

## OPINION

# Macau amongst the world's worst cities

By David Tang

Cancún is a paradigm of “distance lends enchantment to the view”. From the air, it looks fabulous, then as you descend, you notice ominous masses of concrete blocks, and by the time you get into the terminal, you are hit by a hurricane of alarm and ugliness. Hordes of tourists with hairy shins jostle in the hot and humid luggage hall. Mexican customs officers, all decorated to the hilt, look menacing. Outside, an ocean of touts bombard visitors, the taxis are cheap and smelly, and luggage has to be guarded closely in case it is snatched. Along the coast hideous buildings cluster around the shoreline. The whole place is a giant blancmange of a holiday camp, cramped with screaming children, obese parents and mobster-like Latinos, with their ageing mistresses soaked in suntan oils and smeared with pillar-box lipsticks. Inside the hotels there is the echoing hum of conveyor belts of monster buffets decked out with mini-umbrella cocktails, and monotonous Caribbean steel pan music. I spent a day exploring that commercial cesspool while in transit to Havana. It was a stopover that nearly ended my faith in travelling. But thankfully, the people I saw there were robot tourists, not cerebral travellers.

Burnie is another alarming city, a port on the northern coast of Tasmania. On my first night there, I ventured into a bar because it had the brightest light along the street. The jukebox was playing “Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree”, which was my parents’ favorite. Sipping on my shandy, I was approached by a muscle-bound local, who introduced himself to me as Steve, a sheep farmer. He asked if I would dance with him. I really had to think lightning fast about what



might happen if I had refused him, but I felt I really couldn’t oblige and, like a jelly in a high wind, spluttered, “perhaps later”. The moment he was out of sight, I bolted out of the bar and ran back to my nearby hotel where I bolted my door. In the morning, such was my appetite to rid myself of my unpleasant city experience I drove to the western tip of the Tasmanian island, where Aborigines were slaughtered and the Tasmanian tiger became extinct. I had come to inspect an estate that was owned by an extraordinary company that had a Royal Charter, called Van Diemen’s Land Company. But even in this rural area there was no respite from my city experience because the place was eerie. Walking through the land, I felt as if I was at a massive outdoor séance. I couldn’t wait to turn back to Burnie, which reminded me that

cities do not hold exclusive rights over horribleness. It was Scylla and Charybdis.

In daylight Burnie, I searched in vain for an attractive building, shop front, or site. There were ugly cranes in the sky and ugly cruise ships that had docked by the quay, and there was a concatenation of warehouses with corrugated iron roofs and bungalows and low-rises that were poorly painted in an uncoordinated colonial scheme. The beach was empty, awash with black seaweed and rubbish. I couldn’t wait to egress.

Macau must win the accolade of a city whose charm evaporated overnight when it was returned to Chinese sovereignty. For over 440 years, the place was ruled by the Portuguese. Utterly parochial with just a population of 400,000, the enclave had attractive colonial buildings and cob-

blestone streets and an atmosphere of history and the long, fruitful and harmonious community created by the Portuguese and Chinese living side by side.

Those of us who lived in Hong Kong, just 40 miles away, regularly took the jet-foils across for the weekend there, taking a girlfriend or a mistress or even a wife to a charming restaurant and staying the night at a romantic hotel. Sometimes, we would go gambling at the theatrical Lisboa Casino.

But on the day after the Portuguese colony was returned to Chinese sovereignty in 1999 garish casinos, hotels and shopping malls materialized, all built in record time by avaricious Americans and Chinese. They couldn’t wait a nanosecond to lay their hands on the Chinese punters from mainland China. And how right they were.

Today, 17 million mainland Chinese come through Macau every year, and its gambling revenues recently amounted to USD45bn, which is seven times more than the Las Vegas Strip. The price for this exponential growth is a gargantuan building site with tacky designs and tinny replicas of the Eiffel Tower and St Mark’s Square in Venice, replete with toy canals and

gondolas, peddled by wobbling Chinese in full gondolier uniforms.

Casinos and shopping arcades now rule the roost and somnambulant punters come and go, some with grim countenances hiding their secret losses, and others smiling as they splash their spoils on ostentatious retail. Outside, the narrow streets are dead, the skyline an undulating mess of soulless silhouettes, and more and more cars jam the roads. Money launderers mingle with fortune hunters. In the shadows of the ubiquitous pawnshops, with their sleepless neon signs, the place filled with an overwhelming sense of depression, despair, despondency and delinquency.

Crossing continents to Africa, the standout miserable cities include Ouagadougou, Maputo and Harare. They are without any appeal to me. They seem utterly joyless. I feel the same with so many other cities in Africa: Johannesburg, Lagos, Windhoek, Tunis, Tripoli, Nairobi, Kampala, and Casablanca, the latter completely misrepresented in the romantic film. If the truth be told, the African continent is a soft target for complaints of dirty, dusty and rotten cities, because they are easy prey for corrupt military governments that behave like Mr Kurtz in Heart of Darkness.

As I’ve already indicated, Asia doesn’t fare better. There are so many unattractive cities: Manila, Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Seoul,

Pyongyang, Busan, Taipei, Port Moresby, Chongqing, Urumqi, Hohhot, and the champion: Shenzhen... The list is endless; and for each and every one of them, I wouldn’t care if I did not see them again for another ten reincarnations. From the Middle East, I would wish for even more reincarnations: Abu Dhabi and Dubai seem to project over their sun-drenched skies an emblem of Plutus, like Batman with his silhouette in Gotham City. The people on the sands below live for fast and easy money, meandering in and out of skyscrapers that reek of businesses too good to be true, with wags among other lazy tourists breezing in and out of the crystal clear water that was once infested with E.coli.

Manama in Bahrain is even worse because everything is at least three or five notches down from Abu Dhabi and Dubai, which is saying something.

Come to think of it, each continent tells the same story: each consists of so many awful cities: the United States is choked with them. Countries from Central and South America are worse. It is not a sobering thought that in considering grim cities around the world, that I should come to the conclusion that most I have been to easily qualify. Maybe Europe, or at least western Europe, escapes with having the fewest detestable cities. Even so, I hate Leeds.

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**“ Macau must win the accolade of a city whose charm evaporated overnight when it was returned to Chinese sovereignty.”**



OPINION | SERIOUS MONEY

# Leicester City beat the odds - but for most of us gambling is an own goal



By Claer Barrett

It could have been the best investment you never made. Leicester City's sensational Premier League victory was considered so unlikely by the bookies at the start of the football season that some offered odds of 5,000-1.

At that time, Paddy Power thought it statistically more likely that the Loch Ness Monster would be discovered, with odds of 500-1. Ladbrokes was offering the same odds on The X Factor's Simon Cowell becoming prime minister, and had 1,000-1 on Sir Alex Ferguson winning Strictly Come Dancing.

So no wonder the fans are celebrating. The bookies face record payouts of up to £50m - and life-long Leicester fan Gary Lineker now has to make good on his pledge to present Match of the Day in his pants if his team won the league.

All this talk of football and betting odds got me thinking about the prevalence of online gambling in sport. Before Leicester City were handed victory on Monday night, my stepson returned from university to take the 12-year-old

## More than half of 18-24-year-olds have placed a financial bet, according to a study

son of a close friend to his first live football match as a birthday treat.

They had a great time - not least because their team won. Returning home exhilarated, the birthday boy told us all about the game, the crowds, the rude chanting and then, with a slight note of dejection, said he could have won £400 if only he'd placed a bet on the final score.

We spent some time unraveling the last observation. As the 12-year-old saw it, if he had bet his £100 birthday money on his team winning 1-0, he would now have £300 (plus his stake back) - and felt foolish for not having done so. "I knew the score would be 1-0, I just knew it," he said.

Putting aside the fact that he is legally too young to gamble, we then had a conversation about betting odds. It transpired he was unaware that with 3-1 odds, he had a 75 per cent chance of losing.

I also asked why he'd theoretically considered betting all his birthday money, not just £1 or £10 of it. "That way I'd get the most back if I won," came the reply.

He'd cottoned on that many spectators were using their smartphones to bet on the outcome of the match and my attempt to enforce the maxim of "you should only bet what you can afford to lose" seemed far less exciting.

Regardless of whether you watch in a stadium or on the small screen, advertising for online betting is inescapable. At the start of the football season, seven of the 20 teams in the Premier League had a betting company as a shirt sponsor, according to Future Sport, the sports website. Many clubs have signed deals with "official betting partners" who not only sponsor stands, but give special offers and benefits to season ticket holders.

Betting and smartphone apps have transformed gambling into an accessible social activity for young people. Search for "online betting" and a stream of tempting offers from online gambling companies offer "bonus bets" of up to £25 if you sign up.

More than half of 18-24-year-olds have placed a financial bet, according to a study last year by the Chartered Institute for Securities and Investments (CISI), and online betting on football is the

with our own 20-year-old, an avid football fan? He was surprised that the numbers were not higher.

At university, he said, it was the norm for sports fans to watch and bet on games together to "make it more exciting". However, he was quick to add that none of his friends bet more than £1 in a single go; he favored making bets of 10p or 50p for unlikely things that had high returns.

He accredited the trend to in-play betting, made possible by technological

bookies give you the option to "cash out" and take perhaps half of your winnings, depending on how much time is left to play.

Group discussions then ensue about whether you should take the money or risk waiting.

I can appreciate this adds an extra dimension to watching a game, but I worry that gamblers might then be tempted to increase the amount of money at stake, or gamble by themselves.

It is striking that only a quarter of young people surveyed by the CISI knew that odds of 3-1 meant there was a 75 per cent chance they would not win. With teenagers so often glued to a smartphone screen, the thought that they could be silently gambling is a real concern.

But just as we worry about our children getting a drink or drugs habit, when does a bit of fun with online betting sites tip over into a dangerous addiction? That is something even a bookie would struggle to give you odds on.

## Betting and smartphone apps have transformed gambling into an accessible social activity for young people.

most popular form.

Over a quarter of those who did bet said ads on TV and social media were "influential", and 18 per cent of young men surveyed said they enjoyed betting with friends. So how did these statistics bear out

innovation in the online gambling sector, and the practice of "cashing out". For example, you could bet on your phone that the final score will be 2-0. Your team scores a goal, so you're half way there, but this prompts the online

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## MEDIA

# YouTube said to plan 'unplugged' online TV service for 2017

By Lucas Shaw and Alistair Barr

**Y**OUTUBE is working on a paid subscription service called Unplugged that would offer customers a bundle of cable TV channels streamed over the Internet, people familiar with the plan said.

The project, for which YouTube has already overhauled its technical architecture, is one of the online video giant's biggest priorities and is slated to debut as soon as 2017, one of the people said. YouTube executives have discussed these plans with most major media companies, including Comcast Corp.'s NBC Universal, Viacom Inc., Twenty-First Century Fox Inc. and CBS Corp., but have yet to secure any rights, said the people, who asked not to be identified because the talks are private.

YouTube, a unit of Alphabet Inc.'s main Google Internet business, is pursuing subscriptions for premium video to compliment the largest ad-supported video site in the world. YouTube introduced its first paid subscription service, Red, last fall. Unplugged would bring more premium content onto YouTube's web service and mobile apps, grabbing more viewing time and generating more non-advertising revenue.

YouTube has been working on an online cable package since at least 2012, one of the people said, but these plans have taken on new urgency in the past few months. Christian Oestli and Jonathan Zepp are among top YouTube executives working on Unplugged, the people added. Apple Inc. and Amazon.com Inc. are working on similar proposals, while Dish Network

“We’ve started down this journey with specialized apps like YouTube Kids, as well as through our YouTube Red subscription service.”

SUNDAR PICHAI  
GOOGLE'S CEO

Corp. and Sony Corp. have already introduced online TV services.

YouTube's interest in a live TV package has been reported in the past, but this the first time the name and details of the plan have emerged. YouTube declined to comment.

“We aim to provide more choice to YouTube fans - more ways for them to engage with creators and each other, and more ways for them to get great content,” Sundar Pichai, Google's chief executive officer, wrote in a letter to Alphabet shareholders last week. “We’ve started down this journey with specialized apps like YouTube Kids, as well as through our YouTube Red subscription service.”

YouTube has discussed different ways of packaging TV channels, the people said. In one scenario, it would build a bundle of channels with the four U.S. broadcast networks and a smattering of popular cable channels, a concept known in the industry as a skinny bundle. This is similar to a proposal Apple has discussed with media companies for some time.

Like Apple, YouTube has struggled to secure all the channels it wants at a desirable price. YouTube wants to sell a package for less than USD35 a month, the people said, but large media companies expect new providers to pay more per channel than existing partners Comcast and AT&T Inc.

“CBS is essential to any skinny bundle,” CBS Chief Executive Officer Leslie Moonves said at the company's investor day in March, adding that the company would net “more dollars per subscriber than the current larger bundle.”

YouTube has also discussed offering a collection of less-watched TV channels and creating smaller groups of channels around themes. A YouTube Unplugged comedy bundle might include three or four TV channels such as Comedy Central, while a lifestyle bundle might include the Style Network.

YouTube would charge one subscription for the main bundle, and extra, smaller monthly fees for these theme-based groups, one of the people said.

Using this approach, YouTube could show it is capable of bringing new viewers to many of these second-tier channels, a major concern for large media companies that depend on TV for most of their profits. If YouTube can make it work, media companies may be more open to including more-successful channels later, one of the people familiar said.

With the number of subscribers in decline for cable channels such as Walt Disney Co.'s ESPN, Time Warner Inc.'s TNT and Viacom's MTV, media companies are hoping skinny bundles can bring back customers, especially young ones.

“There is a strong consumer

demand for the skinny bundle of 15 channels to 30 channels,” Moonves said. “Many viewers would rather pay for only those channels they actually watch.”

While Apple, Amazon and Google have frustrated media companies over the years with on-and-off content negotiations, they are more popular among young consumers than any cable company. These technology giants also have a large reservoir of customers buying their devices, and each sells a set-top box to stream video from apps like Netflix Inc. and Hulu.

YouTube has been working on an online cable package since at least 2012

With tech companies placing more emphasis on TV, and media companies looking for new distribution, executives are more optimistic about concluding negotiations, the people said. While executives at Disney had previously been wary of skinny bundles, demanding caps on the number of subscribers any such service could have, Chief Executive Officer Bob Iger has since said it is

important for its ESPN sports channel to be in these packages no matter the number of customers.

Still, media companies resist any plan that doesn't include their top channels. Dish took Fox's four non-news networks in a recent deal for its Sling TV product, which also includes channels from Scripps Networks Interactive and Turner Broadcasting System Inc.

Analysts question whether Dish can continue to sell Sling for \$20 a month without deals for the most-watched TV networks CBS and NBC. Dish secured the rights for the online TV service over many years, and still has yet to get everything it wants.

Consumers may feel the same way. As tech giants explore ways to bring traditional, live TV to the web, viewers are flocking to on-demand services like Netflix, Hulu and Amazon. Hulu, owned by Fox, Disney and Comcast, also plans to expand its offering and sell an online TV service with live channels.

“I don't know how much demand there will be for these packages,” said Barton Crockett, an analyst at FBR Capital Markets. “The Internet is setting the ground work for the possibility of consumer adoption of skinny bundles at a level we haven't seen before, but for now the numbers are pretty small.” **Bloomberg**

By Matthew Brown

**W**ILDLIFE advocates on last week said they will seek a court order halting a United States government program that allows tens of thousands of pelts from bobcats and a small number of gray wolves to be exported annually for sale on the international fur market.

Representatives of WildEarth Guardians said the little-known program should not continue without a detailed study of its effect on wildlife populations.

Government figures show more than 57,000 bobcat pelts and a handful of wolf pelts were exported from the U.S. in 2014, the most recent year for which data was available. Exports over the past decade ranged from a low of 30,000 bobcat pelts in 2009 to almost 68,000 in 2013.

The pelts typically are used to make fur garments and accessories. Russia, China, Canada and Greece are top destinations, according to a trapping industry

## Group seeks to halt US exports of fur from bobcats, wolves



A bobcat trapped in a snare

representative and government reports.

"The government's been allowing this to happen blindly without doing any analysis. When we're talking about such high numbers, it's just preposterous," said Bethany Cotton, director of WildEarth Guardians' wildlife program.

The group filed a lawsuit in federal court in Mis-

soula challenging the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service program. The agency regulates trade in animal and plant parts according to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), which the U.S. ratified in 1975.

Bobcats are not considered an endangered species, nor are wolves in much of the Northern Rockies including Montana and

**Gov't figures show more than 57,000 bobcat pelts and a handful of wolf pelts were exported from the U.S. in 2014**

Idaho. Nevertheless, the international trade in bobcat and wolf pelts is regulated because they are "look-alikes" for other wildlife population that are listed as endangered.

State wildlife agencies have opposed the inclusion

of bobcats in the CITES treaty, arguing the species is thriving and protections are unnecessary. The animals are about twice as large as house cats and feed primarily on rabbits and hares. They range across the contiguous U.S. and portions of Canada and Mexico, according to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

Between 2.3 million and 3.6 million bobcats lived in the U.S., with populations that were stable or increasing in at least 40 states, according to a 2010 study from researchers at Cornell University and the University of Montana.

Cotton said her organization became aware of the scale of bobcat fur exports when it sued state game officials in Montana over the accidental capture of another wild cat, Canada lynx, by trappers pursuing bobcats.

Fish and Wildlife Service spokeswoman Laury Parramore said the agency would not comment on pending litigation. But she said the government requires exported pelts to be legally acquired and "not detrimental to the survival of the species."

National Trappers Association President Chris McAllister says the targeting of exports marks a new tactic in a long-running campaign by advocacy groups to shut down the industry. Prior lawsuits have focused on the types of traps used and the inadvertent trapping of protected species.

"They're trying to use anything they can," McAllister said. "If they can shut us down from exporting furs, it would definitely have an impact."

McAllister could not immediately provide figures on how many bobcats are trapped across the U.S. annually. He said prices for pelts from the animals fell drastically over the past several years, from as much as USD1,000 for a top-quality pelt to just \$200 today. **AP**

### ASK THE VET

by Dr Ruan Du Toit Bester



## A GUIDE TO PUPPY VACCINATIONS

**P**UPPY vaccinations are essential to the future well being of your dog. Without them, your dog is at risk for many serious and life-threatening diseases. Whether your dog spends time regularly with other dogs, or your dog is somewhat isolated, vaccinations are important to their overall health. Exposure to the outside elements can put your dog at risk of contracting various different diseases. Therefore, starting off with a basic set of puppy vaccinations can give them a better start in life.

### WHAT TYPES OF VACCINATIONS SHOULD YOUR PUPPY HAVE?

There are several vaccinations available to treat a variety of diseases. A set of basic shots, also known as a DHLPPC booster, is given to protect against the most common and most serious of all diseases. Basic puppy vaccinations include:

- Distemper
- Hepatitis
- Leptospirosis
- Parvovirus
- Para influenza
- Corona virus

Lyme disease is more predominate in areas with a high tick population. If you live in a heavily wooded area or one that is known to have a high population of ticks, a vaccination to protect your dog from Lyme disease is important. Also, if your dog spends significant amounts of time around other animals, you may want to consider a vaccination against Bordetella. Bordetella is more commonly known as kennel cough and spreads very rapidly between

dogs. Rabies is a vaccination that your puppy will be required to get from the government kennel in Macau. The Rabies vaccination will not be given with the booster because your puppy is likely not yet old enough. However, once your puppy is old enough, Macau laws regulate that he receive a Rabies shot every 3 years. In order to ensure maximum protection for your dog, the DHLPPC booster should be repeated every year, also.

### WHEN SHOULD PUPPY VACCINATIONS BE GIVEN?

A real qualified veterinarian will not vaccinate a puppy under the age of 6-8 weeks, but pet shops do all the time. Once your puppy reaches that age, the DHLPPC booster will be given. The booster will be repeated twice and given at 4 week intervals. However, your puppy cannot receive the Rabies vaccination until around 12 weeks of age. The Lyme and Bordetella vaccinations should be given at no sooner than 14 weeks.

### WHAT DO PUPPY VACCINATIONS DO?

The natural immunities from a mother's milk are only thought to last for the first 20 weeks of life. After that, a puppy is unprotected from the dangers of disease. A vaccine of either a live virus or killed virus is used to trigger a response from the immune system. The immune system then releases antibodies to fight against the virus. When the antibodies are released, the immune system learns how to respond and



destroy future viruses of that type.

Because of the response from the immune system, a vaccination should never be given to a puppy that is sick with a fever or illness. When the immune system is already working to fight off one strain of illness, it is likely that the vaccination will not be effective.

### WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF PUPPY VACCINATIONS?

Although side effects are rare, they are not impossible. Naturally, there may be some soreness at the injection site or your puppy may even run a mild fever. This is not anything to panic about because it is completely normal. However, you should always watch for signs of an allergic reaction, such as swelling or difficulty breathing, as these can be life-threatening conditions.

In most cases, side effects are minor and serious side effects are rare. Providing your puppy with a basic set of shots helps give them a healthy start in life. By continuing to have your dog vaccinated every year, you are helping to protect them against the most serious strains of diseases.

Hope this info helps  
Till next week  
Dr Ruan

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