



ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND EFFICIENCY

The new UM rector said that academic freedom is a way to develop an efficient university, citing his experience in the UK

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MACAU, GUANGDONG SIGN EIGHT AGREEMENTS

The new agreements cover topics including food safety, protection of intellectual property, energy efficiency, and the environment

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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'"

WORLD BRIEFS



MALAYSIA's government said yesterday it will pay U.S. company Ocean Infinity up to USD70 million if it can find the wreckage or black boxes of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 within three months, in a renewed bid to solve the plane's disappearance nearly four years ago.
More on p13

MYANMAR's military acknowledged yesterday that its security forces and Buddhist villagers killed 10 Rohingya Muslims whose bodies were found in a mass grave in a village in troubled Rakhine state.



THAILAND's foreign minister admitted that former Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, who fled the country last year to evade a prison sentence, is in Britain, after photos surfaced online apparently showing Yingluck in London.



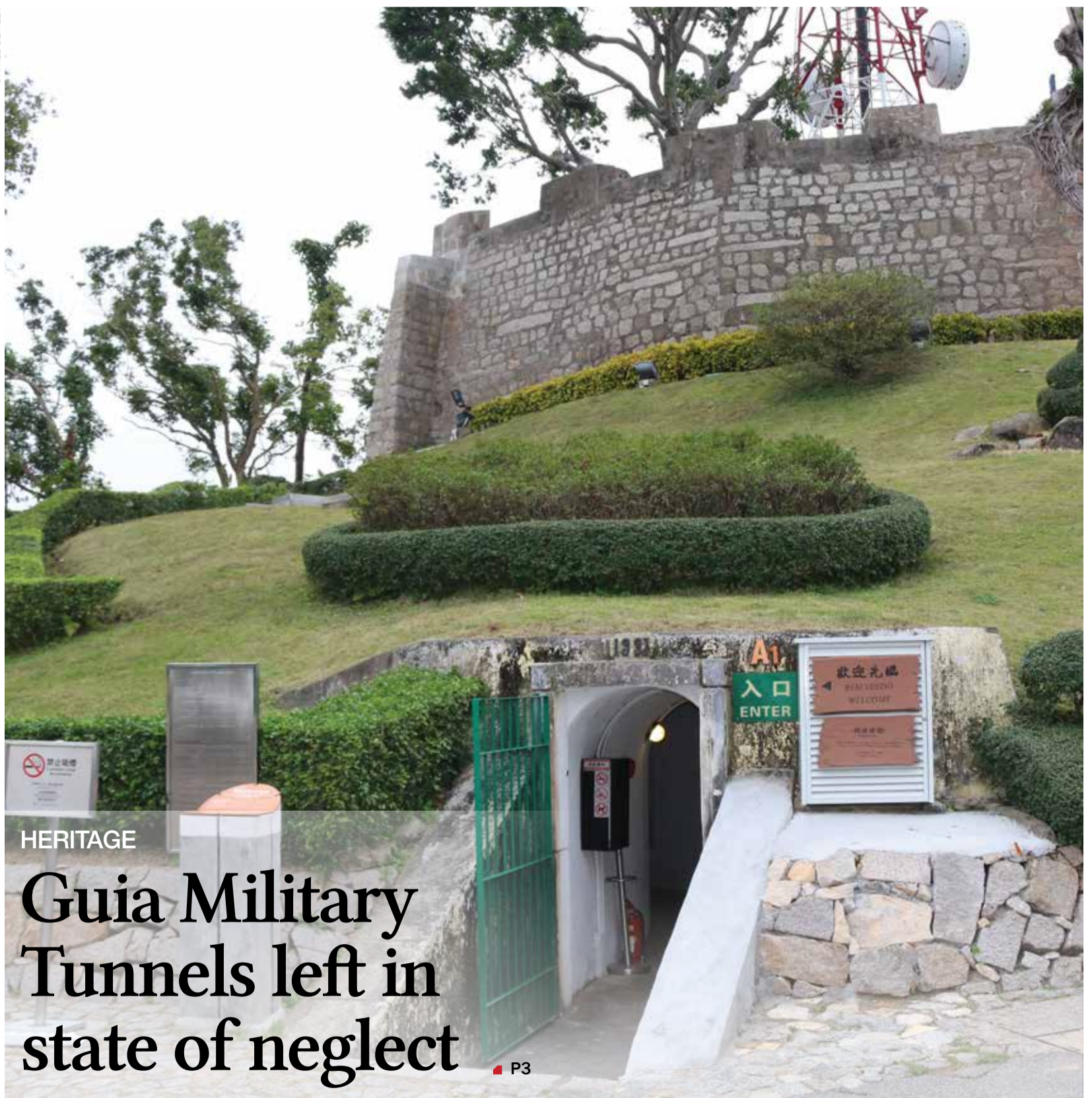
PAKISTAN A mob angered over the recent rape and murder of an 8-year-old girl attacked a police station and a nearby government building in eastern Punjab province yesterday, triggering clashes that left at least two people dead and several injured.
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Sou fights back with suspension appeal

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DANIEL BEITLER



HERITAGE

Guia Military Tunnels left in state of neglect

P3

UK-BASED investment firm Macau Property Opportunities Fund has released its financial statement for the fourth quarter of the 2017 fiscal year, including an assessment of the local property market and the fund's predictions for 2018.

In the financial statement, the fund said it was "hopeful that Macau's VIP gaming segment will recover further which will facilitate the continued recovery of rental values and improve occupancy rates."

The city's property market correlates strongly with the health of the gaming sector.

Macau's gross gaming revenue last year amounted to about MOP265.7 billion (approximately USD33 billion), up 19.1 percent when compared to 2016. Constituting more than 85 percent of Macau's economy, the growth in GGR propelled gross domestic product growth much further than International Monetary Fund forecasts, which had predicted a 13.4 percent annual increase.

British investment firm optimistic on local property market

The strong posting has already led to a significant increase in residential property prices in the post-recession landscape.

Accounting for both luxury and economy apartments, the average transaction price of residential units in Macau surged by more than 32 percent year-on-year in the second quarter of 2017, according to the Statistics and Census Service. That growth was slightly moderated by November 2017, standing 21 percent higher than in the same month the previous year.

Macau Property Opportunities Fund noted that small-size apartments are "more saleable in the current market" because "they are generally not subject to the mortgage loan cap." Consequently, some properties, like The

Fountainside near Lilau Square, are considering reconfiguring existing apartments into multiple small units.

Pointing to the impending opening of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge in 2018, the firm expects an influx of additional foreign labor in future, leading to a rise in demand for accommodation in the leasing market and long-term growth in residential property prices.

Established in 2006, Macau Property Opportunities Fund claims to be the only quoted property fund dedicated to investing in Macau. Its current portfolio comprises a mix of prime residential and retail property assets that were valued at USD436.2 million (about MOP3.52 billion), as at end-September 2017, the report noted. **DB**



MTel hopes to double number of users in 2018

LOCAL telecom company MTel is planning to hit a new record in the number of customers in 2018, the chairman and CEO of the MTel, Choi Tak Meng, told the media this week.

"Currently, the number of our users exceeds 5,000, with households corresponding to the majority. More than 4,100 [of the users] are households, and the remaining are commercial users and WiFi stations," said Choi. According to Choi, "our colleagues hope that [the number of users] can break the 10,000 barrier [in 2018]."

MTel's business in 2017, doubled approximately that of 2016. The MTel CEO also stated that "more business will be even better."

When talking about MTel's service coverage in town, Choi revealed that "in the Macau peninsula, our coverage already exceeds 80 percent, while in



Taipa it already exceeded 86 percent. In Coloane, it is more than 76 percent."

In view of MTel's concession and in agreement with the Macau government, MTel has to cover more than 99 percent of Macau's residential buildings in 2018. When asked if the company is confident in achieving the goal, Choi replied that there are different expectations for distinct areas of the territory.

"Regarding Coloane and Taipa, we are very confident. We have been making plans for it, while

many of them have already been implemented," said Choi, who added that the commercial operations in the Macau peninsula are what MTel and several governmental departments have been working together on to expand coverage. However, Choi is still confident in achieving coverage of 99 percent of residential buildings in Macau.

Until now, more than 1,000 buildings in Macau have installed MTel's fiber optic network.

MTel was established in Macau in 2011. In 2013,

the Macau government awarded MTel a telecommunications network license.

Before MTel entered the Macau market, Macau had a sole telecommunications service provider, which made it "inevitable" that customers would use the only service provider available, according to Choi.

During MTel's network installation process in some of Macau's buildings, the company was faced with difficulties posed by certain property management companies.

Making suggestions to the government regarding a solution to these problems, Choi hopes that Macau can refer to other regions to make changes.

"I used to make the related government department aware of the situation. In Hong Kong, if you have a license, the law rules that a building must let it [an operator] enter. [...] It allows customers to choose whichever [operator] serves better," said Choi.

According to Choi, MTel is a local operator with the whole team formed of Macau residents.

CCM calls on local filmmakers for proposals

THE Macao Cultural Centre (CCM) is calling on local filmmakers to submit their new cinematic projects to be produced and screened in a new edition of "Local View Power".

Candidates willing to share their perspectives about Macau can present their proposals until January 22, according to a statement issued by CCM.

With an overall budget of more than MOP 1million across all categories, this year's edition will support up to 17 individual proposals.

The competition welcomes candidates from three levels of experience, from "Advanced" and "Open" levels aimed at directors aged 18 or above, to "Freshmen", a section for filmmakers under the age of 18.

Participants may submit proposals in the documentary, short feature, or animation categories, each of which will be as-



essed by a panel composed of three audio-visual professionals.

"Local View Power" began in 2007, and has since had ten editions, attracting over 500 proposals that have resulted in 104 finalized works.

These works include "Crash", a film that was produced in 2016 and awarded overseas.

Selected teams will be given technical and financial support to complete their productions, including a mentorship scheme devised and tutored by guest professionals.

Application forms for "Local View Power 2017-2018" are available on CCM's website until January 22.

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UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE

Guia Military Tunnels left in state of neglect

Daniel Beitler

THE Guia Military Tunnels, a heritage site embedded in the hills near the Guia Lighthouse, was discovered by the Times last month in a state of neglect, with dirt and discarded items littering the exhibits.

Large pieces of plastic shared shelf space with historical relics, both coated in a thin layer of accumulating dust and dirt. Cleaning equipment and other dust-covered items were positioned in a corner of the exhibition, clearly visible to the visitor and appearing to have been there for some time.

Unlike many other museums, most of the exhibited pieces did not sit behind glass panes, and were instead exposed to the air and outside environment.

The state of neglect makes the exhibit look unattractive and is unseemly of a city that wants to promote its cultural heritage as an alternative tourist attraction to gambling.

In response to an enquiry from the Times, the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) says it is now stepping up inspections of the Guia

Military Tunnels.

The Tunnels have been under IC management since 2016 and the bureau says personnel are assigned to "conduct regular inspections every month".

"In response to the on-site environmental hygiene and junk accumulation, the IC immediately urged the cleaning company to follow up the cleaning works so as to continue with the normal operation of Guia Military Tunnels, and arrange personnel to enhance the inspections of the Guia Military Tunnels," the IC wrote in an emailed statement to the Times.

The Times revisited the site yesterday to find most of the discarded items cleared, however, several pieces, such as the remains of a plastic bottle, had been ignored or overlooked.

Part of the Historic Center of Macau, UNESCO World Heritage Site, the tunnel network is comprised of three passageways within the 17th-century military complex of Guia Fortress.

Constructed during the interwar period by order of the Portuguese administration in Macau, the 'capillary' network served as a shortcut between military facilities,



DANIEL BEITLER



expediting the redeployment of artillery and munitions from one side of the hill to the other. It was also used as a place to station soldiers, who might use it as a shelter in the event of bombing raids.

Today, two of the tunnels, located just a few minutes from the Guia Lighthouse, have been converted into a museum and are

open to the public. They house various relics from the interwar period, including military uniforms and equipment, and an old electric generator.

Since assuming responsibility for the maintenance of the site in 2016, the IC has enlisted the help of restoration professionals to preserve the cultural relics.

Among the items that underwent anti-rusting maintenance works in 2016 were two military hats and three military knives displayed in exhibition cabinets. Repair work on one of the tunnels was conducted by the IC in February last year and included the replacement of several damaged exhibition panels.

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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'"

Renato Marques

PLENARY

Another Hato debate at the AL, gov't claims no others responsible

A debate proposed at the start of the legislature by lawmaker Ng Kuok Cheong was finally held yesterday on the consequences of Typhoon Hato. Similar to a debate held last week, the responsibilities of government officials in the wake of the catastrophe were discussed.

"We have to ascertain responsibilities!" said Ng, referring both to the executive as well as at a political level.

The Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, and the interim director of the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG), Raymond Tam, remarked that the government has already assumed new responsibilities and has begun taking concrete measures to tackle the issues at hand.

Wong said, "We draft plans [for the] short, mid and long-term. And one plan for the short-term that I can say has already been concluded is to improve the services of Civil Protection through buying several [pieces of] equipment... We already concluded this," he said. Tam then continued, stating that the SMG would



Ng Kuok Cheong proposed the debate

pay attention to key factors in storms; not only strong wind levels but also any rise in the tides. In such a

way, SMG could guarantee that, "[In the future] we will issue [a] timely warning."

In one of the very few new measures advanced by the Security Chief at yesterday's session, Wong said that in addition to acquiring any the equipment that was lacking during the Hato's rescue operations, SMG will also broadcast SMS messages to media outlets and "install megaphones in vehicles that would circulate around the city to transmit information to the population."

Tam also said that the government is changing two executive orders that will add two more categories for typhoon severity (strong typhoon and super strong typhoon), add two new levels for storm surge warnings (from three to five), and increase the frequency of the wind analysis procedure from every hour to every 10 minutes.

Tam also reaffirmed that the new 'typhoon approaching' warnings will give three hours' notice from now on.

Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário then replied to a question of lawmaker Au Kam San, saying "we will raise our electricity production by resorting to Natural Gas plants in Ka Ho. I believe we should have this system in operation during this year."

Lawmakers Pereira Coutinho, Au Kam San and Ho Ion San, questioned the government about the responsibilities of senior officials.

Wong, the director of the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau, Eddie Kou, and the Secretary noted in response that a committee had already been created and had already presented its report, which stated that some people had violated their duties and that the appropriate disciplinary procedures had been followed.

Replying to Pereira Coutinho's doubts about the retirement of the former director Fong Soi Kun, Kou replied that the law establishes that every civil servant "with over 30 years of service and over 55 years of age can request early retirement submitting a request more than 90 days prior to the retirement date."

Not satisfied with the explanation, Coutinho said, "Put[ting] all the blame on the [former] director of the SMG is an unacceptable escape," adding, "The report of CCAC (Committee Against Corruption) pointed out the problems about which I had warned before and the Secretary [for Transport and Public Works] didn't care at the time and continues to not to care now."

As for Ho, he noted that the current disciplinary measures that apply to Civil Servants involve their removal from their duties, with a potential suspension from salary earning for four years. The lawmaker considered the-

se unfit. Kou replied, "the government on the policy address for 2018 had said already that it would regulate in different ways the evaluation from the Civil Servants. We are reviewing this regime to see if there is a margin to improve it."

Questioning a different issue were the lawmakers from the Worker's Association, Ella Lei and Leong Sun Iok, who were asking about a mechanism to be established regarding rules for the non-circulation of people during severe storms, specifically preventing them from going to work.


Leong further reminded the room that the "Labor Law does not establish anything on this matter."

This fact was acknowledged by both secretaries, while Wong said, "rules do not force the suspension from work of private entities and we do not have a way to force them to do that."

Rosario stated, "In fact, that's the situation. All we can do is to recommend that people do not leave their houses, when that is possible."

Lei remarked that such lack of rules "is a threat to the safety [of the workers]. If the public services and the schools can stop, the government should think about this for the others [private entities] too," noting that during and in the aftermath of Hato, "many workers were forced to go to their jobs but upon arrival there was no electricity or water supply and many just stayed there seated without doing anything," thus further urging the government to create a mechanism "to respond to these situations." In the end, lawmaker Ng showed dissatisfaction with the outcome of the debate, calling for more accountability of the Chief Executive (CE). "The government continues to say that the CE was there coordinating, but the feeling of the population is different. The CE should say what he really did, what instructions [were] provided and if the Public Services followed such decisions. He must justify [his actions] to society because there are many inconsistencies [in this case]."

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UM rector pledges to ensure academic freedom

Lynzy Valles

THE new rector of the University of Macau (UM), Professor Yonghua Song, pledged that he would act in accordance with the principle of academic freedom, one of the university's core values.

At a press conference held yesterday, the new rector met with the media for the first time and clarified that academic freedom is one of the ways to develop into an efficient university, citing his 18-year experience in the United Kingdom.

Song dismissed old rumors regarding scholars being discouraged from discussing political issues, particularly regarding mainland China.

"Academic freedom is part of the charter of the UM. In any faculty, we need to abide by the charter [and] that is law of the university."

Questioned whether scholars are free to express their opinion on any matter, the rector reiterated, "What I can say is academic freedom is a core value. [...]"

I can promise you that we will act accordingly with the higher education act of the MSAR and the university charter."

The rector, who assumed office on Monday, also dismissed rumors that he requested a new house be built before he accepted the post at the local university.

"I didn't have any requirements regarding my personal arrangement," he clarified. "I live in an apartment. That is the university's decision. I didn't require anything at all."

On Monday, the Macau Portuguese and English Press Association sent an open letter to the new rector, calling on the university to facilitate more direct and effective communication using the Portuguese language.

The letter was echoed by the former deputy director of the university's Portuguese Department, Inocência Mata, who noted that there is a lack of attention given to Portuguese at the university, according to newspaper Ponto Final.

The former head noted that Portuguese "does not exist" at



UM, and that there is no promotion of the language.

The rector admitted that he had not looked into the matter yet due to only recently beginning his term, yet pledged that he would "go around and talk to people within the university" to obtain a deeper understanding of the situation.

Song also clarified that he has received the letter from AIPIM.

"We saw the letter and as I said, we're beginning to look at it. I can't answer a yes or no on my second day [of assuming post], but I promise I will look at it," the rector assured.

Song also noted that he will be meeting with the Arts & Humanities Department today to see what the faculty is doing in its

research.

Meanwhile, the rector, who is from an electrical engineering background, is also looking at improving the university's electrical engineering research, adding that he will identify key areas for improvement and encourage innovation.

"We're building a smart city and in order to build as such, we need to work on research and development and develop new technologies. For UM, we need to work on [electrical engineering] and network [with professionals], so we can [also] work for other cities. This is one of the areas I will focus on," said the scholar.

Song is on a five-year contract with the university.

Woman dies in car crash

A 67-year-old local woman has been killed in a car accident that took place yesterday morning on R. de Francisco Xavier Pereira. The accident involved one bus and four private vehicles.

According to the Public Security Police Force, the accident is believed to have been caused by the bus driver, who may have mistakenly stepped on the accelerator, leading to a collision with a car waiting for a woman to cross the road at a zebra crossing. Five vehicles in total were involved in the accident. The woman was squeezed between two vehicles, and the driver of a private car was trapped inside his vehicle following the accident. All drivers passed alcohol tests.

Ye Dabo criticizes EU for listing Macau

The Chinese Foreign Affairs Commissioner in the MSAR, Ye Dabo, criticized the decision made by the European Union to list Macau on a tax blacklist. In a meeting attended by Carmen Cano, Head of the European Union Office to Hong Kong and Macau, Ye said that the EU's decision is unilateral and one-sided and completely out of line with the actual situation in Macau. Ye criticized the EU for making improper comments on Macau's internal affairs, saying that these actions have upset the Macau people.

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Sulu Sou appeals to TSI for annulment of AL mandate suspension

Paulo Coutinho

LAWMAKER Sulu Sou filed an appeal to the Court of Second Instance (TSI) last week for the annulment of his suspension from the Legislative Assembly.

First and foremost, Sou and his lawyer, Jorge Menezes, accused the Legislative Assembly (AL) and its main bodies of having overstepped a series of procedures, disregarding the Basic Law, the general law and the House Rules in order to suspend the lawmaker – elected by universal suffrage – on December 4, 2017.

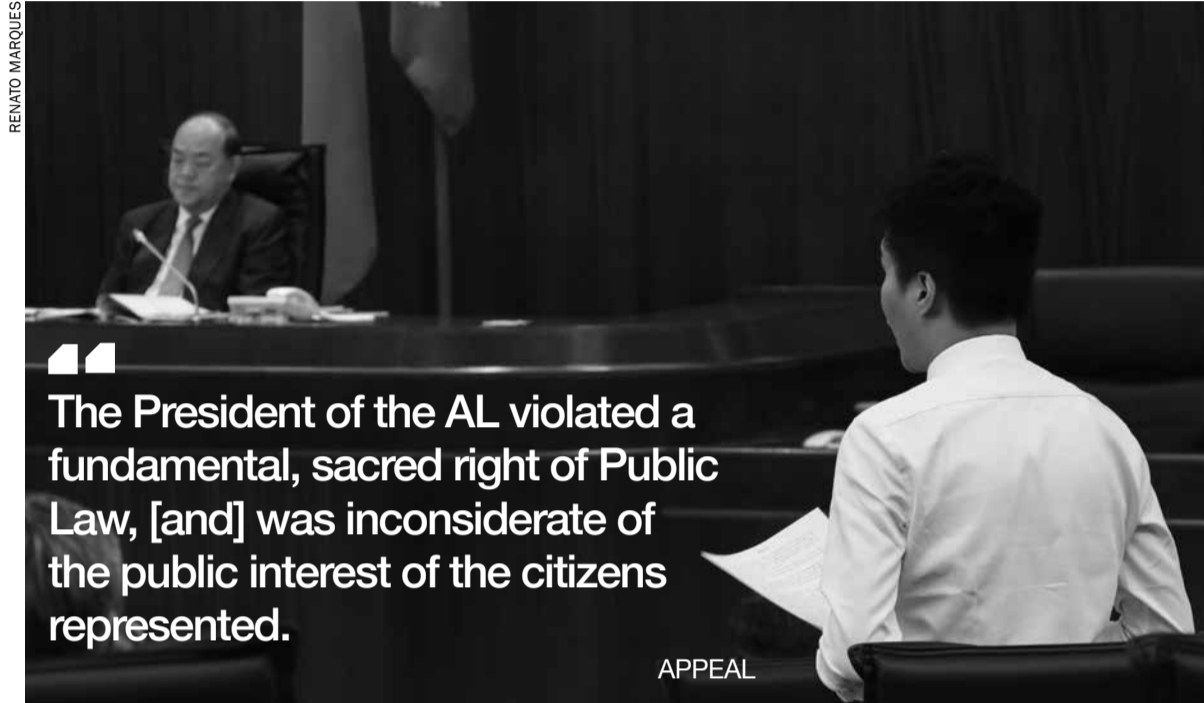
In a document of 60-odd pages, the defence chronicles all the facts and procedures that led to the AL plenary session that voted in favor of the suspension of Sulu Sou – 28 votes for and four against.

The lawmaker contends that five decisions and deliberations made by the President, the board and the plenary of the AL “violated the rules of procedure and fundamental rights of the appellant.”

The appeal, reviewed by the Times, noted that, “It is not a request for the Court [of Second Instance] to replace the AL itself or even to appreciate the substance of the matter.” Instead it requests the court to “investigate and deliberate on the legality of the acts that supported and originated the Plenary Deliberation.”

Sulu Sou is appealing against the plenary deliberation of December 4 which decided for the suspension of his mandate. The defence accuses the legislative body of denying Sou his fundamental right to address the plenary and to vote on a matter of public interest, “without a previous deliberation from the same Plenary that there was a conflict of interests.”

The appellant says that, according to the law, only the plenary



RENATO MARQUES

The President of the AL violated a fundamental, sacred right of Public Law, [and] was inconsiderate of the public interest of the citizens represented.

APPEAL

of the AL has the right to decide on this matter. In this case, the declaration of conflict was deliberated by the board of the AL in violation of the Statutory Rules.

The deliberation of the AL Board (Nov 21, 2017) which determined that the appellant lawmaker was in a situation of conflicting interests “lacks competence” and, therefore, results in “its own annulment and in the annulment of the Plenary Deliberation [which suspended Sou].”

Sou’s lawyer contends that the whole process suffers from “gross irregularities” and a deficient interpretation of the law, starting with the Committee of Rules and Mandates that led to unprecedented decisions by the AL and its president.

The AL President denied lawmaker Sulu Sou the right to defend himself, “saying he ceased to benefit from the said right,” invoking a conflict of interests.

“This is certainly a unique case in the history of the MSAR: an

interested party could be the subject of an unfavourable decision without having the right to defend himself,” the appeal states.

In his appeal, Sulu Sou said he should have had the fundamental right to participate “autonomously” in the debate and the vote regarding the suspension of his mandate, because it was a case

of public interest. “A fundamental right can only be restricted by law,” as per Article 40 of the Basic Law and the general law. The conflict of interest only applies in cases where there is a “personal interest” involved.

The various bodies of the AL that dealt with this case contend that Sou’s suspension is a matter

of the personal sphere, hence he should not participate. If it was indeed a matter of the personal sphere, “there would be [a] conflict of interests, for example, if a lawmaker who owns a casino wanted to participate in a discussion about legislation of the casino industry,” the document reads.

This action is supported by numerous court cases in the MSAR and relevant legal literature, mostly from experts in Portugal and Spain.

For the appellant, the “President of the AL violated a subjective fundamental, sacred right of Public Law, and was inconsiderate of the public interest of the citizens represented [by Sou], giving a repressive image of the legislative body of the MSAR... in the House where those rights should be upheld.”

The Legislative Assembly voted for the suspension of Sou’s mandate at the request of the Court of First Instance to lift his parliamentary immunity. He will stand trial next Tuesday for an alleged act of civil disobedience during a demonstration. Jorge Menezes is the defendant’s attorney.

A ‘duty’ to appeal

IN a message shared on his social media page, lawmaker Sulu Sou argued that it was his duty to appeal the plenary decision to suspend him in early December.

Sou argued that it was his “duty” to appeal the decision – not only in the interest of “elucidating relevant legal viewpoints” to serve as a “reference for future similar proceedings” – but also to “enhance the dignity of the Legislative Assembly and of the Rule of Law.”

Sou recalled concerns raised by himself and several other legislators – notably fellow lawmaker Pereira Coutinho – on the legality of the December 4 vote proceedings.

“Several illegalities were detected in the proceeding

of suspension, including the guarantee of my right to be heard,” wrote Sou. “I believe it would be appropriate that a judicial body, which we believe to be entitled to, clarify the legal matters involved.”

The 26-year-old also stressed the importance of the judicial ruling, given the almost unprecedented nature of the suspension.

“I fully understand that it is the first time after the handover of sovereignty, and the second time ever that proceedings for a deliberation on the suspension of a legislator’s mandate take place. The application and interpretation of related legal provisions may not be entirely clear-cut, and we all lack the experience of their actual implementation.” **DB**

MACAU and Guangdong yesterday signed a total of eight agreements to diversify existing cooperation between the regions. The new agreements cover topics including food safety, protection of intellectual property, energy efficiency, and environmental protection.

The agreements were endorsed during the annual Guangdong-Macau Cooperation Joint Conference, held in Guangzhou Prefecture, Guangdong Province.

The Chief Executive, Chui Sai On, and the

JOINT CONFERENCE

Macau, Guangdong sign eight agreements to foster cooperation

Governor of Guangdong, Ma Xingrui, led respective governmental delegations at the meeting. During the event, they reviewed last year’s achievements regarding cooperation and debated further cooperation opportunities.

During 2018, Guangdong and Macau have pledged to press ahead with further coope-

ration by enforcing measures like “taking a major role jointly in the planning and development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area” and reinforcing cooperation with respect to livelihood issues, including optimization of facilities at checkpoints and other cross-boundary infrastructure. Delivering a keynote

speech at the conference, Chui Sai On said that the existing achievements of past Guangdong-Macau cooperation “have not only shown the strength of a cooperation strategy focused on complementing the respective advantages of Guangdong and Macau, but have also created fresh opportunities for reciprocal benefit.”



Chui Sai On, and the Governor of Guangdong Province, Ma Xingrui, shake hands prior to the conference start

Top car technology trends from CES 2018

Ronald Montoya

ARTIFICIAL intelligence that controls your infotainment screen. A vehicle that can read your brain. Cars that can see around blind corners.

These are some of the automotive tech highlights of CES 2018 in Las Vegas.

The event has increasingly become a way for automakers to preview their developments in car technology, from production-ready to wildly speculative. Here are three trends that could be coming to a car near you:

AI-POWERED INFOTAINMENT

Both Hyundai and Mercedes-Benz are showing how they will use artificial intelligence in a vehicle's infotainment system to turn it into a personal assistant. It's technology that, for now, is confined to smartphones or smart speakers.

Hyundai's Intelligent Personal Agent is a voice-control technology that was co-developed by Silicon Valley-based SoundHound Inc., which specializes in voice-enabled AI.

The intelligent part of such software is its ability to recognize multiple commands. For example, if you ask it, "Tell me what the weather will be like tomorrow and text the kids to remind them about soccer practice," it would recognize two separate commands in the same sentence and complete each task accordingly.

Hyundai's technology functions much like Apple's Siri or Google Assistant. It's designed to respond to commands but also to proactively aid drivers by, for example, reminding them of upcoming meetings and recommending a departure time based on traffic conditions.

The system activates with the wake-up voice command, "Hi, Hyundai." Once queried, the AI-powered agent can help make a phone call, send text messages, search destinations, search music, check weather and manage schedules. It also allows drivers to use voice control for frequently used functions such as controlling air conditioning, sunroofs and door locks. Hyundai plans to install the Intelligent Personal Agent in new models as early as 2019.

Mercedes-Benz is also debuting a new infotainment interface for its compact vehicles that's based on artificial intelligence and what it calls an "intuitive" operating system. There are few details on the system's capabilities so far, but the system is expected to make its way to some vehicles on the lower end of Mercedes'



This photo provided by Nissan shows its brain-to-vehicle device

lineup this year. The display itself looks like the dual widescreen setup that Mercedes used in late-model E- and S-Class sedans.

BRAIN-TO-VEHICLE TECHNOLOGY

Nissan is demonstrating that the "brain" in an autonomous vehicle doesn't always have to be a computer and that a computer can be used to make a person a better driver. The company is one of the first to conduct research on brain-to-vehicle (B2V) technology.

To engage the technology, the driver puts on a wired cap. Picture a much smaller, sleeker version of Doc Brown's brain wave analyzer in "Back to the Future." The device measures brain wave activity, which the vehicle's autonomous systems analyze and then use to anticipate your intended actions.

Nissan says that brain-to-vehicle technology can predict driver behavior to shorten reaction time when a driver is in control, for instance by making steering wheel turns or braking 0.2 to 0.5 second faster. All this will be largely imperceptible to the driver, Nissan says.

Brain-to-vehicle technology also is being tested to detect and evaluate discomfort during driving. This could be used to match the car's driving style to the driver's own style

when the vehicle is in autonomous mode.

"There are a lot of situations where a vehicle's default action when driving autonomously would not be what the driver would actually want to do if they were in control," said Nicholas Maxfield, a Nissan spokesman. "Reading brainwaves is one way to shrink that gap between vehicle action and driver expectation."

Of course, copying a human's driving style may not be ideal in all cases, he said. The last thing you'd want is an autonomous car that speeds and makes erratic lane changes.

Smarter infotainment systems and more widespread availability of connected vehicles are just around the corner.

AUTOMOTIVE WEBSITE
EDMUNDS

The goal is to maximize driver safety during autonomous operating without departing too much from the driver's own style.

This technology is still many years away from making it into a production vehicle, but Nissan says it shows the potential of combining human and artificial intelligence.

CARS THAT TALK TO EVERYTHING

Finally, Ford is using the CES event to announce its recommitment to making all of its vehicles connected by 2019. In the short term, vehicle connectivity means you'll see more Ford vehicles outfitted with Wi-Fi hotspots, remote unlocking and location services.

Ford also is announcing plans to adopt what's called "cellular vehicle-to-everything" technology (C-V2X for short) in the coming years. This technology will make it possible for its vehicles to communicate with smart traffic signals, other vehicles and even a gas pump — to make wireless payments, for example.

Cellular vehicle-to-everything is a more advanced version of vehicle-to-vehicle connectivity (V2V) and uses cellular networks, which are faster than Wi-Fi, to communicate with other vehicles and roadside infrastructure, such as smart traffic signals and cons-

truction zone warnings.

The cellular vehicle-to-everything technology also has the ability to communicate at short range, even when there is no cellular signal. So a vehicle would have the ability to see around blind corners and understand its environment in inclement weather. For example, it could detect icy conditions on a road and warn the driver and other connected vehicles of the hazard.

Ford believes that cellular vehicle-to-everything technology is the key to getting more automakers to commit to connected-car systems and to standardize the technology that will be used. The chips this technology uses are not only faster, but they are also less expensive than the ones employed in current V2V systems.

EDMUNDS SAYS: We don't expect to see many of these features, such as brain-to-vehicle technology, for several years. But smarter infotainment systems and more widespread availability of connected vehicles are just around the corner.

Editor's Note: This story was provided to The Associated Press by the automotive website Edmunds. Ronald Montoya is a senior consumer advice editor at Edmunds.

THE Chinese owner of Volvo Car said full-year profit at its local auto-making unit probably doubled, topping analysts' estimates and allowing billionaire founder Li Shufu to turn his focus to another major acquisition in Sweden.

Net income last year at Geely Automobile Holdings Ltd. increased "around 100 percent" from the 5.11 billion yuan (USD782 million) in 2016, the Hong Kong-listed unit of Li's Zhejiang Geely Holding Group Co. said Tuesday in an exchange filing. That would exceed the 9.46 billion-yuan average estimate in a Bloomberg survey of 36 analysts.

The maker of Emgrand sedans and X7 SUVs is among automakers getting a boost in the world's biggest car market, where sales rose to a record for a 27th consecutive year. Geely forecast deliveries will rise 27 percent to 1.58 million units this year after a surge in demand in 2017, which

China's car boom puts Volvo owner on track to double profit



Li Shufu

ch may place the company as the biggest-selling domestic brand in China, according to analysts.

Shares of the company fell as

much as 2.2 percent in Hong Kong yesterday after more than tripling last year.

Last month, the parent com-

pany Zhejiang Geely Holding announced purchasing a stake in Swedish truckmaker Volvo AB. The parent already owns the Volvo Car nameplate after buying it from Ford Motor Co. In 2013, Zhejiang Geely agreed to purchase Manganese Bronze Holdings Plc, rescuing the maker of London's iconic black taxis after the U.K. automaker entered administration.

Li is turning his attention to the Swedish company's heavy vehicles in a bid to bulk up outside China. The stake would mark Hangzhou-based Geely's first foray into the heavy-truck segment.

"2017 has been an extraordinary and memorable year, in

which we have taken significant steps forward on several fronts," Li told employees in his new year message. "The brands under Geely Holding Group have made exceptional progress."

Li started out making refrigerator parts and later turned a bankrupt state-owned manufacturer into China's biggest privately owned carmaker. He cemented his reputation as a savvy dealmaker after reviving Volvo Car in the face of widespread industry skepticism following the purchase from Ford in 2010.

The premium Volvo brand is going to help Geely outperform peers in the future, Bloomberg Intelligence analyst Steve Man said. **Bloomberg**

Richest Asian banker plans a family office but spurns crypto

Anto Antony

THE family of Uday Kotak, billionaire managing director of Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd., is setting up an office to invest in assets including private equity, stocks and real estate worldwide.

"The funds will be deployed in asset classes other than debt and cryptocurrencies," Venkat Subramanian, who will manage the family office, said in an interview in Mumbai last week. "We will also stay clear of any investment opportunities that will bring us in di-

rect competition with the bank."

While Subramanian didn't disclose a figure, Kotak has about USD1.2 billion in cash and investable assets, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. Most of the money was raised when he cut his stake in the bank to meet regulatory requirements.

The Mumbai-based banker, whose \$10.3 billion fortune makes him the eighth-richest person in India and the wealthiest banker in Asia, held about 30 percent in Kotak Mahindra

Bank as of end-September, which is worth \$9 billion based on current prices. That's down from 33.6 percent in December 2016, a little before the Reserve Bank of India directed the company to gradually reduce the founders' stake to 15 percent by March 2020 in line with guidelines for bank licenses.

Kotak started out in finance in 1985 by setting up an investment company with a 3 million rupee (\$50,000) loan from family and friends. Today he controls India's fourth-largest private-

sector lender by assets. Kotak Mahindra shares have risen about 42 percent over the past year, compared with a 39 percent gain for the Bankex Index, a gauge of 10 lenders in the country.

Subramanian, who is currently chief executive officer at Infina Finance Pvt., a \$470 million long-short fund that has Kotak and his bank as sole investors, is working with members of Kotak's family to put in place a team to manage the office. Kotak hadn't set up a family office so far as most of his wealth was



Uday Kotak

locked in the bank's equity until March 2017.

Investing in debt would bring the family office into direct competition with the bank, while purchases of bitcoin may prove to be risky, Subramanian said. The world's largest cryptocurrency has tumbled more than 20 percent from a mid-December high.

"While the concept of cryptocurrency is alluring, as its value cannot be influenced by any government, the family office will not look at investing in it," Subramanian said. He also flagged possible regulatory clampdowns and the addition of new global cryptocurrencies as risks to value. **Bloomberg**

corporate bits

MANDOPOP SINGERS TO PERFORM AT THE VENETIAN



Taiwanese singer Qing Shan and female performer Poon Sow Keng will bring their "Songs of Yesteryear Part 3 - Qing Shan & Poon Sow Keng" concert to The Venetian Macao on February 24.



Dubbed as the "Taiwan King of Songs," Qing Shan has been singing for over 40 years. This true musical legend was a phenomenon in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macau and other Chinese communities around the world

especially in the 70s and 80s, Sands China said in a statement.

His greatest hits, including "Tears of Flower", "Love is Hard to Guard", "Wonderful Life", "Searching for Dream Land" and "Green Island Serenade", impacted Mandopop development at the time, and these songs have been covered by many singers, including Theresa Teng, Yao Su Rong and Yu Tian.

Poon Sow Keng was born in Macau and but grew up in Malaysia and was well-known for her song "Lovers' Tears," which she performed at age 18.

ICBC Sands Lifestyle Mastercard cardholders can receive a discount of up to 10 percent on tickets.

WYNN ANNOUNCES WINTER BONUS

Wynn Macau yesterday announced that a Winter Bonus equivalent to one month's gross salary will be paid to all eligible Wynn Macau and Wynn Palace team members (excluding senior management), representing nearly 95 percent of the current 13,000 workforce.

According to a statement issued by the gaming operator, this bonus is being awarded to demonstrate the company's appreciation of all team members for their commitment to the company during the successful second half of 2017.

MGM ADDS NEW ELEMENTS TO 'LEARN & PLAY! TEAMLAB FUTURE PARK'



MGM's latest exhibition, "Learn & Play! teamLab Future Park," will be given some new interactive attractions. According to a statement issued yesterday by the gaming operator, "People of all ages are invited to discover the new horizons of the digital world of Learn & Play! teamLab Future Park, where they can thrive

on their creativity through the interactive digital experience." "Learn & Play! teamLab Future Park" will now consist of five interactive settings, namely "A Table where Little People Live", "Sketch Town", "Sketch Town Papercraft", "Graffiti Nature - Mountains and Valleys" and "Light Ball Orchestra".



BLOOMBERG

Macron moots huge China deal for Airbus - to company's surprise

Helene Fouquet, Christopher Jasper

FRENCH President Emmanuel Macron floated the prospect of a massive Airbus SE aircraft order at the end of a three-day visit to China, hours after the planemaker had said no new deals came out of the trip.

An aide to Macron said in Beijing yesterday that the potential sale concerns 184 A320 narrow-body jets for delivery to 13 airlines in 2019 and 2020. While the accord would be worth USD18 billion at list prices, it lacks the status of a formal agreement with the agency that approves Chinese aircraft purchases.

The confusion highlights the complexities of doing deals with China, where plane sales annou-

nced during politically charged visits by Western leaders don't always deliver on their apparent promise. U.S. President Donald Trump celebrated a \$37 billion Boeing Co. order following his first visit to Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping in November, only for it to emerge that the bulk of the 300 jets involved were from previously agreed transactions.

China has become a battleground for Airbus and Boeing as the manufacturing titans seek to dominate an aviation market expected to overtake the U.S. to become the world's biggest as early as 2022.

In the case of the Macron trip, the aide said the planes would all represent new orders and include Airbus's latest A320neo, an upgraded version featuring

more-efficient engines, without elaborating on the airlines concerned or providing an estimated value.

The comments came in the final throes of a visit during which little new business was announced, with New Areva Holding SA failing to pin down a long-anticipated 10 billion-euro (\$12 billion) deal to sell nuclear-waste recycling technology to China National Nuclear Corp.

The Airbus announcement differed from one during Xi's visit to Berlin in July, where a deal for 100 A320s and 40 A350 wide-bodies worth a collective \$22 billion was revealed.

In that case, the planemaker secured a general-terms agreement or GTA through the National Development and Reform

Commission, which has broad administrative and planning control over the Chinese economy. The order will be firmed up once aircraft are allocated to airlines and is likely to meet more immediate demand. China Aircraft Leasing Group Holdings Ltd. has also bought 70 A320 planes worth around \$8 billion the past couple of weeks.

In a formal statement following Macron's visit, France and China said they were exploring new plane contracts and discussing openings for the A330, A350 and A380 wide-body models. China also pledged to maintain rough order parity between Airbus and Boeing.

Of the mooted A320 deal, an Airbus spokesman said that the manufacturer does not com-

ment on any possible commercial agreements.

Airbus Chief Operating Officer Fabrice Bregier, who led the company's delegation, had earlier focused on the industrial relationship with China, saying Tuesday that A320 build rates at a plant in Tianjin, east of Beijing, will accelerate to six planes a month by 2020 from four now.

Boeing predicts China will need more than 7,200 new aircraft worth over USD1 trillion in the 20 years through 2036

Airbus is also offering China a production role on its A380 superjumbo in an effort to secure a program-extending order for the slow-selling double-decker. That would include allowing it to undertake finishing and interiors work on the planes, a person with knowledge of the matter said.

The Toulouse, France-based company said separately yesterday that George Xu will take over as chief executive of Airbus China, having previously run the Tianjin production line. He succeeds Eric Chen, who becomes chairman of the national business. Bloomberg reported Tuesday that the move was pending.

Boeing predicts China will need more than 7,200 new aircraft worth over \$1 trillion in the 20 years through 2036. The number of people flying to, from and within the country will reach 1.5 billion by that time, according to the International Air Transport Association. **Bloomberg**

Firefighting efforts suspended after tanker explosion

AN explosion rocked a stricken oil tanker off the coast of Shanghai yesterday, forcing maritime authorities to suspend firefighting and rescue efforts, Chinese officials said.

China's ministry of transport said rescue vessels withdrew to a safe distance after the explosion on the Sanchi's bow, the latest setback in the multinational effort to extinguish the burning wreck and find more than 30 missing crewmembers.

The ship is still on fire, the ministry said. Chinese officials have previously warned that the tanker could

explode and sink, possibly triggering an environmental disaster.

The Sanchi was carrying nearly 1 million barrels of condensate, a type of gassy, ultra-light oil, when it collided Saturday evening with a freighter 257 kilometers (160 miles) off the coast and caught fire. In-

tense flames, bad weather and poor visibility have hampered rescue efforts.

The entire crew of the Panamanian-registered Sanchi — 30 Iranians and two Bangladeshis — went missing after its collision with the Chinese freighter CF Crystal. The cause of the collision remains unclear.

Officials have previously warned that the tanker could explode and sink, possibly triggering an environmental disaster

Rescuers on Tuesday found a body believed to be a sailor from the Iranian-operated tanker, while a search continued for the 31 other missing crew members.

The National Iranian Tanker Co., the Sanchi's operator, said Tuesday there was a chance that survivors were trapped in the ship's engine room.

"Since the vessel's engine room is not directly affected by the fire and is about 14 meters under water, there is still hope," NITC spokesman Mohsen Bahrami told The Associated Press. **AP**



AP PHOTO

TRANSPORTATION

High speed rail now rivals air travel on key Asia, Europe routes

Justin Bachman, Richard Fan and Christopher Cannon

ACROSS Asia and Europe, high-speed rail is providing a competitive alternative to air travel on the same routes, in terms of price and the all-important barometer of time. Put that together with the environmental benefits that flow from not burning jet fuel, and staying on the ground begins to make more sense for travelers who would otherwise trudge to the airport.

Speedy trains and planes are generally competitive until your travel plans extend beyond 1,000 kilometers, at which point travelers consider flying superior for time savings, according to an overview of academic research by the Journal of Advanced Transportation. But new technologies may push that boundary in the years and decades to come. The chart below gives examples of key global routes where the two are currently comparable.

"Travel time is critical for the competitiveness of different transport modes," researchers from Beijing's Beihang University and the University of South Florida in Tampa wrote last year, buttressing a 2014 European study that found more air service on routes for which trains take longer. While this supports the theory that trains can supplant air travel if door-to-door time and price are equal or better, that doesn't turn out to be the case in reality. It's not a zero-sum game after all.

In general, the advent of fast, affordable train service in China, Japan, South Korea and western Europe has eroded such preconceptions as to how airlines and railroads compete.



A high-speed train in Shanghai

The entry of high-speed rail in markets dominated by airlines doesn't always lead to fewer available flights—there's evidence that, in many places, affordably priced train tickets actually spur new travel demand, much the way ultra-low-cost airlines in Asia, Europe and the Americas have affected bargain fares. That helps both trains and planes.

■ In 2015, 910 million Chinese traveled by all forms of rail—more than twice the 415.4 million who flew

The new rail industry is seeing its most vibrant growth in China, which also has the world's largest high-speed network, the fastest trains and the greatest ambitions for future expansion. One of the world's busiest rou-

tes, Beijing to Shanghai, features the new domestically built Fuxing high-speed train, now with a top allowed speed of 351 kilometers per hour. That speed increase cut the 1,247 kilometer trip to 4 hours, 28 minutes on a route that has about 100 million rail passengers annually, according to Chinese news service Xinhua.

Japan's high-speed shinkansen, or bullet trains, date to the 1960s and have become a staple of domestic travel, with speeds of about 320 km, making for a 2 1/2 hour trip between Tokyo and Osaka, one of the most heavily trafficked routes. That same city pairing, however, has hourly airline service by both of Japan's largest carriers—with each using a mix of wide-body Boeing Co. 767s, 777s and 787s for the 70-minute flight. While adding station/airport dwell time and the time spent getting from city center to the platform/gate doesn't change the result in this case, such calculations sometimes make the difference when it comes to travel time.

In 2015, 910 million Chinese traveled by all forms of

rail—more than twice the 415.4 million who flew, according to the journal article. Unsurprisingly, the future of train technology resides in China. The first magnetic-levitation, or maglev train, which can travel as fast as 430 kph, operates in Shanghai; engineers are researching future maglev trains that could travel at a stunning 600 kph, an achievement that could thoroughly upend the current dynamic between air and ground travel.

Over time, Chinese airlines and high-speed trains have generally evolved so that fares and service classes are comparable, said Yu Zhang, an assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering at the University of South Florida and one of the journal report's authors. In their early days, Chinese high-speed rail operators sought to emulate airlines in terms of attendant training, with fares that were generally too high to spur much demand, she said. Since then, train fares have dropped.

"Air service is impacted, but we do not see a significant reduction of passengers, either," Yu said of the Chinese market. "It's really dependent on the particular route."

In Europe, the Eurostar high-speed rail from London to Paris and Brussels served 10 million riders last year, the fourth since it first topped that mark. The service began in November 1994 and drew 2.9 million passengers the following year. Current Eurostar fares begin at 29 pounds (USD39), down from initial fares of 79 pounds in the system's early days. Again, the different modes of transport that might seem to be rivals for the same passengers are in many way complementary. Low-cost airlines focused on short-haul routes and European high-speed

rail options that would seem to compete are generally not rivals, given their vast differences on other counts. The trains generally serve city centers, while the air carriers tend to use secondary airports further afield as a way to lower their costs.

On the Paris-Bordeaux line, high speed rail is "by far the most competitive travel offer with a real traffic growth of 70 percent since its launch in July," the French railway SNCF said in an emailed statement. "In November, we reached 82 percent of the Paris-Bordeaux travel market share," SNCF official Rachel Picard said. "This high speed benefits all customers, including professional travelers whose number has doubled compared to 2016."

And what happened to the big airlines on the continent such as Air France-KLM? They have ceded traffic on the shorter routes to low-cost rivals, including Ryanair Holdings Plc and EasyJet Plc. Many major U.S. airlines are following suit, abandoning smaller regional jets and reducing service to less-populated cities.

"The way airlines think of trips that are short-haul has changed," said Holly Reed, an executive with Texas Central Partners LLC, which is raising money to build a bullet train between Dallas and Houston.

By now, you may have noticed the absence of one large country from this discussion. After a century of neglect, U.S. transit infrastructure has more in common with the developing world than with China or Western Europe. While Asia rail systems measure their passengers in the hundreds of millions, in the U.S., Amtrak had 31.3 million riders in its 2016 fiscal year.

America's fastest train, the Acela, travels on the Boston-New York-Washington corridor with a speed capability of only 241 kph—but the trains rarely exceed 161 kph due to congestion—and then only for short periods on aging tracks. With the rails often running parallel with the busy Interstate 95, it's not uncommon to see cars outpacing locomotives. **Bloomberg**

Reports: AT&T drops plan to sell Huawei smartphone in US

U.S. telecoms carrier AT&T has dropped plans to sell Chinese brand Huawei's smartphones in the United States, dealing a setback to the No. 3 global phone maker's expansion plans, according to news reports.

The Wall Street Journal, which reported the development Tuesday,

gave no reason for AT&T Inc.'s decision. The South China Morning Post said Huawei Technologies's vice president for consumer business, Richard Yu, confirmed the move in a text message to the newspaper and wrote, "We have been harmed again."

Yu told AP in December the company would an-

nounce smartphone sales through a U.S. carrier this week. Huawei sells some models in U.S. electronics stores and online but has a minimal share of an American market in which most sales are through carriers.

Ahead of the planned announcement, Huawei had issued a statement that said, "Over the past

five years Huawei has proven itself by delivering premium devices with integrity globally and in the U.S. market. On Tuesday Huawei will introduce new products to the U.S. market, including availability."

Huawei, the world's biggest maker of network gear used by phone companies, suffered a setback

in the U.S. market when a congressional report in October 2013 said it was a security risk and warned telecom carriers not to use its equipment.

Globally, the company's handset business trails Samsung and Apple by shipments. But it leads in China, the biggest market, and says it expects to ship a total of 150 million units this year.

Huawei's shipments rose 16.1 percent in the latest quarter over a year earlier to 39.1 million handsets, ahead

of Apple's 2.6 percent growth to sales of 46.7 million, according to IDC. Samsung sales expanded 9.5 percent to 83.3 million units.

In his comments in December, Yu rejected the U.S. security complaints as politically motivated or possibly an attempt by competitors to keep it out of the market.

"They are lying," said Yu. "We are a company that really cares about cybersecurity and privacy protection. We do a lot better than the other vendors." **AP**

After Olympic deal, S. Korea floats summit with Kim Jong Un

Hyung-Jin Kim, Seoul

SOUTH Korea's president said yesterday he's open to meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un if certain conditions are met, as he vowed to push for more talks and cooperation with the North to try to resolve the nuclear standoff.

President Moon Jae-in has previously floated the idea of talks with Kim, but prospects for an inter-Korean summit remain low. His latest comments came a day after the North agreed to send a delegation to next month's Winter Olympics in South Korea and hold military talks on reducing animosity along their tense border — measures that Moon's government has been seeking.

The accords, reached at the first meeting between the rival Koreas in about two years, were widely viewed as a positive step following a year of escalating tension over Kim's rapidly advancing nuclear and missile programs. But critics cautioned against reading too much into North Korea's moves because tensions could flare again quickly as the North still openly seeks to expand its weapons arsenal. They also say Kim may be pushing for better ties with Seoul because North Korea is feeling the pain of U.S.-led international sanctions.

During a televised news conference in Seoul, Moon described the North's Olympic participation as "very desirable," but said that inter-Korean relations cannot improve without progress in the nuclear standoff, and vice versa.

Moon said North Korea will face harsher international sanctions and pressure if it resorts to new provocations, adding that "denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is the path to peace and our goal."

Moon, a liberal who favors a



President Moon Jae-in answers reporters' question during his New Year news conference at the Presidential Blue House in Seoul

peaceful, diplomatic solution to the nuclear issue, said he "keeps myself open to any meeting including a summit" with Kim if it could help improve inter-Korean ties and resolve the nuclear standoff. He said he will push for more talks and cooperation with North Korea for the same purpose.

"To have a summit, some conditions must be established. I think a certain level of success must be guaranteed," Moon said.

U.S. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert welcomed Tuesday's Korean talks, which she said were "aimed at ensuring a safe, secure and successful" Olympics. White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders also said the

North's decision to attend the games presents it with an opportunity to see the value of ending its isolation from the rest of the world.

President Donald Trump on Saturday said he was open to talking with Kim himself while expressing hope for progress in the Korean talks. But U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley later said Washington isn't changing its conditions on talks with North Korea, saying Kim first needs to stop weapons testing for a "significant amount of time."

Trump also contended that his tough stance had helped persuade the North to sit down with the South. During yesterday's news conference, Moon said he feels thankful to Trump for helping

make the talks happen.

Under Tuesday's deal struck at Panmunjom, a border village, North Korea will send a delegation of officials, athletes, cheerleaders, journalists and others to the Pyeongchang Olympics. The accord stipulates the two Koreas will "actively cooperate" in the Olympics to "enhance the prestige of the Korean people."

South Korean Prime Minister Lee Nak-yeon said yesterday he expects the North's delegation will include 400-500 people.

North Korea is not a winter sports power, and two of its figure skaters, Ryom Tae Ok and Kim Ju Sik, were its only athletes to qualify before the North missed a confirmation deadline. The International Olympic Com-

mittee said Monday it has "kept the door open" for North Korea to take part.

During the talks, North Korea told the South Korean delegation that it had recently restored a military hotline with the South, in the second reopening of an inter-Korean communication channel in about a week, according to South Korean officials. All major communications had been shut down because of tensions over the North's nuclear program in recent years. North Korea reopened one channel last week as signs emerged of improving ties.

To have a summit, some conditions must be established. I think a certain level of success must be guaranteed.

MOON JAE-IN

The countries have a long history of failing to follow through with rapprochement accords. In 2015, negotiators met for nearly 40 hours before announcing a deal to pull back from a military standoff caused by land mine blasts that maimed two South Korean soldiers. But animosities flared again several months later after the North's fourth nuclear test.

Last year, North Korea conducted its sixth and most powerful nuclear test and three tests of intercontinental ballistic missiles, and Trump and Kim exchanged bellicose rhetoric and crude insults.

In his New Year's Day address last week, Kim said he was willing to send a delegation to the Pyeongchang Games. Moon welcomed Kim's outreach and proposed the talks at Panmunjom, a proposal North Korea quickly accepted. **AP**

China, Asia leaders discuss Mekong dam projects

LEADERS of nations along Southeast Asia's Mekong River gathered yesterday in the Cambodian capital amid a push by China to build more dams that are altering the water flow and have raised environmental concerns.

The meeting is chaired by Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen and China's Premier Li Keqiang, who are joined by leaders from Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and

Myanmar.

The stated goal of the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation forum, which was created by China in 2015, is to promote sustainable development and boost the quality of life for the millions of people living in the Mekong sub-region.

Known as the Lancang in China, the Mekong River is vital to Southeast Asia, where more than 60 million people rely on it and its tri-

butaries for food, water and transport.

The world's 12th-longest river, the Mekong runs nearly 5,000 kilometers from the Tibetan Plateau and down into mainland Southeast Asia before emptying into the South China Sea in Vietnam. The river's basin is home to up to 1,700 fish species, making it the most diverse basin after the Amazon and Congo.

Yet the river is also ano-

ther potential source of regional tensions due to an increasing number of hydroelectric projects that are altering the flow and raising concerns of ecological damage. Vietnam, already locked in conflict with Beijing over territory in the South China Sea, says it is at particular risk of adverse effects.

China is the driving force behind many of the projects, having already built eight

dams on the river since the 1990s and currently building or planning more than a dozen more. Laos is home to most of the dams planned for the river's lower stretch.

China is also seeking to have parts of the river dredged or rapids cleared so that large cargo ships can navigate. Environmentalists have warned this could have dire consequences on the ecosystem.

In the two years since the

forum's establishment, China has set aside billions of dollars to support 45 projects including water resource research centers and cooperation on connectivity projects, industrial capacity, border trade, agriculture and poverty alleviation.

The forum is seen as a rival to the Mekong River Commission, which has been around for more than 60 years but excludes China and Myanmar. **AP**

Eileen Ng, Putrajaya

MALAYSIA'S government said yesterday it will pay U.S. company Ocean Infinity up to \$70 million if it can find the wreckage or black boxes of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 within three months, in a renewed bid to solve the plane's disappearance nearly four years ago.

Transport Minister Liow Tiong Lai said there was an 85 percent chance of finding the debris in a new 25,000 square kilometers area — roughly the size of Vermont — identified by experts.

The government signed a “no cure, no fee” deal with the Houston, Texas-based company to resume the hunt for the plane, a year after the official search by Malaysia, Australia and China in the southern Indian Ocean was called off. The plane vanished on March 8, 2014, while flying from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing with 239 people on board.

“The primary mission by Ocean Infinity is to identify the location of the wreckage and/or both of the flight recorders [...] and present a considerable and credible evidence to confirm the exact location of the two main items,” he told a news conference.

If the mission is successful within three months, payment will be made based on the size of the area searched. Liow said the government will pay Ocean Infinity \$20 million for 5,000 square kilometers of a successful search, \$30

Malaysia to pay firm up to USD70m if it finds missing plane



Malaysian Minister of Transport Liow Tiong Lai (center) speaks at a press conference during an MH370 missing plane search operations signing ceremony

million for 15,000 square kilometers, \$50 million for 25,000 square kilometers and \$70 million if the plane or recorders are found beyond the identified area.

Ocean Infinity Chief Executive Oliver Plunkett said the search vessel Seabed Constructor, which left the South African port of Durban last week, is expected to

reach the southern Indian Ocean by Jan. 17 to begin the hunt.

He said eight autonomous underwater vehicles, which are drones fitted with high-tech cameras, sonars and sensors, will be dispatched to map the seabed at a faster pace. Plunkett said the underwater drones can cover 1,200 square kilometers (463 sq.

miles) a day and complete the 25,000 square kilometers within a month.

“We have a realistic prospect of finding it,” he said. “While there can be no guarantees of locating the aircraft, we believe our system of multiple autonomous vehicles working simultaneously is well suited to the task at hand.”

The official search was extremely difficult because no transmissions were received from the aircraft after its first 38 minutes of flight. Systems designed to automatically transmit the flight's position failed to work after this point, said a final report from Australian Transport Safety Board last January.

“I feel very happy but at the same time very panicky whether it can be found or not. Now it's back to four years ago where we have to wait everyday [to find out] whether debris can be found,” said Shin Kok Chau, whose wife Tan Ser Kuin was a flight attendant on MH370.

Underwater wreck hunter David Mearns said the new search takes into account oceanographic models used to drastically narrow the possible locations of the crash and deploys state-of-the-art underwater vehicles that will allow the company to cover far more seabed at a faster pace.

“There are no guarantees in a search of this type. However, notwithstanding that uncertainty, this upcoming search is the best chance yet that the aircraft wreckage will be found,” said Mearns, director of Blue Water Recoveries Ltd. **AP**

PAKISTAN

Mob angered by rape, murder of girl attacks police

A mob angered over the recent rape and murder of an 8-year-old girl attacked a police station and nearby government building in eastern Punjab province yesterday, triggering clashes that left at least two people dead and several injured, the police said.

The violence erupted in the city of Kasur hours before the funeral of Zainab Ansari, whose case has drawn wide public outrage.

The girl went missing last week while going to a nearby home for Quranic studies. Her parents were away at a pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia at the time.

Ansari's body was found on Tuesday in a garbage bin, senior police officer Imran Nawaz Khan said. Police say she was abducted, raped and murdered.

Activists on social media have condemned the government for failing to ar-

rest those involved in the crime.

As the attack on the police station and the subsequent clashes unfolded yesterday, local TV broadcast footage showing police firing shots in the air and toward the stone-pelting mob, trying to disperse it. In one segment, an officer asks another to hold direct fire, after which the second officer is seen continuing to shoot at the protesters.

Zulfiqar Hameed, the police chief in Kasur, said two people were killed in the clashes but refused to say whether they died from police gunshots. Provincial Law Minister Rana Sanaullah said the police were trying to contain the violence and find and arrest those involved in the killing of the girl.

Shop owners shut their business in Kasur yesterday to express their anger over the killing of the girl.

Firebrand cleric Tahir-ul-Qadri who took part in Ansari's funeral service demanded the local government be replaced, saying it has “no right to remain in power after the killing of Zainab Ansari.”

In a speech to thousands of mourners, he blamed the Punjab chief minister, Shahbaz Sharif, for failing to “protect lives and honor of innocent girls” in the province.

Qadri also issued an ultimatum to Sharif and Sanaullah to step down by Jan. 17 to avoid street protest.

Qadri is a staunch political rival of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League party and he has led violent rallies in the capital, Islamabad, since 2014 after eight of his supporters were killed in anti-government rallies in Lahore, Punjab provincial capital. **AP**

SRI LANKA

Lawmakers exchange blows over corruption claims

SRI Lankan lawmakers exchanged blows in Parliament yesterday during a debate over alleged corruption in a bond issue that has marred the reputation of a government elected on a platform of good governance.

The brawl erupted after opposition lawmakers protested in the chamber as Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe was speaking on the bond issue.

A recent presidential inquiry report said the son-in-law of a former central bank governor benefited from leaked inside information on the bond issue.

Opposition lawmakers first lodged a protest that they haven't been given the report and later walked into the middle of the chamber while shouting slogans and carrying placards. Go-



The Sri Lankan parliament

vernment lawmakers also walked into the well of the chamber and a brawl soon broke out.

About 50 lawmakers from both sides of the 225-member Parliament took part in the scum. It was unclear if anyone was injured, but some lawmakers had their shirts torn off.

The former central bank governor was a confidante of Wickremesinghe, who picked by him for the position.

The inquiry report said the former central

bank governor's son-in-law made a quick profit of USD72 million and the state suffered a loss of about \$55 million. It also recommended bribery charges be filed against the then finance minister, who allegedly lived in a luxury apartment paid for by the ex-governor's son-in-law.

Sri Lanka's government won election three years ago after promising to investigate alleged large-scale irregularities under its predecessors. **AP**

Martin Crutsinger, Washington

THE World Bank predicts that the global economy will grow 3.1 percent this year, which would be its best showing in seven years. The United States, the world's largest economy, is expected to receive a boost from the USD1.5 trillion tax cut package Congress approved last month.

The World Bank on Tuesday upgraded its global growth forecast for 2018 by 0.3 percentage point from the projection it made in June. It is also forecasting solid growth of 3 percent in 2019 and 2.9 percent in 2020, after similar 3 percent expansion in 2017.

The U.S. economy will grow 2.5 percent this year, the World Bank now predicts, up 0.3 percentage point from its June estimate. Its forecast shows U.S. growth slowing to 2.2 percent in 2019 and 2 percent in 2020.

In its report released Tuesday, the World Bank credited the widespread global rebound, after years of tepid growth, to stronger investment, rising manu-

World Bank predicts solid 3.1pct global growth in 2018



Metalworkers demonstrate in Schweinfurt, southern Germany

facturing activity and increased trade flows.

"The upturn is broad-based, with growth increasing in more than half of the world's economies," the report said.

The 189-nation lending organization cautioned about some risks it sees to the international economy. It noted, in particular,

a shift by the Federal Reserve and some other central banks toward raising interest rates after having kept them near record lows for years. Higher borrowing rates, if they go too far, could depress economic activity. The bank also warned of threats posed by rising trade protectionism and geopolitical pressures.

World Bank economists said their latest forecast reflects an expectation of some benefit from the tax-cut plan President Donald Trump signed into law last month. But the boost it foresees falls short of the expectations of the Trump administration, which is projecting that U.S. growth will reach a sustain-

ned annual pace of at least 3 percent, propelled by tax cuts, deregulation and tougher enforcement of trade laws.

The report also upgraded the World Bank's forecast for other economies on the belief that a broad-based pickup in global growth that began last year will endure. The international economy as a whole grew last year at a stronger-than-expected 3 percent. That was a sharp pickup from the lackluster 2.4 percent pace of 2016 — the weakest showing since the recession year of 2009, when the global economy shrank 1.8 percent.

The World Bank forecast that China, the world's second-largest economy, will grow 6.4 percent this year. And it foresees growth of 2.1 percent in the Eurozone and 1.3 percent in Japan. **AP**

Defiant Bosnian Serbs celebrate banned 'statehood' holiday

BOSNIAN Serbs celebrated a banned "statehood" holiday Tuesday in stubborn defiance of the west and their non-Serb compatriots, but with tacit backing from Russia.

A handful of international guests attended the celebration in Banja Luka, the largest city in the Serb-run part of Bosnia, Republika Srpska. They included Serbia's interior and defense ministers, as well as Anatoly Bibilov, president of Georgia's breakaway province of South Ossetia.

The guests flanked Bosnian Serb nationalist leader Milorad Dodik at a podium to watch a parade by police officers armed with automatic weapons, Bosnian War veterans, and members of sport clubs and rescue services. Closing the procession were Serb members of the Night Wolves, a Russian motorcycle club that staunchly supports President Vladimir Putin.

The January 9 holiday commemorates the date in 1992 when Bosnian Serbs declared the creation of an exclusively Serb state in multi-ethnic Bosnia. Backed by Serbian strongman



A man wrapped in a Serb flag adorned with a photo of former Bosnian Serb military leader Ratko Mladic, pray in a church as part of ceremonies to celebrate a banned Serb holiday

Slobodan Milosevic, the act ignited the country's fratricidal 1992-95 war.

After the war, which claimed 100,000 lives and left 2.2 million people displaced, Republika Srpska became a semi-autonomous region of Bosnia. Non-Serbs who returned to their homes there view the holiday as a celebration of the expulsions and violence they suffered.

Addressing several thousand people who lined the street cheering Tuesday's parade, Dodik said Serbs had "two states" - Republika Srpska and Serbia - which would always support each

other and "wish to become one."

Dodik, who has repeatedly stated that the Serbs' long-term goal is secession from the rest of Bosnia, often boasts of Russia's support for his hard-line policies and efforts to keep Bosnia from establishing closer ties with the West.

Bosnia's constitutional court banned the Serb statehood holiday in 2015, but Bosnian Serbs have refused to accept the ruling. Their defiance led the United States to impose sanctions on Dodik last year, while European diplomats and EU representatives

in Bosnia have stopped meeting with him.

However, Dodik insisted Tuesday that he has many international friends and backers.

"We have many friends and we are proud of them..We have friends in Russia and China," he said, going on to list Austria's right-wing Vice Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache as "a great friend."

Over the past few years, Dodik has met with Russian President Vladimir Putin at least five times. Many fear the apparent Russian support for his stabilizing policies is part of Moscow's effort to strengthen its foothold in Europe and could have devastating impacts on the conflict-prone Balkans region.

Doubling down on his anti-West and pro-Russia rhetoric, Dodik encouraged Bosnian Serb lawmakers in October to pass a non-binding resolution opposing Bosnia's stated goal of joining NATO.

Membership in the military alliance is a goal supported by the Muslim Bosniaks and Croats who account for over 65 percent of the country's population. **AP**

TUNISIA

Police clash with protesters as government under fire

Tarek El-Tablawy, Jihen Laghmari

TUNISIAN police firing rubber bullets and tear gas clashed with mobs protesting surging prices in the capital, as increasingly violent demonstrations test a government struggling to put its finances in order and attract investors.

The continued turmoil yesterday defied calls for calm by Prime Minister Youssef Chahed. Demonstrations broke out last week over tax increases and spending cuts included in the new 2018 budget, claiming the life of one protester. Late Tuesday, demonstrators stormed a branch of the French megastore Carrefour in the capital, looting and trying to set fire to it before authorities stepped in with tear gas.

Clashes erupted elsewhere in the capital and other towns, with protesters blocking roads and throwing stones at police, who responded with rubber bullets, according to Mosaïque FM radio. Tunisia's main opposition party called for continued, more peaceful protests.

The unrest poses one of the most serious challenges to Chahed's government since its formation in late 2016. The belt-tightening was promised to the International Monetary Fund as its price for the USD2.9 billion loan it exten-

ded in 2016 to Tunisia, which is still laboring to revive its economy seven years after the ouster of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, the first of the Arab Spring dictators to fall.

The reforms, including subsidy cuts, are hitting hard in a nation where youth unemployment tops 25 percent, about double the national figure. Annual inflation has been steadily rising, reaching 6.4 percent by the end of 2017 compared to 4.2 percent a year earlier.

Since Ben Ali's ouster, Tunisia has been grappling with political instability and militant attacks that have driven away investors and tourists. The eight governments that have followed have also been under pressure from powerful labor unions demanding that the social justice sought during the 2011 uprising is translated into greater opportunities for the Tunisian people, including higher wages.

Political unrest in Tunisia has the potential to reverberate outside its borders. The country had the highest number of foreign fighters who joined the Islamic State before the militant movement was routed from Syria and Iraq. It also shares a long and porous border with Libya, where chaos has reined since dictator Muammar Qaddafi was toppled and killed in 2011. **Bloomberg**

Marcos Aleman, El Salvador

MIGRATION

US decision would hit families' pocketbooks in El Salvador

EVERY two weeks, Flor Tovar receives a lifeline in the form of cash wired from her husband living in the United States.

The money pays the USD50 rent for her modest two-bedroom home in a low-income housing development about an hour northwest of El Salvador's capital. It also covers school transportation for their two sons, the electricity, water and cable television.

Now a decision made in Washington to end temporary protected status for her husband and nearly 200,000 other Salvadorans in the U.S. has the 33-year-old Tovar and her sons wondering what a future without that income would look like. Salvadorans with the status have been given until Sept. 9, 2019, to leave the United States or face deportation.

"It is very worrisome. These people don't have the resources to come back, and the crime is terrible here," Tovar said Tuesday.

The change would affect only a fraction of the estimated 2 million Salvadorans living the United States. But the effects could be devastating for families like Tovar's who depend on the money sent home by relatives.

The Trump administration has left the door open for Congress to



Flor Tovar and her two sons Christian (right) and Omar Elias (left) pose for a photo at their home in Ciudad Real, El Salvador

find a legislative solution that would allow those Salvadorans to remain in the country. Salvadorans living under the temporary protected status received it because earthquakes in 2001 made it difficult for them to return to their country. But Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen announced Monday that the U.S. has determined

that the effects of those quakes are no longer a hurdle to returning.

Salvadorans transferred more than \$4.5 billion from the U.S. in 2016, accounting for 17 percent of El Salvador's economy, according to government figures. From January to November 2017, remittances were running about 10 percent above the same period

the previous year. A government survey in 2016 determined that 382,734 households in El Salvador received remittances from abroad.

Tovar said that during his years in the U.S. her husband, Elias Collocho, established another family. But they remain on good terms and he continues to send money and speaks regularly with their sons. He works in construction in Richmond, Virginia, and makes a good living. In El Salvador he had worked at a bakery.

"Here there is no work, and if there is, the most you earn is \$5 a day," she said. "He has to take care of a family that he has here and the family he has in Virginia, another woman and two kids. If they come here you think he's going to be able to support two families?"

Tovar does not work and worries what will happen to her sons aged 12 and 10. They are nearing the age when gangs start to recruit. The

gangs are omnipresent and she doesn't let her sons go anywhere without her. Even so, gangsters question them in the street about where they live and ask them to lift their shirts to see if they have tattoos.

Elias, Tovar's eldest, realizes what is at stake. He said that if his father has to come back they won't have the money they have now.

"He told me that he could come soon, that next year he is going to come if he can't get his immigration papers sorted out," Elias said.

Before the Trump administration's announcement, Tovar and her husband had been thinking about sending the sons to the U.S. for their safety. "But now that is not going to be possible," she said.

"I'm uncertain, devastated, worried," Tovar said. "I don't know what future awaits my sons. I had dreamed that they would live in the United States, but now that's not going to be possible." AP

AD



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what's ON



CRAYON SHIN-CHAN KASUKABE ADVENTURE 2017 (MACAU)

TIME: 2pm-9pm (last admission 8:30pm)

UNTIL: February 14, 2018

VENUE: 2/F, Broadway Macau

ADMISSION: From MOP128, available at Kong Seng Ticketing Service

ENQUIRIES: (853) 6288 9485 / 2855 5555

IMAGINARY BEINGS – ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANA ARAGÃO

TIME: 12pm-8pm (closed on Mondays)

UNTIL: February 21, 2018

VENUE: Taipa Village Art Space

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2857 6118

THE MEMORABLE TIME – THE TRADITIONAL HANDICRAFT INDUSTRIES OF MACAU

TIME: 10am-6pm (closed on Mondays; open on public holidays)

UNTIL: February 25, 2018

VENUE: Macau Museum

ADMISSION: MOP15

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2835 7911

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF MACAU – EXHIBITION

TIME: 10:30am-5:30pm (closed on Mondays)

UNTIL: March 31, 2018

VENUE: Gallery of Carmo Post Office in Taipa

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2837 8138

11TH MACAU DESIGN BIENNIAL (HGM)

TIME: 10am-7pm, last admission at 6:30pm (closed on Mondays, open on public holidays)

UNTIL: March 31, 2018

VENUE: Macau Museum of Art, Av. Xian Xing Hai, NAPE

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

offbeat

ROME'S MANGY CHRISTMAS TREE TO BE CARVED UP INTO SOUVENIRS

Rome's pathetic Christmas tree, so droopy and dried out that residents nicknamed it "The Mangy One," will be carved up and turned into souvenirs and a lactation hut for mothers and babies, city officials said Tuesday.



In giving the downtrodden tree a new life, Rome's cabinet moved to close an embarrassing chapter in which the holiday decoration came to symbolize the city's degradation and dysfunction under its 5-Star mayor, Virginia Raggi, and the years of neglect and corruption before her.

Raggi insisted Tuesday that the tree ended up capturing the hearts of Romans and visitors alike, and that its future life would show Rome as a model of recycling.

But not even its removal went as planned. Workers on cranes started taking down ornaments Tuesday, only to put them back after getting word that a formal farewell ceremony was planned for today.

The 21-meter-high tree, which was lit on Dec. 8, earned its moniker soon after it was hoisted up in the middle of Rome's main square, Piazza Venezia, and started dropping its needles at an unusually fast clip.

Raggi ordered an investigation into why the needles fell off so soon, given the tree was alive when it was selected and cost 48,000 euros (\$57,000) to transport from South Tyrol, an Italian Alpine region, to the capital.

The "Spelacchio" saga was the latest headache for Raggi, who was recently indicted on charges she lied about a City Hall appointment. The trial is due to start in June. Raggi says she's innocent.

The case involves the appointment of Renato Marra as director of Rome's tourism department. Marra's brother, Raffaele Marra, headed City Hall's personnel office until his arrest in an unrelated corruption probe.

TV canal macau



13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
15:00	Miscellaneous
16:30	Miscellaneous
17:20	Zig Zag
18:25	Brazilian Soap Opera (Repeated)
19:15	TDM Interview
19:50	Portuguese Serie
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	Miscellaneous
21:30	You, Me and the Apocalypse Sr 1
22:10	Brazilian Soap Opera
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Miscellaneous
00:15	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
00:50	RTPi Live

cinema



CINETEATRO

11 JAN - 17 JAN



THE COMMUTER

ROOM 1

02:30, 04:30, 07:30, 9:30pm

Director: Jaume Collet-Serra

Starring: Liam Neeson, Vera Farmiga, Patrick Wilson

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 104 min



KIDNAP

ROOM 2

02:30, 04:30, 9:30pm

Director: Luis Prieto

Starring: Halle Berry, Sage Correa, Chris McGinn

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 95min

INSIDIOUS: CHAPTER 4

ROOM 2

07:30pm

Director: Adam Robitel

Starring: Lin Shaye, Angus Sampson, Leigh Whannell, Josh Stewart

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 103 min



UNLOCKED

ROOM 3

02:30, 07:30, 9:30pm

Director: Michael Apter

Starring: Noomi Rapace, Orlando Bloom, Toni Collette

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 98min

COCO

ROOM 3

7:15pm

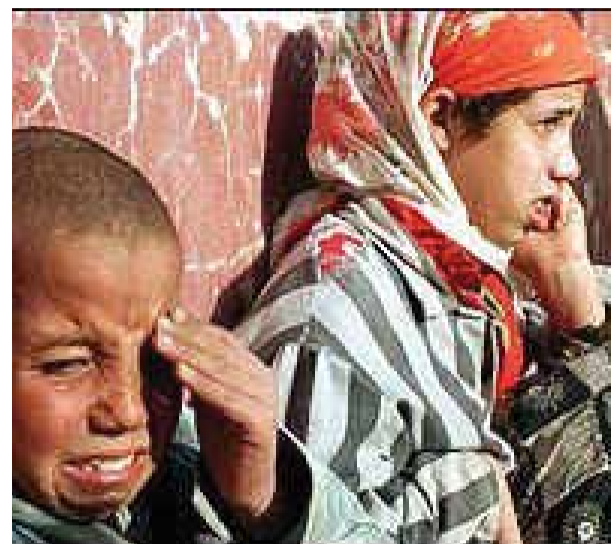
Director: Lee Unkrich

Starring: Anthony Gonzalez, Gael Garcia Bernal, Benjamin Bratt

Language: Cantonese (English)

Duration: 105 min

this day in history



1998 100 DIE IN MASSACRE IN ALGERIA

The Algerian government has blamed Islamic extremists for the deaths of more than 100 people, who were killed when two villages were attacked.

The latest violence follows a series of massacres in north-west Algeria since the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

It is thought the attacks happened shortly after evening prayers. Homemade bombs were thrown into a cinema in Sidi Ahmed and a mosque in nearby Haouche Sahraoui, in the so-called "triangle of death", south of the capital Algiers.

Survivors have said that people trying to escape the bombings were shot and attacked with knives, swords and axes. Since the end of December 1997, more than 800 people have been killed in villages and mountain hamlets. Last week more than 400 people were reportedly killed in a single attack and thousands of people have been fleeing the area.

Survivors have said that whole families were rounded up and either hacked or burned to death.

There is some speculation that the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), which is accused of the massacres, may have shifted its operations outside urban centers as the result of pressure from the security forces.

One of the GIA's chiefs has recently been quoted by the media as saying that isolated villages should arm themselves or take refuge in larger, better protected towns.

Very little is known about the GIA except that it espouses extremist interpretations of Islam which it uses to justify the acts of violence.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference has condemned the massacres, saying that such acts were categorically forbidden by Islam.

The Algerian government has angrily rejected any suggestions that the security forces have been involved in the massacres.

January marks the sixth anniversary of a military coup, the dissolution of the National People's Assembly and the introduction of a state of emergency.

This led to the cancellation of general elections and the disbanding of the main opposition party, the Islamic Salvation Front, which was certain to win the vote.

A violent insurgency against the coup has claimed the lives of between 60,000 and 80,000 people.

Recent violence has drawn concern from the world community and the US State Department has called for an international inquiry into the massacres. This has been rejected by the Algerian government who say it would give credence to the idea that Islamist extremists were not the only ones involved.

But a European Union fact-finding mission is expected in Algiers in the next ten days.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The final number of dead was much higher than first reports suggested. Newspaper reports, after gathering statements from survivors, put the figure at 400 - many of them women and children.

Villagers also said that around 30 girls had disappeared after the attacks, as had happened in previous massacres.

The struggle between the military and insurgents has claimed the lives of more than 100,000 people.

In 1999 a referendum approved a law on civil concord, and an amnesty led to many insurgents laying down their arms and being pardoned by the government.

Thousands of militants were freed from prison by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who took office in 1999 and was re-elected in a landslide victory in 2004.

A general amnesty is now being considered for Algerians implicated in violence and murder since 1992.

Many Algerians say Mr Bouteflika has brought security to the country, but some human rights campaigners say that abuses and torture by the security forces continue.

Since 1992, 7,000 Islamic prisoners arrested during the violent upheaval are reported to have disappeared.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19
If you keep moving at this rapid pace, you might end up tripping over your shoelaces, or even falling on your face!

Taurus April 20-May 20
No one can truly appreciate earthly pleasures quite like you, and right now, your heightened senses are even sharper!

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21
Is someone trying a little too hard to poke their nose into your business? If you want to keep your private business private, you need to do something out of character and keep silent.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Did you really just spout off that shocking one-liner in the middle of the workday? What made you decide to wear that bright red outfit outdoors? Surely you're joking.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Think of your recent misfortune as an auspicious sign - if you hadn't hit this bump and just carried on, as usual, it almost certainly would have exploded in your face at exactly the wrong time!

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22
Does your recent desire for excitement have you itching to push beyond your usual boundaries? It may be newly acquired, but it certainly speaks to some ancient needs you've put on hold for far too long.

Libra Sep. 23-Oct. 22
You've got the touch when you're dealing with any personal situation - especially when you need to use your ear. Your excellent listening skills are just what you need when someone close comes to you.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21
Shake up your social life so that it serves a higher purpose. You need to find ways to benefit others in all your interactions, from the very smallest to the very largest. Your energy emphasizes altruism and service.

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21
If it feels like the professional pressure is mounting, you need to turn your attention to getting the job done. That proves that you mean what you say, and also that you have the chops to back it up.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19
You're always willing to work hard, even when the results don't show up until far in the future. You, more than most people, understand the value of laying the groundwork and paying dues.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18
You know that you've got to back up your words with action, and your energy couldn't be better for doing just that now. You shouldn't have to make threats.

Pisces Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Are your colleagues snooping around your cubicle looking for clues or distraction? Politely tell them to buzz off so you can concentrate on your workload. You have a say in how you're treated.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy

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

Easy+

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

Medium

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

Hard

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

WEATHER

Table with columns: MIN, MAX, CONDITION

CHINA

Table listing weather conditions for various Chinese cities like Beijing, Harbin, Tianjin, etc.

WORLD

Table listing weather conditions for various world cities like Moscow, Frankfurt, Paris, etc.

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Nicholas II was the last Russian one; 5- Water-repellent cloth; 10- Sharon of "Boston Public"; 14- Otherwise; 15- Subway turner; 16- Bacchanalian cry; 17- In spite of; 20- Eye drops; 21- Siouan speaker; 22- Leers at; 23- Gerund maker; 25- When prompted; 27- Slaughterhouse; 31- Female beast; 35- Abhor; 36- Capital of Canada; 38- PIN requester; 39- Tolkien tree creature; 40- '60s campus gp.; 41- Summer hrs.; 42- Golf prop; 43- ___ glance; 44- Away from the mouth; 46- Big name in PCs; 47- Just; 49- Novel; 51- Deflect; 53- Green shade; 54- Clear the boards; 57- Small batteries; 59- Sewing machine inventor Howe; 63- School VIP position; 66- Marine mammal, secure something; 67- Grocery, e.g.; 68- Mindy of "The Facts of Life"; 69- Blows it; 70- Studied, with "over"; 71- Very, in Vichy;

DOWN: 1- Circus structure; 2- ___ gin fizz; 3- Nick and Nora's pooch; 4- Big revision; 5- D-Day craft; 6- Roman emperor after Galba; 7- Contort; 8- Singer John; 9- PBS supporter; 10- Account book; 11- Heinous; 12- Top-rated; 13- Staying power; 18- "___ She Lovely?"; 19- Candy bar filling; 24- Farewell; 26- Marsh marigold; 27- Lots; 28- African language group; 29- Rose essence; 30- Wishing won't make ___; 32- Devoured; 33- Stone marker; 34- Sniff; 37- Jewish month; 40- Tray; 45- Revolving part; 46- Argot; 48- Atelier items; 50- Turned right; 52- Totaled, as a bill; 54- Latin being; 55- Sorry sort; 56- On ___ with (equal to); 58- Shrivelled, without moisture; 60- Are you ___ out?; 61- Dull pain; 62- Dict. entries; 64- AOL, e.g.; 65- Actor Beatty;



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Sunderland out of Dakar Rally, Villas-Boas crashes

BRITISH motorcyclist Sam Sunderland abandoned his Dakar Rally title defense Tuesday due to back pain, and Portuguese football coach Andre Villas-Boas was taken to a hospital after his car crashed against a sand dune.

Rally organizers said Sunderland, the overall leader on a KTM, withdrew near the end of the 330-kilometer special around San Juan de Marcona when he was hurt after a jump.

Adrien van Beveren of France won the fourth stage in about four hours. He also moved into the overall lead, taking a 1:55 advantage over Pablo Quintanilla of Chile.

In the car race, the 40-year-old Villas-Boas was in 43rd position for team Toyota at the time of his accident. There was no word on whether the former Porto, Chelsea and Tottenham coach was staying in the competition.

Another Frenchman, Sebastien Loeb, won the car stage after dueling with defending champion and Peugeot teammate Stephane Peterhansel.

Loeb and Peterhansel swapped



Co-driver Matthieu Baumel looks on as Nasser Al-Attiyah, of Qatar, tries to unstuck their Toyota

checkpoint leads. Loeb finally led through the fourth and last checkpoint while Peterhansel, whose overall lead wasn't in trouble, stopped to change a tire hanging off the rim.

Loeb beat Carlos Sainz by 95 seconds, followed by Peterhansel for a Peugeot sweep of the podium. Peterhansel leads overall by 6:55 over Loeb.

The former champions who started the day second and third overall dropped out of title contention.

Cyril Despres, the five-time champion on a bike who was lying

second in a car, had a broken rear wheel after hitting a rock at about 180 kilometers, and his rally appeared over.

Nasser Al-Attiyah, the two-time champion who won stages one and three, became stuck in sand three times and fell almost an hour off the pace.

Also, Nani Roma, a winner in the car and bike categories, didn't start the stage after crashing at the end of the third on Monday. He was airlifted to a Lima hospital with head and neck injuries. His X-Raid team said he suffered no fractures. **AP**



FOOTBALL

Association chief: Issue with 'overzealous' video

A member of football's lawmaking body says a problem with "over-zealous" video assistant referees needs to be resolved before the technology is approved for use at the World Cup.

The International Football Association Board has been overseeing trials with video replay over the last two years.

FIFA, which holds half of the eight IFAB votes, wants video assistant referees (VARs) at the World Cup in Russia in June. Approval is likely to come at a March

meeting of IFAB, which also features the four British federations.

But English Football Association chief executive Martin Glenn says "over-zealous VARs intervening too often seems to be the key issue. That would interfere with the flow."

Glenn wants to "look at the things that have gone wrong" and ensure replays are used "more uniformly."

On Tuesday, Glenn said: "The big question is: Should we put [replays] into the World Cup?" **AP**

AD

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WINTER OLYMPICS

Q&A: As Olympics approach, things to know about Pyeongchang

Foster Klug, Pyeongchang

THE Olympics are coming to one of the most remote, ruggedly beautiful parts of South Korea, an area known for icy winds, a collapsed mining industry, towering granite mountains that blot out the horizon and for a tough, proud, rapidly aging population as curious about the approaching foreign masses as outsiders are about the place they're heading.

With the Olympics just a few weeks away, here are some answers to questions about Pyeongchang and the Korean Peninsula:

Q: Is the Korean Peninsula safe?

A: Yes, with a half-century-old caveat.

South Korea is one of the safest places in the world to live and visit. People regularly leave their cellphones and bags on restaurant tables when they go to the restrooms.

But it's also an easy drive to the edge of an incredibly hostile, and nuclear-armed, North Korea. Since U.S. President Donald Trump has begun matching the over-the-top rhetoric North Korea has always favored, there have been worries over the possibility of war. South Koreans, used to decades of threats about turning Seoul into a "sea of fire," are still fairly nonchalant about the North. The presence of 28,500 U.S. military personnel and a massive amount of U.S. and South Korean firepower aimed at North Korea helps. North Korea's dictatorship values its existence above all things, and knows that it could not win a war with South Korea and its U.S. ally. This has tempered the threat since the Korean War ended in 1953.

Q: Do people speak English?

A: Not many. But the government has paid for English les-



People take to the slopes at Yongpyong Resort in Pyeongchang

sons for some people in the service industry; there will be translation apps and English-

speaking volunteers; phone hotlines are available. Adding to these efforts will be South Koreans' natural hospitality and curiosity.

Q: Where, exactly, am I going?

A: To a lovely, frigid land of mountains, streams and clean air. But also to a more temperate, coastal region known for its seafood and beach.

The Olympics are actually being held in three areas: Pyeongchang, known for mountains and winter sports; Jeongseon, a blue-collar former mining region; and Gangneung, the biggest of the three Olympic towns by far and a bustling port and vacation area along the Sea of Japan, known here as the East Sea. Together they take up South Korea's northeast corner, not far from the border with the North. The inland areas have always been isolated, and while sections have been revamped for the Olympics and the coastal areas are well developed, many places are proudly as they've always been, which is to say they have little in

common with the skyscraper glitz and "Gangnam Style" glamour of Seoul.

That, for many Koreans who visit, is the point.

Q: What can I eat?

A: Korean cuisine is some of the world's best, a daily joy to explore.

Spicy, pungent kimchi; thick fermented soups filled with meat so tender it falls off the bone; barbecued everything; all of it washed down with ubiquitous soju liquor. While food options here aren't as wide as in Seoul, there are local delicacies, including dried pollack (fish), in stews and grilled; grilled and marinated pork and squid; tofu; riced steamed with mountain herbs and some of the country's best beef.

Q: What's the weather like?

A: Bundle up. Gangwon Province is one of the country's coldest places. The wind is brutal, and the stadium for the nighttime opening and closing ceremonies is open air and has no heating system. Locals make it a matter of pride not to complain about daily wintertime life, but visitors risk misery if

they're unprepared.

Q: How will I get around?

A: Just in time for the games, high-speed trains will whisk people from Seoul and the Incheon airport to the area in about an hour, compared to three hours or more by car. Also available: more taxis than usual, 150 free inter-city buses and shuttle buses that connect with major hotels and the local airport. Officials hope to reduce traffic by restricting locals' car usage. Outsiders driving in can choose from seven parking lots near the Olympic venues, then take free shuttles to stadiums.

Q: What else is there to do in Pyeongchang and South Korea?

A: Pyeongchang County is famous for winter sports, with plenty of area ski rental shops. Just driving among the massive granite peaks and frozen streams can be breathtaking. For scenic views, try Odaesan National Park and the Woljeongsa Buddhist temple, which offers overnight stays. You can hike Mount Seonjaryeong and visit sheep ranches in the mountain town of Daegwallyeong.

Jeongseon, with one Olympic venue, the downhill skiing course, has the country's only casino where Koreans may gamble — Gangwon

Land. You can pedal "rail bikes" amid the mountains at the Jeongseon Railbike Park, an abandoned coalmining railway track, or walk over a cliffside see-through floor at the Jeongseon Ski Walk on Mount Beyongbansan.

Gangneung has the vibrant Sacheon and Gyodong districts near the city's famous Gyeongpo Beach and hosts five Olympic venues handling skating, curling and hockey. The Ojukcheon House and Municipal Museum is a well-preserved 16th-century Joseon Kingdom-era house. And Jeongdongjin Sunrise Park arguably provides South Korea's best mainland sunrise view.

Seoul offers shopping and nightlife in Gangnam south of the Han River. In the north there are Namdaemun's open air markets and several royal palaces and gardens. A short drive away is the Demilitarized Zone, where soldiers glare at each other across the border, the South Koreans through mirrored sunglasses, as tourists gawk. The always odd mix of Cold War tension and modern tourist trap (the southern side has a Popeyes and amusement park) has gotten stranger since the recent defection of a North Korean soldier. He's recovering from being shot five times by his former comrades during a dash across the line. **AP**

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Made in Macao
 Jenny Lao-Phillips



SURVIVING THE COLDEST DAYS IN MACAO

Generally speaking, Macao has no real winter now. The winter I remember when I was a child used to be between three to nine degrees, sometimes as low as one degree. And the cold season lasted from December to February. For three months, people were balled up with sweaters over sweaters and coated with dull-coloured old style min-naap, covered from head to toes, without caring for fashion at all. But winter in Macao is gone, to quote Donald Trump, due to that "good old global warming". Mini-skirts can be worn all year round. But even for a few days, we still need to be prepared for the cold, especially when we do not have three months to get used to the weather now.

Although winters are now shorter and warmer, with only a few days a year where the temperature drops down to the single digits, we cannot be fooled by the temperature. Due to humidity, sometimes the temperature and the real feel does not match, even when it seems warm and sunny outside, once we step into the shades it's a whole different world, blame the humidity. Especially for people with "internal cold syndrome", according to Chinese medicine practice, they already suffer from cold hands and feet all year round, something to do with the lack of yang (as in yin and yang) and fire, it is worse during the cold humid days. How about people with "internal heat syndrome"? Are they immune from the chill of the cold weather? Apparently, even people with "internal heat syndrome" could suffer from freezing hands and feet if the internal heat gets trapped and is unable to deliver warmth to other parts of the body. So, basically, whether our body belongs to the "internal cold" or the "internal heat" side of Chinese medical diagnosis, winter in South China is bad for health according to the older generation.

So what do the locals do to survive the few cold days? One is to have lamb belly hot pot. Apparently, hot pot is good for warming up the body, but not all the food we throw into the pot are good for people with "internal cold syndrome", like radish and lettuce. But red meat is sure to be good for both the "colds" and the "hots" in cold, humid temperatures. So, not sure if it was Hong Kong first or Macao first, but we created the special dish of "lamb belly hot pot with bean curd", which many Chinese restaurants start promoting as soon as winter arrives. And more than three acquaintances from the older generation of locals advised me to "have some lamb belly hot pot" to counter the cold weather.

Having the internal cold dealt with, the other advice I received a lot is to get a few hot water bottles. Central heating has never been of common use in this part of the world, but in the past, every family has a couple of large heaters at home. Perhaps due to household safety reasons, or the short winter days now, heaters are no longer an essential household appliance, more people are using hot water bottles for keeping warm instead. In fact, many prefer bottles to heaters as they are more portable, and unlike heaters, they don't dry up our skin. Aside from hot water bottles, people are also stocking up on "heat bags" for temporary warmth.

So, in my search on how people survive this cold week, three things turn up to be most essential: eating lamb belly hot pot, keeping hot water bottles in beds and couches and always pocket a couple of heat bags.

THE DEATH TOLL HITS 15 IN CALIFORNIA MUDSLIDES; SEARCH GOES ON

The death toll from the mudslides that struck Southern California climbed to 15 yesterday as rescue crews searched for anyone trapped, injured or dead in the onslaught that smashed homes and swept away cars.

The torrential rainstorm that set off the disaster cleared out and was no longer a hindrance as searchers made their way across a landscape strewn with boulders and covered in cement-like mud shoulder-high in some places.

"Right now our assets are focused on determining if anyone is still alive in any of those structures that have been damaged," Santa Barbara County Sheriff Bill Brown said.

He said that several dozen homes were destroyed or severely damaged, and that there are probably many more in similar condition in areas still inaccessible. At least 25 people were injured, 50 or more had to be rescued by helicopters, and an undetermined number of others were missing, authorities said.

The New York Times cancels public event with James Franco

FACING accusations by an actress and a filmmaker over alleged sexual misconduct, James Franco said on CBS' "The Late Show" on Tuesday the things he's heard aren't accurate but he supports people coming out "because they didn't have a voice for so long."

Franco's appearance came hours after The New York Times canceled a public event scheduled Wednesday that was intended to feature "The Disaster Artist" director and star and his brother and co-star, Dave Franco, discussing the film with a Times reporter.

The Times said in a statement that it had canceled the event "given the controversy surrounding recent allegations."

After he won a best-actor Golden Globe on Sunday night, actress Violet Paley accused Franco on Twitter of sexual misconduct. Filmmaker Sarah Tither-Kaplan questioned Franco wearing a "Times Up" pin during the awards ceremony in a tweet about him having her do a nude scene for \$100 per day.

Franco said he supports the "Times Up" movement against sexual harassment and for gender equality. He said that "if there's restitution



to be made, I will make it." "I pride myself on taking responsibility for things that I have done," Franco told "Late Show" host Stephen Colbert. "The things that I heard that were on Twitter are not accurate, but I completely support people coming out and being able to have a voice because they didn't have a voice for so long, so I don't want to shut them down in any way. I think that it's a good thing and I support it."

"I'm here to listen and learn and change my perspective where it's off, and I'm completely willing and want to." Actress Ally Sheedy also

tweeted during the Golden Globes that Franco was an example of why she left the film and television business, but she later removed that message. Sheedy worked with Franco on an off-Broadway play in 2014, but Franco told Colbert that he had no idea what he did to Sheedy and had "nothing but a great time with her."

Franco attended the National Board of Review Awards gala in New York City on Tuesday to present his film's adapted screenplay award. He didn't comment on the allegations. An email seeking comment from his publicist wasn't immediately returned. AP

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

Dominic Steinmann/Keystone via AP



A snow blower on a train clears snow from the rail track in Zermatt. Due to heavy snowfall and rain showers, Zermatt can only be reached by air. Swiss authorities have closed roads and train service into the town of Zermatt amid a heightened risk of avalanches, stranding some 13,000 tourists in the town.

Station	Air quality
Roadside	45-65 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	45-65 Moderate
Ambient	45-65 Moderate

WORLD BRIEFS

SRI LANKA Lawmakers exchanged blows in Parliament yesterday during a debate over alleged corruption in a bond issue that has marred the reputation of a government elected on a platform of good governance. More on p13

ISRAEL's embattled Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is facing a new scandal after a recording emerged of his 26-year-old stay-at-home son joyriding at taxpayer expense to Tel Aviv strip clubs and bragging about how his father pushed through a controversial gas deal.



RUSSIA A new U.S. report by Senate Democrats warns of deepening Russian interference throughout Europe and concludes that even as some Western democracies have responded with aggressive countermeasures, President Donald Trump has offered no strategic plan to bolster their efforts.

GREECE Anti-austerity protesters in Greece have reached the entrance of the prime minister's official residence, as demonstrations intensify against a new austerity bill due to be voted in parliament next week.



BRITAIN-GERMANY Two senior British officials urged Germany yesterday to support a post-Brexit deal that protects the important financial services sector and doesn't hamper trade with unnecessary red tape.

PANAMA Thousands of people have turned out in Panama City to protest corruption on the anniversary of a 1964 demonstration that sparked the movement for wresting control of the Panama Canal from the United States.