



### TSI REJECTS APPEALS ON LAND CONFISCATION

The Court of Second Instance rejected appeals of land concessionaires regarding two plots in Taipa

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### CHINA MAN IN DAVOS IS 'THE BRAIN' BEHIND ECONOMY'S OVERHAUL

A key adviser to President Xi, Liu He is China's representative to the World Economic Forum's meeting

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## WORLD BRIEFS



**PHILIPPINES** State soldiers have captured a Spanish man they said was carrying grenades and bomb parts and is believed to be a supporter of Islamic State group-linked Abu Sayyaf militants on southern Basilan island.

**JAPAN-N. KOREA** Japan's Foreign Ministry says a Japanese navy surveillance aircraft has spotted a Dominican-flagged oil tanker apparently transferring fuel to a North Korean tanker in the open seas.



**INDONESIA** Campaigners are calling for the closure of Indonesian animal markets touted as tourist attractions where dogs are bludgeoned by the thousands and blow-torched alive.

**THE PACIFIC** Leaders of countries in a Pacific Rim trade pact rejected by President Donald Trump are welcoming progress on a final agreement to press ahead without the U.S., saying it shows a resolve against protectionism.

**PAKISTAN** Two missiles fired from a U.S. drone struck a home near Pakistan's border with Afghanistan, killing two militants from the Haqqani network, officials in Islamabad said yesterday.

**ISRAEL** U.S. Vice President Mike Pence told Israeli lawmakers that the U.S. would put plans to move its embassy to Jerusalem on a fast track, drawing angry denunciations from Arabs.

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## GUI MINHAI

# EU, Sweden demand release of HK bookseller

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## TSI VS WONG

# Court annuls unlawful dismissal of customs official; Secretary appeals

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## COURTS

# TSI rules against security chief's dismissal of staff

Renato Marques

**T**HE Court of Second Instance (TSI) has ruled on an appeal lodged by a Customs Service (SA) staff member who was dismissed in November 2016 by the Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, on suspicion of being implicated in

a crime. The TSI has annulled the decision to apply the penalty of dismissal due to insufficient evidence.

The ruling by Judge Tong Hio Fong notes, "in a disciplinary proceeding, as in criminal proceedings, it is not for the accused to prove his innocence, but it is the responsibility

of the disciplinary authority to prove the constituent facts," adding that the decision from the security authorities was to institute disciplinary proceedings against the appellant without awaiting the outcome of the final decision of the courts, basing their decision solely "on the receipt of the accusation deduced by the Public Prosecutions Office [MP]." In light of such facts, Fong writes, "such circumstance is insufficient to establish the facts attributed to the defendant in a disciplinary proceeding since

he is yet to be tried in court to establish criminal liability."

In a statement, the Office of the Secretary replied to the TSI ruling noting, "in 2012, it was found that the customs inspector was suspected of being involved in a prostitution racket. The SA, after learning about the case, immediately instituted disciplinary proceedings," the statement explains, adding that throughout the investigation the suspect has remained silent, refusing to provide any explanation or justification regarding the case. In that sense, "The Secretary for Security, based on the analysis of the accusation made by the Public Prosecutions Office, as well as the results of the disciplinary investigation of the SA and the information provided on the case by the Judiciary Police, applied the aforementioned penalty [to the worker]," against which the staff member

appealed through the TSI.

In the same statement, the Office of Wong also noted the disagreement with the opinion expressed in the TSI's ruling, holding, "a different understanding of the facts in the context of the assessment of the law," which has subsequently led the Office to appeal to the Court of Final Appeal against the second court's ruling.

Wong's office also took the opportunity to affirm that the measures taken, with the consequent dismissal from duties of the officer of SA, came in light of "always rigorously instituted disciplinary proceedings" of the security forces "in accordance with legal provisions."

This was with the purpose of "always guaranteeing that interested parties are treated with exactitude and impartiality during the process, for effective disciplinary management."

## Corruption watchdog finds another case of customs misconduct

**T**HE Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) has reported to have uncovered a case involving a head of a division within the Customs Service (SA), who is suspected of having used the influence of the position to instruct subordinates to act in contradiction to the law and usual practice of the service.

Specifically, the senior public servant is accused of favoring an employee of a certain transport and logistics company to facilitate the illegal importation of goods into Macau. Further, the same company was able to avoid being fined for such misconduct. According to a statement from the CCAC, the division head would have committed the crime of prevarication as provided in Macau's Penal Code punishable with up to five years of imprisonment.

The CCAC also stated that the investigation has been ongoing since the beginning of 2017, when an officer of the SA, of an undisclosed border checkpoint, discovered that a number of imported goods, to be collected by a certain logistics company, had not been declared in accordance with the law and therefore would have been unlawfully imported. Although not disclosing the kind of goods in



question, the CCAC said that at least some of those goods "could only be imported after obtaining a special license, in accordance with the rules of the 'Foreign Trade Law'."

The Office of the Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, has also issued a statement concerning the case stating "that the case reflects that the internal supervision of the SA and the work at the customs posts of Macau have problems that need to be dealt with."

The Secretary emphasized that the case "seriously and undoubtedly undermines the authority and image of the work of the Customs Service, which is why all SA personnel should learn from this case and implement measures to improve their operations." **RM**

## Court rejects appeals on land confiscation

**T**HE Court of Second Instance (TSI), announced yesterday that it rejected the appeals of two land concessionaires regarding cases of land parcels being reclaimed by the government due to expiration of the concessions.

The two decisions favor the ground clearance ordered by the Secretary for Transport and Public Works.

The two land plots in question are both located on Taipa Island, the first in Pac On landfill zone (lot

V2) of 2,637 square meters and the second in Avenida Kwong Tung (lot BT8) with an area of 3,177 square meters.

The orders made by the Chief Executive (CE) in May and September 2015 respectively to declare the

concessions invalid were followed by the Secretariat for Transport and Public Works claiming the plots back and ordering the two companies to vacate the plots within a given time-frame.

The companies had pre-

sented appeals to the TSI on the basis of being denied a right to a hearing before the eviction, the inability of the Secretary for Transport and Public Works to issue such orders, as well as the lack of reasoning for the eviction and the breach of

the principle of impartiality in one of the cases, as Secretary Raimundo do Rosario has been involved with one of the companies in the past as an engineer.

The TSI opposed all the aforementioned arguments put forward, giving rights to the government and ordering the former concession holders to proceed according to the orders given. **RM**

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# Macau, Hong Kong last of Chinese jurisdictions to finish official chronicles

**H**ONG Kong has been criticized by several prominent people in the city because of the SAR's slow progress in drafting the Hong Kong Local Records - a chronicle of its history - which was required by China's State Council, according to a report by Ta Chung Pao.

In 2015, China's State Council required all Chinese provinces to complete the second round of their Local Records by 2020. Currently, Macau and Hong Kong are the only two regions of the Chinese territory which have not completed drafts to date.

The Chairman of Hong Kong Local Records Foundation Limited, Ma Ho Fai, who is also a delegate of the National People's Congress, said that the amendment of the Hong Kong chronicles



has been under discussion for many years, but moving forward with it has become complicated due to the lack of money.

Hong Kong's Education Convergence Chairman, Hon-Kuen Ho, said that drafting the chronicles can effectively establish the re-

lationship between Hong Kong and China and it will be helpful to build Hong Kong's sense of identity.

Ho also noted that the chronicles can be used along with history textbooks as teaching materials.

In Ho's opinion, many young people in Hong Kong

know little about the history of China and Hong Kong. Furthermore, Ho says a few Hong Kong independence groups are revising the history of the region.

Ho wants the government to publish the Hong Kong chronicles as soon as possible.

Unlike Hong Kong, the Macau government is providing approximately MOP600 million for the drafting of Macau's history.

In 2008, Macau initiated the first draft, a process fully financed by the SAR government, whereas in Hong Kong the draft relies on donations from the public.

In 2008, the team leader of the Macau Chronicle draft, Macau Polytechnic Institute's (IPM) President, Lei Heong Lok, noted that the draft will take approximately 10 years to finish. **JZ**

## Chui Sai On says Macau respects freedom of press

**C**HIEF Executive Chui Sai On said that the Macau SAR government highly respects the freedom of press and the freedom of publication. Chui made these comments during a lunch with 70 members of Macau's Chinese press earlier this week.

In addition, Chui said that the SAR government will continue to support the work and training of Macau's media, and will strengthen the relationships between the government, media and the public.

The Chief Executive also praised the media for their long-serving dedication to their country and to Macau, for their stance in serving the public, for their efforts and contributions toward maintaining social harmony and, finally, for the great progress behind the implementation of the 'One Country Two Systems' policy.

Yesterday, Chui Sai On reiterated his pledge to uphold freedom of expression and freedom of the press during a lunch meeting with editors of English and Portuguese media. In a nuanced approach, the chief executive said, "Portuguese and English media add to the tradition of multiculturalism in Macau."

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## EDUCATION

# UM rector pledges to cooperate with other higher institutions

Lynzy Valles

**T**HE ninth rector of the University of Macau, Yonghua Song pledged to establish a mechanism to boost cooperation with other institutions in research in a bid to increase the innovativeness of research output.

The new rector was speaking during his inauguration held yesterday at the University Hall.

Speaking in front of government representatives and representatives from various sectors, Song pledged to focus on the university's priorities and enhance research quality.

"A mechanism to further open up research collaboration will also be established to facilitate interdisciplinary cooperation within the university," adding that the move will deepen connections with mainland universities and research institutes.

He noted that the strengthening of international research collaboration will also be emphasized, along with the reform of current research management mechanisms to enhance research effectiveness.

Meanwhile, Song vowed that the university would work on strengthening its role as a think tank to assist and support the initiatives of the SAR in adopting a scientific approach to its governance.

"The university will continue to promote the integration of academia, research and industry to make more technological transfers possible," he said.



Yonghua Song (right)

"It will also work hard to contribute in such areas as building Macau into a smart city, refining its health care and basic education systems," Song continued.

The new rector added that the university will formulate strategies to refine its education and to impact other institutions.

Moreover, Song said that the university will provide students with more exchange and study opportunities in higher institutions in the mainland or overseas, adding that it would also take a raft of measures to raise the standards of the university's postgraduate programs.

"I will listen to the views of different parties in and out of the university, build communication pathways for staff, foster mutual trust and pool ideas together to work out how to move the university forward," Song vowed.

The newly-appointed rector

has held several leadership positions in U.K. and Chinese universities, and has actively promoted internationalization and institutional cooperation.

At a press conference held earlier this month, the rector pledged to ensure academic freedom at the city's public university.

He dismissed rumors regarding scholars being discouraged from discussing political issues, particularly those regarding mainland China.

## ■ Song vowed that the university would work on strengthening its role as a think tank

The University Council unanimously recommended Song to the Chief Executive as the only candidate for the post, which the CE accepted.

Song assumed office on January 9, following the resignation of the former rector Wei Zhao.

Investigation of Zhao's contract termination is ongoing by the Tertiary Education Services Office (GAES).

In a reply to the Times earlier this month, GAES noted, "Our office is still handling this with established procedures, with no information to be provided at the moment."

The investigation was ordered by the Secretariat for Social Affairs and Culture in late November to determine whether there are any irregularities that had marked the termination of Zhao's contract with the university.

## More companies take part in IFT Career Day

Julie Zhu

**T**HE Institute for Tourism Studies (IFT) held its 2018 Career Day at the IFT Taipa Campus yesterday. In total, 39 organizations from the tourism and service industries joined and exhibited at the event, providing employment opportunities and information, as well as advising participants on the latest developments in their sectors, increasing their chances of success in job hunting.

The positions were in several industries, ranging from tourism to insurance to telecommunications.

During the event, participating organizations

exhibited around 1,000 job vacancies and offered employment opportunities to IFT graduating students.

Last year, the 22 employers that attended offered more than 600 positions.

IFT President Fanny Vong said "each year, we will do a sort of follow-up on the graduates, [such as] what their situation is six months after having graduated from IFT."

"We are very satisfied upon seeing the recent statistics. Approximately 85 to 90 percent of the graduates were able to find a job within six months after graduation. The remaining graduates consider furthering their

education or changing to another job," said Vong, adding that "more than 70 percent of the graduates will work for the tourism services industry."

According to Vong, IFT graduates normally get a slightly higher salary than Macau's average.

When addressing yesterday's career day, Vong noted that the variety of companies participating in the event has been increasing.

"In the past, comparatively, there were more hotel and tourism related companies participating in our career day. The past two years saw an increase in the number of companies related to other types of services.

[...] This year, we have witnessed a few high-end retail and human resources companies."

The employment rate of IFT graduates has been satisfactory. A graduate employment survey was conducted with the participation of 2016/17 graduates. According to the survey results, 84.2 percent of the degree program graduates were employed, while 8.5 percent of graduates pursued further studies. Of the employed graduates, 74 percent worked in the tourism and hospitality sector with a median salary of MOP14,100.

The 2015/16 IFT Degree and Diploma Program Graduate Employ-



IFT President Fanny Vong

ment Survey found that 81 percent of bachelor degree holders had a job six months after graduating from IFT, out of which more than 75 percent were employed in the tourism or hospitality sectors.

Organizations that participated in the event included Air Macau, AsiaHospitalityCareers.com, Christian Dior (Macau), DFS Cotai, EGL Tours (Macau), Evolution-HR and Four Seasons Hotel Macao.

GAMING

# MGM awarded 125 new-to-market tables

**M**GM China Holdings will be granted 100 new-to-market live dealer gaming tables ahead of the January 29 opening of the casino operator's second Macau resort, MGM Cotai, with an additional 25 to follow starting from January 1, 2019. It will also be permitted to operate around 900 new slot machines.

The announcement was made yesterday by the Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lionel Leong, who said that the casino operator is also permitted to transfer up to 77 tables from its peninsula property, MGM Macau.

The Cotai-based resort previously advertised that it had the capacity to accommodate



nearly 500 gaming tables. A total of 125 new-to-market tables may therefore come as a disappointment to MGM China, even though the allocation is broadly in line with that given to its rivals

in the last two years.

In 2015, DICJ authorized 150 new-to-market tables for the second phase of Galaxy Macau, and a further 100 to Studio City. That was followed by a combined 300 tables allocated to

The Parisian Macao and Wynn Palace last year, equally split between the two properties.

The allocation, which was authorized by Macau's Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau, comes in light of a government policy to cap the growth in live-dealer tables.

The cap was introduced in 2013 when Francis Tam was the Secretary for Economy and Finance. It was presented as a measure to control the expansion of the gaming sector, mature an industry prone to large swings in revenue, and force operators to resort to non-gambling activities in order to attract customers.

Macau had a total of around 6,400 live-dealer tables at the end of 2017. **DB**

HEALTH

# Gov't says it is prepared to deal with flu onset

**M**ACAU health authorities say they are adequately prepared to deal with the onset of influenza during the virus's peak season this winter.

The Health Bureau (SSM) has prepared a response plan for seasonal influenza and has sufficient supply of medicines, vaccines and other medical resources to cope with the fluctuating incidence of flu, according to a statement issued yesterday by the Government Information Bureau.

The medical stocks include a reserve of antiviral medicines that could serve up to 180,000 people, and a three-month supply of epidemic-prevention material.

The Government appealed to members of the public to get vaccinated against seasonal flu, as the city is now into its peak season for the virus. SSM has purchased a total of 120,000 flu jabs to be made available to the Macau public and some 103,500 people have received their vaccinations.

So far, there is no record of a

patient either dying or being in a critical condition due to flu this year, the statement notified.

However, SSM has recorded an increase in flu cases in Macau, as well as a slight increase in the waiting time for accident and emergency services at hospital.

Moreover, it will continue to monitor developments regarding the incidence of respiratory diseases. Members of the public are urged to practice good personal and environmental hygiene and to take heed of measures in order to minimize the risk of infection from a respiratory disease.

Such measures include getting regular vaccinations, maintaining a balanced diet, exercising regularly and covering the nose and mouth with tissue paper when sneezing and coughing.

The bureau advises wearing a mask if respiratory symptoms such as fever or the cough develop, as well as when caring for a patient at home and if visiting hospitals or clinics.

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TAX HAVEN

# Macau gov't welcomes unexplained delisting

Daniel Beitler

**T**HE Macau government, after criticizing the European Union decision last month to include the territory on a blacklist of 17 jurisdictions accused of being tax havens, has welcomed last week's delisting.

Macau was listed as a non-cooperative tax jurisdiction on December 5 last year, putting the territory at risk of facing EU economic sanctions.

However, it was delisted late last week along with seven other territories - namely Barbados, Grenada, Mongolia, Panama, South Korea, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates - without an explanation from EU authorities.

The Macau government criticized the listing of the MSAR in the context of what it sees as successive steps by local authorities to curb cross-border tax evasion. It described the inclusion on the list as "unilateral", "one-sided" and "not reflective of the actual situation of Macau."

Though the European Union did not disclose the measures promised or taken by the MSAR to justify its delisting, the Macau government has indicated that the decision is related to the progress made on adopting an international tax cooperation convention.

According to a statement from the Government Spokesperson Office, "the Macao SAR has been actively in contact with the EU to express the position and describe the work progress and expected time-line of the extension of the 'Multilateral Convention



on Mutual Assistance and Administration in Tax Matters' to the Macao SAR, which ultimately leads to a proper solution of the concerned issue."

"At present, the Central Government has already authorized the Government of the Macao SAR to sign the 'Multilateral Competent Authority Agreement.' This will allow the Macao SAR to exchange financial account information with other tax jurisdictions including all EU member states," it continued. "Simultaneously, the legal regime of offshore business sector will be improved to further enhance the administrative work of taxation."

The delisting of Macau now places the territory on a "grey list" of over 40 countries and

## The narrow escape means that the MSAR will not immediately face the possibility of EU sanctions

jurisdictions that the EU will monitor closely.

The narrow escape means that the MSAR will not immediately face the possibility of EU sanctions.

In 2016, merchandise imports from the EU were valued at MOP17.03 billion, almost a

quarter of Macau's total merchandise imports. At the same time, some MOP25.84 billion worth of goods were imported from mainland China, casting doubt over the effectiveness of EU sanctions that would not affect the People's Republic.

Nevertheless, the EU is hailing whatever measures were taken or promised by the MSAR government and the seven other jurisdictions as a success.

French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said that the fresh commitments show "that European pressure is effective," and called for tougher action on tax havens.

"Naming and shaming will not be enough. There also must be sanctions," he said.



## Ho Ian Sang calls for inquiry into officials' errors

Lawmaker Ho Ian Sang has urged the government to consider launching public investigations into principal officials' mistakes or misdemeanors. According to a report released yesterday by TDM, these investigations should particularly target mistakes made by senior government officials, such as policy errors, inappropriate policies, or the delayed implementation of policies. More specifically, if the mistakes lead to an undermining of public interest, then a public investigation should be initiated, according to Ho. In Ho's opinion, Macau's current accountability system cost principal officials little and is not able to curtail the actions of principal officials. Ho pointed out that even if the Commission Against Corruption and the Commission of Audit raised problems, it is rare to see principal officials being made accountable or placed under investigation. Given this scenario, principal officials continue to make mistakes, according to Ho.

## Leong Wai Man appointed IC vice president

The current head of the Cultural Heritage Department of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), Leong Wai Man, has been appointed as the new vice president of the IC. Leong's appointment was signed by the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Alexis Tam, and published yesterday in the government's Official Gazette. Former IC president Ung Vai Meng and vice-president Leung Hio Ming last year stepped down from their positions following allegations of malpractice. They are now being investigated. Leong Wai Man commenced her career at the IC in 2009. In January 2016, she was promoted to head of the Cultural Heritage Department. Her appointment started yesterday and will last for one year.

AD



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HONG KONG

# Warning signs go overlooked in hot stock market

AS Hong Kong's booming equity market smashes one record after another, signs of overheating are popping up everywhere.

But good luck finding anyone who's willing to say sell.

"Do not freak out when you see some worrying short-term indicators - fundamentals are still good," said Hao Hong, a strategist at Bocom International Holdings Co., echoing the advice given by many of his peers in Hong Kong. "Who would want to hold cash in such an exuberant market?"

While strong global growth and buoyant corporate earnings have boosted stocks around the world in recent weeks, Hong Kong's rally stands out. The benchmark Hang Seng Index has outpaced peers in all of the world's

20 largest equity markets this year, jumping 10 percent for its best start in more than three decades. A gauge of the city's Chinese stocks has climbed a record 19 straight days.

The boom is in many ways reminiscent of past market peaks. Measures of momentum, market turnover, analyst sentiment and valuation are all near levels last seen at the end of the Hang Seng's surge in mid-2015, data compiled by Bloomberg show.

Optimists argue that's no reason to pull out. They note that some indicators have room to rise before reaching their 2015 extremes and that equity valuations in Hong Kong are still well below those in other developed markets. The Hang Seng index



could climb another 4.8 percent by the end of June from Tuesday's close, according to Peter So, co-head of research at CCB International Securities Ltd.

Still, even bulls like So and Hong say a temporary pullback is possible.

That's because relative strength indexes for the Hang Seng and the Hang Seng China Enterprises Index have climbed to the highest levels in more than a decade, far above thresholds that suggest an overbought market.

RSIs for the two gauges are also the highest among 70 benchmark indexes tracked by Bloomberg worldwide.

Hong Kong's market turnover jumped to the highest since July 2015 on Tuesday. While trading activity is still below levels seen at the peak of the equity frenzy 2 1/2 years ago, it looks similar to the booms of 2007 and 2015.

Furthermore, the rally has pushed the Hang Seng China Enterprises index to the highest since mid-2015 relative to analysts' share-pri-

ce targets. The projected 12-month index level in the chart above is derived from the consensus forecasts for stocks that make up the index.

While the Hang Seng and Hang Seng China Enterprises indexes are cheaper than many of their global counterparts, valuations in Hong Kong are catching up. The Hang Seng trades at about 13 times estimated earnings for the next 12 months, the highest level since May 2015. MDT/Bloomberg

AD



**S**TRAINS are spreading in China's USD15 trillion shadow banking industry as investors pull back from the debt-like savings products that helped drive leverage to dangerous levels.

Most affected are some \$3.8 trillion of so-called trust products, until now the fastest-growing shadow banking segment and a popular way for debt-ridden property developers and local governments to raise funds from millions of ordinary Chinese. In recent weeks, at least two of the products have been forced to delay payments as the market started to freeze up, making it harder to refinance maturing issues with new ones.

"On the one hand you have cash-strapped borrowers scrambling for refinancing; on the other you have cash-rich investors not knowing where to put their money for fear of getting burned," said James Yang, a sales manager at Shanghai Xiangyi Asset Management Co.

China has doubled down on steps to cut leverage in the financial system after President Xi Jinping consolidated power at a key party congress last year. Authorities have issued a flurry of regulations in recent weeks to curb shadow banking, adding to about 30 new rules published since March when the government stepped up its deleveraging drive.

After the recent crackdown, financial institutions no longer want to act as intermediaries between borrowers and investors, said Yang, adding that it's his worst start to the year for new business since he started marketing the products four years ago.

A late-December ruling from the China Banking Regulatory Commission has discouraged banks from referring their clients to in-

# China's USD15 trillion shadow bank edifice shows more cracks



vest in trust products. That so-called channel business accounted for about 66 percent of total trust assets, UBS Group AG's chief China economist Wang Tao wrote in a note issued on yesterday.

The tensions bubbled to the surface last week. Zhongrong International Trust Co. delayed more than 900 million yuan (\$141 million) of payments on two trust products which were issued to fund a local borrower in southwest China, people familiar with the matter said at the time. Zhongjiang Trust also delayed payment, according to local media.

Both were repaid days later, according to a statement and media report. But such delays are also undermining the confidence of depositors who may finally be getting the message that the government won't always step in. That so-called implicit guarantee has allowed less cre-

## China has doubled down on steps to cut leverage in the financial system

ditworthy borrowers to raise money, underpinning an array of shadow banking products.

"The old ways of fulfilling implicit guarantees on asset management products are dead," said Lu Zhengwei, Shanghai-based chief economist at Industrial Bank.

One of the most far reaching changes announced last year was a plan to align yields with the risks and returns of the underlying products, instead of offering guarantees. China wants to phase in the change by the middle of next year.

The impact is most obvious

in the trust market, where only 229 new products have been issued so far this year, down from 666 in the same period of 2017, according to industry data provider Use Trust. That's the slowest start to a year since 2011, raising the prospect that more borrowers might struggle with timely payments should issuance stay depressed.

Because of their poor credit profiles, the companies and local government entities that use the trust market to raise funds have little chance of getting bank loans or other types of financing, especially when lenders are restricting credit due to the deleveraging campaign.

China Merchants Bank Co. analyst Li Liuyang said he expects to see one or two high-profile defaults this year that will bring home that the implicit guarantee on shadow banking products is gone.

To be sure, until now, defaults have been rare in the trust industry, with issuers usually finding a way to repay depositors through new issuance or other means. Defaults on wealth management products - which tend to invest their proceeds in the bond or money markets - have been even more unusual.

Though market volatility is likely to increase as shadow bank financing dries up, Chinese authorities will step in if necessary, for example with injections of liquidity by the central bank to smooth market operations, according to Wang at UBS. **MDT/Bloomberg**

### corporate bits

#### 200 STUDENTS GRADUATE FROM SANDS INTERNSHIP PROGRAM



Close to 200 students graduated from Sands China's Integrated Resort Internship Program in 2017, with 20 percent of them taking full-time positions with the com-

pany upon graduation, according to a statement from the casino operator.

Sands China's Integrated Resort Internship Program gives local university stu-

dents opportunities to work full-time at its properties on a short-term basis while fulfilling a portion of their degree requirements. As a result, they are able to gain a diversified mix of valuable work experience.

The Program offers full-time internship opportunities in 15 non-gaming departments including concierge, food and beverage, corporate communications, information technology, and others. The two newest departments to participate in the Program are facilities management and props design, which were added in 2017 in order to offer even more diverse career training options for students.

In 2018, the Program will offer internship opportunities to 200 students.

#### CAM CHAIRMAN VISITS AVIATION AUTHORITY FOR BUSINESS EXCHANGE



Dr. Deng Jun, Chairman of Executive Committee of Macau International Airport Company Limited (CAM),

led a delegation to Civil Aviation Authority of Macau (AACM) on Monday to have a business exchange with

the director, Simon Chan.

In the meeting, both sides talked about the fact that the peak travel season is expected at Macau International Airport (MIA) during the Chinese New Year.

Assistance and deployment will be conducted between AACM and MIA in aspects of flights approval and reception at airport, enhancing the efficiency of operations, and attaching great attention to service quality at the same time.

In addition, discussions and views exchange were carried out on security management, the collaborative decision-making system, the recent airspace management and other matters, in order to secure the work efficiency of local civil aviation.

## opinion

**LESHI'S 13 DAYS OF PAIN SHOW SHENZHEN A WAY OUT OF GLOOM**

Shuli Ren, Bloomberg

If two lizards are crawling up a wall in China, there's bound to be someone betting which one will make it to the top first.

In a country obsessed with gambling, Leshi Internet Information & Technology Corp., whose shares resumed trading yesterday after a nine-month halt, is the latest focus. This time, the speculation is centered around how many days the Beijing-based company can fall by the daily 10 percent limit before finding a bottom. According to mutual funds' best estimates, it's at least 13.

At its peak in May 2015, Leshi was such a big name. As the sixth-largest firm on the Shenzhen stock exchange, institutional investors piled in. Asset-management companies, including China Post & Capital Fund Management Co., still own about 10 percent of the Netflix-style streaming company; even sovereign fund Central Huijin Asset Management has a stake.

But mutual funds can't wait about during a nine-month share suspension. China Post & Capital has had to write down its stake repeatedly, estimating in November that Leshi was worth about 3.92 yuan (USD0.61 cents) a share, 75 percent less than the 15.33 yuan at which it was halted. (The stock hit 13.80 yuan within seconds yesterday, with no takers.)

Using that forecast, buyers of Leshi stock aren't expected to emerge until mid-February, just before the start of Chinese New Year. That's right when traders pack up their bags and head home. It's perhaps no surprise that the 2.5-billion-yuan China Post Strategic Emerging Industries Fund is down 26 percent over the past 12 months.

The damage goes well beyond a few funds, though.

Pledging shares to supercharge one's business expansion is a common technique in China, and Leshi founder Jia Yueting is no exception. He's pledged almost all of his 25 percent stake to a dozen brokerages. Unable to liquidate those shares, the brokerages have had to resort to China's convoluted legal system. Ping An Securities Group (Holdings) Ltd. is suing Jia, trying to claw back about 470 million yuan, according to a December filing.

It would be wrong of China's securities regulator to treat this as an isolated event. Last month, the Shenzhen Stock Exchange removed Leshi from its Composite Index and ChiNext Index, hoping once it resumed trading, the benchmarks wouldn't be affected.

As I wrote back then, Leshi is the reason why Shenzhen's stock market, sometimes referred to as China's Nasdaq, was a big loser in 2017. It's natural for company fortunes to wax and wane, just let the market discover how much they're worth. But after Leshi's ultra-long trading halt, are mutual funds going to be willing to buy into high-flying tech stocks again? Likewise, while there's nothing inherently wrong with pledging shares or borrowing on margin, brokerages may hesitate if their collateral could be frozen for months.

China watchers will no doubt be mesmerized by how far Leshi has fallen from grace, but that's a healthy thing. At least the invisible hand of the market is working.

WHEN Liu He takes to the lectern in Davos today, the Harvard-educated technocrat will move further into the spotlight that's been aimed at him since his elevation to China's top political body last year.

A key adviser to President Xi Jinping, Liu is China's representative to the World Economic Forum's annual meeting this week. The visit - which culminates in a speech to the gathering - is likely to be the first of many high-profile appearances by the 65-year-old Cultural Revolution survivor, who's on track to become Xi's key lieutenant on China's economy and financial system.

Known back home for guiding policy behind the scenes, Liu is seen by analysts as the heir-apparent to Vice Premier Ma Kai, who helms a new super-committee tasked with presiding over a crack-down on financial-sector risk but is expected to retire soon.

Liu, who was appointed to the 25-member Politburo in October, is his natural successor as China seeks to both open up its domestic markets and rein in years of rampant borrowing.

"Liu will be like a Chinese version combining both Larry Summers and Ben Bernanke, plus the chairman of the president's economic council," according to Shen Jianguang, chief Asia economist at Mizuho Securities Asia Ltd. in Hong Kong. "He will not only oversee overall financial markets including monetary policy and financial supervision, but also the relevant fiscal and reform policy."

Liu is "the brain" behind supply-side reforms to cut overcapacity and boost market forces, and will be a key figure in shaping economic policy for the next five years, Shen said.

More accustomed to playing a behind-the-scenes role in his current job as head of a Communist Party office focused on financial and economic affairs, Liu's address comes a year after Xi's defense of globalization at Davos just as Donald Trump took office.

A member of Xi's inner circle, Liu has helped guide Chinese economic policy as director of the Central Leading Group for Financial and Economic Affairs, which is chaired by the president. He's also been vice chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission, the government's top economic planning body.

With debt levels across the economy approaching three times annual output, comprised mostly of a complex web of corporate and household borrowing, China's key task going forward is easing its addiction to credit without crea-

LIU HE

# Beijing man in Davos is 'the brain' behind economy's overhaul



Liu He

ting a collapse in asset values that would seriously hamper the economy.

Liu is likely to play a key role in that, says James Stent, author of "China's Banking Transformation: The Untold Story" who spent more than a decade serving on the boards of Chinese lenders. "It's clear that Liu He is going to be powerful in setting economic strategy, whether as vice premier or whatever title he is given," he said.

**DEBT FOCUS**

While Liu has tended to avoid the spotlight, many economists regard him as the voice behind an anonymous missive on debt published in the People's Daily in May 2016. The Communist Party newspaper published the comments from an unnamed "authoritative person," who said China must face up to its nonperforming loans and other risks associated with soaring debt.

"It's widely understood in the industry Liu is the person," according to Xia Chun, a visiting professor at the

University of Hong Kong. "He never shies away from the problems and difficulties in China's economy."

In China's opaque policy world, there's no guarantee Liu will be appointed to lead the new oversight body. But Xia, like Mizuho's Shen, says he's likely to lead the panel.

Liu entered Beijing's Renmin University in the late 1970s, earning a degree in industrial economy, according to a biography from China's Xinhua News Agency. He studied business at Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey, and earned a masters' degree in public administration at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government in 1995.

**U.S. TIES**

A former soldier and factory worker who was sent to China's northeast during the 1966-76 Cultural Revolution, Liu helped draft the five-year plans that underpinned the economy. He spent much of his career in the State Planning Commission, the predecessor of the NDRC that

formerly set prices for everything from bicycles to grain.

Liu has also played an important role in the relationship between the world's two largest economies. As global markets cratered during the U.S. financial crisis, then-Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner and National Economic Council Director Summers separately made time for Liu, a link to top leaders in Beijing, Bloomberg News reported at the time.

But while Liu can be a smart and thoughtful expert, he ultimately remains a servant of Xi, according to George Magnus, an associate at Oxford University's China Centre and former adviser at UBS Group AG.

"Everything of substance must now go to and through Xi, regardless of the leanings and preferences of people like Liu," Magnus said. "He'll certainly continue to give his boss the benefit of his opinions and advice, but implementation of anything has to pass muster with the president." **Bloomberg**

**T**HE European Union yesterday joined Sweden in calling on China to immediately release a Swedish book publisher who was taken off a train in front of his country's diplomats by Chinese police four days ago.

The Chinese foreign ministry yesterday indicated Gui Minhui, the Hong Kong-based book publisher, and the Swedish diplomats who were with him may have been breaking Chinese law.

Gui was first abducted in 2015, one of five Hong Kong book-sellers whose disappearances became a symbol of the extent to which China was willing to reinforce its hard line on squelching political dissent and a free press — despite international criticism.

The office of EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said it “fully supports the public statement and efforts of the Swedish government” on Gui’s behalf.

“We expect the Chinese authorities to immediately release Mr. Gui from detention, allow him to reunite with his family and to receive consular and medical support in line with his rights,” it said in a statement.

On Tuesday, Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs Margot Wallstrom said in a news release that China has given no clear explanation for Gui’s detention. Sweden has already summoned China’s ambassador in the Scandinavian country over the 53-year-old’s case.

“We take a very serious view of the detention on Saturday of Swedish citizen Gui Minhui, with no specific reason being given for the detention, which took place during an ongoing consular support mission,” Wallstrom said in her statement.

“We expect the immediate release of our fellow citizen, and that he be given the opportunity to meet Swedish diplomatic and medical staff,” she said.

Wallstrom said the Swedish diplomats accompanying Gui had been “providing consular assistance to a Swedish citizen in need of medical care.

GUI MINHAI

## EU, Sweden call for China to release detained publisher



Hong Kong bookseller Lam Wing-kee stands next to a placard with picture of missing bookseller Gui Minhui

“This was perfectly in line with basic international rules giving us the right to provide our citizens with consular support,” she said.

Gui had been running a Hong Kong publishing company spe-

**“We expect the Chinese authorities to immediately release Mr. Gui from detention.”**

EU FOREIGN OFFICE

cializing in gossipy tales about high-level Chinese politics when he disappeared from his Thai holiday home about two years ago. He was believed to have been spirited away by Chinese security agents to mainland China, where he later turned up in police custody. In a videotaped confession that supporters believe was coerced, Gui stated that he’d turned himself in to mainland authorities over a hit-and-run accident.

He was released into house arrest in October in the eastern city of Ningbo, living in what his daughter Angela called a police-managed apartment.

His daughter told Radio Sweden, the English-language service of national broadcaster Sveriges Radio, that her father was on

a train with two Swedish diplomats on Saturday when a group of police officers seized him.

She said her father was traveling to Beijing to see a Swedish doctor after he was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, a neurological disease that he developed while in custody.

Gui’s 2015 abduction reinforced rising fears that Beijing was chipping away at the rule of law in Hong Kong, a semiautonomous Chinese city that is promised civil liberties such as freedom of speech until 2047.

The books Gui and his colleagues sold at their Causeway Bay Bookshop were popular with visitors from mainland China, where such titles are banned.

Questioned at a daily briefing

about Gui’s situation, Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said she was “not aware of the details.”

Calls for Gui’s release “don’t make sense I think,” Hua said, adding that “other countries should respect the competent Chinese authority’s law-based handling of the foreigners’ cases in China.”

Without giving details, Hua said “all people in China must not violate China’s laws.”

“I would like to reiterate that all foreigners in China including foreign diplomats should not engage in activities that violate relevant international conventions or Chinese laws,” she said.

Under Chinese law, those convicted of a crime generally have their civil rights suspended for a period of time, although it wasn’t clear whether that applied in Gui’s case. The prohibitions, which are often not made public, can also include restrictions on travel.

Chinese authorities also have a history of continuing to persecute political prisoners even after their release from prison and other legal strictures.

Noted human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng recently disappeared back into custody after five years of prison and three more years confined by guards at home. Liu Xia, the wife of the late Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo, has been held a virtual prisoner for years despite never being charged.

Since her husband’s death in July while serving a prison sentence, Liu has had virtually no contact with friends or family and the authorities will not say where she is currently being held. AP

## US Treasury official presses Hong Kong, Beijing on N. Korea

**A** U.S. Treasury official said yesterday she has urged officials in Hong Kong and Beijing to step up measures to counter North Korean smuggling and financing, as part of Washington’s fine tuning of efforts to shut down Pyongyang’s nuclear program.

Treasury Undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence Sigal Mandelker said she told Hong Kong officials it should be harder for North Korea to use shell companies regis-

tered in the Asian business hub.

Mandelker said she also repeatedly pressed officials in Beijing to expel sanctioned North Koreans in China who facilitate North Korean financial transactions.

Despite various hurdles, she said three increasingly stringent U.N. Security Council resolutions last year on North Korea were having a “significant impact.” She did not give any details.

The U.S. and international sanctions are aimed

at depriving North Korea of revenue for its nuclear weapons program and otherwise exerting pressure on the government in Pyongyang.

South Korea’s recent seizure of two ships suspected of being used for illegal oil sales to North Korea revealed a murky web of shell companies listed as their owners or managers, including some registered in Hong Kong.

The former British colony often tops the business and economic freedom rankin-

gs, based on criteria that includes ease of setting up business. But that can also facilitate illicit dealings.

Mandelker said she had discussions with officials including those at Hong Kong’s Financial Services and Treasury Bureau about tightening up company formation and corporate registration rules.

“This shouldn’t be a place where companies can establish themselves to help in the smuggling and ship-to-ship transfers,” she said. AP



## ANALYSIS

# A flurry of exchanges, protests: What's next for Koreas?

Hyung-Jin Kim, Seoul

**S**OUTH Korean activists tore photos of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un yesterday, a day after the North warned such actions could derail reconciliation efforts around next month's Winter Olympics in the South.

It seems unlikely North Korea would follow through on its threat, after going so far with its sudden outreach to the South following a year of elevated tensions over its nuclear weapons development. But the North's bluster raises a question: Will the Olympics-related mood of rapprochement continue after the Feb. 9-25 Pyeongchang Games are over?

A look at recent developments in North-South Korean Olympic detente:

## DEFACING KIM JONG UN

A small group of activists, mostly defectors from the North, ripped three photos of Kim and tossed the pieces into the air before assembled media at Seoul's National Assembly.

It was the latest in a series of rallies by conservatives, who accuse liberal President Moon Jae-in of giving too many concessions to the North. They say North Korea is launching a "peace offensive" ahead of the Olympics as a way to weaken U.S.-led international sanctions and buy time to perfect its nuclear weapons.

On Monday, about 150 to 200 activists and politicians stam-



The Olympic Rings in coastal Gangneung, South Korea

ped and burned a large photo of Kim and a North Korean flag as the head of the North's popular girl band passed by them during a visit to Seoul.

North Korea responded Tuesday by calling the protesters "human rejects" and "living corpses." The statement by the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification also criticized the South Korean government for failing to prevent a protest that defamed its "supreme leadership." Kim is the subject of a state-organized personality cult.

"If the North-South agreement and schedules for the [North's] participation in the Olympics are canceled [...] the blame will wholly rest with the conservati-

ve group and the South Korean authorities," it said.

## RARE VISITS

For now, fledgling cross-border visits have continued, suggesting that North Korea isn't seriously considering withdrawing from the Olympics.

South Korean officials are on a rare trip to the North this week to plan for joint pre-Olympic events at scenic Diamond Mountain and the new Masik ski resort. An advance team from the North is due to cross the heavily fortified border today to look at accommodation facilities, a press center and the Olympic stadium.

Earlier this week, another North Korean delegation triggered a

media frenzy. Hyon Song Wol, who leads Kim's hand-picked Moranbong Band, arrived to inspect venues for a 140-member art troupe — an orchestra and singers and dancers — set to perform in the South during the Olympics. TV cameras followed her every move during a two-day visit.

## A SACRIFICE FOR POLITICS

The North Korean delegation arriving today will include 12 female hockey players who will form a joint Olympic team with South Korea.

The unified hockey team is a source of intense debate in South Korea. One survey showed about 70 percent of responden-

ts opposing the idea because it would deprive South Koreans of playing time.

The North Korean players initially planned to come on Feb. 1 with the 10 other North Korean athletes invited to compete, but South Korea requested an earlier arrival to practice together and develop teamwork.

The IOC-brokered agreement requires at least three North Korean players to suit up for each game, meaning that three from South Korea's original 23-player roster cannot play in those games.

"It is a tough situation to have our team be used for political reasons, but you know it's kind of something that's bigger than ourselves right now," Sarah Murray, the South Korean team's Canadian coach, told reporters. "It's great that we are combining and making history coming together through sport, but it's kind of at the expense of we don't get to play our full roster."

## UNCERTAINTY AHEAD

The Koreans' agreement to have their athletes parade together under a single "unification flag" depicting their peninsula is triggering a backlash from conservatives, who question why the South Korean team cannot carry its national flag on the first Winter Olympics on their soil.

Despite the opposition, the Moon government hopes that an Olympic-inspired mood of detente would serve as a stepping stone to the resumption of diplomatic talks that could slow down North Korea's nuclear advancement.

North Korea, however, has insisted it won't discuss its nuclear program during its ongoing talks with South Korea, and some experts warn that tensions could flare again after the Olympics. **AP**

## AFGHANISTAN

# Insurgents attack children's group in Afghanistan, 3 dead

**A** group of gunmen stormed a non-governmental children's organization in eastern Nangarhar province yesterday, killing two security guards and a civilian, provincial officials said.

Attahullah Khogyani, spokesman for the provincial governor, said the attack targeted Save the Children's provincial office in Jalalabad.

Inamullah Miakhial, spokesman for Nangarhar regional hospital, said at least 14 wounded were brought to the hospital. The casualty count could rise as a gun batt-

le was still underway, he said.

The attack started with the suicide bomber and was followed by gunfire, said Khogyani.

The Islamic State group claimed the attack in a report from its Aamaq news agency. It said a suicide bomber attacked with an explosive-laden vehicle and a subsequent raid targeted "British and Swedish foundations and Afghan government institutes."

Both Taliban insurgents and IS are active in eastern Nangarhar province.

Monica Zanarelli, the International Committee of the Red Cross' head of delegation in Afghanistan, said that an attack against an organization that helps children is "outrageous."

"Civilians and aid workers must not be targeted," she said in a statement. "Increased violence has made operating in Afghanistan difficult for many organizations."

The attack follows a deadly weekend siege of the Intercontinental Hotel in the capital Kabul in which 22 people were

killed, including 14 foreigners. Multiple U.S. citizens were killed and injured in the Taliban's 13-hour siege of the hotel, the State Department said. No exact figures were immediately available for either the U.S. fatalities or injuries.

Eleven of the 14 foreigners had been previously identified as working for the private Afghan airline KamAir. During a ceremony at Kabul's airport yesterday the bodies of seven Ukrainian citizens were handed over to officials for transfer to Ukraine.



Vehicles burn after a deadly suicide attack in Jalalabad, east of Kabul, yesterday

Mirwais Samadi, head of the consulate department of the Afghanistan Foreign Ministry, said the attack was launched by "terrorists" and their supporters.

"Some of our countrymen were martyred and some foreign nationals also were killed," he said. "We express our condolences and thoughts to the victims and families."

In eastern Ghazni province, meanwhile, four Afghan police were killed after their checkpoint came under attack by insurgents, said Arif Noori, spokesman for the provincial governor.

Six insurgents were killed and three were wounded in the battle, which took place early morning yesterday in Dayak district, said Noori. **AP**

Robert Burns, Hanoi

VIETNAM

# Mattis thanks Hanoi for supporting sanctions on North Korea

U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis praised Vietnam yesterday for supporting U.N. sanctions against North Korea and expressed hope that Washington and Hanoi can build closer defense ties despite being former enemies.

"They've stepped up and aligned themselves with U.N. sanctions," he told reporters flying with him from Jakarta, Indonesia, where he held high-level talks and observed a colorful display of combat skills by Indonesian commandos.

The Pentagon chief's visit comes just days before the 50th anniversary of the Tet offensive, a turning point in the American war against communist North Vietnam. Mattis, who did not serve in that war, said it is not an impediment to current relations.

"This is in our past," he said.

The Tet offensive, named for the Lunar New Year holiday on which it was launched in 1968, was a battlefield failure for the North Vietnamese but a political victory in the sense that it punctured American hopes of winning the war.

Mattis noted Vietnam's proximity to the South China Sea makes the country a key player in disputes with China over territorial claims to islets, shoals



Ahead of the Vietnam visit, in Indonesia, US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis (left) holds talks with Indonesian Coordinating Minister for Politics, Security and Law, Wiranto

and other small land formations in the sea. Vietnam also fought a border war with China in 1979.

"Because of the coastline they have and the position they occupy, they are going to be a foun-

ndation for any kind of prosperity" in the region, which is one reason to push now for closer

defense relations, he said.

During his visit, Mattis also planned to meet with representatives of a Pentagon organization, the Defense POW-MIA Accounting Agency, that carries out searches for remains of American service members still unaccounted for from the Vietnam war, which ended in 1975.

Later in the week Mattis plans to fly to Hawaii for talks with U.S. commanders and to meet with his South Korean counterpart to discuss the situation with North Korea.

Before he left Jakarta yesterday morning, Mattis was treated to a demonstration of counter-terrorism skills by an Indonesian commando group. The commandos showed off their hand-to-hand combat skills and performed a range of exotic moves including lopping off the heads of live snakes and drinking their blood.

Mattis said during his visit to Jakarta that he hoped the U.S. could develop closer ties to the Indonesian military. AP

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## OSCARs 2018

## Fresh voices lead the way in nominations

Jake Coyle, New York

THE Academy Awards showed red outsiders, on screen and off, with milestone-setting nominations that celebrated Guillermo del Toro's full-hearted ode to outcasts "The Shape of Water," embraced first-time filmmakers like Greta Gerwig and Jordan Peele, and made "Mudbound" director of photography Rachel Morrison the first woman ever nominated for best cinematography.

In nominations that spanned young and old, studio blockbusters and passion-fueled indies, the 90th annual Academy Awards on Tuesday gave many who have long been shunned by the movie business — women directors, transgender filmmakers, minority actors, even Netflix — something to cheer about.

Leading all nominees with 13 nods, including best picture, was "The Shape of Water," by veteran Mexican filmmaker del Toro, whose Cold War-era fantasy is about a mute office cleaner (Sally Hawkins) who falls in love with an amphibious creature. But the nominations also carried forward some of the ongoing reckoning of the Me Too movement that has been felt especially acutely in Hollywood, where male filmmakers outnumber women by a ratio of approximately 12-to-1.

Gerwig, the writer-director of the nuanced coming-of-age tale "Lady Bird," became just the fifth woman nominated for best director, following Lina Wertmüller, Jane Campion, Sofia Coppola and Kathryn Bigelow, the sole woman to win, for "The Hurt Locker." Speaking by phone Tuesday from Los Angeles, Gerwig said the distinction was extremely meaningful.

"When I think about Kathryn Bigelow winning and me sitting there watching it and feeling suddenly like, 'It's possible,'" said Gerwig. "To be nominated as the fifth woman, I hope that what it does is that women of all ages look at it and they also find the spark within themselves that says: 'Now I have to go make my movie.' That's what I want. And I want it selfishly because I want to see their stories."

Morrison posted Twitter of her nomination: "I hope it tells all the



Director Greta Gerwig (right) and Saoirse Ronan on the set of "Lady Bird"

dreamers out there (especially the young girls with cameras in their hands) that ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE."

In what's been a wide-open awards season, Oscar voters chose nine best-picture nominees, including four with female protagonists: "The Shape of Water," "Lady Bird," Martin McDonagh's rage-fueled comic drama "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri," Jordan Peele's horror sensation "Get Out," Joe Wright's Winston Churchill drama "Darkest Hour," Steven Spielberg's timely newspaper drama "The Post," Christopher Nolan's World War II epic "Dunkirk," Luca Guadagnino's tender love story "Call Me By Your Name" and Paul Thomas Anderson's twisted romance "Phantom Thread."

One of Gerwig's first calls of congratulations was to another first-time filmmaker, Peele. The two have been brought together by Hollywood's months-long Oscar campaigning and their mutual rookie status. (Gerwig previously co-directed a small feature.)

Peele becomes the fifth black filmmaker nominated for best director, and the third to helm a best-picture nominee, following Barry Jenkins last year for "Moonlight." He's also the third person to receive best picture, director and writing nods for his first feature film after Warren Beatty ("Heaven Can Wait") and James L. Brooks ("Terms of Endearment").

"I'm going to write. I'm now going to get hard at work on the next one," Peele said by phone. "One of the greatest things that I get from this whole process is

this faith in my voice. It's like jet fuel. It makes me want to make as many movies that I can in my life.

"The Shape of Water" landed just shy of tying the record of 14 nominations, scoring a wide array for nominations for its cast (Sally Hawkins, Richard Jenkins, Octavia Spencer), del Toro's directing, its sumptuous score (by Alexandre Desplat) and its technical craft. Del Toro said in an interview Tuesday that he would celebrate with an extra chicken sausage for breakfast: "That will be my indulgence for the day."

"You realize that we are all, in some way or another, a bit of an outsider in different ways," said del Toro of his film's resonance. "Not fearing the other but embracing the other is the only way to go as a race. The urgency of that message of hope and emotion is what sustained the faith for roughly half a decade that the movie

needed to be made."

All of the acting front-runners — Frances McDormand ("Three Billboards"), Gary Oldman ("Darkest Hour"), Allison Janney ("I, Tonya"), Sam Rockwell ("Three Billboards") — landed their expected nominations. But there were plenty of surprises and more than a few landmarks in the nominations announced from Los Angeles ahead of the March 4 ceremony, to be hosted by Jimmy Kimmel.

Meryl Streep scored her 21st nomination, for "The Post," and John Williams ("Star Wars: The Last Jedi") his 51st. Two 89-year-old legends became the oldest nominees: Agnes Varda ("Faces Places," best documentary) and James Ivory ("Call Me By Your Name," for adapted screenplay). There were eight first-time acting nominees, including 22-year-old "Call Me By Your Name" breakthrough Timothee Chalamet and Daniel Kaluuya, 28, of "Get Out." Saoirse Ronan, that grizzled 23-year-old, landed her third Oscar nom, for "Lady Bird."

Denzel Washington ("Roman J. Israel, Esq.") was nominated for best actor, likely eclipsing James Franco ("Disaster Artist"). Franco was accused of sexual misconduct, which he denied, just days before Oscar voting closed.

Christopher Plummer, who replaced Kevin Spacey in Ridley Scott's "All the Money in the World," also sneaked into the best supporting actor category. Added to the film in reshoots little more than a month before the film's

release, 88-year-old Plummer is the oldest acting nominee ever. "Everything has happened so quickly of late that I am still a trified stunned but excited by it all," said Plummer.

Perhaps most unexpected was the broad success of Paul Thomas Anderson's "Phantom Thread," which scored not only nods for Daniel Day-Lewis for best actor and Lesley Manville, for best supporting actress, but also nominations for best picture, Anderson's direction, costume design and Johnny Greenwood's score.

Still, "Three Billboards" scored seven nominations, behind only "The Shape of Water" and Christopher Nolan's "Dunkirk." The World War II epic, thus far little-honored in Hollywood's awards season, emerged especially strong with Oscar voters, taking eight nominations, many of them in technical categories. It's Nolan's first nomination for best director.

Though the favorites are largely independent films, a number of blockbusters fared well, including five nods for "Blade Runner 2049," four for "Star Wars: The Last Jedi," three for "Baby Driver," two for "Beauty and the Beast" and two for Pixar's "Coco," which is up for best animated feature. The Wolverine film "Logan" even notched a screenplay nod, a first for a superhero movie.

The documentary category — also including "Abacus: Small Enough to Jail," "Last Men in Aleppo" and two Netflix entries: "Icarus" and "Strong Island" — likewise contained history. AP

## Oscars making history, quietly, with transgender nominees

OSCAR nods for women and minorities drew many of the headlines in the nominations, but this year's Academy Awards also mark a breakthrough for transgender filmmakers.

Yance Ford, the director of the documentary "Strong Island" and a trans man, became the first transgender filmmaker nominated for an Oscar. His film, a Netflix release about Ford's investigation into his brother's 1992 murder, was nominated for best documentary.

Sebastian Lelio's "A Fantastic Woman," Chile's Oscar entry, was also nominated for best foreign language film. It stars Daniela Vega, a trans actress, as a transgender singer mistreated in the aftermath of her boyfriend's death.

Alluding to those nominations, as well as those for films featuring prominent gay characters such as "The Shape of Water," "Call Me By Your Name" and "Lady Bird," GLAAD applauded



Daniela Vega in a scene from, "A Fantastic Woman"

the Oscar field.

"It's a big day for LGBTQ-inclusive films at the Academy Awards. Films like 'The Shape of Water,' 'A Fantastic Woman,' 'Lady Bird,' and 'Call Me By Your Name' not only have complex, detailed, and moving portrayals, but prove that audiences and critics alike are hungry for stories which embrace diversity," said Sarah Kate Ellis, GLAAD president and CEO.

"These important stories move the needle forward on LGBTQ acceptance at a time when media images are often the front lines for marginalized communities."

Some had hoped Vega would become the first transgender actor nominated. Hollywood has come under increasing criticism for celebrating trans stories played by non-trans stars, while failing to cast transgender actors.

Hilary Swank ("Boys Don't Cry"), Jared Leto ("Dallas Buyers Club"), Eddie Redmayne ("The Danish Girl") and Felicity Huffman ("Transamerica") have all garnered Oscar nominations for trans roles, with Swank and Leto winning.

Transgender people have been nominated in other Oscar categories. The composer Angela Morley received two nods, for 1974's "The Little Prince" and 1976's "The Slipper and the Rose."

## NO SMARTPHONES FOR PwC ACCOUNTANTS

THE SHOW ran especially long last year, at three hours and 49 minutes, but it finished with a bang: the infamous envelope mix-up that led to "La La Land" being incorrectly announced as the best picture before "Moonlight" was crowned. This year, the academy has prohibited the PwC accountants who handle

the envelopes from using cell-phones or social media during the show. The accounting firm also unveiled several reforms including the addition of a third balloting partner in the show's control room. But the movie business has larger accounting problems. Attendance hit a 24-year low in 2017.

**T**OP Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer has pulled back an offer of USD25 billion for President Donald Trump's long-promised southern border wall, as lawmakers scrambled to figure out how to push a deal to protect 700,000 or more so-called Dreamer immigrants from deportation.

Schumer had made the offer last week in a last-ditch effort to head off a government shutdown, then came scolding criticism from his party's liberal activist base that Democrats had given up too easily in reopening the government without more concrete promises on immigration.

"We're going to have to start on a new basis, and the wall offer's off the table," Schumer, D-N.Y., told reporters yesterday (Macau time).

The shutdown battle — settled mostly on Trump's terms — complicated the already difficult search for an immigration pact: GOP hard-liners appeared emboldened, while Democrats absorbed withering criticism from progressives. Neither development seemed likely to push the combatants toward the compromises needed to produce a bill that can pass both the tea party-driven House and the more pragmatic Senate.

USA

# Top Democrat rescinds offer of USD25 billion for Trump's wall

Still, there were fresh signs of a willingness to keep hunting for a solution, with a flurry of meetings on Capitol Hill and an assessment from White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders that "I don't think they're that far apart."

Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, said he'd been to three meetings about immigration. "I know there's a lot of skepticism around here and not much trust," he said, "but I do believe that there is a bona fide bipartisan concern about getting this done."

Even if the Senate can come up with the votes to pass a plan, Democrats fear there is little chance such a bill would gain the support of House Republicans.

"There were no commitments made in the House" as legislators worked to end the government shutdown, House GOP Whip Steve Scalise of Louisiana said Monday, warning against any "amnesty" measure.

Trump weighed via Twitter:



Senate Minority Leader Sen. Chuck Schumer of N.Y.

"Nobody knows for sure that the Republicans & Democrats will be able to reach a deal on DACA by February 8, but everyone will be trying...with a big additional focus put on Military Strength and Border Security. The Dems have just learned that a Shutdown is not the answer!"

Cornyn, the No. 2 Senate Re-

publican, said Schumer had promised \$25 billion for the wall and other border security measures, though not all of that would have been immediate funding. He called Schumer's withdrawal of the offer "a step backward."

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., has committed to trying to reach a deal on immigration and key budget issues by Feb. 8, though Cornyn said Monday that "strikes me as highly difficult."

Instead, the Senate appeared more likely to start a freewheeling debate next month.

"Whoever gets 60 votes wins," said McConnell. 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, 2108

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

## BIG APPLE CIRCUS CLOWN RESIGNS OVER SEXUAL MISCONDUCT



A beloved circus performer known as Grandma the clown has resigned from the Big Apple Circus following accusations that he pressured a 16-year-old aerialist to pose for pornographic photos.

The circus's chairman, Neil Kahanovitz, told The New York Times this week that 65-year-old Barry Lubin offered his resignation shortly after the alleged victim came forward.

In a statement released by his lawyer, Lubin apologized for his conduct, saying the sexual misconduct allegations are true and that he takes full responsibility for his actions.

The female victim said it happened during the Big Apple's 2004 season in New York. She said she was at first hired to work with the mini-troupe, but then Lubin persuaded her to model for his personal photography business.

## TV canal macau



13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
15:00	Miscellaneous
16:10	CTT Cup: Sporting x Porto (Repeated)
18:00	Miscellaneous
18:35	What's Up
19:00	Brazilian Soap Opera (Repeated)
19:50	Portuguese Serie
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	TDM Talk Show
21:35	Non-daily Portuguese News
21:40	Yes, Chef! Sr 2
22:10	Brazilian Soap Opera
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Miscellaneous
00:35	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
01:05	RTPi Live

## cinema



## CINETEATRO

25 JAN - 31 JAN



## MAZE RUNNER: THE DEATH CURE

ROOM 1  
(2D) 02:15, 04:45, 9:34:5pm  
(3D) 07:15pm

Director: Wes Ball

Starring: Rosa Salazar, Thomas Brodie-Sangster

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 142 min



## DOWNSIZIG

ROOM 2  
02:15, 04:45, 7:15, 9:45pm

Director: Alexander Payne

Starring: Matt Damon, Christoph Waltz, Hong Chau

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 135min



## FATE/STAY NIGHT: HEAVEN'S FEEL - I. PRESAGE FLOWER

ROOM 3  
02:30, 5:00, 9:30pm

Director: Tomonori Sudô

Starring: Ayako Kawasumi, Jôji Nakata, Noriaki Sugiyama

Language: Japanese (Chinese)

Duration: 120 min



## COCO

ROOM 3  
7:15pm

Director: Lee Unkrich

Starring: Anthony Gonzalez, Gael García Bernal, Benjamin Bratt

Language: Cantonese (English)

Duration: 105 min

## this day in history

## 1998 POPE CALLS FOR REFORM IN CUBA

Pope John Paul II has called for reform in Cuba and the release of political prisoners while condemning US attempts to isolate the country.

The Pope is the first pontiff to visit the Communist Caribbean island.

Speaking in the capital, Havana, he said freedom of conscience was "the basis and foundation of all other human rights".

"A modern state cannot make atheism or religion one of its political ordinances," he added.

The Cuban President, Fidel Castro, who was educated in a Jesuit school, declared Cuba an atheist state after he took power in 1959.

In 1992 Cuba dropped its commitment to atheism from its constitution and last December Christmas was reinstated as an official holiday ahead of the Pope's five-day visit.

Today the Pope urged an end to Cuba's political and economic isolation: "She needs to open herself to the world and the world needs to draw close to Cuba".

He also condemned the "resurgence of a certain capitalist neo-liberalism which subordinates the human person to blind market forces" and "often places unbearable burdens upon less favoured countries."

"We thus see a small number of countries growing exceedingly rich at the cost of increasing impoverishment of a great number of countries," he said.

President Castro, whom the Church blames for decades of persecution of Catholics, urged every able-bodied Cuban to attend the papal mass, if not out of conviction, at least out of respect.

And according to BBC correspondent Tim Gibb there was a mood of intense excitement in a crowd of several hundred thousand.

During the address in Havana's Revolution Square, which lasted more than three hours, the Pope was constantly interrupted by people chanting, "Long live Juan Pablo; he wants everyone to be free!"

The president, sitting in the front row, listened intently and smiled occasionally while alongside him sat Nobel-winning novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez of Colombia.

The Mass, like his earlier one in the eastern city of Santiago de Cuba, was also broadcast on television nationwide.

The Pope looked tired at times during the long ceremony, but he was not too weary to joke about it. "I am not against applause, it allows the Pope to rest," he said on one occasion with a wry smile.

This morning he called for the release of Cuban political prisoners at a Mass on the outskirts of Havana at one of the country's principal shrines.

There are an estimated 500 prisoners of conscience in Cuba. Opposition activists face constant harassment and arrest.

Earlier in the week, the Pope personally handed Fidel Castro a list of names which the Church would like to see released.

So far there's been no public response from the Cuban government; however the country's vice-president, Carlos Lahe said the list would be given proper attention.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

In his farewell speech the following day, the Pope condemned the economic embargo imposed on Cuba by the United States, describing it as an indiscriminate measure that hurt the poor.

On his return, the Pope described the trip as unforgettable, and a great event of spiritual, cultural and social reconciliation for the island.

He compared the five-day Cuban trip to the one he made to his native Poland in 1979 and hoped it would set off a train of events that would benefit the Cuban people.

Two weeks later his prayers were answered when Cuba released more than 300 political prisoners as an act of goodwill.

In March 1998, the US announced it was ready to allow the return of direct flights to Cuba to increase the flow of humanitarian aid to the Cuban people.

But it was not until October 2000 that the US House of Representatives approved the sale of food and medicines to Cuba. In November 2001 the US exported food to Cuba for the first time in more than 40 years after a request from the Cuban government to help it cope with the aftermath of Hurricane Michelle.

But tensions between Cuba, the US and Europe resurfaced in 2003 after a crackdown on dissidents that saw the execution of three men who tried to escape to America.

In May 2004 new US sanctions restricted US-Cuba family visits and cash remittances from expatriates. President Castro led a protest march against measures.

The Pope died on 2 April 2005 after he failed to recover from a throat operation.



YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 You're feeling quite eccentric, wildly erratic and super-impulsive.

Taurus April 20-May 20 Anything that seems like a good idea works for you today. For now, you're totally cooperative when it comes to new offers, so go ahead and say yes.

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 You have something you need to share, but if it's personal and you're not quite comfortable with it yet, hold back for a bit.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Everyone has the right to be cranky. That doesn't mean everyone has to take pleasure in our crankiness, but they should at least try to give us time to get past it.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Today, you have a rather fiery nature - as anyone who tries you is sure to discover. Still, there's something to just being nice to people, particularly if you're dealing with an authority type who doesn't care about your future.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 That restless feeling is a clear signal that it's time to try something new. If you haven't made plans today, don't wait - a faraway place is calling, and you can't resist much longer.

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 You can talk your way out of almost anything. That skill, in combination with your innate charm, helps you find your way through plenty of difficult situations.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 No one can talk you out of taking your life a little too seriously now. That's even more true of duties handed down to you when someone else dropped the ball.

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 After all the work you've done to give yourself a social life, including making time, finishing chores and (reluctantly) delegating overtime responsibilities, you totally deserve to have as much fun as possible tonight.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 You need to make a big decision regarding someone special, but you're not quite sure what to do yet. On the one hand, you're totally ready to get closer to them.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 You're not the most patient of souls, so few people who know you are ever surprised when they hear about your shenanigans.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 You are almost certainly getting a little tired of deep conversations, truth or dare, and anything else that even hints at revealing true feelings - for now, anyway!

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy Sudoku grid with numbers 7, 8, 6, 5, 4, 1, 9, 8, 1, 9, 5, 7, 2, 9, 5, 7.

Easy+ Sudoku grid with numbers 2, 3, 4, 2, 7, 4, 8, 9, 9, 3, 7, 4, 5, 7, 1, 3, 6, 5, 9, 7, 9, 6, 7, 2, 6, 5.

Medium Sudoku grid with numbers 6, 2, 5, 8, 8, 3, 4, 1, 6, 1, 5, 9, 9, 2, 7, 3, 2, 3, 5, 4, 2, 8, 1, 5, 7, 4, 9.

Hard Sudoku grid with numbers 1, 7, 3, 9, 2, 5, 1, 8, 4, 2, 6, 8, 6, 9, 3, 1, 9.

WEATHER

Table with columns: CHINA, MIN, MAX, CONDITION. Lists weather for Beijing, Harbin, Tianjin, Urumqi, Xi'an, Lhasa, Chengdu, Chongqing, Kunming, Nanjing, Shanghai, Wuhan, Hangzhou, Taipei, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, and WORLD cities like Moscow, Frankfurt, Paris, London, New York.

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Condition; 7- China setting; 11- Animation frame; 14- Regained consciousness; 15- Dork; 16- Locka, FL; 17- Entertained; 18- Theatrical; 20- Deli meat; 22- my case; 23- Mentalist Geller; 24- CIA predecessor; 25- Indulge; 27- Waterfall; 29- Baby powder; 31- Suffers; 32- Bassett or Lansbury; 35- Contented sighs; 37- Shoebox letters; 38- Duenna; 41- Parisian possessive; 44- Bull; 45- Summer ermines; 49- Mont Blanc, par exemple; 51- Bed-and-breakfasts; 53- Mongol tent; 54- Shore; 56- Actress Vardalos; 59- "Michael Collins" actor; 60- Domingo; 61- Ancestor; 63- Assemble; 66- Think; 67- Remote abbr.; 68- Bern's river; 69- Lipton competitor; 70- Before; 71- Attack a fly; 72- Maintain;

DOWN: 1- Shoulder blade; 2- Marmoset; 3- Causing laughter; 4- Try out; 5- In (unborn); 6- Fountain treats; 7- The King; 8- Sun. speech; 9- Lyricist Gershwin; 10- Fess up; 11- Clique; 12- Letter; 13- Milk sugar; 19- District; 21- Colo. clock setting; 25- Scottish social unit; 26- Pains; 28- Not pos.; 30- Brother of Moses; 33- Parking place; 34- Shun; 36- Concorde, e.g.; 39- Sea eagle; 40- Salty sauce; 41- Bulky and heavy; 42- Bess's predecessor; 43- Glitter; 46- Gilded; 47- Tab grabber; 48- Ogle; 50- This, in Tijuana; 52- Cat (winter vehicle); 55- Bits; 57- Skater Slutskaya; 58- Yellow-fever mosquito; 61- Worry; 62- Mamie's predecessor; 64- Hem's partner; 65- Historic time;

Yesterday's solution crossword grid with words like CAMPO, HERA, SRES, ARRAU, ONEI, ESPY, SNERT, OENO, LAIN, HODAD, PROLIFIC, POD, WIN, RASH, ELAN, SOUSA, AGA, FLAP, EARNER, NOTWITHSTANDING, ARIANA, ERSE, OSU, TANYA, ASWE, SREE, DATE, LOP, OBT, SELA, TIPS, AROAR, SEAR, VAIN, LEONA, TRIP, ENTS, ASSET.

Large crossword puzzle grid with numbers 1-72.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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

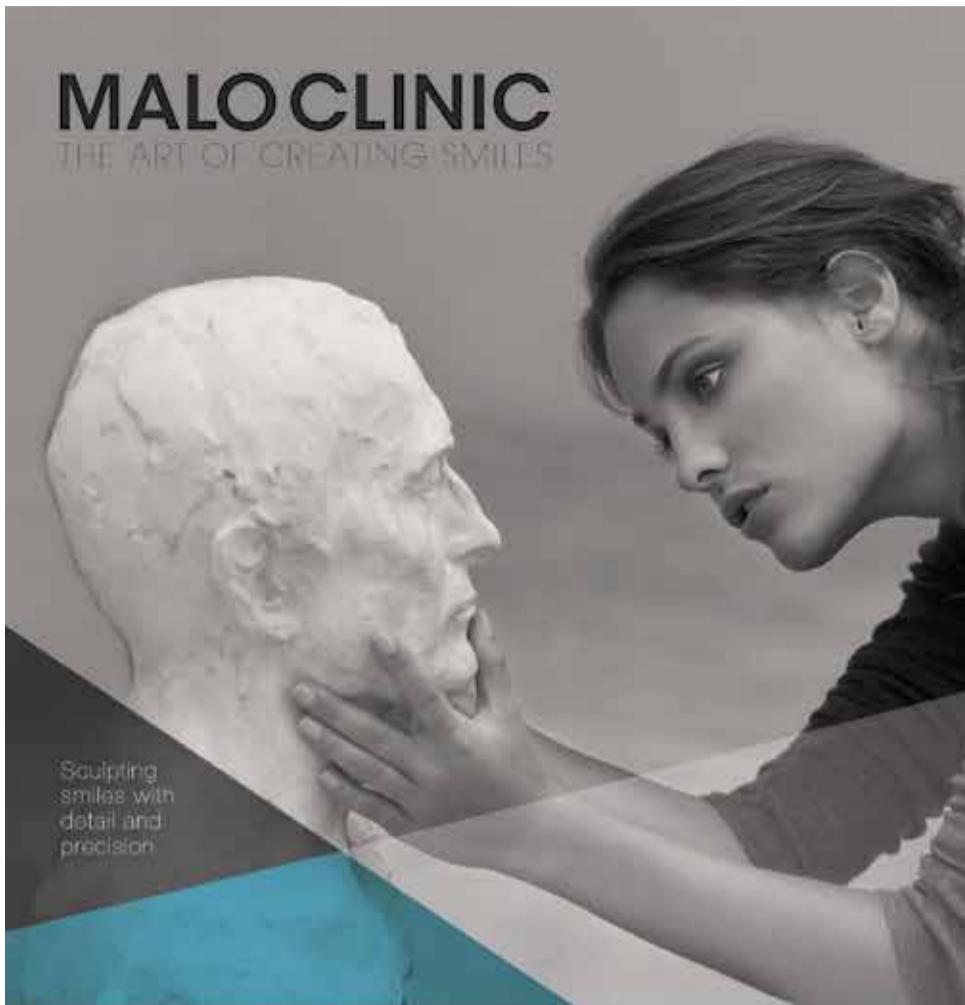


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AD



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### Dear patients and friends of Taivex Malo Hospital Dental Clinic/Macau MALO CLINIC,

We at Macau MALO CLINIC Dental Care would like to apologize to you all.

The Macau Health Bureau has notified the hospital to stop all operations for 6 months, thus the dental clinic won't be able to provide you with dental services either.

We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused you.

#### Within this time period, patients may choose the following options:

- A.** Go to one of our 18 MALO CLINIC clinics in Mainland China, all of which, together with Macau MALO CLINIC, operate under MALO CLINIC China Management, following the exact standards and medical protocols as any international MALO CLINIC.
- Macau MALO CLINIC will provide the transport to and from our clinics in Guangzhou or Shenzhen. Macau MALO CLINIC will manage the necessary bookings in all MALO CLINICS in China, as well as follow-up and medical records will be provided to our colleagues in China.
- B.** For all patients who will be in Portugal during this period, Macau MALO CLINIC will manage the necessary bookings, follow-up and patients' medical records to our colleagues in any MALO CLINIC in Portugal.
- C.** For those patients who are willing to wait for MALO CLINIC in Macau to proceed with the treatments, we are putting all our efforts in finding a partnering healthcare organization at the moment in order to continue our practice.

If any urgent situation arises or if you have any enquiries, please feel free to contact us.

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 Email: service.maloclinic@maloclinics.com.cn    Website: http://www.maloclinic.com.cn  
 (Can be contacted at any time)

Once again, we would like to apologize for all the inconvenience this has put on you all.

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We hope to find solutions for everyone's cases as soon as possible so that we may keep providing quality dental service to you all.

Yours Sincerely,

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+ INFO



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## WINTER GAMES

# Japanese snowboarder has tricks, height for Olympic gold

**H**IS first name, loosely translated into English, means "Walk the Dream." No wonder, then, that back home in Japan, expectations soar nearly as high as snowboarder Ayumu Hirano's jumps above the halfpipe.

Hirano stands at only 1.61 meters but his newest tricks are huge. He's been working on stringing together back-to-back 1440s — a 1440 is the toughest trick in the halfpipe — and if he pulls it off next month at the Winter Olympics in South Korea, he could find himself at the top of the podium — above Shaun White, above Australia's Scotty James, above defending champion Iouri Podladtchikov (iPod for short) and all the other contenders in snowboarding's signature event.

Hirano already has a silver medal — earned at the Sochi Games four years ago. Gold would not be too big of a stretch, especially if White were to have another off day, the likes of which he endured when he finished fourth in 2014.

Too much hype? By now, there's really no such thing for Hirano, who caught White's eye when he was young.

"He had a tough go of

things because he was like 14 or so and they were like, 'You're going to be the next big thing,'" said White, who will face Hirano this week at the Winter X Games in an Olympics preview. "It's hard to be the up-and-coming rider to, all of sudden, they're comparing you to me. It's a lot to live up to those expectations. So, he's kinda made his way and he's having his breakout. He's an interesting rider."

On a picturesque December day, Hirano walked through the village at Copper Mountain, Colorado, without anyone even casting a second glance in his direction. He appreciates this sort of anonymity. Back home, it's not the same. Ever since he strapped on a snowboard and started going big, he's drawn attention. Burton snowboards saw his videos on YouTube and handed him an endorsement contract when he was in fourth grade.

And yet, his mission remains simple: Make his country even more aware of what exactly he does. Snowboarding made its Olympic debut at the Nagano Games in Japan, and ever since, the country has been trying to cash in on its

potential in the sport. Riders like White have curtailed some of the success, at least at the highest level. But Hirano and Taku Hiraoka finished 2-3 at the last Olympics and another Japanese rider, 16-year-old Yuto Totsuka, has been going big in the lead-up to this year's games, as well.

Hirano, who is only 19, views himself as not only the present in Japanese snowboarding, but someone who can inspire the next generation.

"That's why I'm aiming for that gold, so more people can see how great snowboarding can be," Hirano said.

Want to make Hirano grin? Ask him about his first name. He gets that quite a bit.

"I've been snowboarding since I was 4, so maybe my parents did have this in mind in hopes that I would walk to my dream," he said. "They just wanted what was best for me."

At first, he was a skateboarder, with his father building a skatepark ramp behind a surf shop he owned for Hirano and his older brother, Eiju, to practice. Hirano's surfing career never really flourished, though, after his brother had an accident while surfing. **AP**



Japan's Ayumu Hirano at the Russia 2014 Winter Olympics

## TENNIS

# Chung's stunning run continues into Australian Open semis



South Korea's Chung Hyeon celebrates after defeating United States' Tennys Sandgren in their quarterfinal

John Pye, Melbourne

**S**ERVING for a spot in the Australian Open semifinals and with the score at 40-love, Hyeon Chung started thinking how he might celebrate being the first Korean to reach the last four of a Grand Slam.

Not so fast. He hadn't let up when upsetting No. 4 Alexander Zverev or six-time Australian Open champion Novak Djokovic en route to the quarterfinals, but he let his guard down for a few points against No. 97-ranked Tennys Sandgren.

He missed four match points in the last game and had to fend off two break points, including one in a 31-shot rally dominated by slice backhands, before finally beating Sandgren 6-4, 7-6 (5), 6-3 at Rod Laver Arena on yesterday.

"In last game, I think at 40-love [...] if I win one more point, I make history in Korea. I have to think about the ceremony, something," he said, explaining how he got slightly ahead of himself. "After deuce, break point. I was like, no, nothing to do with ceremony. But just keep playing — keep focused."

Then he fully embraced the moment, joking with Jim Courier in an on-court TV interview, introducing the audience to his parents and his coach, and taking the microphone to speak in Korean to millions of new tennis fans back home.

"I think all the people is watching Australian Open now because we make history in Korea," he said.

The No. 58-ranked Chung is the lowest-ranked man to reach the Australian Open semifinals since Marat Safin in 2004. At 21, he's also the youngest to reach the last four at a major since Marin Cilic did it here in 2010.

With Chung already through, and Kyle Edmund playing No. 6 Marin Cilic in the other half of the draw, it's the first time since 1999

that multiple unseeded players have reached the Australian Open semifinals.

Two women who've been to this stage at a Grand Slam before will meet in the last four. One has two major titles, the other still seeks a breakthrough. Top-ranked Simona Halep recovered from an early break to win nine straight games in a 6-3, 6-2 win over No. 6 Karolina Pliskova and set up a semifinal match against 2016 champion Angelique Kerber, who routed U.S. Open finalist Madison Keys 6-1, 6-2.

Kerber has been the only Grand Slam singles champion in the women's draw since her third-round win over Maria Sharapova. Two-time French Open finalist Halep has had a tougher road — having to save match points in a third-round win over Lauren Davis that finished 15-13 in the third — to reach the semifinals at Melbourne Park for the first time.

Not that Chung's run has been routine. After taking out Zverev and Djokovic, Chung could next face defending champion Roger Federer for a spot in the final. Federer was playing Tomas Berdych later yesterday in the quarterfinals.

Until the last game, Chung had been simply too consistent for Sandgren, a 26-year-old American who had never won a match at a Grand Slam tournament or beaten a top 10 player until last week.

Sandgren's unexpected surge to the quarterfinals — he beat 2014 champion Stan Wawrinka and No. 5 Dominic Thiem en route to the quarterfinals — was overshadowed by heavy scrutiny of his Twitter account and his follows and retweets of far-right activists.

Kerber has had no serious distractions on a 14-match winning streak, and is hoping to emulate her breakout year in 2016.

She won the Australian and U.S. Open titles two years ago and reached the No. 1 ranking, but slipped into the 20s last year. She didn't win a title between the

2016 U.S. Open and the Sydney International earlier this month.

Seeded 21st, her first three wins were in straight sets but a fourth-round struggle against No. 88 Hsieh Su-wei had commentators

wondering if Kerber was in 2016, or 2017 form.

She responded with six service breaks against the No. 17-seeded Keys, finishing off the match in 51 minutes and improving her

record to seven wins in eight matches against the American.

"I am just trying to find the feeling back that I had, like 2016, and just enjoying my time," Kerber said. **AP**



## Twitter politics: Tennys Sandgren blasts media

**A**FTER losing in the Australian Open quarterfinals, Tennys Sandgren saved his final shot of the tournament for the media.

Sandgren opened his news by reading a prepared statement directed at the media that has scrutinized his Twitter feed during his unexpected run at Melbourne Park.

"With a handful of follows and some likes on Twitter, my fate has been sealed in your minds," Sandgren said, reading from his mobile phone. "To write an edgy story, to create sensationalist coverage, there are a few lengths you wouldn't go to to mark me as the man you desperately want me to be."

Sandgren refused to answer questions about his statement, saying that the focus around him "has gone very far away from the tennis."

If one thing is clear after the past few days, it certainly has.

Given what he's accomplished on the courts at Melbourne Park, Sandgren's story was ini-

tially focused on his tennis. The 26-year-old Tennessee native has never come close to experiencing this type of success before. Prior to coming to Melbourne, Sandgren was a mainstay on the second-tier Challenger Tour — the minor leagues of tennis. He had only won two matches at the ATP Tour level — and never played in a Grand Slam.

But in Melbourne, Sandgren came out of nowhere to stun two top-10 players — Stan Wawrinka and Dominic Thiem — en route to being just the second man in the last 20 years to reach the quarterfinals on his Australian Open debut.

What started off as a fairytale story, though, began to change tenor when Sandgren's social media activity came to light.

Before he scrubbed his Twitter history on Tuesday, Sandgren's tweets had included one saying the unfounded "Pizzagate" conspiracy theory linking Democrats to a child-sex ring at a Washington pizzeria was "sicke-

ning and the collective evidence is too much to ignore."

Among his recent retweets was a video by Nicholas Fuentes, former host of a podcast called "America First" who attended last year's white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Va.

And he apparently targeted Serena Williams, calling a video of her yelling at Roberta Vinci during their U.S. Open semifinal in 2015 "disgusting."

Williams had apparently taken notice, sending her own tweet during Sandgren's match, saying "Turns channel" — a message her followers interpreted as a response.

Sandgren has defended his social media activity this week, denying being a supporter of the far right while saying he finds "some of the content interesting."

"Who you follow on Twitter I feel doesn't matter even a little bit," he said following his win over Thiem. "To say, well, he's following X person, so he believes all the things that this person believes, I think it's ridiculous."

He explained in an interview with ESPN that he deleted all of his tweets not because it's "something that I'm really necessary embarrassed about," but because he thought that "creating a version of a cleaner start is not a bad call."

With his prepared statement yesterday, though, Sandgren made clear he's done explaining his tweets.

Refusing to take any more questions about social media, Sandgren then shifted gears and offered praise for his quarterfinal opponent, Chung. **AP**

opinion

Made in Macao  
Jenny Lao-Phillips



ON CANTONESE OPERA

As I have been researching Greek theatre, rituals and dance these days, it struck me that as a Chinese, I do not really know much about our own similar arts culture, Cantonese opera 粵劇 (Yue-ju). While Greek theatre has been known for its ritualistic nature and chorus, and as the successor of ancient Spring dance ritual, not many studies have been done on Cantonese opera. In fact, there are a lot of similarities between these two art forms, despite one being from the west and the other from the east. Most importantly, Cantonese opera was listed by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009, which renders it vital to be studied. So, I started exploring the artistic culture of my own roots a bit more.

The beginning of Cantonese opera can be dated back to the ancient theatre during the Yuan Dynasty. Although they were not like the ones we have now, ancient artistic performances during the Yuan Dynasty were called 雜劇 (Tsa-ju), which consisted mostly of songs, dance and acrobatics, and as a form of comic entertainment. Towards the end of the Ming Dynasty and the beginning of Ching Dynasty, Yue-ju was developed into a form of ritualistic play, where stories of the gods were performed during auspicious days or when a new temple, honoring a certain god, was established.

It was surprising to find that the popularity of Cantonese opera actually originated from Hong Kong and Macao. From the end of the 18th century, Cantonese opera was often being performed in Hong Kong, mostly during ritualistic celebrations, such as the feast day of the heavenly queen, at temples dedicated to her. Then from the beginning of the last century, the words used in Yue-ju became more colloquial Cantonese, causing more people in Hong Kong and Macao to be able to appreciate the art.

There was a period of time, between the 1930s and 1950s, before the development of the movie industry in Hong Kong, when Cantonese opera acting was a great career, and a number of classic plays were written at that time. However, not many new plays seemed to be created after the 1950s. In fact, from a quick search of once famous Cantonese opera actors, those that are still remembered by existing generations are being remembered as TV stars instead of opera stars, who presumably had to switch career due to the declining demand for opera plays. So, what caused the decline of Cantonese opera?

Firstly, most young people find Cantonese opera very interesting the first time they watch it, with its bright colours of customs, extravagant make-up, and interesting movement of hands and eyes of the actors, which are actually a form of dance for the opera theatre. However, it wouldn't be taken as a form of regular entertainment because most people do not understand the play. Even when they are performed in Cantonese, a lot of the plot has to be understood from the movement of the actors, so it is not easy to empathize with the characters and capture the full attention of spectators.

Secondly, with the development of the cinema industry in Hong Kong from the 70s, most people choose to watch movies instead of opera theatre as leisure entertainment. So, Cantonese opera, from being a huge form of entertainment in the first half of the 20th century was reduced back to ritualistic plays on special Buddhists occasions.

However, there is still a zealous Cantonese opera group in Macao who practice regularly and occasionally 'self-publish' a few shows at the Wing Lok cinema. Perhaps, if the younger generation is educated more about the complexity and beauty of this art, Cantonese opera can bloom again. It is, after all, our cultural heritage.

THE BUZZ US: TWO DEAD, 17 INJURED IN KENTUCKY SCHOOL SHOOTING; SUSPECT HELD

A 15-year-old student killed two classmates and hit a dozen others with gunfire, methodically firing a handgun inside a crowded atrium at his rural Kentucky high school.

Kentucky State Police Commissioner Richard Sanders yesterday [Macau time] identified the dead students as Bailey Nicole Holt and Preston Ryan Cope. Both were 15 years old.

Sanders says the gunman walked into Marshall County High School with a pistol in the morning

and immediately opened fire. He says 14 people were shot; Bailey died at the scene and Preston died after being taken to Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, Tennessee. He says five others are still in critical condition.

He says the 15-year-old male suspect will be charged with two counts of murder and multiple counts of attempted murder.

Assistant County Attorney says the suspect has been appointed an attorney.

Uber driver in US illegally charged with four California rapes

Christopher Weber, Los Angeles

A Mexican man living in the U.S. illegally used his job as an Uber driver to target intoxicated young women and was charged with raping, assaulting and robbing four victims, California prosecutors said.

Alfonso Alarcon-Nunez drove women to their homes, assaulted them, and stole property including cellphones, computers and jewelry, officials said. He collected his fare payments through the smartphone app Venmo to disguise his identity and his Uber records.

DNA evidence helped lead detectives to Alarcon-Nunez, who was arrested at his Santa Maria home last week, San Luis Obispo County District Attorney Dan Dow said at a news conference.

The alleged crimes occurred over four weeks starting in mid-December in San Luis Obispo, a city of about 45,000 that is home to California Polytechnic State University. Alarcon-Nunez's victims are between 19 and 22 and three were drunk at the time of the crimes, Dow said.

Alarcon-Nunez, 39, faces 10 criminal charges, including rape of an intoxicated victim and first-degree burglary. He



This undated booking photo provided by the County of San Luis Obispo shows Alfonso Alarcon-Nunez

pleaded not guilty to all charges at his arraignment and remained held in the San Luis Obispo County Jail with bail set at USD1.47 million. His next court date was set for Jan. 29.

Detectives are looking for potential witnesses and trying to determine if there are additional victims in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties northwest of Los Angeles, where the Alarcon-Nunez had been driving for Uber since September, Dow said.

Alarcon-Nunez has also gone by the name "Bruno Diaz" and his Venmo username was "Brush Bat," prosecutors said.

Officials said Alarcon-Nunez

was not always driving for Uber when he picked up women. Sometimes, drivers in cars parked outside bars or restaurants "jump in front of the actual Uber driver and they will take someone unsuspecting to their home. And that's a way of putting someone at risk, and in this case that's exactly what's alleged to have happened," Dow said.

He said the alleged crimes show that the company should improve its driver screening process, Dow said. Dow urged Uber users to make sure they are getting in the car of the correct driver by verifying the license plate and other information provided to clients. AP

Station	Air quality
Roadside	45-65 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	70-100 Moderate
Ambient	70-100 Moderate

SOURCE: DSI/MG

WORLD BRIEFS



AFGHANISTAN Militants stormed the offices of Save the Children in eastern Afghanistan yesterday, killing two security guards and a civilian, and triggering a shootout with police that was still underway more than eight hours later, provincial officials and the organization said.

More on p12



LIBYA The death toll from a nighttime twin car bombing near a mosque in a residential area of Libya's eastern city of Benghazi rose to 33 yesterday, authorities said.

ROMANIA The European Union is warning Romania about reneging on its commitment to fight corruption and wants the country's parliament to rethink its approach to new justice laws.

GERMANY The German government fired back yesterday at critics of its arms export policies, insisting that it takes great care not to approve the sale of weapons to countries that abuse human rights.



BRAZIL A day before a panel of judges could decide his political survival, former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva proclaimed to tens of thousands of supporters that he would stay in Brazilian politics to the end of his life.

VENEZUELA President Nicolas Maduro said he is ready to seek re-election after his allies pushed forward voting in a move widely seen as a bid to capitalize on disarray in the Venezuelan opposition and consolidate power amid a freefalling economy.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/Aijaz Rahi



No sweat. Members of Shwet Ashw, the motorcycle display team of the Indian army, perform during rehearsals for Indian Republic Day celebrations, in Bangalore. India celebrates Republic Day tomorrow.