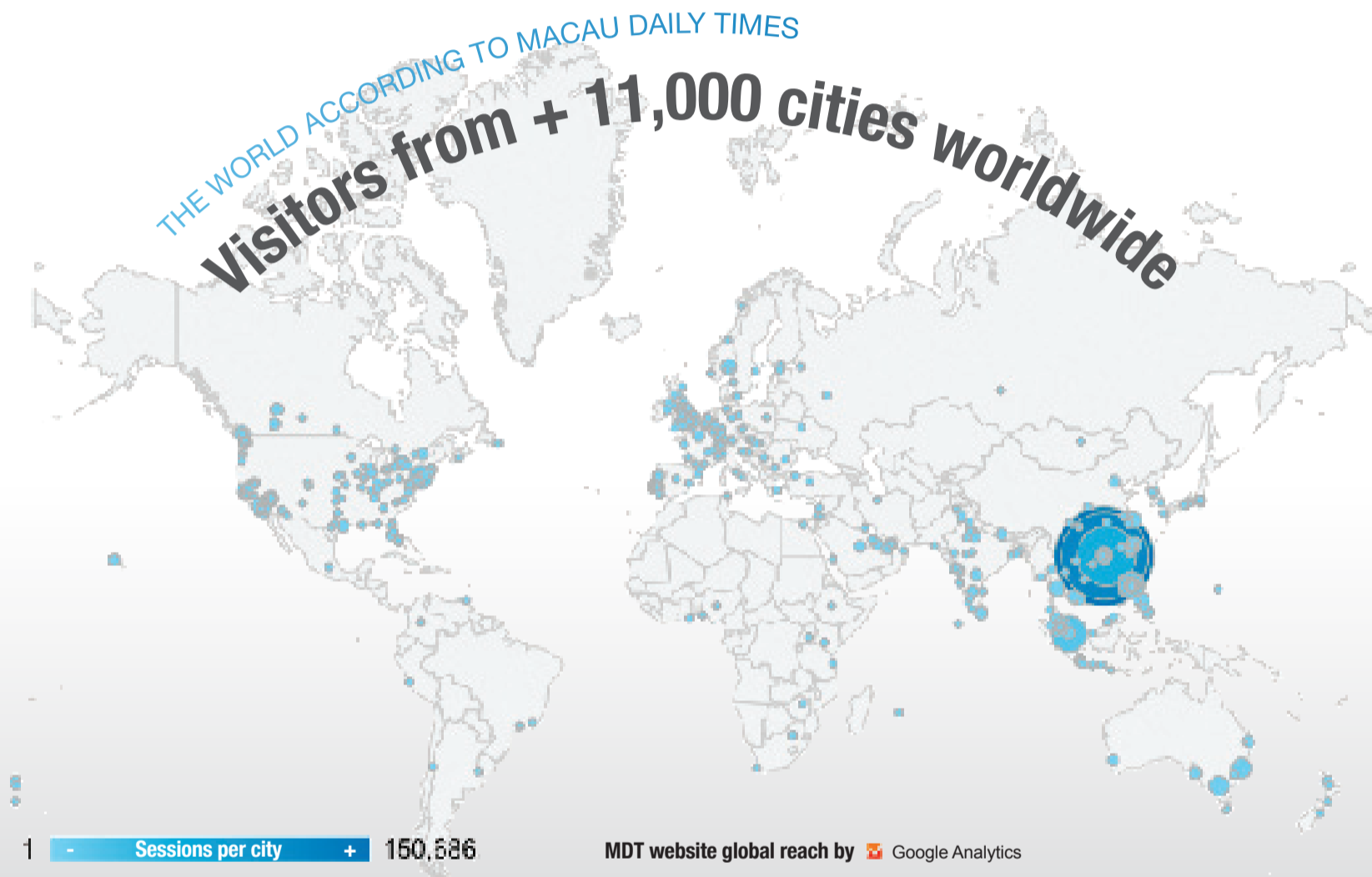
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## MACAO CITY FRINGE FESTIVAL

# Organizers open activity registration to public



PHOTO ARCHIVE

**O**RGANIZERS of the 16th Macao City Fringe Festival, which will be held in the city between January 13 and 22, are now calling for registration for the first round of extending activities that will commence from January 5.

These activities include the "Workshop on Environmental Dance Theatre", in which participants will be guided by experienced choreographers Nina Dipla and Candy Kuok, and may be selected to per-

form in "The Other Side of the Sacred", and "Thematic talks: Foreign Theatre – Body, Memory and Labour", in which artists and performing groups will share their creation experiences from overseas.

The 16th Macao City Fringe Festival, which has adopted "A Feast of Creativity! Bon Appétit!" as a slogan, will offer 23 distinctive programs and a total of 70 performances.

The programs will be hosted across more than a dozen venues

on the Macau peninsula including the Sir Robert Ho Tung Library, the Nam Van Lake Nautical Center, the Macau Art Garden, Ox Warehouse and the square behind the Ruins of St. Paul's.

Among the highlighted programs for this festival is the world-acclaimed performance "Antiwords", in which actresses appeal to the audience with absurd humor as they portray drunken characters. The program features a voice-over in Czech with subtitles in Chinese and English.

According to a statement released by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), tickets have already sold out for some of the festival's events, with only a few remaining for many of the others.

Tickets for sessions of programs such as "Mobile Kitchen", "Zuò Zuò Tea House", "A Little Bird Lost Its Way", "The Smooth Life" and "The Other Side of the Sacred" have sold out since they became available earlier this month.

The 16th Macao City Fringe Festival is co-organized by the IC and the Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau (IACM). Tickets are available at Macau Ticketing Network outlets. Holders of ICBC cards are eligible for a 10 percent discount on ticket purchases over MOP200.

## 4,420 injured in traffic accidents in 2016



**T**HE Public Security Police Force (PSP) informed in a statement released on a Christmas Day that a total of 4,420 people were injured as a result of car accidents in the period from the beginning of January until the statement's date of release.

Nine people died from car accidents during the same period. In addition, a total of 120 accidents were caused by drivers under the influence of alcohol, while 15 involved driving under the influence of medicines.

According to the PSP, these figures represent a slight

decrease compared to the same period of last year.

Based on data provided on the PSP's website, until the end of October, 12,364 car accidents took place in Macau, which corresponds to 5.52 percent fewer incidents than that in 2015.

Four drivers and four

pedestrians died, which is a decrease of 43 percent and an increase of 33 percent respectively. The total number of deaths went down 27 percent during the first 10 months, year-on-year.

In 2015, PSP recorded 15,804 traffic accidents in the whole year, 14 of which resulted in 15 deaths. This figure was comprised of 10 drivers, one passenger, and four pedestrians. Last year alone, 5,291 people were injured in the city's traffic accidents.

However according to the available data, the fewer accidents ended up with fines being charged by the authorities, with a 12.5 percent increase in the total fines applied in the first 10 months of this year when compared to 2015.

In the first 10 months of this year, fines due to traffic accidents amounted to MOP174.1 million which represents a 12.59 percent increase year on year. From January until October of 2015, this figure was MOP154.7 million.

## EDUCATION

## DSEJ seeking to supervise after-school care service providers



**A**MENDED laws regarding after-school care services will enter legislative procedures next year, the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEJ) announced, according to a report by Macao Daily News.

DSEJ noted that in the past after-school care services, in particular the licensing process regarding the approval of service providers to pick up children and take care of them after school, were not under the administration of DSEJ.

The department has proposed to take these services under its auspices given their increased demand.

The region's tutorial regulations are well known given they went through three public consultations, a procedure that commenced in April of 2009.

The education authority revealed that the amended laws which involve issues relating to after-school services will propose that any individual or entity which provides extra tutorial services to seven or more students simultaneously must obtain a license from DSEJ, otherwise these parties will be charged with a penalty.

The new bill will also regulate the education level of individual service providers, as well as some new requirements regarding tutorial spaces.

According to the DSEJ website, currently there are 242 approved tutorial licenses while another 49 are waiting for approval.

The department also claims that throughout this year, it has conducted inspections of after-school care service providers in order to help the operators adapt to the incoming laws.

## Guangdong seeks to attract human resources companies

**G**UANGDONG is looking to attract a number of well-known international human resources companies to enter the province in the coming five years, according to a report by Macao Daily News.

In order to achieve this goal, the province is looking to add 15 to 20 working bases in Guangdong, in particular, focusing on importing human resources from beyond China.

The aforementioned plans are written in Guangdong's most recent five-year plan in regard to the province's human resource and social welfare development. Topics covered relate to key aspects of this area while outlaying the priority for a series of measures to achieve these goals, which Guangdong will implement soon.

The province also expects to award individuals and organizations that recruit the talented people in demand in China.

Aside from the recruitment drive, Guangdong will also implement additional policies to improve the province's quality of scientific and technological human resources. In particular, the province will renew some of its scientific projects relating to new materials, sea, and biological technology.



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## OIL

# India's top producer spends USD1.2bn to buy gas block



A petroleum refinery (background) in India

## Saket Sundria

**I**NDIA'S biggest oil and gas producer will pay as much as USD1.2 billion to buy a majority stake in a gas field off the country's east coast, aiming to boost production as the country seeks to cut energy imports.

State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp. Ltd.'s board approved the purchase of an 80 percent stake in Gujarat State Petroleum Corp.'s de-

water block in the Krishna Godavari basin, it said in a statement last week. The

## The deal will help PM Modi's goal of reducing imports of hydrocarbons

New Delhi-based company will pay \$995.26 million for the Deen Dayal West Field, the largest discovery in the KG-OSN-2001/3 block, with estimated natural gas reserves of 1.1 trillion cubic feet.

It will pay another \$200 million for six other discoveries in the block located in the Bay of Bengal. The block has likely total reserves of at least 11.2 trillion cubic feet, according to GSPC's annual report for the year ended

March 31.

"The acquisition fits well with the strategy of ONGC to enhance natural gas production from domestic fields on a faster pace," the company said, adding that trial gas production from Deen Dayal West Field has already started.

The deal will help expedite production of gas from the block critical to achieve Prime Minister Narendra Modi's goal of reducing import dependency of hydrocarbons by 10 percent by 2022.

The companies will share infrastructure and reduce

costs in an area where both have spent or plan to spend at least \$3 billion each. The deal is critical for GSPC, a company owned by the government of the western state of Gujarat, as it is at least four years behind schedule in starting commercial gas production despite having completed construction of a processing platform, gas pipeline and an onshore terminal.

ONGC said the acquisition will help it develop faster its discoveries in the Yanam and Godavari areas as well as gas discoveries in its KG-DWN-98/2 block. **Bloomberg**

## Oil extends gains ahead of OPEC cuts

**O**IL extended the longest winning streak in more than four months before OPEC and other producing nations start reducing output to stabilize the market.

Futures advanced 0.4 percent in New York, climbing for a seventh session. Prices are set to recover next year as production cuts help to re-balance an oversupplied market, Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih said last week. OPEC and 11 nations from outside of the group including Russia have agreed to trim about 1.8 million barrels a day next year.

Oil has traded near or above USD50 a barrel since the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries agreed last month to curb production for the first time in eight years. Iraq, the second-biggest OPEC producer, is fully committed to the accord, Oil Minister Jabbar Al-Luaibi said last week in Cairo at a meeting of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries.

"Current oil prices reflect positive factors we've been seeing recently, including expectations about output cuts by OPEC and non-OPEC nations," said Will Yun, a Seoul-based commodities analyst at Hyundai Futures Corp. "Questions remain on whether the rally will continue because unless there are new bullish items, the market may see more uncertainties in the long term."

**T**ESLA Motor Inc. and Panasonic Corp. will begin production of solar cells and modules next year at a plant in Buffalo, New York.

Production will begin in the summer, with the factory's output capacity expanding to 1 gigawatt by 2019, the companies said in a statement yes-

terday. Panasonic will invest more than 30 billion yen (USD256 million) on the installation of production equipment, Yayoi Watanabe, a spokeswoman for the Osaka-based company, said by phone. The total investment was not disclosed in the statement.

The announcement un-

## Tesla, Panasonic to begin solar panel project

derscores deepening ties between the two companies. They are jointly building a \$5 billion lithium-ion gigafactory in Nevada to produce batteries for electric cars and energy storage products

for homes and utilities. In October, Tesla revealed plans to work with Panasonic to make solar cells and modules for solar-roof installer SolarCity Corp. - a company Tesla acquired last month for

\$2 billion.

"When production of the solar roof begins, Tesla will also incorporate Panasonic's cells into the many kinds of solar glass tile roofs that Tesla will be manufacturing," ac-

cording to the statement.

Solar components from the Buffalo plant will also work seamlessly with Tesla's energy storage devices such as Powerwall and Powerpack, the companies said. **Bloomberg**

### corporate bits

#### THE VENETIAN TO PRESENT TAN DUN IN CONCERT TODAY



The Venetian Macao is set to present "Tan Dun Rock Symphony New Year's Concert" tonight at the Venetian Theatre. The performance will feature composer and conductor Tan Dun who will lead the Macao Orchestra, Mongolian folk-rock band Hanggai, and other celebrated musicians.

Tan has won dozens of awards, including a Grammy and an Oscar for his score for the movie "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," according to a statement issued by Sands China.

Tan wrote the award ceremony music for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games and conducted the Shanghai

Disneyland Opening Concert.

Regularly collaborating with renowned musicians, conductors and ensembles, the Macao Orchestra has performed in more than 30 cities in Mainland China and around the world.

Also appearing are four musicians including violinist Jue Yao from Hong Kong, cellist Zhu Lin from Shanghai, pianist Ralph van Raat from Holland, and soprano Maria-Chiara Chizzoni from Italy.

Completed by Mongolian folk-rock legends Hanggai - considered a Chinese representative of world music - the programme will combine established classical pieces, Hanggai original compositions, and Tan's own works, some of which require audience participation through the use of mobile phones.

Tickets for "Tan Dun Rock Symphony New Year's Concert" are on sale at all Cotai Ticketing box offices.

CTM issued a press release stating that customers who purchased a Samsung Galaxy Note 7 from the company can approach any of its branches to apply to exchange it for other handset models by bringing along the Samsung Galaxy Note 7, its original accessories, and the purchase receipt.

According to Samsung Hong Kong's notice, the exchange procedures of Samsung Galaxy note 7 will be available until December 31.

As CTM notes, this exchange procedure for the smartphone

#### EXCHANGE OF GALAXY NOTE 7 ONLY AVAILABLE UNTIL END OF DECEMBER



has been in place since October.

The telecommunication company recommends consumers

handle the matter as soon as possible as the service will be unavailable after the end of the year.



# Porsche wins German top court ruling in funds case



**PORSCHE** Automobil Holding SE won a key legal victory in its effort to end years of litigation stemming from a failed attempt to take full control of Volkswagen AG in 2008.

Germany's highest civil court dismissed an appeal by hedge funds including Viking Global Equities LP and Glenhill Capital LP, Porsche Holding said in a statement. The investors were seeking around 1.2 billion euros (USD1.25 billion) in damages from alleged market manipulation triggered by short-selling transactions, swaps and options related to VW voting stock.

Porsche Holding has faced a barrage of claims for a total of about 6.7 billion euros since disclosing in October 2008 that it controlled 74.1 percent of Volkswagen, partly through options, and was seeking to acquire 75 percent as part of a takeover. The announcement caused VW to soar as short sellers raced to cover bets that the stock would fall. While the Stuttgart, Germany-based company's effort ultimately failed, it still owns a majority of Volkswa-

gen's voting shares.

"This is the next important step for our company," Manfred Doess, Porsche Holding's legal chief, said in the statement. "The still pending cases will confirm our legal position."

The Regional Court of Stuttgart had dismissed the action in 2014. The plaintiffs appealed but the Higher Regional Court of Stuttgart rejected their challenge in March last year. The Federal Court of Justice now also rejected their bid to overturn these rulings. The decision by Germany's highest civil court, which is final and can't be appealed, is the seventh consecutive ruling that backs Porsche's view that it properly informed investors, the company said.

The ruling cuts the pending claims to about 5.5 billion euros and is a setback for investors still hoping for redress. Most suits are now being bundled in joint litigation pending at the Higher Regional Court in Celle, in VW's home state of Lower Saxony. That court centralized the evidence phase and has scheduled 22 days of hearings starting in July.

Porsche Holding has been seeking to overcome the allegations ever since its 2008 disclosure. German financial regulator Bafin initially reviewed the issue, and prosecutors raided the company in 2009. Charges were brought in 2012, but a Stuttgart criminal court acquitted Porsche and two of its former executives in April this year. While prosecutors initially said they would appeal, they later abandoned the effort. **Bloomberg**

# Troubled Italian bank says capital hole bigger than expected



**TROUBLED** Italian bank Monte dei Paschi di Siena says it will need more rescue money than previously expected, as a government rescue looms.

The bank said in a statement issued late Monday that the European Central Bank had estimated its capital shortfall at 8.8 billion euros (USD9.2 billion), well above the 5 billion euros Monte dei Paschi had been planning to raise.

The increase in the sum is due to the fact that Monte dei Paschi's capital position has deteriorated in the past month, apparently as customers withdrew deposits.

Italy's government on Friday said it was guaranteeing all of the bank's retail customers with part of a 20 billion-euro fund approved by parliament to ensure the stability of banks. Monte dei Paschi had failed to raise enough capital independently.



### Combat life's challenges and reset life again

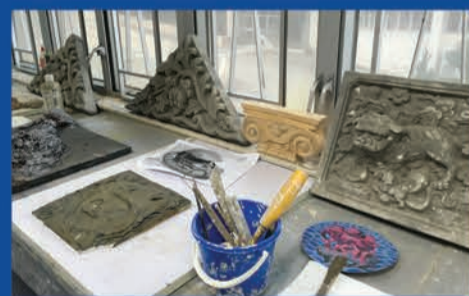
#### Rotary Club of Hou Kuong visits the Teen Challenge Training Centre - An Exchange of Love and Energy



At the start of the year 2016, with the help and arrangement of the Drug Abuse Treatment and Rehabilitation Division of the Social Welfare Bureau, Rotarians from Rotary Club of Hou Kuong paid a visit to the Teen Challenge Training Centre. Through this event, more was learnt about the goal, the daily operation and facilities of the Centre as well as how the rehab patients were looked after. And at the end, it left them with a great impression of the staff's endeavors in rehabilitation works and their care for the rehab patients. To allow more interactions among the rehab patients and give them the chance to showcase their talents, they were encouraged to form a music band and were invited to perform in the Club's 38th anniversary charity gala dinner back in April. And later this year, a barbeque and sharing event was hosted to celebrate the mid-autumn festival with the rehab patients and their families together. During which they had shared among participants with their stories and personal experiences on how they quitted the drugs and recovered, and there were some really unforgettable heartwarming and touching moments.

The Teen Challenge was initially established back in 1989 as a non-profit gospel drug rehabilitation centre. But in recent years, the problem of drug abuse among youngsters is getting much more serious. And in response to the needs of the local community, the Centre was reorganized on 27 October 2008, with more emphasis on providing drug rehab programs for young drug abusers.

With the motto of the Centre "life affecting life", they use the approach of paying more care and attention to the overall of each rehab patient in different aspects, including the patient's physical health, psychological and soul's well-being, and his or her participation with the community to achieve the goal of rehab recovery. They also integrate arts therapy and continuous education to provide the patients a multi-disciplinary training curriculum.



The Centre has also collaborated with the Social Welfare Bureau and Cultural Affairs Bureau in a program, "Special Venture on Culture", providing courses such as in restoration of cultural relics and artifacts, book binding techniques and stage production. Through these new trainings, they want to help the youngsters to set new goals and live a normal and healthy lifestyle.



Rotary Club of Hou Kuong has great admiration and respect to the Social Welfare Bureau who spares no effort in the support of social service organizations and their works in promoting drug rehabilitation services in Macau and let the public gain a deeper understanding of their services and rehab programs. Also as a charitable organization, Rotary Club of Hou Kuong hopes to participate in promoting rehabilitation for drug abuse.

Louise Watt, Beijing

CHINA vowed yesterday to speed up the development of its space industry as it set out its plans to become the first country to soft land a probe on the far side of the moon, by around 2018, and launch its first Mars probe by 2020.

"To explore the vast cosmos, develop the space industry and build China into a space power is a dream we pursue unremittingly," read a white paper setting out the country's space strategy for the next five years. It says China aims to use space for peaceful purposes and to guarantee national security, and to carry out cutting-edge scientific research.

The white paper, released by the information office of China's Cabinet, points to the growing ambitions of China's already rapidly advancing space program. China places great emphasis on the development of its space industry, seen as a symbol of national prestige that will raise the country's standing in the world. Although the white paper doesn't mention it, China's eventual goal is to land an astronaut on the moon.

While Russia and the United States have more experience in manned space travel, China's military-backed program has made steady progress in a comparatively short time.

Since China conducted its first crewed space mission

# China plans to land probes on far side of moon, Mars by 2020

in 2003, it has staged a spacewalk and landed a rover on the moon in 2013 — the first time humans had soft landed anything on the moon since the 1970s.

## China never talks big and says something it's unable to achieve.

HE QISONG  
SPACE SECURITY EXPERT

Last month, two astronauts returned from a month-long stay aboard China's Tian-gong 2 experimental space station, the country's sixth and longest crewed mission. A fully functioning, permanently crewed space station is on course to begin operations six years from now and is slated to run for at least a decade.

The white paper reiterated China's plans to launch its first Mars probe by 2020, saying it would explore and bring back samples from the red planet, explore the Jupi-

AP PHOTO



In this Nov. 18, 2016, file photo released by Xinhua News Agency, ground crew check on the re-entry capsule of Shenzhou 11 spacecraft

ter system and "conduct research into major scientific questions such as the origin and evolution of the solar system, and search for extraterrestrial life."

The paper says the Chang'e-4 lunar probe will help shed li-

ght on the formation and evolution of the moon.

He Qisong, a space security expert at Shanghai University of Political Science and Law, said that achieving mankind's first soft landing on the far side of the moon is a

newly stated goal. It indicates that China has mastered the underlying technology needed to land on a specific area of the lunar surface, he added.

"China never talks big and says something it's unable to achieve," he said. AP

## Industrial profits climb 14.5 percent, led by coal and metals

BLOOMBERG



PROFITS at industrial firms in China accelerated in November, with raw material producers leading gains, as prices of products such as coal and metals continued to advance.

Industrial profits rose 14.5 percent from a year earlier to 774.6 billion yuan (USD111 billion), the National Bureau of Statistics said yesterday. That compared with the 9.8 percent increa-

se in October. Earnings in the first 11 months climbed 9.4 percent to 6.03 trillion yuan.

Earnings posted the second-strongest gain in more than two years as factory inflation rebounded to a five-year high in November on surging coal and metal prices. That helps manufacturers cut debt and invest more, while delaying efforts to reduce excess capacity.

"Profits of industrial companies have continued to rise this year, but they still face challenges to improve their efficiency," the NBS said in a statement. "Profit gains depend excessively on price rebounds for raw material sectors such as oil processing or steel."

Raw material producers contributed 68 percent of the industrial profit gains in the first 11 months from a year earlier, NBS said. Earnings from coal mining rose 157 percent in the first 11 months while those for base metal processing surged 275 percent.

Not all sectors showed gains. Industries such as oil and gas drilling and power supply saw profit declines in the first 11 months. Bloomberg

## Nine villagers sent to prison after land protests

CHINESE authorities handed down prison sentences to nine protesters in a fishing village that's received international attention for its demonstrations against land seizures, state media reported yesterday.

The villagers in Wukan were given sentences on Monday ranging from two to 10 years for offenses that included illegal assembly, blocking traffic and disrupting public order.

With a population of 13,000 people and located near Hong Kong, Wukan was the site in 2011 of a rare victory for protesters against the ruling Communist Party over the issue of the government taking land of farmers and peasants to build large-scale projects. Facing an international spotlight, the party allowed villagers to elect their local party secretary. The winner of that election was Lin Zuluan, a former protester.

But Lin's detention on corruption charges earlier this year sparked more than 80 straight

days of rallies calling for his release, despite warnings from Chinese authorities not to assemble.

This time, police moved in to violently suppress the protests. They fired rubber bullets at demonstrators and assaulted journalists from two Hong Kong newspapers conducting interviews in the village.

Videos shared on Chinese social media showed one person with blood on his arm and chest, and another being treated for an apparent bullet wound on his hand.

Lin gave a televised confession to charges that he took up to 593,000 yuan (about USD85,300) to "influence livelihood and economic projects" in the village. He was given 37 months in jail. But one of his former lawyers told The Associated Press in September that he believed Lin had confessed under pressure to protect his family, and soon afterward, Lin withdrew his confession and tried to appeal his sentence, but was unsuccessful. AP

# Obama, Japan's Abe to seek reconciliation at Pearl Harbor



Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (center) greets guests at a dinner held in Abe's honor in Honolulu

Josh Lederman, Honolulu

**P**UTTING 75 years of resentment behind them, the leaders of the United States and Japan are coming together at Pearl Harbor for a historic pilgrimage to the site where the bloodshed of surprise attacks thrust America into World War II.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit yesterday with President Barack Obama is powerful proof that the former enemies have transcended the recriminatory impulses that weighed down relations after the war, Japan's government has said. Although Japanese leaders have visited Pearl Harbor before, Abe will be the first to visit the memorial that now rests on the hallowed waters above the sunken USS Arizona.

For Obama, it's likely the last time he will meet with a foreign leader as president, White House aides said. It's a bookend of sorts for the president, who nearly eight years ago invited Abe's predecessor to be the first leader that Obama hosted at the White House.

For Abe, it's an act of symbolic reciprocity, coming six months after Obama became the first sitting U.S. president to visit Hiroshima in Japan, where the U.S. dropped an atomic bomb in hopes of ending the war.

"This visit, and the president's visit to Hiroshima earlier this year, would not have been possible eight years ago," said Daniel Kritenbrink, Obama's top Asia adviser in the White House. "That we are here today is

the result of years of efforts at all levels of our government and societies, which has allowed us to jointly and directly deal with even the most sensitive aspects of our shared history."

More than 2,300 Americans died on Dec. 7, 1941, when more than 300 Japanese fighter planes and bombers attacked. More than 1,000 others were wounded. In the ensuing years, the U.S. incarcerated roughly 120,000 Japanese-Americans in internment camps before dropping atomic bombs in 1945 that killed some 140,000 people in Hiroshima and 70,000 in Nagasaki.

Abe will not apologize for Pearl Harbor, his government has said. Nor did Obama apologize at Hiroshima in May, a visit that he and Abe used to emphasize their elusive aspirations for a nuclear-free future.

No apology needed, said 96-year-old Alfred Rodrigues, a U.S. Navy veteran who survived what President Franklin D. Roosevelt called a "date which will live in infamy."

"War is war," Rodrigues said as he looked at old photos of his military service. "They were doing what they were supposed to do, and we were doing what we were supposed to do."

After a formal meeting in the morning, Obama and Abe planned to lay a wreath aboard the USS Arizona Memorial, which is accessible only by boat. Then they'll go to nearby Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, where both leaders will speak.

Obama and Abe signed off on the visit last month when they met in Peru on the sidelines of

an economic summit. Though the parallels with Obama's Hiroshima visit are palpable, both governments said that one visit wasn't contingent on the other.

Meanwhile, China criticized Abe's visit as an insincere attempt to absolve Japan of its wartime aggression. "Trying to liquidate the history of World War II by paying a visit to Pearl Harbor and consoling the dead is just wishful thinking on Japan's part," said Hua Chunying, a Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman in Beijing, at a regular briefing.

"Japan can never turn this page over without reconciliation from China and other victimized countries in Asia," she said. "Japanese leaders should stop being so evasive and dodging, and instead take a responsible attitude toward history and future, deeply and sincerely reflect upon the history of aggressive war, and draw a clear break with the past."

Abe's visit is not without political risk given the Japanese people's long, emotional reckoning with their nation's aggression in the war. Though the history books have largely deemed Pearl Harbor a surprise attack, Japan's government insisted as recently as this month that it had intended to give the U.S. prior notice that it was declaring war and failed only because of "bureaucratic bungling."

"There's this sense of guilt, if you like, among Japanese, this 'Pearl Harbor syndrome,' that we did something very unfair," said Tamaki Tsukada, a minister in the Embassy of Japan in

## ■ Abe will not apologize for Pearl Harbor. Nor did Obama apologize at Hiroshima in May

Washington. "I think the prime minister's visit will in a sense absolve that kind of complex that Japanese people have."

Since the war, the U.S. and Japan have built a powerful alliance that both sides say has grown stronger during Obama's tenure. There are questions about what the relationship will look like under President-elect Donald Trump.

During the campaign, Trump

suggested that Japan and South Korea should obtain nuclear weapons so the U.S. would no longer be burdened with costs of defending them, a disquieting notion in many Asian capitals. But after Trump's election, Abe became the first foreign leader to meet with him, sitting down in Trump Tower with the business mogul and Trump's daughter, Ivanka.

Though no Japanese prime minister has visited the USS Arizona Memorial, former Japanese leader leader Shigeru Yoshida visited Pearl Harbor in 1951, six years after Japan surrendered. He stopped there on his way home from signing the San Francisco peace treaty with the U.S. and others, and paid a courtesy visit to the office of Adm. Arthur W.R. Radford.

Other prime ministers have since visited Pearl Harbor and the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, known as Punchbowl. **AP**



Shinzo Abe visits the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific to place a wreath at the Honolulu Memorial

## CAMBODIA

## Court slams opposition leader with new conviction

A court in Cambodia yesterday sentenced the country's exiled opposition leader to five years in prison after finding him guilty of conspiring to incite chaos by posting misleading documents on his Facebook page.

The conviction by the Phnom Penh Municipal Court is the latest legal problem for Sam Rainsy, head of the Cambodia National Rescue Party. The several cases against him are generally considered part of Prime Minister Hun Sen's strategy to weaken his opponents ahead of local elections next year.

Sam Rainsy was found guilty in absentia of conspiracy to incite chaos and using and falsifying public documents. His Facebook page had reposted from a fellow party member several poorly translated documents suggesting that Hun Sen's government had sig-

ned a treaty ceding territory to neighboring Vietnam, Cambodia's traditional enemy.

Two opposition party members who maintained the Facebook page for Sam Rainsy were found guilty of the same charges, and also given five-year prison sentences, but with two years suspended. The two are also in exile.

The original poster of the erroneous material, opposition Sen. Hong Sok Hour, was sentenced last month to seven years in prison.

Defense lawyers in Sam Rainsy's trial had argued that the case hinged on a mistranslated document found on the internet for which the defendants were not responsible.

They also said that Sam Rainsy had nothing to do with posting the false information, and routinely allowed his staff to post any interesting material. **AP**

## INDONESIA

## Jakarta governor blasphemy trial to proceed

An Indonesian court ruled yesterday that the blasphemy trial of the minority Christian governor of the country's capital will proceed.

Gov. Basuki "Ahok" Tjahaja Purnama is charged with insulting Islam and desecrating the Quran by using one of its verses to boost his chances of winning re-election. Ahok, 50, is seeking a second term as governor in elections due in February.

The blasphemy controversy erupted when a video circulated online in which Ahok lightheartedly said that people were being deceived if they believed his detractors who asserted that the Quran prohibits Muslims from having a non-Muslim leader.

The five-judge panel overruled defense arguments that the indictment submitted by prosecutors had inaccuracies and should be annulled.

Hearings will resume next week at the North Jakarta District Court, which will be moved to southern Jakarta after the Supreme Court approved the prosecutors' request for a bigger courtroom.

Several hundred members of anti- and pro-Ahok groups have gathered outside the court for every



Basuki "Ahok" Tjahaja Purnama gestures to visitors inside a courtroom during his trial at North Jakarta District Court in Jakarta

hearing, but have been kept apart by police.

Protests against Ahok, led by conservative Muslims and which drew hundreds of thousands of people, have kept Jakarta, the capital, on edge for weeks. A Nov. 4 protest there turned violent, with one death and dozens of police and protesters injured.

Ahok, an ally of President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo, faces up to five years in prison if found guilty. He is the first ethnic Chinese governor of

Jakarta and the first Christian governor in more than half a century.

In his defense plea, Ahok said that his comments were not an interpretation of the Quran and that he was only referring to certain politicians "who exploited the verses incorrectly because they do not want to compete fairly in the election."

His blasphemy trial has shaken the government and exposed religious and racial fault lines in the world's most populous Muslim nation. **AP**

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Kim Tong-Hyung

**W**HILE lawyers desperately tried to restore the impeached South Korean president's powers, politics advanced without her yesterday as parties and potential candidates postured for elections that could take place in just months.

Dozens of lawmakers split from the conservative ruling party and likely will try to create a party fielding outgoing U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as its presidential candidate. Ban's potential rivals reacted by questioning his presidential credentials and touting their own ideas, including significant policy changes in regard with relations with nuclear-armed North Korea and allies United States and Japan.

Choung Byoung-gug, one of the 29 lawmakers who left the Saenuri Party accused President Park Geun-hye's loyalists in the party's leadership of "neglecting the values of real conservatism" and "shamelessly defending the historically worst infringement of constitutional values." More Saenuri lawmakers may leave the party in the coming weeks.

The split came as investigators widened their inquiry into the scandal surrounding Park, who has been accused of allowing a longtime confidante of manipulating government affairs and colluding with the friend to extort money and favors from the country's biggest companies. The special prosecution team planned to summon the president's jailed friend, Choi Soon-sil, but she requested a delay citing health reasons.

Ban is seen as the best hope for conservatives to win the Blue House after Park's collapse complicated politics for her party. Recent opinion polls show voters slightly favor Ban ahead of liberal politician Moon

# South Korean ruling party splits over impeached president



A group of lawmakers of the ruling Saenuri Party attends a press conference at the National Assembly in Seoul

## The split came as investigators widened their inquiry into the scandal surrounding Park

Jae-in, who conceded the presidential race to Park four years ago.

In a recent meeting with South Korean reporters in New York, Ban described the political turmoil at home as heartbreaking and said he was ready to "burn" his body in devotion for South Korea, his strongest hint yet that he would run for president.

Kim Kyoung-soo, an opposition lawmaker who serves as Moon's spokesman, dismissed

the plans by the Saenuri defectors to create a new party for the presidential race, saying "watermelons can't be made by drawing lines on zucchinis."

Kim said voters "will not approve a political reshuffle that lacks sincere remorse and self-reflection, and only chases the delusion of recreating a pseudo conservative government."

Moon likely would have to withstand a challenge from outspoken Seongnam city mayor Lee Jae-myung in the Democratic Party's primaries.

Lee, who brands himself as an anti-establishment figure and is compared to both Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders, saw his popularity rise amid the rage over Park's scandal. He calls for stronger policies to reduce the widening gap between rich and poor and curb the excesses of "chaebol" — the large, family-owned conglomerates that dominate the coun-

try's economy.

In a meeting with reporters yesterday, Lee said Ban's popularity could soon decline over allegations that he "used a high-profile post to gain personal profits," apparently referring to allegations raised by news reports that he took bribes from a businessman in 2005 and 2007. Ban has denied the claims.

Lee also said South Korea should stop the deployment of an advanced U.S. missile defense system to defend it from North Korea. Echoing Moon's position, Lee said the security benefits of having Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, are diminished by worsened relations with China. The planned deployment has angered China, which suspects that the system would allow U.S. radar to better track its missiles.

Lee also criticized Park's agreement on compensation

for South Korean women forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese military in World War II and says Seoul should allow a new military intelligence-sharing pact with Tokyo to expire. Lee said South Koreans still distrust Japan because it never sincerely apologized for invading and colonizing the Korean Peninsula in the early 20th century.

The date of any early presidential election is depended on the outcome of the impeachment case against Park.

Parliament voted on Dec. 9 to impeach her, and the Constitutional Court has up to six months to decide whether Park should permanently step down or be reinstated. Her presidential powers are suspended until then, with the prime minister serving as the government caretaker.

If the court formally removes Park from office, a presidential election must be held within 60 days.

At the court's preparatory hearing yesterday, Park's lawyers challenged whether she had to attend the trial. Her lawyers also asked the court to request 16 organizations and companies to submit reports answering whether they were really forced into giving money and favors to foundations controlled by Choi, as has been alleged. Lawmakers, who are acting as the prosecutors in the case, said the request shouldn't be made because it could pressure the companies.

The requests were seen as an attempt to buy time for Park.

The court said it would hear pleadings in the case on Jan. 3. **AP**

## PHILIPPINES

# Series of drug raids seize nearly a ton of meth



Members of the National Bureau of Investigation arrange bags containing nearly one metric ton of seized methamphetamine during a press conference in Manila

**P**HILIPPINE authorities said yesterday that anti-narcotics operations have led to the arrest of 10 suspects, including three Chinese nationals, and the seizure of nearly 1 metric ton of methamphetamine, the country's biggest drug haul ever.

Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre II said the 890 kilograms (1,962 pounds) of methamphetamine seized in raids this month has a street value of around 6 billion pesos (USD120 million).

The National Bureau of

Investigation filed criminal complaints before the Justice Department yesterday against three Chinese and three Filipino suspects arrested Friday in almost simultaneous raids in San Juan city in eastern metropolitan Manila in which 600 kilograms of methamphetamine was seized from a car and a nearby house.

"This is the biggest bust by any enforcement agency," Aguirre said.

The bureau said the series of raids followed months of surveillan-

ce after receiving intelligence information in September on a Chinese group involved in the manufacture and distribution of drugs in metropolitan Manila.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has been waging a brutal crackdown against illegal drugs since he took office in June. More than 6,000 suspected drug users and dealers have been killed, alarming U.S. and U.N. officials and human rights advocates.

Duterte said in a speech

yesterday that he would work until the last drug dealer is off the streets and the last drug lord is killed. "I will really kill you, you sons of bitches," he said.

He said the suspects arrested Friday in San Juan were lucky that he was not in Manila at the time, because "if the [methamphetamine] is that much in a house, I will really kill you, let's not resort to any drama, I will shoot you myself if there's no one else to do the shooting." **AP**

## German leaders want to keep border controls in place

**SENIOR** German politicians say they want to keep border controls imposed amid last year's migrant influx in place beyond mid-February, when they're currently due to expire.

With a national election expected in September and German leaders seeking to draw lessons from last week's attack on a Berlin Christmas market, there's little appetite for dropping border checks.

Stephan Mayer, a home affairs spokesman for Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative Union bloc, told Deutschlandfunk radio yesterday: "As long as the danger and threat in Germany is as high as at present, we cannot help but keep the internal border controls."

Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere told the Bild am Sonntag newspaper that he intends to keep the border controls "well beyond February." That would require approval from the European Union's executive Commission. **AP**

## RUSSIA

# Rescuers find flight recorder from Black Sea plane crash

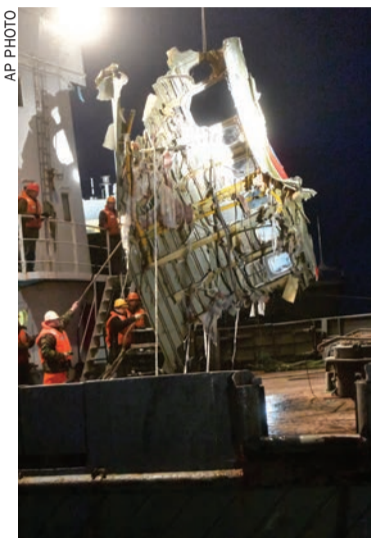
Veronika Silchenko,  
Nataliya Vasilyeva

**RESCUE** workers yesterday found a flight recorder from the Russian plane that crashed into the Black Sea over the weekend, the defense ministry said.

All 92 people aboard the Russian military's Tu-154 plane are believed to have died Sunday morning when it crashed two minutes after taking off from the southern Russian city of Sochi. The 84 passengers included dozens of singers from Russia's world-famous military choir who were going to the Russian Air Force base in Syria to perform at a New Year's concert.

The defense ministry said in a statement that one of the flight recorders was found early Tuesday morning about a mile away from the shore.

State television showed footage of rescue workers on an inflatable boat carrying a container



Employees of the Russian Emergency Ministry Press Service lift a fragment of the plane outside Sochi

with a bright orange object submerged in water. The ministry said the "black box" would be immediately flown to Moscow. It did not mention whether the flight recorder had sustained any damage.

Mourners yesterday continued to bring flowers to the pier of

## Investigators are looking into bad fuel, pilot error, foreign objects stuck in the engines or equipment failure

Sochi's sea port as 3,500 people, 45 ships and 192 divers swept the vast crash site for bodies of the victims and debris. Rescue teams so far have recovered 12 bodies and numerous body fragments, which have been flown to Moscow for identification.

Divers found fragments of the fuselage, parts of the engine and various mechanical parts overnight, the defense ministry said.

Officials still have not announced the cause of the crash, but they have been anxious to squelch speculation that it might have

been caused by a bomb planted on board or a portable air defense missile.

But some aviation experts have noted that the crew's failure to communicate any technical problem and the large area over which fragments of the plane were scattered point to a possible explosion on board.

Russia's main domestic security and counter-terrorism agency, the FSB, said it has found "no indications or facts pointing at the possibility of a terror attack or an act of sabotage on board the plane."

The FSB said that investigators are looking into bad fuel, pilot error, foreign objects stuck in the engines or equipment failure.

The Tu-154 is a Soviet-built three-engine airliner designed in the late 1960s. The plane that crashed Sunday was built in 1983, and underwent factory check-ups and maintenance in 2014 as well as earlier this year. **AP**

AD

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Fares Akram, Rafah

**F**OR most of the past decade, Egypt has been a quiet partner with Israel in a blockade on the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip that has stifled the economy and largely blocked its 2 million people from moving in and out of the territory. But after a three-year crackdown, there are signs that Egypt is easing the pressure in a step to repair its shattered ties with the Islamic militant group.

In recent months, Cairo has increased the number of people allowed to exit through the Rafah border crossing, Gaza's main gateway to the outside world. It also has begun to allow Gaza to import commercial goods through Rafah for the first time since 2013 and sent public signals that it is interested in improving relations.

"There is a ball of hope that was thrown by Egypt," said Ashraf Jomaa, a Gaza community leader who has taken part in recent meetings with Egyptian officials to discuss the changing ties. "The question is how we, the Palestinians, shall catch that ball and develop the hope."

The changes, while still in their infancy, mark a significant departure from what has been a tough Egyptian crackdown since the military ousted its then-president, Mohammed Morsi, in 2013. Hamas, an offshoot of Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood, enjoyed close relations with him and quickly fell into disfavor with the new government.

Under President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi, the former military chief who ousted Morsi, Egypt all but destroyed a once-thriving network of cross-border smuggling tunnels used by Hamas — robbing the group of its main economic lifeline and a key source of weapons.

Targeting Islamic militant groups in Egypt's northern Sinai Desert, it also destroyed hundreds of homes in the volatile border area to create a "sterile zone." Egypt's state-run media have repeatedly accused Hamas of collabora-

# After years of conflict, Egypt eases pressure on Gaza



Palestinian passengers and workers load luggage on the bus cart to cross the border to the Egyptian side of Rafah crossing

ting with militants in Egypt, a charge the group denies.

The crackdown has had a devastating effect on both sides of the border.

The olive and palm trees that once lined the 40-kilometer road from Rafah to El-Arish, the provincial capital of North Sinai, have been razed and even small bushes have withered.

The road is littered with checkpoints, tanks and mobile artillery units, manned by anxious young soldiers. In the town of Sheikh Zuwaid, where travelers used to stop to buy Egyptian mobile phone cards and snacks, stores were gutted, their doors bombed out. The bullet-riddled houses above them were turned into military positions, with sandbags covering the windows and snipers stationed on the roofs. The U.S.-based Human Rights Watch estimates that thousands of people

have been displaced — most of whom moved either elsewhere in town or to El-Arish.

In Gaza, years of Egyptian restrictions, coupled with an Israeli blockade and three wars between Hamas and Israel, have devastated the economy and weakened Hamas.

The U.N. and other international bodies estimate unemployment to be 43 percent, and Hamas has struggled to pay the salaries of the 40,000 police and civil servants it hired after seizing Gaza in 2007.

An Israeli naval blockade, which Israel says is needed to prevent arms smuggling, means that most goods enter Gaza through Israeli-controlled cargo crossings. While most consumer goods are freely available, prices of fuel, cigarettes and other items have spiked because of limited supplies. Construction materials, badly needed to rebuild damage from a 2014 war, remain in short supply.

But Egypt's recent turnaround has begun to bring some relief. In the past six months alone, Rafah crossing has been opened more than 40 days, compared to just 26 in all of 2015, allowing thousands of people to leave for jobs, medical care, family visits and studies abroad.

Last month, it allowed a top Hamas leader, Ismail Haniyeh, to travel abroad for the first time since Morsi was toppled. In addition, it allowed a Malaysian official to enter Gaza to meet with Hamas officials. In another first, it allowed cargo to be shipped into Gaza through Rafah, in-

cluding 40 new cars, painting materials and tar.

In recent months, Egypt has invited three delegations of businessmen, academics, community leaders and jour-

## ■ In Gaza, years of Egyptian restrictions, coupled with an Israeli blockade and three wars between Hamas and Israel, have devastated the economy

nalists from Gaza for semiofficial conferences in Cairo. Participants said the issue of creating a trade zone between Gaza and Egypt was raised. Hamas has begun paving a patch of land on the Palestinian side of the crossing for what local media say will be an area to contain more imports from Egypt.

At a recent meeting, Egyptian officials said they were interested in "opening a new chapter" with Gaza, said one official, who was not allowed to be identified under the briefing guidelines. "We are still evaluating the situation, and this is a long dialogue until we reach better relations."

Hamas has welcomed the

moves, saying it is ready to shutter the tunnels if commercial activities increase above-ground. Senior Hamas official Mahmoud Zahar said, "If the [Rafah] crossing opened commercially, what's the need for the tunnels?"

But Hamas, an armed group sworn to Israel's destruction, has repeatedly seen its hopes dashed as it tries to emerge from isolation. It remains unclear how far Egypt is willing to help the group, especially if it continues using tunnels to bring in arms.

"If the tunnels are used by the Palestinian resistance, then this is something else that doesn't harm the Egyptian security," Zahar said.

Beverly Milton-Edwards, a visiting fellow at the Brookings Doha Center, said any Egyptian moves toward Gaza are to promote its own national security interests. With Egypt still locked in battle against Islamic extremists in Sinai, any change will likely be slow and cautious, and could depend greatly on Hamas' own actions.

Egypt still fears Sinai militants will use the tunnels to escape or to bring in explosives from hard-liners within Hamas' armed wing.

"The signaling of intent is carefully calibrated to remind the Gaza government of the levels of control and power that Egypt can exert positively or negatively," Milton-Edwards said. "If there is not enough evidence of compliance by the Hamas government then Cairo will not hesitate to halt all alleviating measures." AP



A Palestinian elderly refugee sits in the sun with his grandsons in front of his family house in Jebaliya refugee camp, Gaza Strip

## what's ON

## THE STAMP FESTIVAL

TIME: 9am-5:30pm (no admission after 5:00 pm), closed on public holidays

UNTIL: April 7, 2017

VENUE: Communication Museum of Macao / Estrada D. Maria II, No. 7

ADMISSION: MOP10

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2871 8063 / 2871 8570

## EXHIBITION "TRACES AND VISION – LONGZHOU 'SHEHUO' FOLK PERFORMANCES, PHOTOGRAPHY BY WU XIAOPENG"

TIME: 9am-9pm

UNTIL: January 8, 2017

VENUE: Temporary Exhibitions Gallery of the Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8988 4100 / 2882 7103

## 'LUI CHUN KWONG THE DISTANT LINE'

## EXHIBITION

TIME: 10am-9pm

UNTIL: February 26, 2017

VENUE: Tap Seac Gallery / Av. Conselheiro Ferreira de Almeida, No. 95, Macao

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2836 6866

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VENUE: 76, Rua Almirante Costa Cabral

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8399 6699

## MACAU GRAND PRIX MUSEUM &amp; WINE MUSEUM

Time: 10am-8pm daily (Except Tuesdays)

VENUE: Rua Luis Gonzaga Gomes, 431, basement (Tourism Activities Centre-CAT)

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8798 4108 / 2833 3000

## WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR EXHIBITION

TIME: 10am-6pm daily, (Except Thursdays, open on public holidays)

UNTIL: February 21, 2017

VENUE: Macau Science Centre, Avenida Dr. Sun Yat-Sen

ADMISSION: Exhibition Centre MOP25;

Planetarium MOP60-80

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2888 0822

## Offbeat



## 12 INJURED AS AIRLINER VEERS OFF RUNWAY IN WESTERN INDIA

India's Jet Airways said that 12 passengers were injured during an emergency evacuation yesterday after one of its planes veered off the runway before taking off on a domestic flight in western India.

The airline said on its website that 154 passengers and seven crew members were on board the Boeing 737-800 at Dabolim Airport in Goa, headed for Mumbai.

Seven of the 12 injured passengers were discharged after receiving medical attention, while the other five were still being treated. The airline said none of the injuries were serious.

One passenger, B.K. Singh, said there was panic on board as the plane got very bumpy and veered about 200 meters off the runway. He said several passengers were injured as they jumped from the exit onto the runway. **AP**

## TV canal macau

13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
3:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:50	RTPi Live
17:20	Once Upon A Time Sr.2 (Repeated)
18:05	Precious Pearl (Repeated)
19:00	TDM Interview (Repeated)
19:30	Non-Daily Portuguese News (Repeated)
19:40	Soap Opera
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	Non-Daily Portuguese News
21:30	Criminal Minds S10
22:10	Precious Pearl
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Miscellaneous
00:15	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
00:5	RTPi Live

## cinema

## CINETEATRO

22 DEC - 28 DEC



## 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

## 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: Felicity Jones, Diego Luna, Ben Mendelsohn, Donnie Yen

Language: English (Cantonese)

Duration: 133min

## this day in history



The bridge as it looks today

## 1979 TAY BRIDGE RAIL DISASTER REMEMBERED

Many passengers will be retracing the fatal journey to mark 100 years since gales plunged a railway bridge and passenger train into icy waters killing 75.

The disaster occurred on the Tay Bridge over the Silvery Tay, near Dundee, which collapsed after the central spans gave way.

British Rail has commissioned a special train to take people across the new bridge at the exact time of the accident 1915 GMT of the 1720 from Burntisland to Dundee.

Arrangements have been made for a short memorial service for the victims of the disaster, the crew and passengers who plunged 88ft. A wreath will be cast into the water from the train.

Some passengers, who will begin their journey in Sunderland, are expected to get off the train just before it crosses the bridge fearing superstition.

The North-West branch of the Locomotive Club of Great Britain is avoiding any fears of a repetition and has organized a similar excursion for tomorrow - the Tay Bridge 100 - heading north from Crewe.

Anniversary events first got under way last month in Dundee with students retracing the steps of the journey to study the new architecture of the bridge and what went wrong 100 years ago.

The library and museum have each opened exhibitions with a documentary, photography and relics from the smashed coaches and bridge.

The cross-river link from Dundee was a celebrated feat of architecture when it first opened spanning almost two miles and cutting journey time from the city to London by five hours.

The architect Thomas Bouch was awarded a knighthood by Queen Victoria who used it to travel to her Scottish retreat in Balmoral. It provided speedier delivery of coals and no need for passenger ferries.

Construction took six years and cost £300,000 and the almost two mile long bridge was opened on 31 May 1878. Six months later 1,000 yards of the bridge plunged into the waters leaving Dundee with a legacy it cannot forget.

Only 46 bodies were retrieved and for months later wreckage from the disaster was washed up sometimes at a distance of 150 miles.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

The bridge's construction was a mammoth accomplishment which inspired world renowned poet William MacGonagall to put pen to paper about it.

The tragedy stunned the whole country and the ensuing enquiry revealed the design of the bridge did not allow for high winds such as which took place on that evening.

Faults were found in nearly every aspect of the bridge's engineering.

The engine itself was salvaged, repaired and restored to the railways.

Structural members from the collapsed bridge were salvaged - and more than 100 of the original spans, called girders, were re-used in the construction of the new railway bridge.

Work began three years after the disaster and was completed in 1887.

Many of the piers of the original bridge are visible on this construction.



YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Over time, you've trained yourself to count to 10 when you feel the fire in your disposition begin to color your cheeks - when you're absolutely enraged, that is. Take a walk. A power walk.

Taurus April 20-May 20 You're ready to show the world that someone who's maintained for this long isn't someone to be treated lightly. You've just found a way to let go of what you've been holding on to.

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 It's time to put an end to the not-so-mandatory waiting period: make plans to bring together the old and the new in your life. You're given to worrying like this, and you know it; you've done it for a long time.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 It's never easy giving out advice, whether it's asked for or unsolicited. Either way, chances are good that they won't actually take it, even after you've spent at least an hour reciting your best sales pitches.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 You may not be able to solve the situation even with their help or advice, but you definitely won't feel competent to do it without them. At any rate, it's worth a shot.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 Once you make up your mind about someone, it's tough to change it, especially if a long-term dispute is at the heart of that opinion. For now, it might be best for you to let all that go.

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 You have the feeling that someone you've never really trusted is trying to get between you and the person or goal you've been actively pursuing. If you're not sure, sit tight and don't do anything that might embarrass you.

Scorpio Oct. 23-Nov. 21 You're ready to stop thinking about work, work and work. At the moment, since work has gone along so swimmingly, you're ready to focus on the other most important category in your life.

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 As fiery as you are - and that's pretty darned hot - when you say you're ready to get the show on the road, as far as a work project goes, there's absolutely no doubt that it's all going to come together, and quickly, too.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 You've been trying to get a certain person to cooperate with you - to act as elegantly and respectfully as you know they can. The problem is that they may not be living up to your expectations, much less their own.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 A loved one you've been thinking about fondly for some time has finally come around - at least, it seems that way. There are several roadblocks in their way, however, many of which won't move aside easily.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 Wouldn't it be easier and more efficient to be sure that every word you exchange is direct, honest and to the point? Sure it would. So stop playing word games.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy

9x9 grid for Easy Sudoku puzzle with some numbers filled in.

Easy+

9x9 grid for Easy+ Sudoku puzzle with some numbers filled in.

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9x9 grid for Medium Sudoku puzzle with some numbers filled in.

Hard

9x9 grid for Hard Sudoku puzzle with some numbers filled in.

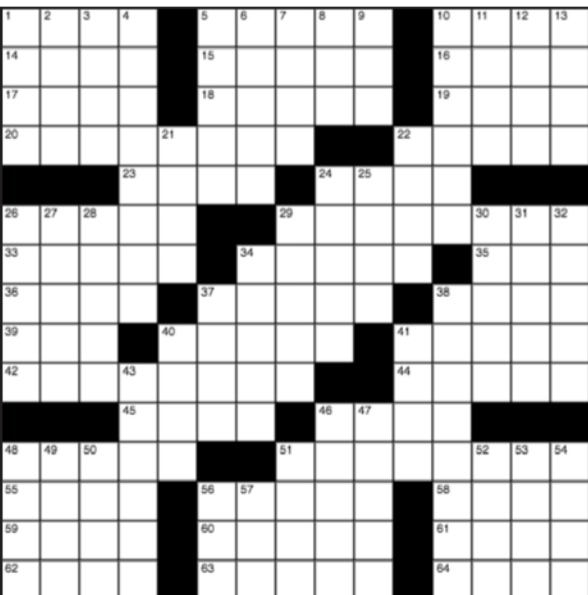
WEATHER

Weather forecast table with columns for MIN, MAX, and CONDITION for various cities in CHINA and WORLD.

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Former Virginia senator Charles; 5- \_\_\_ Gay; 10- Felines; 14- Longfellow's bell town; 15- Pertaining to the moon; 16- I've Got \_\_\_ in Kalamazoo; 17- Glenn of the Eagles; 18- Influential offering; 19- Gambling mecca; 20- First in importance; 22- 1980s attorney general; 23- Even \_\_\_ speak...; 24- Fencing blade; 26- Conductor Solti; 29- Independence; 33- Not for kids; 34- End in \_\_\_; 35- Non-pro sports org.; 36- Actively engaged; 37- Windows predecessor; 38- "Dilbert" intern; 39- World Series mo.; 40- Carryalls; 41- Emcee's job; 42- Reticent; 44- Gum; 45- Retain; 46- Trendy; 48- Broad valleys; 51- Methane; 55- Potpourri; 56- Cool; 58- Pearl Harbor's island; 59- Bausch & Lomb brand; 60- Seeps; 61- \_\_\_ Three Lives; 62- H.S. junior's exam; 63- Prophets; 64- Engine parts;

DOWN: 1- Rabble; 2- Other, in Oaxaca; 3- Uncle Remus title; 4- Biennial; 5- Arm joint; 6- Suckle; 7- Put a lid \_\_\_; 8- Test site; 9- Live and breathe; 10- Sway; 11- "A Death in the Family" author; 12- Makes brown; 13- Plumlike fruit; 21- High-ranking NCO; 22- Cat call; 24- Continental cash; 25- School orgs.; 26- Zsa Zsa or Eva; 27- Elicit; 28- Boots; 29- Summed; 30- Brewery kilns; 31- Native New Zealander; 32- Klondike territory; 34- \_\_\_ in the right direction; 37- Relocate; 38- Echo-free; 40- Very, in Versailles; 41- Part of the eye; 43- Barely make; 46- Provide food for; 47- \_\_\_ Perot; 48- A small town; 49- Some are pale; 50- Director Wertmuller; 51- Labyrinth; 52- Big bash; 53- Excuse me; 54- Lather; 56- Refusals; 57- Fair-hiring abbr.;



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Joseph Wilson

PORTUGUESE LEAGUE | OVERVIEW

# For Benfica, it's business as usual with transfers, titles

**A**NOTHER rising talent turned into a profit. Another title on the horizon.

It's a scenario Benfica's fans are more than accustomed to: watching their club perform its masterful balancing act of staying atop the Portuguese league while transacting smart business deals.

When the January transfer market opens one of the leading candidates likely to be on the move in Europe is Benfica's central defender Victor Lindelof, who is widely rumored to be on his way to play for Jose Mourinho's Manchester United in the Premier League.

The 22-year-old Sweden center back has impressed by helping Benfica win its last two Liga titles. UEFA also selected Lindelof to its starting 11 of up-and-coming players who came into their own in the Champions League last season, when Benfica reached the quarterfinals. This season, the two-time former European champions are back in the round-of-16, where they will play Borussia Dortmund.

Sweden teammate Zlatan Ibrahimovic has given his backing to Lindelof joining him at United.

"I think Victor is doing great things," Ibrahimovic said. "He's playing good in Benfica. He gets a lot of responsibility in the national team now and he's growing. If he is good enough for United? I think he is ready for the big clubs out there. So it's up to him."

Benfica, along with traditional league heavyweights FC Porto and Sporting Lisbon, excel at doing deals with bigger clubs across the continent.

In recent years the Eagles have made over two hundred million euros by selling a long list of players, including Renato Sanches, Nicolas Gaitan, Andre Gomes, Jan Oblak, Nemanja Matic, Axel Witsel, Angel Di Maria, Ramires and



Benfica's Victor Lindelof (right), stops Besiktas' Talisca during the Champions League group B football match

David Luz, among others.

## TITLE RACE

With only one loss in 15 games, coach Rui Vitoria has Benfica on course for a fourth consecutive league title as the season takes a winter break near its midpoint. Second-place Porto also has just one defeat but a run of three consecutive draws has left it trailing by four points.

## PICK OF THE PLAYERS

Benfica's title defense is a collective effort led by midfielder Luis Fernandes.

Fernandes, who has found his place at Benfica after bouncing around several Spanish clubs, is on target to have his most productive season ever with six goals in the league already.

Guimaraes forward Moussa Marega has responded well after leaving Porto on loan, scoring 10

goals to help the team join the fight for European berths.

And Sporting's Dutch striker Bas Dost has earned a mention after scoring nine times in a strong first campaign since leaving German club Wolfsburg.

## EMERGING TALENT

Porto's Andre Silva is enjoying a brilliant season since graduating from the club's reserve team.

The 21-year-old striker has scored 10 times in the Portuguese league, equaling Marega's tally to lead the competition.

He produced a standout performance against Leicester City in the Champions League by netting two goals to lead a 5-0 rout of the English titleholders. He also joined Lindelof as one of the UEFA team's rising European talents.

Goncalo Guedes, Benfica's 20-year-old forward, has earned hopeful comparisons with a young Cristiano Ronaldo, while Sporting coach Jorge Jesus said that his winger Gelson Martins reminds him of Portugal great Luis Figo.

## SURPRISES

Seeing Benfica and Porto first and second in the standings is routine in Portugal, but an upstart Braga side is providing some novelty to the season.

Led by Wilson Eduardo and Pedro Santos' combined 11 goals, Braga has risen into third place, six points behind Benfica. That run included a 1-0 victory at Sporting.

## POINTS TO PROVE

With Sporting eight points back in fourth place, coach Jorge Jesus has his work cut out for him.

Jesus stunned all of Lisbon when in 2015 he left Benfica after six highly successful seasons to take over their cross-town rival. No coach had ever made a direct move from Benfica to Sporting.

After Sporting came close last year only to stumble and finish second, Jesus is under pressure to bring trophies to a club that last won the league in 2002. AP

# Simone Biles soars to AP Female Athlete of the Year

**S**IMONE Biles tried to treat the 2016 Summer Olympics like just your average ordinary gymnastics meet. So what if the stage and the stakes were different?

The floor was still the floor. The vault still the vault. The uneven bars still uneven. The balance beam still a four-inch wide test of nerves.

And the 19-year-old with the electric smile and boundless talent was still the best in the world. Maybe

the best of all-time.

Over the course of 10 days in August, the biggest meet of her life ended like pretty much all the others in the four years that came before it: with Biles standing atop the podium, a gold medal around her neck and the sport she's redefining one boundary-pushing routine at a time staring up at her. Not that she remembers any of it. "It's kind of a blur," Biles said.

Maybe to Biles, but not

to the rest of the world. Her massive haul in Rio de Janeiro — a record-tying four golds to go along with a bronze for the dominant U.S. women's team — propelled her to stardom and rendered her last name superfluous. Now there's one more honor to add to what on Twitter is known simply as #SimoneThings: Associated Press Female Athlete of the Year.

In a vote by U.S. editors and news directors an-

nounced Monday, Biles received 31 votes out of a possible 59 votes. U.S. Olympic swimmer Katie Ledecky, who won four golds and a silver in Rio, finished second with 20 votes. Serena Williams, who won Wimbledon for the seventh time to tie Steffi Graf's record of 22 Grand Slam titles, and three-time AP women's NCAA basketball Player of the Year Breanna Stewart tied for third with four votes each. AP



opinion

Macau Matters

Richard Whitfield



UNIVERSITY RESIDENTIAL COLLEGES

Living in a residential college can be a very important experience of university study. While I have never lived in a residential college myself, from many discussions with friends and colleagues and through reading, it is clear that a good university college experience is about much more than having a place to sleep, eat and study.

University study is about broadening your perspectives and gaining a much greater awareness of the world around you, learning how to learn and preparing for a career, developing and expanding your professional and personal networks, and transitioning from childhood to adulthood through independent living and bearing full responsibility for your life choices.

Good residential colleges greatly facilitate this process by providing a “half-way house” living situation that is less protected than home but more protected than living alone. Good colleges provide lots of spaces and opportunities for group learning and socialization. They also have counselors and tutors on hand to monitor and assist students. These are especially needed because university students are often testing boundaries with alcohol, drugs, and sex and they often need guidance and advice on the risks and rewards inherent in different life choices. University students also often get distracted or flounder in their academic studies and need tutorial assistance close by to get them back on track.

According to the available published information, the dormitories at the university where I currently teach part-time aim to provide an international residential college experience for the students. As I am teaching a research methods course, I tasked some student teams to conduct focus group studies to evaluate the quality and success of the dormitories from the students’ perspectives. Sadly, the university experience of residential college life in Macau seems to fall well short of the international ideal, at least at this university.

The over 35 students who participated in the six focus group sessions organized by my students complained about curfews and limited Internet access in their dormitories. They were also concerned about limited communal spaces and washing and cooking facilities. Their comments indicated that the student living spaces really were just dormitories rather than residential colleges.

Moreover, the residential students are separated by gender into different buildings and those studying for similar degrees are grouped together. This severely limits the broadening that you want to achieve by mixing together students from different backgrounds and different social and career perspectives. Additionally, according to the students, the dormitories have few common areas where they can socially interact or study together. Furthermore, the social activities organized within the dormitories also seem quite limited and are often held during semester breaks when the students are back home with their families.

Finally, the university dormitories do not seem to have live-in counselors or tutors to monitor or assist the students. To me, this is actually the most important element of any worthwhile residential college experience - totally left to fend for themselves there will inevitably be many potentially good students who fall through the cracks and are lost to the university (and community).

I fully agree that Macau should develop international university education and a very important part of such an initiative is excellent university residential colleges. We clearly need improvements in this area, but there are many good international role models that we can emulate if the desire is there.

THE PRINCIPAL OF TAIWAN SCHOOL RESIGNS OVER NAZI-THEMED PARADE

The principal of a high school in northern Taiwan has resigned following widespread criticism over an event staged by students that featured Nazi-themed costumes and swastika banners.

Taiwan’s official Central News Agency reported this week that Cheng Hsiao-ming, principal of Kuang Fu High School in the city of Hsinchu, apologized for the incident as he announced his

resignation.

The event on Friday drew public attention after images were posted on social media of the students hoisting swastika banners in a parade behind a tank fashioned from cardboard.

Israel’s representative office in Taipei condemned the event, calling it “deplorable and shocking.”

Colombia probe finds human error in air crash



Rescue workers recover a body from the wreckage of the crash

A series of human errors caused an airliner to run out of fuel and crash in Colombia last month, killing 71 people including most of a Brazilian soccer team, aviation authorities said.

Colombia’s Civil Aeronautics agency concluded in its investigation that the plan for the flight operated by Bolivia-based charter company LaMia did not meet international standards. Among the errors made were the decisions to let the plane take off without enough fuel to make the flight safely and then to not stop midway to refuel. The pilot also did not report the plane’s emergency until it was too late, it said.

Neither the company nor Bolivian authorities should have allowed the plane to take off with the flight plan submitted, said Freddy Bonilla, air safety secretary for Colombia’s aviation authority. He said the agency’s preliminary conclusions were based on the plane’s black boxes and other evidence.

Experts had earlier suggested that fuel exhaustion was a likely cause of the Nov. 28 crash that wiped out all but a few members of the Chapoense soccer team, as well as team officials and journalists accompanying them to a championship playoff match in Medellin, Colombia.

The BAE 146 Avro RJ85 has a maximum range was 2,965 kilometers (1,600 nautical miles) — just under the distance between Medellin and Santa Cruz, Bolivia, where the plane had taken off at almost full capacity.

The plane was in the air for about 4 hours and 20 minutes when air traffic controllers in Medellin put it into a holding pattern because another flight had reported a suspected fuel leak and was given priority.

Investigators found that crew members of the LaMia flight were aware of the lack of fuel but waited too long to report the emergency.

Bonilla said that during the flight the pilot and co-pilot

are heard on “various occasions” talking about stopping in Leticia — a city near the borders separating Brazil, Peru and Colombia — to refuel but decided not to do so. When the plane entered Colombian airspace it was flying into a wind, which caused more fuel to be consumed.

And when the pilot asked for priority to land in Medellin, six minutes before crashing, the plane had already spent two minutes with a motor shut off, the investigation concluded. All the motors shut down minutes later.

Investigators in Colombia concluded that the plane did not have the fuel reserves required by international standards for such a flight. They said there was no evidence of sabotage or mechanical failure.

Authorities also detected an excess of baggage, but did not relate it to the accident, and, according to its plan, the flight was expected to reach 30,000 feet, an altitude the plane was not certified for.

Details of the complete report by Colombia’s aviation agency will be released in April 2017. Bolivia, Brazil and the United Kingdom contributed to it. Bolivia’s government has already blamed the airline and its pilot for the accident. MDT/AP

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

Xinhua/Xing Guangli



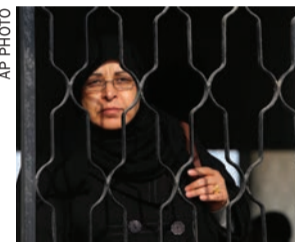
The Kunming Railway Station in Kunming, capital of southwest China’s Yunnan Province. The Guiyang-Kunming section of the Shanghai-Kunming high-speed railway is scheduled to be put into operation today, when the whole line will be fully operational.

Station	Air quality
Roadside	40-60 Good
High Density Residential Area	40-60 Good
Ambient	40-60 Good

SOURCE: DSMG

WORLD BRIEFS

**KUWAIT** A Kuwaiti criminal court has sentenced a Filipina to 10 years in prison for pledging allegiance to the Islamic State group. The woman was arrested in August and accused of joining the terror group through its affiliate in Libya via email while working as a maid.



AP PHOTO

**EGYPT** For most of the past decade, Egypt has been a quiet partner with Israel in a blockade on the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip that has stifled the economy and largely blocked its 2 million people from moving in and out of the territory. But after a three-year crackdown, there are signs that Egypt is easing the pressure in a step to repair its shattered ties with the Islamic militant group.

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AP PHOTO

**FRANCE** French authorities say the main suspect in Berlin’s deadly Christmas market attack made a stop in the eastern French city of Lyon, yet they still don’t know how he entered French soil.



AP PHOTO

**US** Senator John McCain has pledged U.S. support to the security of Russia’s three Baltic neighbors amid worries that the U.S. may not be fully committed to the defense of NATO allies following statements by U.S. President-elect Donald Trump. He added that Washington should consider basing troops permanently at least in Estonia.