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New year jammed by road works - again

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WORLD BRIEFS



U.S.-RUSSIA Russian President Vladimir Putin telephoned U.S. President Donald Trump to thank him for a CIA tip that helped thwart a series of bombings in St. Petersburg, the Kremlin and the White House said. *More on p15*

PHILIPPINES A slow-moving storm has left more than 30 people dead and several others missing mostly due to landslides and floods and stranded thousands of holiday travelers in the central Philippines. *More on p13*

MYANMAR's presidential spokesman said yesterday that the president authorized the arrest last week of two Reuters reporters for allegedly violating the state secrets act.



TURKEY's president has slammed a U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish militant group and said he'll clear his country's border with Syria of "terrorists."

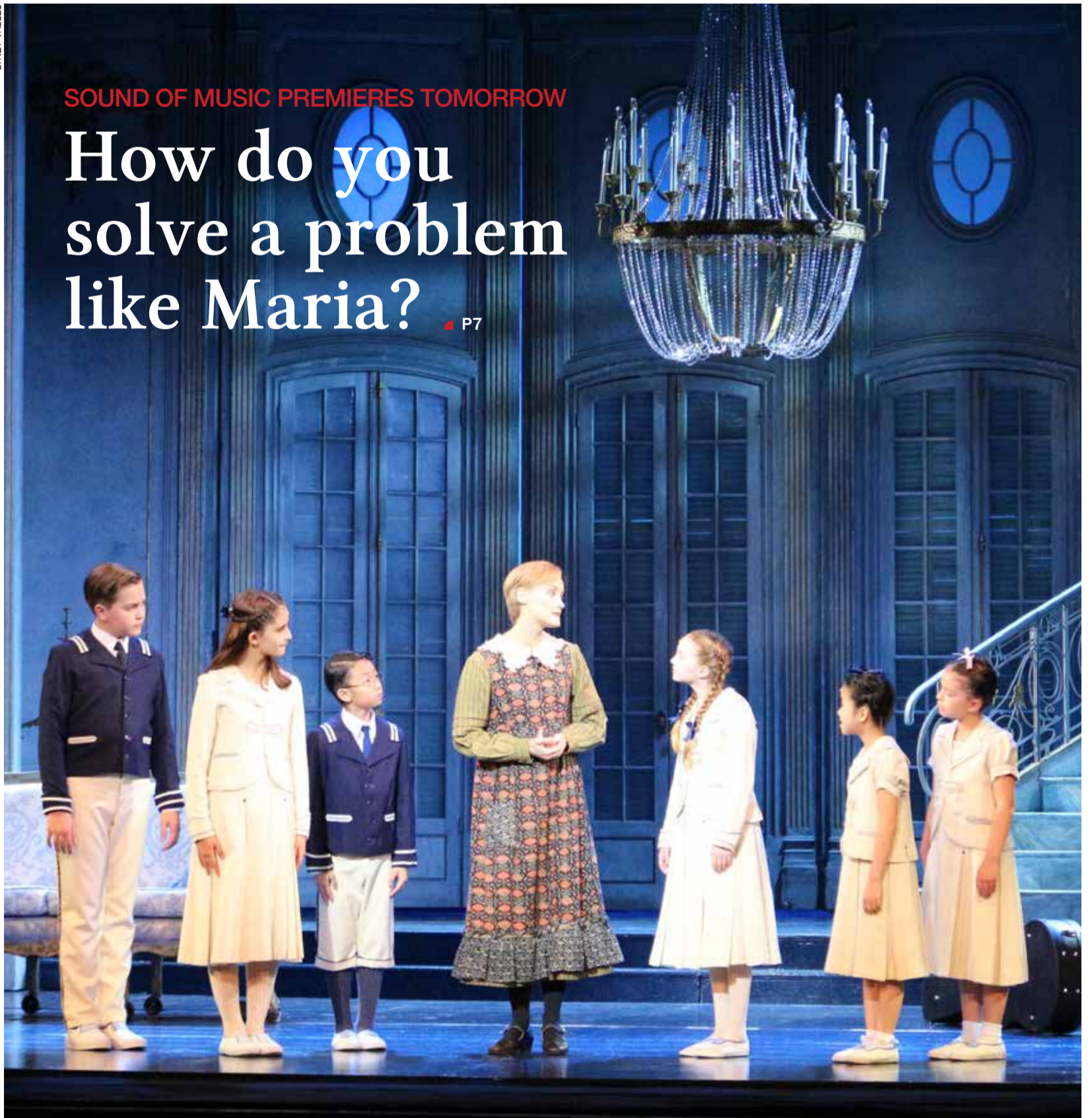
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LYNZY VALLES

SOUND OF MUSIC PREMIERES TOMORROW

How do you solve a problem like Maria?

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RENATO MARQUES



Unveiling of relics



Gun powder bag

THE GOLDEN PARADE

Imperial relics from the Palace Museum on display at MAM

Renato Marques

THE Golden Parade – Imperial Weaponry from the Palace Museum, the annual exhibition on cultural heritage opened its doors on Friday at the Macao Museum of Art (MAM).

The exhibition is the 19th large-scale exhibition on cultural heritage from the collaboration between MAM and the Palace Museum in Beijing.

The exhibition will be open, for a period of approximately three months. Over 100 pieces from the imperial weaponry collection of the Palace Museum will be displayed.

The displayed items will include weaponry, equipment and devices produced by the imperial workshops and tributes from different regions of China and cumulatively they will present a historical portrait of the Qing dynasty's military power.

During the Qing dynasty, horse riding and archery were widely popular. Several measures were taken to maintain the Manchu tradition, such as forest hunting and troop patrols in the Nan Yuan region. Such aspects are well represented in this exhibition, which emphasize pieces such as horse saddles, archery equipment, armor and other more modern equipment such as firearms. According to the organizers, "through the display of military armament and related paintings of the Qing court, people can learn about activities such as imperial hunting, military drills and the military system itself." They continue by explaining how the exhibit will

allow the public to "get to know the composition of the Eight Banners, types of military weaponry and the imperial court's support to military power from different perspectives, as well as to gain a comprehensive understanding of the Qing dynasty's policies, military system and military spirit of the Manchus."

The exhibition is divided into three great sections, titled "Dignified Bearing", "Military Prowess" and "Military System" respectively.

■ The display will include weaponry, equipment and devices produced by the imperial workshops

A central piece of "Dignified Bearing" will be the painting, "Emperor Qianlong's Review of the Grand Parade of Troops" as well as several other paintings that portray the troops parade review by Emperor Qianlong, in Nanyuan, and also a detailed description of the military parade skills of the "Eight Banners" troops, that included archery on horseback, artillery and shooting. In the same section, we can also find several military items used by the court, such as an "armor of gold brocade with iron plates and copper studs."

The "Military Prowess" section includes paintings of Qianlong's hunts as well as several of Emperor Kangxi's hunting archery and firearms as well as other military equipment of the court.

In the last section, dedicated to the "Military System," several relics, which belonged to the military leaders and court gatekeepers are featured. Among them are imperial seals and other smaller pieces that highlight the importance that was paid to the security of the court.

Concurrently, and to enhance the experience of visitors, the exhibition is complemented with a series of activities, including seminars conducted by experts from the Palace Museum, workshops and guided tours.

A total of seven talks will be held starting from Saturday, December 16, when two researchers from the Palace Museum, Cao Lianming and Liu Guoliang will deliver talks on "Military Relics of the Qing Dynasty from the Palace Museum" and the "Background of hunts and respective feasts."

As for the guided tours, these will be available between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. on weekend and public holidays from December 23.

Running until March 11, 2018, the exhibition "The Golden Parade – Imperial Weaponry from the Palace Museum" is located on the fourth floor of MAM, located adjacent to the Macao Cultural Center (CCM). It will be open from 10 a.m. to 7p.m. daily, except Mondays. The admission is free of charge.



Archery equipment



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Fewer road works planned but expect worse traffic congestion

A total of 617 road works will be carried out in 2018, the Transport Bureau (DSAT) announced yesterday.

This number was obtained after the Road Construction Co-ordination Group of the DSAT collected reports from government departments and concessionaires on planned road engineering projects for 2018.

DSAT predicts that the city's traffic congestion will become severe over the next year. DSAT also announced that construction in 2017 was more intense than 2016.

The total is 94 fewer projects than the 711 projects undertaken in 2017, a reduction of 13.2 percent. However, private applications have not been included in the total.

Among the projects, 42 will be related to large-scale works concerning main roads. These 42 projects will take between 60 and 1,000 days depending on their progress and level of complexity.

The main roads involved are Areia Preta, Avenida da Ponte da Amizade, Estrada do Reservatório, Avenida do Almirante Lacerda, Avenida do Conselheiro de Ferreira de Almeida, in addition to Avenida de Guimarães, Avenida dos Jogos da Ásia Oriental, Estrada de Pac On and Rotunda da Piscina Olímpica da Taipa.

Some 27 of the 42 main projects will involve the highest level of main road construction. This year, the number of main roads with works of

RENATO MARQUES



that scale was 21.

The scope of the works consists mainly of improving the infrastructure needed for supply of electricity, building and reorganizing the sewage network, connecting road networks on the new reclamation urban zone, replacing asbestos pipes, and building viaducts.

The construction is expected to exacerbate the traffic pressure over Macau's global transportation network in the short term.

DSAT's road project coordination group says that it will continue to optimize coordination and management regarding the works, to shorten the construction period and minimize the impact on residents' lives.

The coordination group claims that, with the cooperation of related government department and concessionaires, the group can effect meaningful results in terms of controlling the number of road engineering projects, the projects' construction areas, and the construction periods.

In 2017, 22 cases of projects which did not make sufficient progress were recorded.

Of the 711 projects announced for 2017, 478 have so far been completed, 52 are still undergoing, and 181 projects have not yet begun.

Starting from July 1, DSAT implemented a mechanism to indicate the impact of road constructions on transportation.

Based on this mechanism, 397 temporary transportation measures were issued until November 30, divided into different levels of importance, from "lightly serious" to "most serious."

As reported by the DSAT road coordination authority, DSAT in 2017 increased its inspection of construction projects' temporary transportation measures. Regarding some of the temporary measures which DSAT suggested lacked efficiency, the bureau will upload information about the projects' applicants and the concessionaires to its website so that the public can learn about the involved parties. **JZ**

HK secretary says Delta Bridge to open to traffic next year

THE Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge (informally, the Delta Bridge) will open to traffic next year, according to Hong Kong's Chief Secretary for Administration Matthew Cheung, though its construction is still scheduled to complete by the end of the month.

The comment was publicized on Cheung's official blog. It noted that the three govern-

ments of Hong Kong, Zhuhai and Macau had been working to finish the bridge by the end of 2017 and were working on an official opening date.

"We shall continue to work out the border control arrangements," the secretary noted, according to the South China Morning Post. "[Upon completion of those], we shall report to the central government for it to

decide the opening date. We shall make [that date] public as soon as practicable after the decision is made."

Cheung also noted that two other cross-border infrastructure projects – the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and Liantang-Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point – would also be completed in 2018.

Last week Hong Kong authorities increased the number of driving permits for the HKZMB to 10,000 in response to "overwhelming" demand. This marked a threefold increase from the initial 3,000 dual-plate permits initially announced by the Transport Department.

Several Hong Kong industry leaders welcomed the increase but complained that the

10,000 permits are not enough to satisfy demand in the SAR and that the mega-bridge is able to accommodate a much larger number.

The bridge has been beset for almost a decade by delays, budget overruns and safety concerns. It was also the focus of a corruption investigation after certain components were found to have fraudulent certification.

150,000 spectators recorded at Int'l Parade



Acting president of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) Ieong Chi Kin announced that an audience of approximately 150,000 people attended the 2017 Macao International Parade. According to Ieong, the budget for this year's parade amounted to MOP16 million, an increase of one million from last year. The increased budget was primarily used to install facilities, and inviting non-local groups to perform. The parade can be viewed online, with channels such as Sina, TDM, and many others recording over 200,000 viewers. This is the first time that the parade has been live streamed.

Shortage of 834 people in banking industry by 2019

The latest report from the Talent Development Committee indicates that Macau's banking industry will have to deal with a shortage of 834 human resources staff between 2017 and 2019. According to the committee, there are currently 7,072 banking industry employees. Financial leasing in special financial areas, credit business, customer services, electronic banking, and legal litigation and anti-money-laundering are the other sectors which are expected to face a shortage of staff. Moreover, until the end of 2019, the insurance industry will face a gap in human resources consisting of 95 people.

December 29 the last day for the registration of new voters

The Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau (SAFP) has informed that December 29, the last working day of 2017, is the deadline for the registration of new voters. Registration can be completed through the Information Center on Electoral Affairs located at the Public Administration Building in Rua do Campo or using the self-service kiosks installed in over 40 locations around Macau. Some of the kiosks are available 24 hours a day, the most well-known being in the Public Administration Building, or in the ground floor atrium of the China Plaza Building, Outer Harbor Ferry Terminal. Registered voters can also update their information on the website: www.re.gov.mo.

SARs included in mainland's house provident fund system

The Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office (the Office) of the State Council announced a new batch of policies to include the two SARs' residents into mainland's welfare system. Eligible SAR residents are those who work in mainland China. According to a statement released by the office yesterday, SAR governments will be treated equally when it comes to house provident funds, for which the SARs residents will pay to and withdraw from the fund the same way as mainland residents. Another special scholarship has also been established for the SAR residents and overseas Chinese who study in mainland China. Both the quotas and prize amounts of the scholarships will be increased.

Illegal gaming scheme shut down by PJ

Renato Marques

THE Judiciary Police (PJ) shut down an illegal gaming scheme and detained several suspects for illegal betting. The information was aired by the PJ spokesperson yesterday at a joint press conference held at the Public Security Police Force (PSP) headquarters.

According to officials the police were alerted on December 13 to illegal betting activities taking place in an apartment in the ZAPE area.

The police then sent agents to the location and found three suspects; two men aged 26 and 30 from Macau and the mainland respectively, and a 28-year-old woman also from mainland China.

A search of the apartment revealed several mobile phones, computers and record books that were used for the unlawful activities.

The PJ took the three suspects into custody and a further investigation revealed that the suspects were said to have been hired by an organization to perform duties that included contacting potential customers and receiving orders and payments from those to place bets in their name. All the transactions and betting orders were conducted online using communication apps such as We-

Chat and payment systems such as AliPay.

It was also reported that the group was working on a commission-based system receiving an undisclosed amount to place bets as well as commissions on the earnings.

The three were taken to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) on the charges of running a criminal organization and running illegal gaming activities.

In a separate case reported by the PJ, two other people were caught while entering the region. The two suspects are residents of Hong Kong, aged 37 and 34, and are related to a drug trafficking organization that the PJ dismantled this October. At that time, one detained suspect revealed the identities of the others involved.

On December 15, when trying to enter Macau by the Outer Harbor Ferry, one of the suspects along with a friend, was caught by the PJ with the help of the Customs Police.

A further investigation revealed that both were in fact related to the case, and both of them told the police that they had been hired to perform drug smuggling tasks. This time, the two detainees were coming to Macau to rent an apartment that would serve as deposit point for the drugs to be transported into Macau at a later opportunity.



Resident accused of presenting false 'crime' report

THE Judiciary Police (PJ) is charging a local resident aged 22 for presenting a false crime report to the police force, the PJ spokesperson said during the joint press conference held yesterday.

The resident claimed to have been attacked and robbed by two men on Rua de 5 de Outubro on December 16 around 3 a.m.

The man claimed he had been threatened by one of the alleged attackers with a fruit knife, stripping him of HKD49,000 in cash,

MOP3,000 in cash, and a mobile phone.

According to the alleged victim, the thieves then ran towards Rua do Guimarães and disappeared.

Further investigation from the police found that there was no evidence of the alleged crime and decided to question the alleged victim a second time. He then admitted making a false declaration report. He justified this action with the fact that the HKD49,000 belonged to a friend and he had spent the sum at a casino table. **RM**

TWO GROUPS TO DEMONSTRATE ON MACAU SAR DAY

ACCORDING TO sources in the Public Security Police Force there are two groups that submitted requests to perform demonstrations on December 20, the Public Holiday of Macau SAR day. The PSP spokesperson informed the media yesterday that one of the groups will be the Associação dos Armadores de Ferro e Aço (Iron and Steel Association) which intends to deliver a letter to the Labour

Affairs Bureau (DSAL). This group has a parade prepared beginning at the Iao Hon Market Square and heading to the DSAL headquarters. The second group consists of "three residents" who will organize a parade from the Areia Preta district, aiming to deliver petitions to three locations including the Central Government's Liaison Office and the Government's Headquarters.

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FOLLOWING the devastation of Typhoon Hato, which occurred on August 23, Sands China spared no effort to immediately help rebuild the city, which suffered severe damage in several parts of Macau.

Boosting their extensive immediate relief efforts in the aftermath of the deadly typhoon, Sands China has pledged to donate MOP65 million: MOP30 million from Sands China and a MOP35 million contribution from the Adelson Family Foundation.

The post-typhoon disaster relief efforts in the community began in the immediate aftermath of the storm and remain ongoing, with some projects expected to carry into next year.

Last week, Sands China presented a cheque for just over MOP2 million to Macau Holy House of Mercy for the cost of restoring its old-age home which includes rectifying major structural damage to its roof.

The donation is to cover repair costs that include rebuilding and repainting the rooftop; restoring water-damaged ceilings and walls, and fixing leaks; and installing new water drains and pipes.

Sands China Ltd President Dr Wilfred Wong took the opportunity to meet some of the elderly residents, and received a tour of the damaged areas that will be restored with the help of Sands China's donation.

"Macau is still recovering from the devastation of Typhoon Hato, so it is important that we continue to assist the community where we can," said Dr Wong.

"Macau Holy House of Mercy has a rich history of providing important charitable services to the community, and it is Sands China's pleasure to contribute to the restoration of its old age home."

Macau Holy House of Mercy President Antonio José de Freitas said, "Sands China has been a long-

Sands continues its pledge to help rebuild the city



time supporter of Macau Holy House of Mercy, and we are very grateful for their ongoing support. This donation will be of critical importance in helping us restore our elderly home back to a suitable condition for its residents."

The Sands China team also assisted with family buildings damaged in Coloane by providing metal warehouse rebuilding; fixing concrete floors and walls; structural steel, façade and roofing work; and electrical, plumbing

and drainage repair.

Just last week, Sands China undertook a site visit to homes refurbished along the Coloane shoreline.

With the support and coordination of the Housing Bureau, Sands China's construction team immediately offered assistance to residents of Navegantes Street and Lai Chi Yun to rebuild or refurbish the damaged houses.

A total of 22 homes were rebuilt or repaired in a span of only a month and a half. Among them, three metal-structure homes on Navegantes Street were completely destroyed, which Sands China's team then reconstructed.

The homeowners were delighted to see their homes recovered including Ms. Ip who expressed her gratitude after her home was rebuilt, noting that the efforts and assistance of the Sands China team were remarkable.

Meanwhile, they also assisted the Good Shepherd Sisters by helping restore landscaping after doing a technical assessment. The garden within its shelter was badly damaged with many trees felled, so the company helped source and replant new trees suited to the climate and landscape.

Sands China has also been contributing toward various

disaster relief efforts including transportation, technical and professional support, SME support and long-term assistance.

To offer support to its local SME suppliers during this challenging time, Sands China launched a new SME support programme including expediting payments, 50 percent advance payment, flexible delivery time and restoring hardware for critical business operations.

In addition, the company has provided continuing support to non-government organizations in Macau, assisting Caritas Macau, Macau Special Olympics (MSO), the Association of Parents of the People with Intellectual Disabilities of Macau and General Union of Neighborhood Associations (UGAMM) with timely transportation to help them maintain their essential operations, including the purchase of new vehicles to replace damaged ones. Sands China also purchased six industrial-grade washing and drying machines for Fuhong Society of Macau that are used for the members' occupational training.

Meanwhile, the company has also donated MOP250,000 to Association of Parents of the People with Intellectual Disabilities of Macau, Fuhong Society of Macau, Macau Special Olympics and Caritas Macau for their emergency use.

For children who tragically lost their parents to Typhoon Hato, Sands China has pledged to set up a fund to support their continuing education.

The company's volunteer team has been recognized for the tireless efforts and the hard work by Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Alexis Tam, who thanked them for volunteering during the post-Hato period.

Sands China's relief efforts are part of Sands Cares, the global corporate citizenship program of parent company Las Vegas Sands Corp.

WHAT THE BENEFICIARIES SAY

"Thanks to Sands China, who actively contacted us after the typhoons and made their vehicles and drivers available to us, the elderly and those with reduced mobility have managed to receive appropriate medical care as scheduled because we have been able to sustain our services. They are even purchasing new vehicles for us."
- Paul Pun Chi Meng, secretary-general of Caritas Macau

"We are grateful that Sands China at first had offered their assistance and made their buses available to us to help us resume our shuttle services for our students as soon as possible, thus enabling them to receive life-long learning opportunities in the aftermath of the two typhoons. They then purchased new vehicles for us to resume and sustain our services. In addition, Sands China dispatched a team of technical staff to help repair our damaged gates and glass doors at the headquarters, which helped us resume normal operation."
- Hetzer

Siu Yu Hong, CEO and national director of Macau Special Olympics

"We are glad and thankful to have received a donation and support from Sands China, who is providing transport services for our members at first and helping us purchase a brand new van, enabling us to resume normal operations. At the meantime, many of our members suffered damage to their homes, from broken windows to flooding. Sands China has been a big supporter of our association, and they've been instrumental in helping get these repairs done so that our members can get their homes back to a liveable state as soon as possible."
- Lou Sio Ha, director of the executive board of the Association of Parents of the People with Intellectual Disabilities of Macau

"Typhoon Hato and the flooding had completely destroyed our six washing and drying machines that are

used for our members' occupational training. We are very thankful to Sands China's assistance and care. Their representatives specially made a trip to visit our damaged areas and helped us purchase six washing and drying machines and donated a total of MOP 250,000 for our post-Hato aid, which helped us expedite the recovery work and continue to serve our service users."
- Jennifer Chau, Director of Fuhong Society of Macau

"Our transportation service provided to the elderly in our neighborhood with mobility challenge was badly affected by Typhoon Hato, and we are deeply thankful to Sands China for its generosity for purchasing new vehicles with rehabilitation built in facility to us. It serves as a commitment to resume our transportation services to the elderly and needy heavily rely on this unique services with great enhancement."
- Leong Heng Kao, president of the General Union of Neighborhood Associations



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SOUND OF MUSIC AT THE VENETIAN

Maria and the von Trapps hit the stage with West End cast

THE Sound of Music is slated to kick off its first show tomorrow at The Venetian Macao's Venetian Theater, featuring a cast of 20 performers from Macau and Hong Kong.

The highly acclaimed production comes from the home of West End musical theater – the renowned London Palladium – where it recently celebrated 954 performances.

The musical features many memorable songs including "My Favorite Things," "DO-RE-MI," "Climb Ev'ry Mountain," "The Lonely Goatherd," "Sixteen Going on Seventeen," and the title song "Sound of Music."

The Sound of Music is inspired by a true story of Maria, the fun-loving governess who changes the lives of the widowed Captain von Trapp and his seven children by re-introducing them to music. The story culminates in the family's escape across the Austrian mountains as tensions rise prior to the outbreak of World War II.

Featuring live music, sets, costume design and choreography and a stage that transforms from Nonnberg Abbey to a backdrop of the pictures-

que Austrian hills and meadows, the musical will be at the theatre until January 7.

The main leads playing Maria and Captain von Trapp are in Macau for the first time, along with seven children from Macau, and 13 cast members who originate from Hong Kong.

The actor who plays Captain von Trapp, Nicholas Maude, was in the musical's original show in London back in 2006, and has performed many of the male roles in the play.

"It's lovely to be in [it] again," he told the press.

"Every time we do the show it's always a joy because we're working with different people. It's lovely because the entire [production] cast is from South Africa," he added.

Meanwhile Carmen Pretorius, who plays Maria commented, "Local kids are very talented. So we're really excited to see their characters grow and get to know them a bit better."

The two actors noted that there are certain scenes to which they feel particularly attached, including the scene where the captain sings for the first time, followed by all the children hugging him.

"For me that was the best part of the show. It's a lovely emotional moment. The children are always genuine in their emotions [...] and they give everything," he said.

Meanwhile, the children who play the von Trapp children noted that although the original story took place more than 60 years ago, the musical's moral lessons will remain "timeless."

"The themes of family friendship, love, compassion, within The Sound of Music, even if it's 60 years old, they are timeless," said one.

"Everything we learned in the show is something we take through in our normal lives, and outside of the house and school. It reminds you to set priorities in life," said another.



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MGM marks tenth anniversary with inaugural staff

THE senior management team at MGM Macau and its 8,900 Golden Lion Team members celebrated the company's 10-year anniversary in Macau yesterday.

Celebrating and commemorating this milestone, a ten-year service gala celebration was held on December 5 for 1,900 MGM Macau members who were there when it opened.

At the gala, MGM's senior management team presented a ten-year service certificate and a limited edition commemorative silver coin to each inaugural member for their commitment over the decade.

This was followed by a carnival-themed anniversary party yesterday as a compliment to fellow Golden Lion Team members for their excellence

and dedication, the gaming operator said in a statement.

In appreciation for the support of team members and their families, MGM also organized an Employee Family and Friend Day at Learn and Play! teamLab Future Park, offering complimentary access to 600 team members and their families so that they could share quality time at the resort's first interactive and digital art exhibition.

Speaking about MGM's journey over the decade, James J. Murren, chairman and chief executive officer of MGM Resorts International and chairperson and executive director of MGM China Holdings Limited, sent his greetings via video recording.

He said, "Ten years ago, MGM took an important step out of the U.S. to Macau. At

that time, we recruited thousands of dedicated and talented individuals who have championed our brand and supported us in creating unique offerings to attract tourists to Macau. Today I am so proud that all of you not only delivered our promise, but also exceeded our expectations."

Pansy Ho, co-chairperson & executive director of MGM China Holdings Limited, thanked Golden Lion Team for remaining devoted to delivering quality moments for its guests.

"Ten years later today, we are in full swing to prepare for the opening of MGM Cotai and our growing team will continue creating unprecedented art and cultural experiences paired with advanced technology," she said, pledging to continually invest in local talents. **LV**

CEPA

Two new agreements to integrate Macau further with national development



TWO new agreements, both under the framework of the Mainland and Macau Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA), were signed yesterday with the aim of "advancing integration of Macau's development with that of the country as a whole," an official note reads.

The two agreements, which came into force upon signing, are part of a special economic and trade cooperation framework under the "One country, two systems" principle, and were designed in accordance with regulations set out by the World Trade Organization.

The "Investment Agreement" and the "Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation" were both signed this morning at Government Headquarters by Vice-Minister of Commerce, Gao Yan, and Macau's Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lionel Leong.

The signing ceremony was held after a meeting of the 2017

CEPA Joint Steering Committee. During the meeting, Vice-Minister Gao said the two new agreements highlighted the Central Government's support for Macau in the development of its economy, adding that such agreements "would help to support the city's long-term sustainability."

According to Gao, trade in goods has achieved full liberalization while trade in services has almost achieved liberalization under the Mainland-Macau CEPA framework.

Secretary Leong stated that the new agreements expanded cooperation opportunities in trade between the mainland and Macau. "The SAR Government would step up efforts to promote the two new agreements, in order to enable Macau businesses to have a better understanding of the latest agreements, and to make better use of CEPA's preferential measures," he noted.

CEPA was initiated in 2004.

corporate bits

SHERATON, ST. REGIS GATHER WOMEN FROM THE INDUSTRY



In keeping with Marriott International's commitment to develop and empower future women leaders, Sheraton Grand Macao Hotel and The St. Regis Macao recently brought together nearly 40 senior hospitality professionals from the two hotels and their sister properties, JW Marriott Hotel Macao and The Ritz Carlton Macao.

Hosted by Janet McNab, managing director of Sheraton Grand Macao and The St. Regis

Macao, the networking dinner was themed "Know Your Limits & Have None." The dinner featured a talk by Executive Coach Janine Manning, a specialist in personal branding.

The event forms part of Marriott International's program designed to bring women together in Asia to share their experiences, challenge each other's thinking, and inspire each other to achieve their goals and aspirations.

"In our industry, I don't believe we should focus on one gender being dominant over the other as I have also worked with many fantastic men. The hospitality industry is one that is broad in scope and presents equal opportunities for all," said McNab, as cited in a joint statement.

WYNN SENIOR EMPLOYEE RECEIVES EXCELLENCE AWARD

To further recognize the outstanding performance of Wynn Macau's team members, four local senior employees were nominated to participate in the "Excellence Award for the Best Senior Employees" co-organized by the Social Welfare Bureau and Labor Affairs Bureau.

With over a hundred senior employees nominated in the scheme, the four Wynn employees were among the top 20 nominees with the highest ratings during the preliminary assessment stage.

In the final rounds, U Weng Chon from the public area department, stood out in particular and was elected one of ten Best Senior Employees, the gaming operator announced in a statement.

U Weng Chon was invited to



attend the "Excellence Award for the Best Senior Employees" award ceremony where certificates of appreciation were presented in recognition of the outstanding performances of the winning employees.

U has been with Wynn for over ten years and he is currently working as a Public Area Cleaner at Wynn Macau.

AIR MACAU LAUNCHES CHANGZHOU ROUTE

Air Macau held an inaugural ceremony of the Macau - Changzhou Route yesterday, making it the fourth destination for Air Macau in East China.

The Changzhou - Macau route will operate on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

It will build a solid foundation for the promotion of economic growth, trade cooperation, cultural exchange, and tourism resource sharing, the Aviation Tribune reported.

In addition, the airline is looking forward to sharing the achievements of rapid development in the Greater Bay Area with the people of Changzhou through the Air Macau flights.

The routes of Air Macau in East China have covered



Shanghai, Nanjing and Hefei.

Changzhou is a cultural city with a history spanning more than 2500 years. In 2015, it was listed as a national historical and cultural city with rich cultural relics and unique features. Changzhou is also a modern and economically developed emerging industrial city.

ENERGY

Coal's two-year rally to end in Europe as China addiction fades

Ladka Bauerova

A two-year rally in coal is set to unravel in northwest Europe as China reasserts an anti-pollution drive it eased to keep citizens warm in a frigid winter.

Benchmark coal prices will probably fall about 16 percent by the end of next year, capping the longest rally in year-ahead rates since 2010, according to a survey of analysts and traders by Bloomberg News.

China, which uses almost half the world's coal, will import less as it cuts its reliance on the dirtiest fossil fuel to curb smog. But the switch to cleaner energy hasn't been smooth, lending support to coal prices from Australia to Rotterdam. Officials this month reversed a coal-burning ban in some provinces as temperatures plunged, and factories were ordered to cut power use as there wasn't enough natural gas.

"We expect prices to fall back by the end of the winter," said Thomas Pugh, a commodities analyst at Capital Economics Ltd. in London. "Supply is picking up, and there is a big push in China away from coal



towards gas and renewables. In the long run, that's only going to go one way, and it will affect prices globally."

Prices for year-ahead European coal will end 2018 at USD77.75 a ton, according to the average of six estimates in the survey. The contract will probably trade at about

\$86.40/ton by the end of March.

Seasonal demand may still sustain the current rally throughout winter, said Georgi Slavov, head of energy, ferrous metals and agricultural research at London-based commodities broker Marex Spectron, who cited

low inventories in Asia and Europe. An increased availability of short-term credit has allowed buyers in China and India to further ramp up demand in the past four weeks, he said.

And as coal loses favor in China, the prospects for the mineral in Europe are "bleak" and U.S. demand will conti-

nue to decline, the International Energy Agency said in its Coal 2017 report published yesterday. But the fuel's use in India and other Asia nations is forecast to grow.

Still, supply will outstrip demand and prices will begin to drop in the second half of next year, according to Barbara Lambrecht, an analyst at Commerzbank AG.

"China's coal demand is likely to have passed its peak," Lambrecht said. "A structural shift away from heavy industry and toward a more service-based society will slow demand as it dampens the country's need for energy." **Bloomberg**

Local aid for electric cars to end, say insiders

CHINA is planning to tell local governments to stop offering subsidies for electric cars and other new-energy vehicles, people familiar with the matter said, a move that could undermine demand for autos made by companies including BYD Co. and BAIC Motor Corp.

The Ministry of Finance is working on a plan that would mandate authorities to phase out the incentives to discourage protectionism and help rein in state expenditure, the people said, asking not to be identified. The plan may be implemented as early as next year.

Automakers would still be entitled to the central government's funds, the people said. The ministry didn't immediately respond to a fax requesting comments.

The grants have made electric vehicles more affordable in a market that surpassed the U.S. as the world's biggest in 2015 and one that now accounts for half of global EV use. Subsidies have been a cornerstone of an almost decade-old policy to help promote zero-emission vehicles, but Beijing is reviewing the payouts to iron out some distortions and also to cap costs to the exchequer.

HK targets next Alibaba in revamp of IPO rules

HONG Kong's stock exchange proposed to let "innovative" companies list in the Chinese enclave with dual-class share structures to avoid losing out on more initial public offerings by technology giants like Alibaba Group Holding Ltd.

Allowing shares with extra voting power is part of a package of measures released Friday that may be the biggest change to the exchange's listing rules since 1993, when it allowed large Chinese enterprises to go public there.

The bourse wants to better reflect "the drivers of the new global economy," Chief Executive Officer Charles Li wrote in a blog, after earlier saying he hopes "a significant number of innovative companies" will start to choose Hong Kong by the second half

of next year.

Alibaba's decision to hold its USD25 billion initial share sale in New York three years ago spurred intense debate among bankers, brokers, exchange officials, investors and politicians about lifting a longstanding ban on stocks with dual voting structures. In the end, fear that more Chinese technology firms may choose to list elsewhere trumped warnings from large investors like BlackRock Inc. that such structures erode market integrity.

The Securities and Futures Commission recognizes that investors hope to tap a more diverse range of companies but also want strict safeguards to ensure that the share class doesn't become commonplace, Chief Executive Officer Ashley Alder said in a statement Friday.

Each multiple-vote share would represent no more than 10 times the votes of ordinary shares, according to a Hong Kong Exchanges & Clearing Ltd. statement after a two-month consultation. Only companies with a focus on new technologies will be able to use the dual-class structure and founders and executives will need to demonstrate how their contribution merits it.

In addition to the dual-class proposal, the bourse plans to let biotech companies list without track records of profitability. It's testing the waters in an area that can be crucial for attracting big tech companies and said more sectors could get this treatment in the future.

Hong Kong is adopting dual-class structures - long favored by

technology firms as a way of letting founders and management retain control - as a new wave of fast-growing Chinese companies approach the stage where they might go public, from Ant Financial Services Group to Xiaomi Corp. and Tencent Music.

The planned changes also lift restrictions on secondary listings for "innovative" mainland Chinese companies and raise the minimum market capitalization for main exchange IPOs to HKD500 million (\$64 million) from HKD200 million. Another round of consultation in the first quarter of 2018 will consider the detailed rules.

Hong Kong's trajectory illustrates the power big companies wield as competition among exchanges for the hottest IPOs intensifies, said Martin



Wheatley, the former head of the SFC in Hong Kong and the U.K.'s Financial Conduct Authority, in an interview before Friday's announcement.

The push to adopt a dual-class system, which had long been stalled by resistance from the securi-

ties regulator and large fund managers, gained momentum this year as Carrie Lam was elected as Hong Kong's chief executive. The previous administration under Leung Chun-ying was too preoccupied with popular discontent to pay much attention to the issue. **MDT/Bloomberg**

David Tweed

SOUTH CHINA SEA

Vietnam follows Beijing with upgrades of its own

AS China continues to transform disputed territory in the South China Sea into features capable of sustaining air and naval bases, Vietnam is also upgrading areas it occupies.

Images taken by DigitalGlobe satellites in September show new facilities including a possible dry dock on West London Reef in the Spratly Island chain, around 680 kilometers southeast of Ho Chi Minh City, that could allow boats to stop for maintenance and patrol for longer periods.

While the work is vastly outweighed by what China is doing it suggests Hanoi wants to hold its ground over the contested waterway, even if it risks upsetting Beijing. In August, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte ordered a construction halt on a 500-square-meter sand bar in the area after a protest from China.

"Maintaining and even consolidating a military and non-military presence has been consistently one of the key approaches for Vietnam's strategy for the South China Sea," said Alexander Vuving, a political analyst at the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Hawaii.

Vietnam has reclaimed about 120 acres across 10 islets since 2014, according to the Washington DC-based Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, extending runways and adding radar and patrol capabilities. By comparison, China has reclaimed more than 3,200 acres on seven features in the Spratlys, building ports, lighthouses and runways it says

are mostly for civilian purposes or defense.

China's claims to more than 80 percent of the South China Sea, which carries around USD3.4 trillion worth of global trade a year, overlap with the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Vietnam. In the past year, Hanoi has become the most vocal defender against China's assertions.

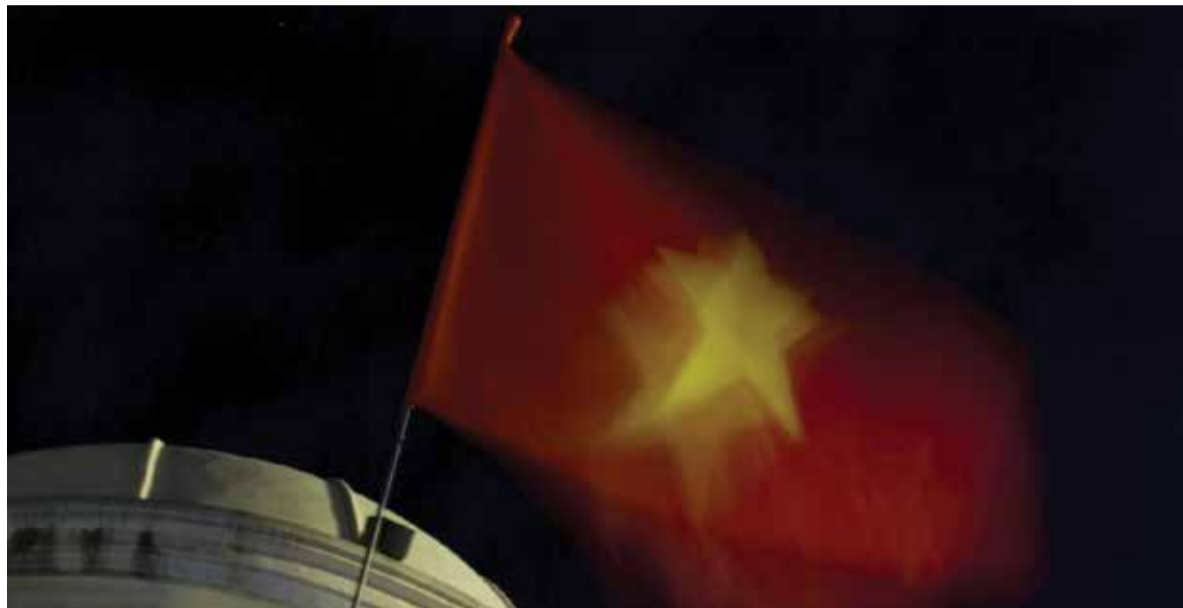
Its latest upgrade to West London Reef comes after China reportedly pressured Vietnam to halt drilling in a contested area leased to Spain's Repsol SA., said Bill Hayton, an associate fellow at Chatham House.

"Vietnam's response to the Repsol incident has been a modest expansion on its islands," said Hayton, who wrote "The South China Sea: The Struggle for Power in Asia". "Many of the decisions to expand the island facilities would have been taken before the drilling episode, but that is certainly giving some impetus."

Another potential source of friction between Hanoi and Beijing is renewed talks over a Code of Conduct for the South China Sea between China and the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Despite endorsing a one-page framework in August, which

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calls on parties to commit to the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, China wants the code to be voluntary, whereas Vietnam wants it to be legally binding.

"Vietnam would sign a legally binding Asean-China code of conduct if it brings it and other countries benefit," according to Rear Admiral Le Ke Lam, a former Vietnam Naval Academy director. "But China would never sign it."

Vietnam's Foreign Ministry did not respond to emailed questions about the land reclamation

or whether the Code of Conduct should be legally binding. Le said Vietnam's South China Sea infrastructure program was confined to minor reclamation on existing islands.

Vietnam suffered a setback last year after the new Philippine president chose not to pursue further an international court ruling that dismissed Beijing's South China Sea claims. The case, brought by Duterte's predecessor Benigno Aquino, was supported by Vietnam.

In the absence of support from

the Philippines, Vietnam has sought to improve ties with Indonesia, which has shown signs of pushing back against Chinese encroachment near the Natuna Islands that Beijing claims are part of its traditional fishing grounds.

In June 2016, President Joko Widodo held a cabinet meeting on a warship near the islands, and Indonesia later renamed the northern reaches of its exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea as the North Natuna Sea. **Bloomberg**

After hype, Toronto's yuan clearing hub sees slow start

THREE years after it opened amid much fanfare with the promise of paving the way to more trade between Canada and China, the yuan hub in Toronto has proven to be a bit of a dud.

Even as Prime Minister Justin Trudeau makes overtures to launch free trade talks with the world's second-largest economy, Canadian firms have been slow to warm to the hub, which allows them to settle transactions in the Chinese currency with Chinese business partners.

"We expected a higher jump from the start point and it hasn't happened," said Min Gao, head of the treasury department at the Canadian unit of Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, which runs the hub's clearing house. "But it's still growing, and it's healthy growth."

The benefits of the hub, the first of its kind in North

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America when it opened in 2014, are obvious. Settling transactions in the yuan gives Canadian companies broader access to suppliers and customers in China, where many smaller firms only use yuan. It also helps firms in both countries avoid costly and time-consuming U.S. dollar

intermediaries.

Yuan flows between China and Canada are up 67 percent since the hub was established, and the currency now accounts for 15 percent of all flows between the two countries, compared with a 70 percent share for the Canadian dollar, the Society for Worldwide Interbank

Financial Telecommunication, a global payments network, reported in October.

Still, just 7 percent of Canadian companies use the Chinese currency, compared with a global average of 24 percent, according to a separate 2016 study by HSBC Bank Canada.

China has been boosting efforts to open its financial markets following the yuan's addition to the International Monetary Fund reserve currency basket. While the U.S. dollar is still the global currency of choice, the use of the Chinese currency has been on the rise.

China's financial markets have already opened for some Canadian players. Bank of Montreal and HSBC's Canadian units were authorized by the People's Bank of China in November 2016 to become market makers for direct trading of yuan against Canadian dollars in China's inter-bank foreign exchange market.

National Bank of Canada also issued its first panda bond, or yuan-denominated debt issued in China, in October 2016, and followed that up with another in September. **MDT/Bloomberg**

China hails Spain court's approval of Taiwanese extradition

CHINA says it welcomes a Spanish court's decision to grant Beijing's request for the extradition of 121 Taiwanese nationals to China, a decision that has drawn criticism from Taiwan, a self-ruled island.

Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told reporters at a regular briefing Monday that Beijing appreciated Spain's firm support of its "One China" principle, which is Beijing's view that it has sovereignty over Taiwan.

Hua also said the Spanish court's decision Friday was an "important outcome" of the two countries' cooperation in using extradition to crack down on crimes.

The Taiwanese nationals are accused of belonging to Spain-based gangs that swindled people in China out of millions of euros by telephone. **AP**



This satellite image provided by Human Rights Watch/Digital Globe shows four villages in Maungdaw township, northern Rakhine state on Nov. 25

MYANMAR

Rights group reports more destruction of Rohingya villages

SATELLITE imagery shows that Rohingya villages in Myanmar continued to be destroyed even as Myanmar and Bangladesh signed an agreement last month to return refugees from the ethnic Muslim minority who had fled their country amid violence, Human Rights Watch said yesterday.

The New York-based rights group said buildings were destroyed in 40 villages in northern

Rakhine state in October and November, increasing the total to 354 villages that have been partially or completely destroyed since Aug. 25.

More than 630,000 Rohingya have fled from Myanmar into Bangladesh since Aug. 25, when Myanmar's army began what it called "clearance operations" following an attack on police posts by a group of Rohingya insurgents. Refugees

arriving in Bangladesh said their homes were set on fire by soldiers and Buddhist mobs, and some reported being shot at by security forces.

In late November, Myanmar and Bangladesh signed an agreement covering the return of Rohingya who fled across their mutual border to escape the violence in Rakhine.

"Satellite imagery confirms that dozens of buildings were burned

the same week" the agreement was signed, Human Rights Watch said in a statement.

"The Burmese army's destruction of Rohingya villages within days of signing a refugee repatriation agreement with Bangladesh shows that commitments to safe returns were just a public relations stunt," said Brad Adams, Human Rights Watch's Asia director. "The satellite imagery

shows what the Burmese army denies: that Rohingya villages continue to be destroyed. Burmese government pledges to ensure the safety of returning Rohingya cannot be taken seriously."

Zaw Htay, Myanmar's government spokesman, said, "I cannot give comment yet because I have not seen the statement on the satellite images yet."

“The destruction of Rohingya villages [...] shows that commitments to safe returns were just a public relations stunt.**”**

BRAD ADAMS
HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

INDONESIA

American man recaptured after five-day manhunt

AUTHORITIES have recaptured an American man who escaped from an overcrowded and understaffed prison on the Indonesian resort island of Bali.

Christian Beasley, 32, is believed to have escaped during heavy rain last Monday from the Kerobokan penitentiary in Bali's provincial capital, Denpasar, by sawing through a ceiling and then climbing over a 6-meter-high wall behind the prison.

The head of the prison, Tonny Nainggolan, said earlier that another American inmate, Paul Anthony Hoffman, 57, who has been serving a 20-month sentence since July for robbery, was captured while trying to escape along with Beasley.

Beasley was arrested in August at a post office in Bali's Kuta tourist area while allegedly trying to pick up a package containing 5.7 grams of hashish. He stood trial and the verdict was due last Tuesday, a day after his escape.

Bali police detective Made Pramestia said Beasley had reached the neighboring tourist island of Lombok by boat on the day of his escape.

Pramestia said Beasley was recaptured on Saturday in an alley near a beach on Lombok after a five-day manhunt.

An investigation was underway to determine if prison guards were involved in the escape, said Surung Pasaribu of the local office of the Law and Human Rights Ministry. He also said there

is a shortage of guards at the prison, which was built to accommodate about 300 people but has nearly 1,600 inmates.

It was the second escape from the prison since June, when four foreign inmates escaped through a drainage tunnel.

Two of them, Bulgarian Dimitar Nikolov Iliev and Indian Sayed Mohammed Said, were recaptured in East Timor days later and were returned to Bali. The two others, Shaun Edward Davidson of Australia and Tee Koko King bin Tee Kim Sai of Malaysia, are still at large.

Jailbreaks are common in Indonesia, where prisons are overcrowded with people convicted of drug crimes as part of the government's anti-drug crusade. **AP**

PHILIPPINES

More than 30 dead due to slow-moving storm

A slow-moving storm has left more than 30 people dead and several others missing mostly due to landslides and floods and stranded thousands of holiday travelers in the central Philippines, officials said.

Sofronio Dacillo Jr., a disaster-response officer, said 26 villagers died and 23 others were missing mostly due to landslides in different areas in the island province of Biliran, where the weather has improved after Tropical Storm Kai-Tak blew over Saturday.

At least seven other people were killed in landslides

and floods in four central areas due to Kai-tak, which weakened into a tropical depression but moved southwestward and picked up speed Sunday with sustained winds of 55 kilometers per hour, according to officials and police.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council said it was trying to confirm the reported deaths caused by the storm, which forced more than 89,000 people to flee to emergency shelters. Thousands of Christmas holiday travelers were stranded due to canceled inter-island ferries and flights.

Sann Win, a border guard police officer in northern Rakhine, said by phone yesterday that "there was no burning of any villagers' homes in October and November."

In September, Myanmar's government said more than 6,800 homes had been destroyed in the wave of violence, with all but about 200 of them belonging to Rohingya villagers. **AP**

Kai-tak, known locally as Urduja, has remained almost stationary over the eastern section of the central Philippines in recent days, drenching island provinces, setting off landslides and floods and knocking out power in some areas.

President Rodrigo Duterte said he would visit the storm-hit region.

About 20 typhoons and storms, mostly from the Pacific, lash the Philippines each year, making the poor country of more than 100 million people one of the most disaster-prone in the world. **AP**

Michael Heath, Jason Scott

Australia sees narrower budget gap, reaffirms 2021 surplus

AUSTRALIA'S government forecast a narrower budget deficit this fiscal year as swelling corporate profits boosted the tax take, even as weak wage growth weighed on collections.

The underlying cash deficit in the 12 months through June 2018 will be AUD23.6 billion (USD18 billion), compared with a May forecast of AUD29.4 billion, Treasurer Scott Morrison said in a half-yearly update. While growth and wage estimates were shaved, the books are still forecast to return to the black in 2021.

"The Treasurer is on the highwire and must balance the government's fiscal responsibilities with its desire to defend the personal tax scales against bracket creep," said Mark Molesworth, tax partner at accounting firm BDO. "Other reforms, designed to make the system as a whole more efficient at collecting revenue and less of a drag on business, should be pursued."

In an interview with Bloomberg TV yesterday, Morrison said the prospect of income tax cuts for Australians, as previously flagged by Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, was still a "totally realistic" goal.

"That's what we're now focusing our attention on. We want to put

more back in the pockets of households on middle incomes," he said, adding that would be the focus of the government's efforts "between now and going into next year."

■ For the first time since the financial crisis, the government will no longer be borrowing to pay for recurrent expenditure

Net debt is now expected to peak in 2018-19 at 19.2 percent of gross domestic product, a 0.6 percentage point drop on the May estimate. For the first time since the financial crisis, the government

will no longer be borrowing to pay for recurrent expenditure, Morrison said in an earlier statement.

Australia has run a deficit every year since the 2008 global financial crisis - a period that encompassed soaring iron ore prices and a once-in-a-century mining boom, followed by the unwinding of that investment as supply increased. The fiscal picture brightened this year following a record run of full-time hiring and a rebound in commodity prices that lifted company profits.

Authorities have been plagued by over-optimistic forecasts for the economy that then had to be revised lower. Morrison has taken a more cautious approach and is now benefiting from rare better-than-expected results.

The economy is underpinned by record-low interest rates at 1.5 percent that are paying off as business gains in confidence, hiring more people and increasing investment. Yet on the other side of the equation, Australians are carrying record debt and with wage



growth at recession-era lows, could result in a clampdown on spending. That would resonate across the economy given consumption accounts for more than half of GDP.

"Our growth story remains a

compelling one, and although real GDP growth has been slightly tempered in 2017-18, the trajectory is upward," Morrison said in Canberra yesterday. "Our economy is strengthening. Growth and jobs are rising." **Bloomberg**

INDIA

Modi set to retain grip on home state after bellwether vote

INDIAN Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party is set to return to power in his home state, an election that's considered a bellwether before the national vote in early 2019.

The Bharatiya Janata Party was leading in 101 seats in the 182-seat Gujarat legislature as of yesterday, according to early trends from the Election Commission of India. That's more than the 92 needed for a majority though this would be the BJP's lowest tally in more than two decades. The main opposition Congress party was ahead in 73 seats.

A narrower victory may prompt Modi to resort to populist spending to boost support before he faces re-election in early 2019. That risks widening India's already bloated budget deficit and pressure the battered bond market. The result could also embolden

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who tapped into discontent against Modi's economic policies before as many as eight state elections over the next year.

"BJP will have to take some corrective measures in terms of the discontent on the ground but I don't know how far they will succeed in that," said Sudha Pai, who taught political studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi. These include the creation of jobs for the youth as well as better incomes for farmers, she said.

The BJP has held Gujarat for about two decades with Modi at the helm for more than 12 years. He used his stewardship of Gujarat as a launchpad for his national campaign in 2014, pledging business-friendly policies and development for all. However, last year's ban on high-value currency notes

and this year's chaotic roll out of the goods and services tax has hit traders and textile workers in Gujarat.

The Congress party, which had been written off earlier in the year, found its voice and attacked the administration as a "government for the rich."

"A few months ago, the market believed that the state election in Gujarat was a non-event with a foregone conclusion," analysts at CLSA led by Mumbai-based Mahesh Nandurkar wrote in a report last week. "But the changes in the political scenario over the last few months have turned the election into an event."

The BJP also seemed poised to wrest the small Himalayan state of Himachal Pradesh from the Congress, according to the Election Commission's early trends. **MDT/Bloomberg**

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24 - 25 December 2017

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AD

SOUTH AFRICA

Ruling party counts votes for new leader

Krista Mahr, Johannesburg

COUNTING of votes for the next president of South Africa's ruling African National Congress party has begun, after the polling took place through Sunday night and into yesterday morning, with the new leader of Nelson Mandela's storied liberation movement expected to be announced shortly.

The ANC's new leader is likely to become South Africa's next president. More than 4,700 ANC delegates have gathered on the outskirts of Johannesburg to vote for a new party leader as President Jacob Zuma's two terms as head of the party come to an end.

The two presidential candidates are Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, former African Union commission chair and Zuma's ex-wife, and Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa, a wealthy businessman who has been increasingly critical of the president.

After the conclave got off to a slow start due to disputes over delegate accreditation, voting for the



Delegates attend the second day of the African National Congress elective conference in Johannesburg

new leadership started late Sunday night. Overnight, delegates lay on the floor of the conference center and slept slumped in their chairs waiting to cast their ballots.

The race appears to be tight and either candidate could pull off a win, said observers. Ramaphosa had the edge in ANC branch nominations on Sunday, but Dlamini-Zuma's camp told local media that her supporters had been campaigning hard over the

weekend.

Some senior ANC leaders broke with tradition and shared how they voted on social media - an unusual move for a party that prefers to conduct its internal business behind closed doors.

Minister of Police Fikile Mbalula, a Zuma ally, tweeted early yesterday that he had voted for "mother princess" Dlamini-Zuma, adding the hashtag #womenpower.

ANC National Spokesman Zizi Kodwa and Chief Whip Jackson Mthembu both declared they had voted for Ramaphosa. Mthembu said he cast his ballot for the deputy president "and five other incorruptible leaders" in order to save the party and the country. "We must!!" he wrote.

The ANC's reputation has taken a beating during Zuma's scandal-ridden tenure, causing rifts that threaten to split Africa's oldest li-

beration party. Keeping the ANC together has been a key talking point at the gathering.

"In all its manifestations, factionalism has become the biggest threat to the organization," Zuma said in a tepidly received speech at the opening of the conference. "Unity is what will make the ANC and South Africa succeed."

ANC Secretary General Gwede Mantashe, appearing cheerful during his final press briefing in that post on Monday, acknowledged the party had work to do ahead of national elections in 2019.

"Where we have lost ground, we want to regain the lost ground," he said. "We want a better ANC because a better ANC is good for the country."

In particular, he said allegations of high level corruption has damaged the party and needs to be faced.

"It's one debate that continues to divide us," said Mantashe. "We cannot hide our heads and say it [corruption] does not exist. It exists." **AP**

AD



www.ift.edu.mo

Institute for Tourism Studies (IFT), a rapidly growing public higher education institution in Macao devoted entirely to education and training for the tourism and hospitality industry, invites applications for the following full-time teaching posts. *Subjects to be taught in English and/or Chinese. Successful candidates are required to teach in both the daytime and evening degree programmes.*

Assistant Professors of Tourism College

- ✦ **Hotel Management (1 vacancy) (Ref. No. 021/AC/2017) :**
should be able to teach/develop specific subjects such as Hotel Operations, F&B Cost Control and Lodging Management.
- ✦ **Management and Marketing (1 vacancy) (Ref. No. 022/AC/2017) :**
should be able to teach/develop specific subjects such as Human Resources Management, Strategic Management, Leadership, Service Quality Management and Advanced Marketing.
- ✦ **Culinary (1 vacancy) (Ref. No. 023/AC/2017) :**
should be able to teach/develop specific subjects such as Food Preparation courses, Food Safety, Menu and Recipe Development, and Kitchen and Restaurant Design.
- ✦ **Retail Management (1 vacancy) (Ref. No. 024/AC/2017) :**
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Candidates are expected to engage in research and industry collaborations, and teach/develop the subject areas above. For a full list of subjects in the current curriculum and details of the academic unit, please visit www.ift.edu.mo.

Requirements:

Assistant Professor: must have at least a Master's degree in the relevant area and at least 4 years of full time teaching experience as Lecturer.

Candidates are required to submit testimonials or other forms of evidence, issued by the employer(s), indicating the number of years and months of teaching experience in tertiary education institutions. **Candidates without the stipulated number of years of full time teaching experience need not apply for the vacancies above.**

Annual Taxable Remuneration and Benefit:

Assistant Professor (MOP627,480 - MOP883,120)

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Type of Contract:

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Application and Documents Need to be Submitted:

Apply **online** at IFT website (<http://www.ift.edu.mo/JobVacancies>) and submit the following documents in PDF format:

- Copies of certificates of all academic degrees awarded and relevant transcripts
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- Full resume
- Cover letter
- Identity Card or passport copy
- List of academic journals or articles published (if available) with ISBN

Required qualifications and teaching experiences which are not supported by testimonials and/or verifiable evidence at the time of application will not be considered

Application closes on 10 January 2018

- The selected candidates are expected to assume duty in 2018.
- Final result name list will be announced on IFT website around second-quarter of 2018 or earlier.
- Please note that ALL application materials must be received by the closing date (Macao time). Application received by IFT after the closing date will only be included in the next round of recruitment, if applicable.
- Personal data provided by applicants will be kept confidential and used for recruitment purpose only.

For application details, please visit <http://www.ift.edu.mo/JobVacancies>.

For enquiries, please send to Job Vacancies On-line enquiry <http://www.ift.edu.mo/JobEnquiry>.

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin telephoned U.S. President Donald Trump Sunday to thank him for a CIA tip that helped thwart a series of bombings in St. Petersburg, the Kremlin and the White House said.

During the call, the two leaders' second in three days, Putin expressed gratitude for the CIA information. The Kremlin said it led Russia's top domestic security agency to a group of suspects that planned to bomb St. Petersburg's Kazan Cathedral and other crowded sites this weekend.

The White House said in its readout of the conversation that "based on the information the United States provided, Russian authorities were able to capture the terrorists just prior to an attack that could have killed large numbers of people."

The White House added that Putin extended his thanks and congratulations to CIA Director Mike Pompeo and the entire agency. Trump then called Pompeo "to congratulate him, his very talented people, and the entire intelligence community on a job well done!"

"President Trump appreciated the call and told President Putin that he and the entire United States intelligence community were pleased to have helped save so many lives," the White House said in its statement. "President Trump

RUSSIA

Putin thanks Trump for CIA warning that thwarted bomb plot

stressed the importance of intelligence cooperation to defeat terrorists wherever they may be. Both leaders agreed that this serves as an example of the positive things that can occur when our countries work together."

The Kremlin said Putin assured Trump that "if the Russian intelligence agencies receive information about potential terror threats against the United States and its citizens, they will immediately hand it over to their U.S. counterparts via their communications channels."

The CIA's tip to Russia comes even as Russia-U.S. ties have plunged to their lowest level since the Cold War era — first over Russia's annexation of Crimea and support for pro-Russia separatists in Ukraine, more recently over allegations that Moscow interfered in the U.S. presidential election to help Trump.

While Russian officials have said the two countries were continuing to exchange some terror-related



Russian President Vladimir Putin

intelligence, Sunday's statement from the Kremlin was Russia's first public assertion that information from the United States helped prevent an attack.

The suspects were allegedly plotting a suicide bombing in a church and a series of other explosions in the city's busiest areas on IS orders. A search of a St. Petersburg

apartment found explosives, automatic weapons and extremist literature.

If the suspects succeeded in bombing the cathedral, it would have been the first major attack on a Russian Orthodox Church by Islamic terrorists, who have blown up apartment buildings, passenger planes and transport facilities

in Russia.

Alexei Chepa, a deputy head of the foreign affairs committee in the lower house of Russia's parliament, hailed the CIA tip as a "step toward cooperation."

"The more such actions we have, the better it will be for both our countries," Chepa told the state RIA Novosti news agency. **MDT/Agencies**

AD

SATURDAY SUPERSTACK

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what's ON

TEAMLAB FUTURE PARK
 TIME: 1:30pm-10pm (Mondays to Fridays)
 10:30am-10pm (Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays; 90 minutes per session, maximum capacity is 150 people at one time)
 UNTIL: February 28, 2018
 VENUE: MGM Art Space
 ADMISSION: MOP150 (MOP120 for Macau residents; free admission for children aged 2 or under)

DISCOVER MACAU: MUSEUM OF TAIPA AND COLOANE HISTORY
 TIME: 10am-6pm daily (Last admission at 5:30pm; closed on Mondays)
 ADDRESS: Rua Correia da Silva, Taipa
 ADMISSION: Free
 ENQUIRIES: (853) 8988 4000

A PROMENADE IN THE SMALL CITY: AN ILLUSTRATION EXHIBITION OF THE MACAU CULTURAL AND CREATIVE MAP
 TIME: 11am-10pm
 Until: December 31, 2017
 VENUE: Lakeside Gallery, Anim'Arte
 ADMISSION: Free
 ENQUIRIES: (853) 2836 6866

AFFECTION FOR LOTUS – EXHIBITION OF PAINTING AND CALLIGRAPHY FOR THE 100TH BIRTHDAY OF JAO TSUNG-I
 TIME: 10am-6pm (Last admission at 17:30; closed on Mondays; open on public holidays)
 UNTIL: December 31, 2017
 VENUE: Jao Tsung-I Academy
 ADMISSION: Free
 ENQUIRIES: (853) 2852 2523

Offbeat

HOLY COW! WANDERING BOVINE RETURNED TO PHILLY NATIVITY SCENE



A cow in Philadelphia apparently wanted to be away from the manger, as it escaped twice last Thursday morning from a church's live nativity scene.
 Stormy, a 7-year-old brown and white Hereford, was back munching hay at Old First Reformed Church of Christ by 7:15 a.m. after two sets of adventures on snowy downtown streets.
 Police first got reports of a cow near an Interstate 95 on-ramp around 2 a.m. Thursday.
 One of the state police troopers who responded has a cattle ranch in New Jersey and knew how to handle the situation, WPVI-TV reports. Officers put a rope on the cow and walked her to a nearby parking lot with police vehicles helping shepherd Stormy back to church. Some lanes of the highway had to be shut down as the cow was wrangled.
 But for Stormy, all was not calm and bright. She fled again around 6 a.m., despite Rev. Michael Caine's best efforts to stop the 1,500-pound animal. She then ambled toward a major thoroughfare as the morning rush got underway.
 "If you're in the area of 4th and Market, beware of traffic delays. A cow is loose. Again. No, we can't believe we are tweeting this either," the police department tweeted just before 7 a.m.
 This time, the bovine was tracked down on the fourth floor of a parking garage about a block south of the church.
 By late morning, Stormy was loaded into a trailer to head back to the Manatawna Saul Farm, which is a high school 4-H club that owns her.

TV canal macau

13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	RTPi News (Delayed Broadcast)
15:00	Miscellaneous
15:35	Zig Zag
16:10	NOS League: Tondela x Benfica (Repeated)
17:50	Brazilian Soap Opera (Repeated)
18:40	TDM Sports (Repeated)
19:50	Portuguese Serie
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	TDM Interview
21:30	Grimm Sr. 2
22:10	Brazilian Soap Opera
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Miscellaneous
00:05	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
00:40	RTPi Live

cinema

CINETEATRO



STAR WARS EPISODE VIII
 ROOM 1
 (2D) 2:15, 9:30pm
 (3D) 6:50pm
 ROOM 2
 (2D) 4:15, 7:00pm
 Director: Rian Johnson
 Starring: Daisy Ridley, John Boyega, Mark Hamill
 Language: English (Chinese)
 Duration: 150 min



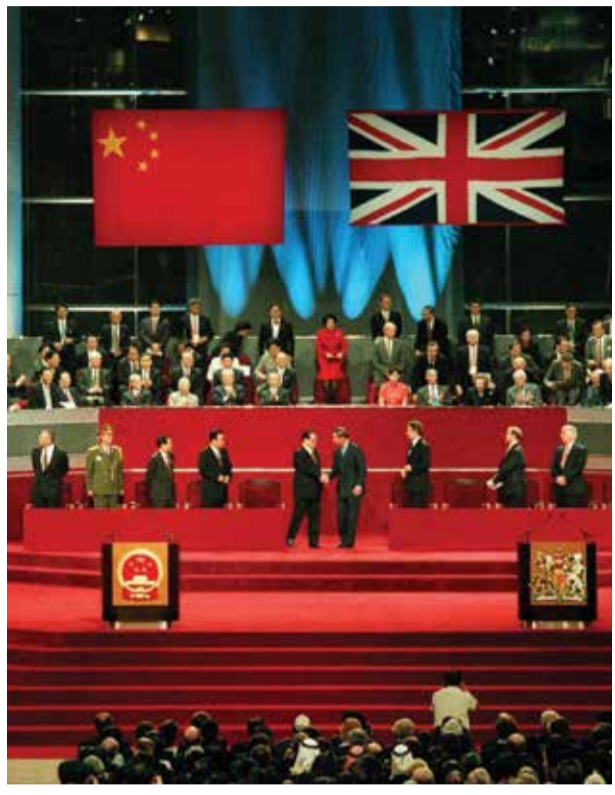
MY LITTLE PONY: THE MOVIE
 ROOM 1
 5:00pm
 ROOM 3
 2:30pm
 Director: Jayson Thiessen
 Starring: Emily Blunt, Kristin Chenoweth, Liev Schreiber
 Language: Cantonese
 Duration: 99min

WONDER
 ROOM 2
 2:15, 9:45pm
 Director: Stephen Chbosky
 Starring: Julia Roberts, Owen Wilson, Jacob Tremblay
 Language: Chinese (English)
 Duration: 113min



MY TOMORROW, YOUR YESTERDAY
 ROOM 3
 4:30, 7:30, 9:30pm
 Director: Takahiro Miki
 Starring: Sota Fukushi, Nana Komatsu
 Language: Japanese (English & Chinese)
 Duration: 111min

this day in history



1984 BRITAIN SIGNS OVER HONG KONG TO CHINA

The British colony of Hong Kong is to be returned to China in 1997 after an historic agreement was signed in Peking today.
 Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher signed the Joint Sino-British Declaration with her Chinese counterpart Zhao Ziyang.
 It formally seals the future of Hong Kong, transferring it from a British colony of six million people to communist China in 13 years.
 The agreement, which will end 155 years of British rule in the colony, also launches a new era in trade and diplomacy between the two countries.
 Chinese president Deng Xiaoping, who pursued the recovery of Hong Kong, greeted Mrs Thatcher.
 The champagne ceremony took place at the Great Hall of the People before delegates who helped draw up the agreement, including 101 guests from Hong Kong.
 Mrs Thatcher said: "The circumstances are unique. The agreement is unique."
 "It is right that we should feel a sense of history, of pride and of confidence in the future."
 The declaration outlines Hong Kong will be "restored" to the People's Republic of China with effect from July 1 1997 and will apply for fifty years.
 It will be known as the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR).
 Britain has agreed to return Hong Kong after guarantees it will "enjoy a high degree of autonomy, except in foreign and defence affairs".
 And China's principle of "one country, two systems" allows Hong Kong to have a capitalist economy and enjoy existing rights and freedoms.
 The Prime Minister later revealed the negotiation process had been rocky.
 When Mrs Thatcher last visited Peking in 1982 the atmosphere was hostile as an agreement could not be reached.
 Talks restarted in July 1983 and today's agreement, which was finalised only ten days before the 30 September deadline, is being hailed as a diplomatic coup.
 Mrs Thatcher will visit Hong Kong tomorrow during her whistle-stop world tour.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

A bloody crackdown by troops on protests in the Chinese capital, Beijing, in June 1989, known as the "Tiananmen Square massacre" soured relations between Britain and China.
 The British Government, fearing for the colony's future, responded by granting British passports to 50,000 Hong Kong heads of families, building a new international airport, and introducing a Bill of Rights.
 Chris Patten, the last Governor of Hong Kong introduced democratic reforms in 1992 which the Chinese Government opposed.
 A series of diplomatic meetings between the two governments in 1995 and 1996 improved relations.
 On 1 July 1997 a spectacular ceremony in Hong Kong celebrated a new era in its political life as it transferred to Chinese control.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 A recent confrontation with someone close to you could have serious emotional fallout and lead you to question their loyalty. Take a walk or get some exercise to clear your head.

Taurus April 20-May 20 If you kept your emotions in a bank, you might be feeling just a touch overdrawn right now. Remember that while it's always nice to feel nostalgia, you're really not helping yourself by staying stuck in the past.

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 Your restless mood pushes you to explore different paths and become acquainted with unusual folks you'd normally consider unsuitable. These different types turn out to have far more in common with you than you'd think.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Understanding almost always leads to compassion, especially when it comes to a loved one. It's not just a matter of trying to see things from their point of view.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Curb your appetite for attention and you may learn something extremely important about someone's agenda that had previously eluded you. It's amazing what you can discover when you listen carefully to other people!

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 Break free from the pack and capture something (or someone) that is your heart's desire. Give it all you've got - holding back comes across as hesitation or weakness and just confuses matters.

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 You have a chance to really change some financial agreement you don't like, thanks to some particularly helpful financial energy. This is doubly true when it comes to negotiations or other social events.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 Some bright social energy is zipping through your life right now, giving you an extra dose of sex appeal. Not only does this enhance all first impressions, it also gives you the ability to think quickly on your feet.

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 Do you feel like your home life is in need of some serious transformation? It's no wonder, with the mutable energy coursing through your life right now. You may decide a relationship needs a serious overhaul.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 You can be quite an attention-grabber with your top-notch ideas - and right now, you're definitely on a roll. Spread the word and let people know exactly what kind of plans you've got for your company.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 A last-minute reprieve arrives, possibly in the form of a financial rescue or a hot deadline that suddenly gets pushed back. This gives you a way out of a confining situation.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 You make faster progress today by hitching your wagon to a team rather than plodding along on your own. You may get plenty done on your own, but you need a more social dynamic to really get ahead.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

WEATHER

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

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- George of "Just Shoot Me"; 6- Collective word for intellectual pursuits; 10- Trevi Fountain site; 14- 1985 Kate Nelligan film; 15- Person who is liable to tell untruths; 16- Cabinet dept.; 17- Sean of "The Lord of the Rings"; 18- Rani's wrap; 19- Dock; 20- Held by a contract; 22- Off the leash; 23- Chieftain, usually in Africa; 24- Longed for; 26- The French word for "no"; 29- At a distance; 31- Three sheets to the wind; 32- "Hold On Tight" band; 33- 1492 vessel; 34- Polar cover; 38- Yellow cheese coated with red wax; 40- Sloppy place; 42- Change decor; 43- Remove the antlers; 46- Able was...; 49- Prefix with classical; 50- Spy org.; 51- Wild ones are sown; 52- Aviv preceider; 53- Greeting; 57- Workout count; 59- a time; 60- Without a defined social structure; 65- Lens holders; 66- WWII battle site; 67- Liquid waste component; 68- Animistic god or spirit; 69- Vintner's prefix; 70- Long stories; 71- Scrutinize; 72- Durable wood; 73- Overact;

DOWN: 1- Authenticating mark; 2- Word in a threat; 3- "___ grip!"; 4- Licorice flavoring; 5- Person who repairs telephone wires; 6- Losers; 7- Iranian coin; 8- Behind time; 9- ___ Lanka; 10- Newsmen; 11- Pungent bulb; 12- 1980s attorney general; 13- Blew it; 21- LP player; 22- Secular; 25- Inventor Whitney; 26- Can't do without; 27- Ye ___ Shoppe; 28- Flood survivor; 30- Rate; 35- Penny; 36- Zip-___-Doo-Dah; 37- Wading place; 39- American Indian shoe; 41- High school memento; 44- Public disturbance; 45- "Miss Saigon" setting; 47- Numbered rds.; 48- Marry; 53- Factory; 54- Early computer; 55- Helping theorem; 56- Cosmetician Lauder; 58- Beat it!; 61- Forearm bone; 62- Shakespearean villain; 63- Rat-___; 64- ___-majestA©; 66- Boozehound;



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Fire department 28 572 222
Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993
Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333
Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
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IACM 28 387 333
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AD

Real estate advertisement for JML Property, featuring 'FOR SALE' and 'FOR RENT' listings with details on location, size, and price for various properties in Taipa, Coloane, and Nam Long.



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The unhappy one: No smiles as Lukaku scores again for United

AFTER his barren run in the Premier League, it's two goals in two games for Manchester United striker Romelu Lukaku. What he's yet to rediscover is the joy of scoring.

Lukaku scored the opening goal in United's 2-1 win at West Bromwich Albion on Sunday but refused to celebrate, instead looking stony-faced as he was mobbed by his teammates.

Just like after he scored the midweek winner against Bournemouth.

"Maybe he looks to the bench and sees his manager doesn't celebrate," United manager Jose Mourinho said, attempting an explanation for how Lukaku greeted his 27th-minute goal at The Hawthorns.

Then there was the fact he spent the 2012-13 season on loan at West Brom, even scoring a hat trick against United that year.

"Maybe he loves West Brom," Mourinho added. "Maybe he remembers the team that helped him early in his career."

Or maybe it was a riposte to the critics. Lukaku went 2 1/2 months scoring just one league goal before his strike against Bournemouth. He started the season with seven goals in his first seven league games.

Either way, Lukaku is back

among the goals as second-place United heads into the busy festive period 11 points behind Manchester City, with 18 of 38 league games having been played.

Liverpool had no problem scoring against Bournemouth, either, in the other match on Sunday. The Reds won 4-0 on the south coast, with Mohamed Salah almost inevitably on the score sheet to move to 20 goals for the season before Christmas.

They moved up to fourth place ahead of a game against fifth-place Arsenal on Friday.

United has recovered from its damaging derby loss to Manchester City last weekend with hard-fought, back-to-back wins to stay in second place.

Like against Bournemouth, United did just enough to get the three points and can now welcome back midfielder fulcrum Paul Pogba to the team after his three-game suspension.

Jesse Lingard following up Lukaku's opener with a goal in the 36th minute to put United 2-0 up.

West Brom finished the stronger and substitute Gareth Barry reduced the deficit in the 79th at a corner. The team still hasn't won in four games under new manager Alan Pardew and stayed in the relegation zone in 19th place.

United lost captain and right back Antonio Valencia to injury in the 66th minute.

With Sadio Mane rested, Liverpool's so-called "Fab Four" was missing a key member at Bournemouth. It didn't matter.

The other three — Salah, Philippe Coutinho and Roberto Firmino — scored along with center back Dejan Lovren at Vitality Stadium.

The Reds rebounded from back-to-back draws at Anfield — to Everton, then West Bromwich Albion — with another big away victory, having already won 5-1 at Brighton this month. They climbed above Burnley and Arsenal, and back into the Champions League qualification positions. **AP**



Manchester United's Romelu Lukaku celebrates scoring against West Bromwich Albion

AD

3 - 31 DECEMBER 2017

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I BUY MACAU

Style Blogger Becky Fang
7th Macau Shopping Festival Ambassador

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opinion

World Views

Michael Pettis, Bloomberg

CHINA SHOULD LET ITS MIGRANT WORKERS ROAM FREE

Over the past few weeks, people here in Beijing have been riveted by the so-called migrant “clean-out” - the government’s attempt to evict tens of thousands of migrant workers from their homes in the poorer parts of the city. What’s not being discussed, however, is how the crackdown could threaten one of the government’s other main priorities: managing debt.

In China, mobility is legally restricted according to a household registration system, called the hukou. Chinese citizens receive an urban or rural hukou which officially identifies them as residents of a specific area and which allows them to live and work only in that area. Few if any of the migrant workers affected by the current sweep possess a Beijing hukou.

Previously, this didn’t really matter. For the past three decades, during the period of China’s furious economic growth, the country’s fastest-growing regions were desperate for cheap labor to fill factories and build infrastructure. With local government officials graded in large part on their ability to generate rapid growth, they largely ignored hukou restrictions and made migration into their cities easy. Hundreds of millions of workers traveled from their hukou areas to wherever there were jobs, in particular big cities such as Beijing, Shenzhen and Shanghai.

The attitudes of local authorities may be changing now as the economy slows and officials become more concerned about unemployment and tensions over access to schools and other social services. One of the easiest tools the authorities have to manage both problems is to enforce the hukou rules that are already on the books. In Beijing, the campaign is broadly popular among legal residents, who complain about overcrowding and rising rents.

If it spreads, however, the crackdown could carry a significant macroeconomic cost. Enforcing the residency system nationally could severely limit labor mobility in China. This would in turn constrain monetary policy, which is critical to minimizing the cost to China of what’s likely to be a very difficult adjustment after decades of deeply unbalanced growth.

How exactly would this happen? It’s important to remember that while China is a huge economy with a great deal of variety across different regions, it can nonetheless operate effectively with a single currency because it has most of the characteristics of an optimum currency area. In the 1960s, Columbia University’s Robert Mundell argued that four conditions were required to establish such an area. They include high levels of labor mobility, high levels of capital mobility, a system of transfers that shares risks across the region, and coordinated business cycles.

If labor mobility in China slows dramatically, growth rates in different parts of the country would diverge even more than they have already, rather than converge.

For this reason, authorities should monitor labor practices carefully and take steps to prevent local officials from heavily enforcing the hukou. This may prove difficult, in which case they should consider alternative policies to reinforce monetary integration. They could strengthen fiscal policies that transfer income from faster-growing provinces to slower-growing ones, for example, or manage fiscal spending so that business cycles are more closely coordinated across regions.

One thing we know from the history of developing countries is how suddenly virtuous cycles can become vicious cycles. In China, rapid growth historically encouraged local officials to ignore hukou restrictions. This caused a sharp increase in labor mobility, which made monetary policy more effective and, in turn, encouraged even more rapid growth.

This self-reinforcing process could just as easily reverse itself, with slow growth encouraging officials to restrict labor mobility, weakening the transmission of monetary policy and slowing growth even further. Officials might want to think twice before making their own jobs harder.

[Abridged]

THE **BUZZ** QUIZ ON GOA DRAWS MACAU STUDENTS

Students from the Portuguese School (EPM) participated in a quiz competition at Goa University for the first time.

The quiz consists of questions based on articles written by the students from Classes 10-12 of Goa-based schools on several arts and culture topics.

The event will be telecast on a Goan channel in January 2018, the Times of India reported. The

three participants were Leonor Silva, Teresa Senna Fernandes and Joana Yee. Yee, who has Goan roots, was eager to see more of the land where her grandparents were born.

According to the Times of India, the trio participated in the Portuguese quiz, Kaleidoscope, an event that attracts students from all over Goa. The quizzes were held in five languages - Portuguese, Hindi, Konkani, Marathi and French.

Station	Air quality	
Roadside	65-95 Moderate	
High Density Residential Area	65-95 Moderate	
Ambient	65-95 Moderate	

SOURCE: DSI/MG

Catalan economy feels the pinch amid bid to split from Spain

Barry Hatton, Lisbon

JITTERY businessmen in Catalonia, spooked by signs the recent tumult over the region’s latest bid to secede from Spain is hurting the local economy, have put their investment plans on ice as they brace for the Catalan parliamentary election on Thursday.

Catalan retail sales and tourist arrivals are falling and unemployment is edging higher, recent figures show.

Investors and consumers react badly to uncertainty and conflict, and Catalonia’s push to break away has brought Spain’s worst institutional crisis in decades.

The Catalan regional government was removed from office by Spain’s national government in late October after regional lawmakers passed a declaration of independence that Spanish authorities deemed illegal. That came after an Oct. 1 independence referendum in Catalonia which the Spanish Constitutional Court disallowed. Catalonia is currently being run by direct rule from Madrid.

The upcoming election looks like being a tight race between Catalans who support secession and those who prefer to remain in Spain.

A lot is at stake when polling stations open for 7.5 million voters in a region that accoun-



A stall street in Barcelona

ts for 19 percent of Spain’s gross domestic product. A triumph for pro-independence parties could unleash further social and political mayhem that would ripple unpredictably across Spain, which has the fourth-largest economy in the 19-country eurozone. Citing the uncertainty over Catalonia, Spain’s central bank on Friday cut its growth forecasts for next year and 2019 to 2.4 percent and 2.1 percent respectively, shaving a percentage point off its previous predictions.

A recent survey of more than 100 company directors in the northeastern Spanish region found that 46 percent of them have put their 2018 spending plans on hold while they await the election outcome.

They have reason to fear: Just over half of them said their company sales fell from September to November, by an average of 9.5 percent, making them wary of the future, according to a survey published last week by the

economist Fernando Trias de Bes in collaboration with the ESADE Business School. The surveyed companies together employed almost 158,000 people.

Just over 3,000 businesses have moved their official headquarters out of Catalonia in recent months, anxious they might no longer be covered by Spanish and European Union laws if Catalonia broke away. Those companies included Catalonia’s top two banks, Caixabank and Sabadell, and Planeta, the world’s leading Spanish-language publisher.

Retail sales in Catalonia fell almost 4 percent in October compared with the same month last year. That was the steepest drop in Spain, where nationally the fall was 0.1 percent, the national statistics agency INE said.

Tourist arrivals in Catalonia, including its popular capital Barcelona, that month were 4.7 percent down on 2016, according to the INE. **AP**

THE **DECISIVE MOMENT**

AP Photo/Shizuo Kambayashi



Shush! Giant panda cub Xiang Xiang [right] and her mother Shin Shin take a nap at a panda cage at Ueno Zoo in Tokyo. The baby panda (right) made a special appearance before Tokyo’s governor, a group of local schoolchildren and the media one day ahead of her official debut.

WORLD BRIEFS



SOUTH AFRICA Counting of votes for the next president of the ruling African National Congress party has begun. More than 4,700 ANC delegates have gathered on the outskirts of Johannesburg to vote for a new party leader, who is likely to become South Africa’s next president. **More on p14**

CENTRAL EUROPE A planned gas pipeline to link Russia with Germany that bypasses Ukraine and Poland threatens central Europe’s security, Poland’s new prime minister said yesterday.



AUSTRIA Sebastian Kurz (pictured, left) was sworn in yesterday as Austria’s new chancellor, making him Europe’s youngest leader at age 31, after his Austrian People’s Party formed a coalition with the nationalist Freedom Party that is expected to move the country’s politics to the right.

FRANCE The first group of African refugees benefiting from a new initiative bringing those deemed to be especially vulnerable directly to Europe arrived in France yesterday.



HONDURAS President Juan Orlando Hernandez (pictured) has been declared the winner of Honduras’ disputed election, but that did little to quell unrest from weeks of uncertainty as challenger Salvador Nasralla called for more protests yesterday.

CANADA Toronto homicide detectives have taken over the investigation of the deaths of billionaire Barry Sherman and his wife after autopsies showed they died from “ligature neck compression.”