



RISE OF WITHDRAWALS IN HONG KONG

The recent installation of know-your-customer technology in local ATMs had an impact on Hong Kong transactions

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HEALTH

Tam against mandatory insurance system

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WORLD BRIEFS



MALDIVES The political crisis in the Maldives deepened yesterday, as the president of the island nation said the Supreme Court had overstepped its authority in ordering the release of a group of imprisoned opposition leaders. The government has declared a state of emergency for 15 days. More on p13

VIETNAM A court in Vietnam gave a second life prison sentence yesterday to a former executive at Vietnam's state oil giant accused of corruption and who Germany said was kidnapped from there by Vietnamese agents last year. More on p12

INDONESIA Paramilitary police fatally shot a woman in what they said was a clash with stone-throwing villagers in the troubled Papua region, but a relative of the victim disputed their account of events.

More on backpage

Samsung heir freed after appeal wins suspended jail term

P12 S. KOREA

100 additional special taxis to undergo public tender

The government announced the addition of a further 100 special taxis in the Official Gazette yesterday. The Transport Bureau has the authority to organize public tenders regarding the licensing of these taxis. Each license will be valid for a maximum period of eight years from the day of issue, with no renewal to be granted. Moreover, license owners will not be allowed to transfer the license to a third party. The licensed vehicles cannot be used as taxis beyond the eight-year license, and their vehicle registration must be canceled.

SSM says peak flu season over

The number of influenza patients seeking medical treatment has decreased from its peak, the Health Bureau said during yesterday's TDM talk show. According to SSM, the numbers have been decreasing consistently for the past week, with flu in schools reducing to nine cases over this period in contrast to the 16 cases registered in the third week of 2018. SSM noted that despite the high percentage of students receiving flu vaccines, individual cases can still occur. The Bureau stated that the spread of influenza over the past few weeks never reached a serious threshold, and that it was indeed milder than in Macau's neighboring regions. Due to these circumstances, SSM, together with the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau, decided not to suspend classes.

School president calls for school village in Zone A

The president of Escola Choi Nong Chi Tai, Vong Kuoc Ieng, has urged the government to release a plan for the school village on the future urban Zone A, according to a report by Macao Daily News. Vong hopes that the government will open schools in the new urban zone, currently under reclamation, so as to ease the needs for school positions posed by the northern district. Estimates indicate that over 100,000 people will live in Zone A, and that among the total population, there will be a large number of students leading to a strong demand for schools.



CRIME

Croupier and two gamblers arrested for embezzlement

Renato Marques

A 48-year-old croupier and two gamblers from mainland China were arrested on the weekend after the casino at which the croupier was employed filed a complaint against the three. According to the casino's estimates, the suspects' actions led to a loss of at least HKD450,000, the Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesperson announced at yesterday's press conference. The casino security department told the police that the croupier had been collaborating with the two gamblers, a man (27) and a woman (44), in order to hand the pair winnings and exemptions from paying losses at a baccarat table on at least three different occasions.

After analyzing the surveillance footage provided by the casino, it was found that on January 20 the two suspects from the mainland played at the table at which the croupier was working, initially placing a bet of HKD90,000.

After the hand was placed, the bet was moved by the croupier, altering the loss to a win of HKD180,000.

A similar method was employed two days later. Although the croupier did not pass

the pair any winnings, they were exempted from losing a bet of HKD90,000 as the initial bet was changed from "Player" to "Banker."

On a third occasion, on January 24, the croupier once more converted the loss into a win by awarding the pair another HKD180,000.

On February 3, the three suspects were caught and taken into custody by the PJ. Questioned by the police authorities, they denied any of the crimes, claiming to have played in accordance with the rules.

However, due to undeniable evidence in the possession of the police, they were presented to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) for the crime of embezzlement.

In a separate case reported during the same press conference, a local man was charged with theft and arson. The case occurred on January 31, when the man went to a restaurant located in the Fai Chi Kei district to meet a woman for dinner. After dinner, he decided to take the woman home on his motorcycle, but with only one helmet in his possession, he attempted to steal another from a motorcycle parked nearby. As the helmet lock strap was secured to the

motorcycle, he used a lighter to burn the strap to release it from the motorcycle, allegedly causing a fire that damaged the motorcycle.

After the arson case had been reported to the PJ by the Fire Services on February 1, the man surrendered to the PJ on the same day, giving his own account of the incident.

According to the police source, the value of the stolen helmet was MOP200 and the damages caused are calculated at approximately MOP5,000.

In a separate report made by the Public Security Police Force, a local woman, aged around thirty, was caught by the police driving a vehicle despite having a suspended license

following a trial in January. The case occurred on February 2 around 11:30 a.m., when an officer on duty saw the driver turning from Rua dos Currais to Rua da Hortense in the Northern district. The event caught the attention of the officer since, according to the traffic signs, drivers are not allowed to turn into the street from that direction.

The woman then failed to present a valid driving license and a search of police records revealed that a judge had sentenced her one month earlier to a driving suspension.

She was charged with the crime of driving during the penalty period as well as aggravated disobedience.

WOMAN DIES FROM CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

A VIETNAMESE national has died while taking a shower in the early hours of February 4. On Saturday night, the 33-year-old woman's husband became concerned for her welfare as she was taking a long time. He went to look for her, only to find her collapsed in the bathroom. He called an ambulance that took her to the hospital where she was

pronounced dead. According to the preliminary investigation she had succumbed to carbon monoxide poisoning, allegedly because the gas water heater they were using in the apartment was installed in the toilet without proper ventilation. The case is still under investigation to ascertain with certainty the cause of death.

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KYC technology seen as cause for the rise of withdrawals in HK

THE recent installation of know-your-customer (KYC) facial recognition technology at over a thousand automated teller machines in Macau could increase cash withdrawals in its neighboring region, according to the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA).

Cash withdrawals at Hong Kong ATMs have surged, with monthly withdrawals using mainland bank cards ranging between HK2 billion and HK6 billion.

Reuters stated that mainland Chinese customers are withdrawing hundreds of thousands of dollars using up to 50 cards at a time.

The KYC technology was installed to more effectively monitor ATM cash withdrawals by mainland Union Pay cards.

The HKMA is currently monitoring the situation, and declined to comment on media reports claiming that up



to HKD20 billion was being withdrawn from its ATMs every month.

"The HKMA is aware of media reports about people using multiple mainland cards to withdraw cash at ATMs in Hong Kong," the central bank said in a statement.

It added that it is "monitoring the situation and is in discussion with the banking

industry and the police about this issue."

The HKMA is also in close contact with Macau authorities "on their experiences in the use of facial recognition technology in ATM cash withdrawal," adding that there currently is no plan to introduce the technology in Hong Kong.

Mainland Chinese citizens are only allowed to withdraw

a maximum of RMB100,000 a year, regardless of the number of separate bank accounts or ATM cards they own. This is Beijing's latest move to tighten its capital account controls and curb money laundering.

The HKMA said that the rule could impact withdrawals in Hong Kong, but also noted that it could be hard for authorities to crack down on mass withdrawals as it is not illegal to withdraw cash from ATMs on others' behalf.

Meanwhile, the Monetary Authority of Macau told Reuters that the measures, introduced at the ATMs in the world's largest gambling hub, had cut cash withdrawals to a "relatively reasonable level."

"Irregular activities have been stopped, promoting the security of the financial system of Macau and having a positive impact on the development of the local financial sector," it said.

80 extra flights approved for CNY

The Macau Civil Aviation Authority has approved 80 extra and charter flights for the Chinese New Year period, double the number of authorized flights during the festive season last year. These extra and charter flights mainly operate to and from mainland China. Other destinations, namely Taiwan, Vietnam, Japan and Thailand, are also included. The measure aims to increase the airlines' capacity to "meet the air transport demand for the Chinese New Year." These extra flights and charter flights will operate until February 26, and are operated by several airlines including Air Macau and China Eastern Airlines.

CPTTM to co-organize seminar on fashion branding

The Macau Productivity and Technology Transfer Centre (CPTTM) and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC) will jointly organize a seminar on "How to Become the New Focus of a Fashion Brand" tomorrow. According to information from the bureau, there will be a second seminar, titled, "Centrestage Hong Kong International Fashion Exposition." This second seminar invites local fashion designers who participated in the exposition last year to come back and share their experiences. INK and AXOXYOXOS, designers from Macau, were ranked in the top 20 most popular brands at the Centerstage Hong Kong International Fashion Exposition in 2017. The seminar will be held at CPTTM's House of Apparel Technology.

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News At Hand



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Portuguese soprano Sofia Escobar

OM to present a Valentine's Day concert

The Macao Orchestra (OM) will present the "Valentine's Day Concert - The Phantom of Love" at The Venetian Theatre this Saturday, featuring two singers who will perform melodies from movies and musicals. Under the baton of the assistant conductor of the Macao Orchestra, Francis Kan, OM will be joined by Portuguese soprano Sofia Escobar and young Chinese tenor Li Yi, the Cultural Affairs Bureau informed in a statement. In the concert, the Macao Orchestra and the two singers will perform a series of melodies including music from Aladdin, The Sound of Music, My Fair Lady and The Phantom of the Opera. Tickets are available at the Macao Ticketing Network and all Cotai Ticketing box offices.

TSI denies appeal on Water Treatment Plant tender

THE Court of Second Instance (TSI) has ruled in favor of the decision taken by the government to exclude the consortium composed of CESL ASIA - Investimentos e Serviços, SA and Focus Aqua, Limited from the tender on the "Operation and Maintenance of the Wastewater Treatment Plant of Macau Peninsula." The consortium had appealed the decision taken during the evaluation stage of the tender.

At the time, and according to the decision of the TSI, the consortium "was excluded because it did not meet the requirement stipulated the clause 6.2 of chapter II.2 of the tender program," the clause referring to the experience of the companies in such a field.

In this way, the contract was awarded by order of the Chief Executive on August 5, 2016 to another consortium, "BEWG - Waterleau."

In the ruling, and in response to the arguments used by the appealing consortium, the TSI noted, "in a relatively new field, such as wastewater treatment,

the requirements are gradually becoming greater and more diverse. The criteria and technical requirements by which the tender should be governed (such as the qualification required of competitors) are from the exclusive competence of the developer," adding, "Since the requirements were applied evenly to all competitors, it is not clear how a greater or lesser degree of rigor may be designed to make it difficult for the first applicant to be successful." Regarding the second ground of appeal used by the appellant, namely the length of the appellants' experience, the collective court ruled, "clause 6.2 of the program obliges competitors to have, covering in the past ten years, at least two completed or ongoing services related to the operation and maintenance of wastewater treatment facilities, each of them for not less than two years in duration," noting, "Since the first applicant has only five years' experience, the application obviously does not meet the requirement, even if that experience lasted more than five years."



The court also noted that in the case of Wabag, the services provided were uninterrupted and without any gap, ruling that the fact that they were based on several contracts is not relevant, as the experience counted as a whole and lasted for more than two years, the TSI concluding that there is no alleged difference in treatment of the different bidders.

The last argument used by CESL ASIA and Focus Aqua in the appeal was to note that one of the companies of the winning consortium (The Waterleau Group) had resulted from the merging between Waterleau Global Water

Tecnology NV and another company, in which the former had a stakeholder and partner that had previously been convicted of the practice of active corruption in the case of the former Secretary Transport and Public Works, Ao Man Long.

The TSI refuted this argument by pointing out that none of the companies comprising the consortium that won the tender, nor its partners, had been convicted in any case in Macau, ruling "In these terms, this argument is also insubstantial," maintaining in this way the decision made by the committee that evaluated the proposals.

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Shareholder rights law firm to investigate Wynn

SHAREHOLDER and consumer rights law firm Schubert Jonckeer & Kolbe has launched an investigation into whether several executives at Wynn Resorts acted improperly by issuing misleading statements and failing to implement adequate policies on sexual harassment in the workplace.

Schubert Jonckeer & Kolbe says that senior executives at the company may have "breached their fiduciary duties by failing to address Mr. Wynn's problematic behaviors and criticism of their governance structure over the years. The company's officers and directors may be responsible for causing significant financial and reputational harm." The firm will also investigate irregular pay for company executives, including a USD330 million severance package for Steve Wynn that "exceeds the upper parameter of acceptable amounts."

The Wall Street Journal reported on January 26 that a number of women said Wynn harassed or assaulted them and that one case led to a \$7.5 million settlement.

The newspaper also criticized the corporate governance structure



of Wynn Resorts, which it said "ranks among the worst, not the best, of U.S. companies."

The Las Vegas billionaire has vehemently denied the allegations, which he attributed to a campaign led by his ex-wife.

He also faces investigations by gambling regulators in two states.

Meanwhile, Wynn Resorts has hired a law firm to help investigate sexual misconduct allegations against casino mogul Steve Wynn, the company's chairman and CEO. The company has also crea-

ted a special committee to retain independent counsel and conduct an investigation on behalf of the board.

A statement by Los Angeles-based law firm O'Melveny & Myers LLP says it will assist the Wynn board's special committee of independent directors with the inquiry.

The statement released Friday says investigators will set up a phone and web-based reporting line for current and former Wynn employees to provide information. **MDT/AP**

Tourism boards pledge to seize opportunities brought by Bay Area

THE 78th Work Meeting of the Tourism Marketing Organization of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau took place in the region on Friday, deepening regional cooperation through discussions on joint promotional projects for 2018.

Within the current collaborative framework, the Macao Government the Tourism Office (MGTO), Tourism Administration of Guangdong Province and the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) declared they would ramp up efforts to promote their regions as tourist destinations domestically and overseas, seizing the opportunities brought by the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Bay Area.

According to a statement by MGTO, the three tourism boards agreed to capitalize on the opportunities brought by the development of the Bay Area and reinforce their marketing efforts, including tourism seminars for the Bay Area

and strategic promotions of the three destinations overseas.

A promotional travelogue for each of the three destinations will also be produced.

The three parties will set up joint booths in major travel fairs throughout Macau, Guangdong and Hong Kong as well as organize trips to each region.

Guangdong Province assumes the Rotating Chairmanship of the Tourism Marketing Organization of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau this year. It established the organization in 1993 with HKTB and MGTO to facilitate work plans and enhance communication and cooperation.

The Tourism Federation of Cities in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau Bay Area was established last December for the purpose of comprehensive tourism cooperation. In addition to the two SARs' tourism boards, it comprises tourism authorities from all nine of the Bay's other cities.

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HERITAGE

Researcher suggests more community development projects in Macau

Julie Zhu

PETER Zabielskis, Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Macau, recently published his latest research work on heritage preservation in Macau and the Malaysian city of Penang.

His latest book is a combination of more than ten years of work, during which he gathered material from every top scholar of Southeast Asia who had written about Penang.

“Previously a lot of work has been done on port cities in terms of business and trade, but not a lot on the exchanging of ideas that happened in coastal areas. Both the inner city of Penang and part of Macau have been designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, but beyond that, there are still problems that remain. That’s not the end point of any goal, to get that designation,” said Zabielskis.

“UNESCO grants this global thing to a place, but then what is the benefit for the local people who are already living there? Of course it can develop the economy, it’s good for business, in



Peter Zabielskis

terms of tourism, but what too often happens is that people’s sense of places get challenged, by congestion with foreigners, and things get oriented towards commercialization for outsiders instead of the development of a good quality of life for local people. So I compare Penang and Macau and there are some important differences but [also] some similarities,” he explained.

Zabielskis noted that one good thing done by Penang’s state government is their extensive funding of a group called Think City, which he described as an “NGO

[non-governmental organization] on UNESCO heritage designation, and that’s meant for all sorts of community development [...] developing smart cities that are not necessarily about technology.”

“I am waiting for something similar to happen in Macau, that really develops what we know worldwide to have really helped quality of life, rather than just economic prosperity,” he continued.

“In almost every heritage preservation project, the focus is on material culture – usually architecture, not on softer things like how does the place feel. How does

it benefit local people? How does it contribute to culture and identity?”

“Both in Macau and Penang, I see deep love of the place and the city among residents.”

“It’s too often that it becomes a process of encouraging tourist development only, and even the things that are listed in intangible heritage, if you look closely at them, most of them are things you could potentially sell tickets for. They are not safeguarding ways of life that have been continuous and changing over time, but that people value.”

On the topic of Macau’s scarce public space – the city has some of

the lowest open public space per capita compared to other world cities – Zabielskis added that “to see so many of those spaces taken over, overrun by tourists, it’s quite sad. In both places, both in Macau and Penang, I see deep love of the place and the city among residents.”

In Macau, he noted, residents’ love of the city is often challenged by poor planning or overbuilding. “There have been so many art exhibits in Macau where the theme is ‘don’t build anymore, start thinking about people rather than buildings’. Of course there are housing issues, and everybody needs an affordable house. That’s one thing, but to allow the public spaces that are treasured by Macau’s residents to just be totally re-signified as commercial tourist spaces is kind of unfortunate.”

Zabielskis suggested that “instead of looking to the grand monuments, building mega projects, or even high-rises, a small amount of funding for a modest community development project is something to be considered to keep people engaged with the love that they already have for Macau.”

Civil Protection Law to move forward this week

THE approval process for the new bill on Civil Protection matters will move forward this week, according to the Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak last Friday. The Secretary said the bill is ready and is expected to be handed to the Chief Executive (CE) Chui Sai On this week. Wong revealed the information on the sidelines

of the inauguration ceremony of the new director of the Judiciary Police (PJ), Sit Chong Meng, upon questioning by the media. Wong noted that the Macau SAR government has paid close attention to the facts and consequences of Typhoon Hato, and that several tasks were already carried out in accordance with the instructions of

the CE, which included the definition of short-, mid- and long-term plans. Wong reaffirmed that part of the work on the short-term plan is complete and that the remaining tasks are in progress.

The short-term plan focuses primarily on developing the emergency response, including hardware procurement and the creation of an evacuation

plan. The mid-term plan will focus mainly on upcoming legislative reform.

With this bill, the government intends to define regulations to be followed by authorities in response to calamities and other incidents compromising safety and public health in the civil protection field.

At the same time, the document lays a foundation for the creation of

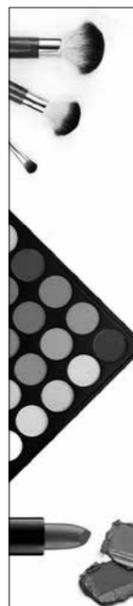
the Civil Protection and Contingency Coordination Bureau, and provides grounds to create aggravated penalties for some crimes, particularly those relating to spreading rumors during a typhoon or other disaster.

Wong reaffirmed his intention to acquire and use walkie-talkies and install loudspeakers in fire engines to disseminate in-

formation to the public, in the event that other means of communication fail.

In addition, Wong stated his intention to use the transmission system included in the second and third phases of the video surveillance system as a resource to improve access to information and strengthen channels of communication.

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AL PLENARY | HEALTH

Tam disagrees with mandatory insurance system

Julie Zhu

THE Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Alexis Tam, hinted that no plans are under imminent consideration regarding the establishment of a mandatory medical insurance system in Macau. However, the secretary still allowed for the possibility of a discussion among the public regarding the medical insurance system.

Lawmakers Si Ka Lon and Song Pek Kei have proposed the Legislative Assembly (AL) debate the establishment of a medical insurance system.

"Our colleagues are confident in improving the medical service. [This ability] has been recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO). If our medical service is bad, how can the average life expectancy reach 83.3 years?" questioned Alexis Tam, adding that regarding the "recent flu, we handled it very well, we did not create a scarcity [of vaccines or care] among residents."

The secretary noted that 97 percent of the patients at the Hospital Conde S. Januário (CHCSJ)



RENATO MARQUES

are receiving free medical service. "Our medical protection is enough," Tam claimed.

When asked by Leong Sun Iok about the possible medical cooperation between Macau and other Greater Bay Area cities, Tam pointed out that due to the differences between the mainland and Macau's medical system, such cooperation would be considered and discussed carefully before the Macau government reaches a conclusion.

When replying to Wong Kit Cheng, Tam noted that the Macau government is paying MOP14,600 per resident per year for medical services, and that the total amount

of such expenditure represents ten percent of public expenditure by the Macau government.

"We think it's not bad," said Tam, further claiming that this governmental medical expenditure has a "high efficiency."

The secretary compared Macau government's expenditure on its residents' medical services with that of Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore.

He noted that Macau's government covers 75 percent of residents' medical services and according to him, this is more than what the other aforementioned governments are paying for their residents.

"What we need now is to enhance the level of our own medical team," said Tam.

Tam then said that the government can bring the medical insurance system to the public for discussion.

Agnes Lam questioned Tam regarding how much both the public and the government would pay for the insurance if Macau establishes a medical insurance system.

"Among our colleagues, none of us agrees with the medical insurance system," revealed Tam, adding that such systems have many flaws.

As noted by Tam, Macau residents on average see a doctor 9.7 times per year, which is higher than in Hong Kong and Singapore.

"Our medical supply is really enough. We spent little money and provide so many services," said Tam, adding "we can shorten the waiting time, and we can use more resources to hire more medical professionals, including doctors and nurses, and we can purchase better medical equipment."

Lam remarked however that

"we still need more data to explain whether the current medical system is the best."

Au Kam San hopes the government "[will] not completely deny other possible insurance systems just because it [the government] is completely satisfied with the current medical protection system."

Including Si Ka Lon and Zheng Anting, many lawmakers voiced their opinions regarding Macau's medical efficiency, waiting time for medical treatment, and the high pressure medical professionals face due to their scarcity.

Si Ka Lon also questioned whether the government can use part of the money it is currently using for the public's medical services to instead buy medical insurance for residents.

As with many other lawmakers, Zheng Anting expressed his hope the government will exert more effort in shortening waiting times for medical treatment.

Mak Soi Kun suggested the government outsource some of the public hospitals' services to the private sector, and to give more money to senior citizens from the government's cash handout.

José Pereira Coutinho voiced his belief that if the cost for the medical insurance system is low, the government can carry out an experiment in regards to it.

Tam, replying to all the lawmakers, noted that the medical insurance system is worth discussion.

Arbitration rules amended to allow conciliation meeting via videoconference

THE regulations of the Arbitration Centre for Consumer Conflicts of Macau were amended through a dispatch from the Secretary for Economy and Finance and the details of the amendment were published last week in the government's Official Gazette (BO).

The changes were made

with the aim of making arbitration processes more convenient for tourists by allowing conciliation meetings to be held through videoconferencing.

The Consumer Council (CC) have stated that the measure is meant to allow cross-border mediation and hearing, boosting tourists' confidence.

In a statement, the CC remarks enumerated the aims of revising such regulations; to safeguard each tourists' claimant rights even after they have returned to their homelands, to improve the efficiency of the Consumer Arbitration Centre and to enhance consumers' confidence to shop in Macau.

In the same statement, the Council also stated that it has "proposed to consumer organizations in the Greater Bay Area to establish a mechanism for cross-border arbitration."

Until now, due to the constraints related with transportation, distance and time, many consumers have abandoned their com-

plaints, as an on-site hearing was required to follow up on the process.

With the changes now enforced, the CC claims that "in the future, this brings convenience to tourists who lodge their complaints in Macau and ensures they are still protected [and promised] to get a fair and reasonable judgment once

they return to their places of origin."

According to data from the CC, in 2017 the Council received 574 complaint cases from tourists. From this total only six were referred to the Consumer Arbitration Centre for processing. The Council hopes that the revision will facilitate the resolution of a higher percentage of the complaints as more and more tourists learn that they can be fully protected, even in retroactive cases that are being resolved after they have left the MSAR.

corporate bits

MGM ANNOUNCES BONUSES FOR EMPLOYEES



MGM announced that two bonuses, a Discretionary Bonus and a Special Bonus, will be paid to eligible non-management team members.

Both bonuses will add up

to 14 months of salary in 2017, according to a statement the gaming operator issued on Friday.

The Discretionary Bonus is equal to one month's sa-

lary and will be paid in two equal installments in February 2018.

In addition to the Discretionary Bonus, a "Special Bonus" equivalent to a 14th month salary will be paid in July 2018 to recognize all eligible team members within the two properties.

Grant Bowie, CEO and executive director of MGM China said, "The past year has been a year full of new experiences and demands which we have conquered as a team. These bonuses are our appreciation and recognition to our team members for their hard work, contribution and commitment to MGM."

SANDS CHINA DISTRIBUTES FOOD HAMPERS TO FAMILIES



A group of approximately 35 Sands China Care Ambassadors volunteered on Saturday at Macau Holy House of Mercy's Welfare Shop, where they distributed 350 food hampers to disadvantaged families

ahead of the upcoming Year of the Dog.

It is the sixth consecutive year that Sands China has supported the Welfare Shop, including a donation of MOP300,000 made to assist

families undergoing financial hardship.

The distributed food hampers contained staple items such as rice, noodles, biscuits, canned food, cooking oil, toothpaste, shower gel, bar soap, among other products, the gaming operator noted in a statement.

Sands China has contributed a total of MOP1.7 million since 2013, enough to provide 1,800 food hampers.

"Sands China is pleased to offer our continued support – in the form of both financial and human resources – to Macau Holy House of Mercy's Welfare Shop, as it provides an important service to the Macau community," said Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China.



■ The Hang Seng gauge of Chinese stocks in Hong Kong has jumped 18 percent in the past two months

Chinese funds buy record USD1.6b of Hong Kong stocks today

Kana Nishizawa

HONG Kong's stock market now has a sizable bulwark against global bearishness: Chinese buyers from north of the border.

After the benchmark Hang Seng Index plunged as much as 2.7 percent yesterday in the wake of a U.S. slump, mainland investors purchased a net 10.2 billion yuan (USD1.6 billion) of the city's shares through exchange links with Shanghai and Shenzhen. That's the biggest inflow since Chinese authorities widened the investment channel in December 2016, according to data com-

plied by Bloomberg using daily quota usages. By the close, the Hang Seng's losses had narrowed to 1.1 percent.

For mainland funds facing limited investment options thanks to capital controls, buying Chinese companies in Hong Kong is an easy trade. Dual-listed firms like Bank of China Ltd. and China Shenhua Energy Co. have long been priced at a discount to their Shanghai shares, while a surging yuan against the Hong Kong dollar is making them cheaper still.

"Southbound liquidity is supporting the market and they're concentrating on buying Chinese financial com-

panies because of their discount," said Steven Leung, executive director at UOB Kay Hian (Hong Kong) Ltd. "There will be more and more diver-

sification from pension and life insurance money investing overseas and Hong Kong is still the first place for them to consider."

Such inflows are translating into bigger returns, making the trade even more appealing. The Hang Seng gauge of Chinese stocks in Hong Kong has jumped 18 percent in the past two months, compared with a 5.6 percent advance by the Shanghai Composite Index. The fact that H shares are mostly large-cap state owned companies is also appealing to mainland funds as they avoid

smaller companies facing higher funding costs thanks to a deleveraging campaign.

Banks and airlines led gains in Hong Kong today, with China Citic Bank Corp. jumping 3.9 percent and Air China Ltd. climbing 2.7 percent. Both companies are more than 30 percent cheaper in Hong Kong compared with their mainland listings.

The outperformance of H shares should continue thanks to increased allocation from wealth management and overseas institutions, according to Citigroup Inc. **Bloomberg**

Loan for Hong Kong tower buy may be biggest since 2015

A Chinese-led consortium is seeking a financing package of HKD33 billion (USD4.2 billion) to buy a landmark skyscraper, testing the waters for what could be the biggest property loan in Hong Kong since 2015.

The jumbo borrowing comes amid the Hong Kong Monetary Authority's efforts to tighten lending for developers. At HKD33 billion, the loan to acquire The Center would be the largest

real estate-related financing since billionaire Li Ka-shing borrowed HKD55 billion to spin off Cheung Kong Property Holdings, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

The terms of the financing package are still being finalized and the numbers could change, according to people familiar with the matter, who are not authorized to speak publicly and asked not to be identified.

Alibaba buys stake in Wanda Film in USD1.2b share sale



ALIBABA Group Holding Ltd. has agreed to buy a stake in Dalian Wanda Group Co.'s cinema operator as billionaire Wang Jianlin's real estate-to-entertainment conglomerate turns to another Chinese tech giant and a government-backed company for investments totaling about 7.8 billion yuan (USD1.2 billion).

Alibaba is to pay 4.68 billion yuan for a 7.66 percent stake in Wanda Film Holding Co., making the e-commerce giant the second-biggest shareholder, Wanda Film said yesterday in a regulatory filing. Beijing Cultural Investment Holdings, controlled by the Beijing government, will pay 3.12 billion yuan for a 5.11 per-

cent stake.

This is Wanda Film's first major sale of shares to external investors after listing on the Shenzhen bourse in 2015 and comes as the group's billionaire founder Wang is selling off assets from real estate to hotels to help pay down debt. The fundraising also comes in the midst of an asset restructuring at Wanda Film, whose shares have been suspended from trading since July.

Alibaba and Cultural Investment agreed to pay 51.96 yuan a share, in-line the 52.04 yuan last closing price in July.

Investing in Wanda could help Alibaba founder Jack Ma play a larger role in China's film industry, forecast to become the world's largest box-office by 2020. In 2016, Alibaba Pictures Group Ltd. bought a stake in Amblin Partners, the outfit backed by Steven Spielberg to work together on production, marketing and

distribution both globally and in China. Billionaire Ma is competing with Tencent Holdings Ltd.'s Pony Ma Huateng, as both invest in movie and TV production.

This is the second time in a week that a Chinese tech giant has invested in Wang's Wanda Group, which has been under Chinese government scrutiny for "irrational" outbound investments. Last week, a consortium led by Tencent agreed to buy a 14 percent stake in Dalian Wanda Commercial Management, formerly known as Dalian Wanda Commercial Properties Co., for \$5.4 billion, easing pressure on the unit to complete a listing by September.

In addition to the investments, Wanda Film will cooperate with Alibaba and Cultural Investment on areas including film distribution, marketing, financing as well as pre-screening advertising and online ticketing, according to the filin. **Bloomberg**

Senior US diplomat pitches arms sales in China's backyard

Gerry Shih, Beijing

The top U.S. diplomat overseeing arms sales said yesterday she would be promoting American weaponry at the largest air show in Asia, where China's military footprint and political influence are surging.

A large U.S. delegation at the Singapore Air Show is doing "everything we can" to encourage Southeast Asian governments to purchase U.S.-made arms like the F-35 fighter jet, Ambassador Tina Kaidanow told reporters in a telephone briefing. She repeatedly sought to dispel the notion that U.S. influence was in retreat.

The Trump administration in December outlined a new national security strategy that placed an emphasis on countering China's rise. The strategy calls for reinforcing the U.S. presence in the Indo-Pacific region, where Beijing and Washington have accused each other of stoking a dangerous military buildup while vying for influence.

Washington has been seeking to woo countries like Vietnam, a former foe, with arms sales and transfers at a time when



An F-35 jet arrives at its new operational base at Hill Air Force Base in northern Utah

China has bolstered its territorial claims in the South China Sea with extensive construction projects on man-made islands.

Kaidanow said the transfer last year of a coast guard cutter to Vietnam, which often contests China's maritime claims, was an "incredible positive."

"They will be able to use our equipment for maritime domain awareness, for maritime security [...] that's important for them," said Kaidanow, who visited Hanoi last week shortly after U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, on a visit to Vietnam, announced plans to send an aircraft carrier to the country in a show of solidarity.

"Our hope is they will consider American companies [not only] in defense but in other sectors as well," Kaidanow said, referring to Vietnam.

China's assertive military posture in the South China Sea has concerned several Southeast Asian countries with rival territorial claims, but Beijing, wary of being en-

circled by a U.S.-led alliance, has at the same time offered infrastructure investment across the region as a way of winning friends. China has shipped weapons to countries like the Philippines, which once decried China's maritime claims but has recently drawn closer to Beijing.

Kaidanow said she will meet with officials from Japan, Canada and several Southeast Asian countries to discuss arms purchases at the trade show in the coming days and argued that Southeast Asian countries should consider purchasing U.S. arms "not just as a matter of security but also regional balance."

U.S. warships will maintain their freedom-of-navigation operations in South China Sea waters claimed by China, she said, adding: "We will absolutely continue the pace."

China condemns the U.S. operations as "reckless" provocations that raise the risk of military confrontation between the two powers. China strongly protested in January when the USS Hopper destroyer sailed within 12 nautical miles of Scarborough Shoal, which China disputes with the Philippines.

In the aftermath, Chinese state media referred to the incident to argue that China should speed up its deployments in the busy waterway, where it has built hangers, runways and military infrastructure. **AP**

ANALYSIS

Why China could seize the lead in self-driving cars

Adam Minter

In China, the cars are becoming smarter. Last week, Alibaba Group Holding Ltd. and Foxconn Technology Co. Ltd. led a USD348 million fundraising round for Guangzhou Xiaopeng Motors Technology Co. Ltd., a three-year-old startup developing internet-connected, electric cars. The investment might seem an odd one for online retailer Alibaba. But it's part of a larger vision for transportation that includes tools to design and run entire cities. Indeed, with backing from the Chinese government, Alibaba could soon seize the lead over European and American competitors in the race to define the future of transportation.

In many respects, the cutting-edge self-driving systems found in vehicles like the Tesla Model X already belong to the past. Their arrays of cameras, radars

and computing power can maneuver a vehicle into a tight parking space, safely change lanes on the highway and even respond to a summons by the driver. But, as remarkable as these capabilities are, they tend to rely on line-of-sight connections. That works great when sensors can clearly see a stoplight or stop sign - less so, say, in foggy conditions, or if someone has deliberately changed the sign in order to spoof the onboard computer.

One way around that problem is to enable stoplights to "talk" to cars via wifi. So long as the wifi signal is strong, the car not only knows when to slow down; in theory, it could obtain that information long before arriving at an intersection and adjust its route for maximum time and fuel efficiency. If other cars had the same capability, then that "smart" stop light could direct traffic better than a human, let alone a tradi-

tional light.

This isn't a new idea. Proponents of autonomous cars have long imagined linking them to centralized traffic infrastructure in order to make trips more efficient. (If secured properly, such a system would also help counter the spoofing threat.) Experimental efforts to build such systems have begun all over the world. The U.S. state of Ohio has outfitted a 35-mile stretch of highway with sensors and fiber optics to support autonomous vehicles. South Korea is planning \$64 billion in smart highways.

Not surprisingly, China's plans are the most ambitious. The Chinese government has named autonomous cars one of the key sectors in its "Made in China 2025" initiative, meant to transform China into a world-beating manufacturer of high-end, innovative products. Official policies encourage collaboration

between Chinese technology companies involved in various aspects of transportation, from the cars themselves to satellite navigation.

Alibaba is among the biggest of those firms. The company has developed something it calls, ominously, "City Brain" - an artificial intelligence hub that utilizes big data to "automatically deploy public resources and amend defects in urban operations." In less-Orwellian terms, it's "smart city" software designed to manage how public resources like water and electricity are monitored and distributed.

The system is operational in the company's hometown of Hangzhou, where it's focused on traffic management and - according to Alibaba - has reduced travel times by 10 percent since its launch in 2016. Since then, it's been deployed in at least two additional Chinese cities and, later this

year, will be rolled out in its first foreign location, Kuala Lumpur.

So far, City Brain only uses real-time video of traffic patterns to adjust stoplights. If it can be linked to cars, though, it could change those traffic patterns themselves. Alibaba already has an automotive operating system that allows for two-way communication with technology such as City Brain. Presumably, Xiaopeng's new electric cars will use it.

Alibaba and its Chinese peers have other advantages over European and American competitors. First, data privacy is much less of a concern in China and Southeast Asia than it is in other markets, making it easier and less controversial to collect, store and use data on how citizens move around cities. Second, the Chinese government is clearly committed to helping Chinese companies lead the world in such te-

chnology. At a minimum, it's unlikely to allow foreign rivals to engage in mapping and comprehensive data collection on Chinese soil.

Third, China is already scaling up. City Brain operates in cities housing nearly 35 million people, while China is poised to become the biggest autonomous-car market in the world. Other companies - and global standards - will have to adjust to whatever developments take place on the mainland.

Of course, there's no guarantee that Alibaba will win this race; some of its Chinese partners are working on competing systems. Meanwhile, foreign companies will benefit from a growing wariness among Western governments and citizens about sharing data with Chinese companies linked to the government. For the moment, though, China's moving into the fast lane. **Bloomberg**

Joe McDonald, Beijing

NISSAN and a Chinese partner announced plans Monday to develop 20 electric vehicles as part of a USD10 billion, five-year investment program, adding to efforts by global automakers to create commercially competitive electrics for the biggest auto market.

Nissan Motor Co.'s venture with state-owned Dongfeng Group will start sales this year of Nissan's all-electric Leaf and two other electric models, said Jun Seki, president of their joint venture, Dongfeng Motor Ltd. He said three "affordable EV" compacts will be launched next year.

"Our EV offensive starts from 2018," said Seki.

Nissan joins global automakers including Volkswagen AG and General Motors Co. that are looking to China to propel future revenue and are investing billions of dollars to develop electric vehicles that will appeal to Chinese drivers.

The appeal of electrics in China still depends heavily on subsidies but Beijing is pushing automakers to develop the technology. Automakers face quotas that require electrics to make up at least 10 percent of their sales starting next year.

Regulators are using access to China's market as leverage to induce global auto brands to help local companies that might become future competitors develop electrics. Foreign automakers that want to manufacture in China must work through local partners, most of them state-owned, and must share or help develop technology to satisfy the



Dongfeng President Jun Seki gestures while speaking during its 2018-2022 midterm plan press conference in Beijing yesterday

Nissan plans 20 electric models for China through 2022

sales quotas.

Overall, Chinese sales of sedans, SUVs and minivans rose 1.4 percent last year over 2016 to 24.7 million units. Total sales of pure-electric and gasoline-electric hybrids rose 53.3 percent to 777,000 units but accounted for just 2.7 percent of the market.

Nissan and Dongfeng said they plan to develop 40 new models — half of them electric or hybrid — over the next five years. Those will be sold under the Nissan, Dongfeng and

Infiniti brands as well as the partnership's low-price Venucia name.

■ Nissan and Dongfeng said they plan to develop 40 new models - half of them electric or hybrid

By 2020, the partners have set an annual sales target of 360,000 electric or hybrid vehicles, or some 30 percent of the total, Seki told reporters. He said last year's total sales were 21,000 units.

"We need to accelerate cost reduction," said Seki. "But to reduce costs, we need more volume."

Overall, their joint venture aims to increase annual sales by 1 million units to 2.6 million by 2020.

Seki said Nissan-Dongfeng

sales of electrics have failed to gain traction due to the relatively high sticker price of models that contain up to 85 percent imported components.

"We probably underestimated our competitors," said Seki. "We need really heavy localization to compete."

China is an important factor in Nissan's goal to increase its annual global revenue from 12.8 trillion yen (\$116 billion) to 16.5 trillion yen (\$150 billion) by 2022, according to Seki. AP

ANTI-DUMPING

Trade probe of US sorghum a 'normal' investigation

A Chinese government spokesman said yesterday an anti-dumping probe of imported U.S. sorghum is a "normal case of trade remedy" following suggestions it might be retaliation for Washington's investigation of Chinese steel and other goods.

The Ministry of Commerce announced this weekend it was investigating whether U.S. sorghum was being exported to China at improperly low prices. That followed White House decisions to raise tariffs

on some Chinese-made washing machines and solar power equipment and to investigate steel imports and Beijing's technology policy.

"I just want to stress that it is merely a normal case of trade remedy investigation," foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said at a regular briefing.

The Ministry of Commerce said it launched the probe of U.S. sorghum after concluding large volumes and falling prices hurt Chinese producers. It could raise import duties

or take other steps if it finds the United States acted improperly.

Businesspeople have suggested Beijing might target U.S. agriculture exports if it wanted to retaliate in the event the Trump administration takes more severe actions on trade.

The White House is believed to be on the verge of announcing results of an investigation into whether Beijing improperly pressures foreign companies to hand over technology.

Beijing has accused U.S. President Donald

Trump of threatening the stability of the international trade regulation system by taking action under U.S. law instead of through the World Trade Organization.

U.S.-Chinese trade relations are "mutually beneficial," Geng said.

"We are willing to deepen reciprocal cooperation with the United States and continue benefiting the two peoples," he said. "We hope the United States will go along with China to make concrete efforts to this end." AP

Eight killed in gas leak at Guangdong steel mill

GAS leaking from a pipeline at a steel mill in Guangdong province killed eight people and injured 10 early yesterday, local authorities reported.

The Shaoguan city government said in a post on its microblog that the leak occurred at 3 a.m. at the Shaoguan Iron and Steel company's Songshan plant.

It said the rescue and recovery effort was underway and the cause of the leak was under investigation.

China has made con-

siderable progress in improving industrial safety, but scores are still killed annually in the country's factories, coal mines and transportation networks.

In 2015, an explosion traced to improperly stored chemicals killed at least 173 people in the port city of Tianjin, about an hour east of Beijing.

More recently, 10 people were killed in an explosion at a biotech company workshop in the eastern city of Lianyungang on Dec. 9.

SOUTH KOREA

Samsung heir Lee freed after appeal wins suspended jail term

Youkyung Lee, Seoul

SAMSUNG heir Lee Jae-Syong was freed yesterday after a South Korean appeals court gave him a 2 1/2-year suspended jail sentence for corruption in connection with a scandal that toppled the country's president.

The Seoul High Court softened the original ruling against Lee, rejecting most of the bribery charges leveled against Lee by prosecutors who sought a 12-year prison term.

While the ruling clears the way for the Samsung vice chairman to resume his role at the helm of the industrial giant founded by his grandfather after a year in prison, he faces a slew of challenges outside prison.

Chief among them will be winning trust that he is capable of running South Korea's biggest company, and assuaging public anger among those who viewed the court's surprise decision as a setback in the war on corruptions.

"The past year was a precious time for personal reflection," Lee told reporters waiting outside the gates of a detention center in southern Seoul.

Lee's first stop from the prison was a Samsung hospital where his father has been hospitalized after suffering a heart attack in 2014.



Lee Jae-yong, vice chairman of Samsung Electronics, arrives at the Seoul High Court

Lee was charged with offering USD38 million in bribes to former President Park Geun-hye and her confidant Choi Soon-sil, embezzling Samsung funds, hiding assets overseas, concealing proceeds from criminal activities and perjury.

The appeals court said Lee was unable to reject the then-president's request to financially support her confidante and was coerced into making

the payments. The court still found Lee guilty of giving 3.6 billion won (\$3.3 million) in bribes for equestrian training of Choi's daughter and of embezzling the money from Samsung funds.

Lee's lawyer, Lee Injae, told reporters that the Samsung vice chairman still plans to appeal his conviction. Prosecutors also were expected to appeal the court's ruling,

making it almost certain the case will go to the Supreme Court.

Lee, 49 and the only son of Samsung's ailing chairman, was given a five-year prison term in August on bribery and other charges linked to a political scandal that took down former South Korean President Park Geun-hye.

Lee has pleaded not guilty to charges he used Samsung

corporate funds to bribe Park and a confidante, seeking to consolidate his control over Samsung and facilitate a smooth transfer of corporate leadership from his father. The appeals court rejected the lower court's view that corporate succession was one of the issues at stake.

Many South Koreans were expecting a tough stance from the appeals court and took to social media and online news portals to vent their anger at the ruling and the judge who issued the verdict.

"Republic of Samsung" and the name of the judge who handed down yesterday's verdict were among the top trending words on Twitter in Korean.

The earlier ruling against Lee was seen as a departure from the previous court cases that had been criticized for being too soft toward white-collar crime and toward executives of chaebol, the big conglomerates that helped South Korea's rapid industrialization.

Lee's case and the current trial of the former president are seen as tests of the country's commitment to ending cozy ties among South Korea's political and business elite. Such links once were seen as the key to South Korea's impressive rise from the ashes of its 1950-53 war but now are blamed for corruption, inequality and stifling innovation.

Before the final hearing at the appeals court Lee paid back 8 billion won (\$7.3 million) to Samsung Electronics. The lower court had said Lee embezzled that amount from Samsung to bribe Choi. **AP**

VIETNAM

Court gives life term to oil exec after alleged abduction

A court in Vietnam gave a second life prison sentence yesterday to a former executive at Vietnam's state oil giant accused of corruption and who Germany said was kidnapped from there by Vietnamese agents last year.

State-run online newspaper VnExpress said Trinh Xuan Thanh, the former chairman of PetroVietnam's construction arm, was convicted of embezzling USD622,000 from a property project developed by a subsidiary. Seven other defendants in the two-week trial were sentenced from six to 16 years in jail on the same charges.

Thanh denied the allegations but testimony by other defendants and witnesses gave sufficient basis to issue the conviction, the paper quoted judges as saying.

Thanh, 51, received another life prison term two weeks ago after being convicted of embezzling \$178,000 from a thermo power plant in the country's highest-profile court case. Another defendant in that case was former Politburo member Dinh La Thang, who was sentenced to 13 years for economic mismanagement. Thanh was the first former member of the all-powerful body to

face trial in decades.

The defendants in the trial that ended yesterday included Dinh Manh Thang who was sentenced to nine years in prison after being convicted of embezzling \$222,000. Thang is the younger brother of Dinh La Thang.

Germany has said Vietnamese intelligence services abducted Thanh from a Berlin park in July in what it called "an unprecedented and flagrant violation of German and international law." He had sought asylum in Germany.

Vietnam denied the abduction allegation and says Thanh returned voluntarily.

The ruling Communist Party under the watch of General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong, who was re-elected to another five-year term in 2016, has stepped up its anti-corruption campaign to an unprecedented level with PetroVietnam and the banking sector at its center.

Scores of current or former senior PetroVietnam executives and bankers have been put on trial for economic crimes.

A trial of 46 defendants, most of them bankers and businessmen, is underway in southern commercial hub of Ho Chi Minh City. **AP**



Trinh Xuan Thanh, a former chairman of state energy giant PetroVietnam's construction arm, appears in court in Hanoi

Mohamed Sharuhaan, Male

MALDIVES

Government refuses to enforce Supreme Court order

THE political crisis in the Maldives deepened yesterday, as the government of the island nation said it would not obey a Supreme Court order to free a group of imprisoned opposition leaders.

The surprise judicial ruling last week has led to an increasingly tense standoff between the Supreme Court and the government of President Yameen Abdul Gayoom, with protests spilling into the streets of the capital, Male, and soldiers in riot gear deployed to the parliament building to stop lawmakers from meeting.

Yesterday, Legal Affairs Minister Azima Shakoor said that “the government does not believe that the Supreme Court ruling to release the political prisoners can be enforced.”

She explained the decision by saying that the Supreme Court had not acted on a series of government letters saying there were “numerous challenges” to implementing it. On Sunday, a Supreme Court statement said that “there are no obstacles in implementing the ruling and releasing political prisoners and that this has been informed to the Prosecutor General’s office.”

There was no immediate comment from Yameen’s main rival, exiled former President Mohammed Nasheed, who is among the



Maldivian president Yameen Abdul Gayoom (center) surrounded by his body guards arrives to address his supporters in Male on Saturday

prisoners ordered freed.

The Supreme Court ruled that the political leaders’ guilty verdicts had been politically influenced. The ruling has led to protests by opposition supporters urging the government to obey the order. Clashes erupted between police and the political opponents on Thursday and Friday. Soldiers

surrounded the parliament building over the weekend to stop lawmakers from entering the building.

The United Nations and several foreign governments, including the United States, have urged the Maldives to respect the court order.

Nasheed has been living in exile

in Britain since 2016 after being given asylum when he traveled there on medical leave from prison.

In addition to ordering the release of the political prisoners, the court also reinstated 12 lawmakers who had been ousted for switching allegiance to the opposition. When tho-

se lawmakers return, Yameen’s Progressive Party of the Maldives will lose its majority in the 85-member parliament, which could result in the legislative body functioning as a rival power to the president.

Known for its luxury tourist resorts, the Maldives became a multiparty democracy 10 years ago after decades of autocratic rule by the current president’s half brother, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom.

But the nation lost much of its democratic gains after Yameen, who has maintained a tight grip on power, was elected in 2013. He had been set to run for re-election this year virtually unopposed, with all of his opponents either jailed or exiled.

On Friday, Nasheed said he would mount a fresh challenge for the presidency this year.

Nasheed was sentenced to 13 years in prison after he was convicted under the Maldives’ anti-terror laws. The trial that was widely condemned by international rights groups. **AP**



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AP EXCLUSIVE

Despite denial, Pope got abuse victim's letter

Nicole Winfield & Eva Vergara,
Vatican City

POPE Francis received a victim's letter in 2015 that graphically detailed sexual abuse at the hands of a priest and a cover-up by Chilean church authorities, contradicting the pope's recent insistence that no victims had come forward, the letter's author and members of Francis' own sex-abuse commission have told The Associated Press.

The fact that Francis received the eight-page letter, obtained by the AP, challenges his insistence that he has "zero tolerance" for sex abuse and cover-ups. It also calls into question his stated empathy with abuse survivors, compounding the most serious crisis of his five-year papacy.

The scandal exploded last month when Francis' trip to South America was marred by protests over his vigorous defense of Bishop Juan Barros, who is accused by victims of covering up the abuse by the Rev. Fernando Karadima. During the trip, Francis callously dismissed accusations against Barros as "slander," seemingly unaware that victims had placed him at the scene of Karadima's crimes.

On the plane home, confronted by reporters, the pope said: "You, in all good will, tell me that there are victims, but I haven't seen any, because they haven't come forward."

But members of the pope's Commission for the Protection of Minors say that in April 2015, they sent a delegation to Rome specifically to hand-deliver a letter to the pope about Barros. The letter from Juan Carlos Cruz detailed the abuse, kissing and fondling he says he suffered at Karadima's hands, which he said Barros and others witnessed and ignored.

Four members of the commission met with Francis' top abuse adviser, Cardinal Sean O'Malley, explained their objections to Francis' recent appointment of Barros as a bishop in southern Chile, and gave him the letter to deliver to Francis.

"When we gave him [O'Malley] the letter for the pope, he assured us he would give it to the pope and speak of the concerns," then-commission member Marie Collins told the AP. "And at a later date, he assured us that that had been done."

Cruz, who now lives and works in Philadelphia, heard the same later that year.

"Cardinal O'Malley called me after the pope's visit here in Philadelphia and he told me, among other things, that he



Juan Carlos Cruz speaks during an interview with The Associated Press in Philadelphia this weekend

had given the letter to the pope — in his hands," he said in an interview at his home yesterday [Macau time].

Neither the Vatican nor O'Malley responded to multiple requests for comment.

While the 2015 summit of Francis' commission was known and publicized at the time, the contents of Cruz's letter — and a photograph of Collins handing it to O'Malley — were not disclosed by members. Cruz provided the letter, and Collins provided the photo, after reading an AP story that reported Francis had claimed to have never heard from any Karadima victims about Barros' behavior.

The Barros affair first caused shockwaves in January 2015 when Francis appointed him bishop of Osorno, Chile, over the objections of the leadership of Chile's bishops' conference and many local priests and laity. They accepted as credible the testimony against Karadima, a prominent Chilean cleric who was sanctioned by the Vatican in 2011 for abusing minors. Barros was a Karadima protegee, and according to Cruz and other victims, he witnessed the abuse and did nothing.

"Holy Father, I write you this letter because I'm tired of fighting, of crying and suffering," Cruz wrote in Francis' native Spanish. "Our story is well known and there's no need to repeat it, except to tell you of the horror of having lived this abuse and how I wanted to kill myself."

Cruz and other survivors had for years denounced the cover-up of Karadima's crimes, but were dismissed as liars by the Chilean church hierarchy and the Vatican's own ambassador in Santiago, who refused their

repeated requests to meet before and after Barros was appointed.

After Francis' comments backing the Chilean hierarchy caused such an outcry in Chile, he was forced last week to do an about-face: The Vatican announced it was sending in its most respected sex-crimes investigator to take testimony from Cruz and others about Barros.

In the letter to the pope, Cruz begs for Francis to listen to him and make good on his pledge of "zero tolerance."

"Holy Father, it's bad enough that we suffered such tremendous pain and anguish from the sexual and psychological abuse, but the terrible mistreatment we received from our pastors is almost worse," he wrote.

■ The scandal exploded when Francis' trip to South America was marred by protests over his vigorous defense of Bishop Juan Barros

Cruz goes on to detail in explicit terms the homo-eroticized nature of the circle of priests and young boys around Karadima, the charismatic preacher whose El Bosque community in the well-to-do Santiago neighborhood of Providencia produced dozens of priestly vocations and five bishops, including Barros.

He described how Karadima would kiss Barros and fondle

his genitals, and do the same with younger priests and teens, and how young priests and seminarians would fight to sit next to Karadima at the table to receive his affections.

"More difficult and tough was when we were in Karadima's room and Juan Barros — if he wasn't kissing Karadima — would watch when Karadima would touch us — the minors — and make us kiss him, saying: 'Put your mouth near mine and stick out your tongue.' He would stick his out and kiss us with his tongue," Cruz told the pope. "Juan Barros was a witness to all this innumerable times, not just with me but with others as well."

"Juan Barros covered up everything that I have told you," he added.

Barros has repeatedly denied witnessing any abuse or covering it up. "I never knew anything about, nor ever imagined, the serious abuses which that priest committed against the victims," he told the AP recently. "I have never approved of nor participated in such serious, dishonest acts, and I have never been convicted by any tribunal of such things."

For the Osorno faithful who have opposed Barros as their bishop, the issue isn't so much a legal matter requiring proof or evidence, as Barros was a young priest at the time and not in a position of authority over Karadima. It's more that if Barros didn't "see" what was happening around him and doesn't find it problematic for a priest to kiss and fondle young boys, he shouldn't be in charge of a diocese where he is responsible for detecting inappropriate sexual behavior, reporting it to police and protecting children from pedophiles like his mentor.

Cruz had arrived at Karadima's community in 1980 as a vulnerable teenager, distraught after the recent death of his father. He has said Karadima told him he would be like a spiritual father to him, but instead sexually abused him.

Based on testimony from Cruz and other former members of the parish, the Vatican in 2011 removed Karadima from ministry and sentenced him to a lifetime of "penance and prayer" for his crimes. Now 87, he lives in a home for elderly priests in Santiago; he hasn't commented on the scandal and the home has declined to accept calls or visits from the news media.

The victims also testified to Chilean prosecutors, who opened an investigation into Karadima after they went public with their accusations in 2010. Chilean prosecutors had to drop charges because too much time had passed, but the judge running the case stressed that it wasn't for lack of proof.

While the victims' testimony was deemed credible by both Vatican and Chilean prosecutors, the local church hierarchy clearly didn't believe them, which might have influenced Francis' view. Cardinal Francisco Javier Errazuriz has acknowledged he didn't believe the victims initially and shelved an investigation. He was forced to reopen it after the victims went public.

He is now one of the Argentine pope's key cardinal advisers.

By the time he finally got his letter into the pope's hands in 2015, Cruz had already sent versions to numerous other people, and had tried for months to get an appointment with the Vatican ambassador. The embassy's Dec. 15, 2014, email to Cruz — a month before Barros was appointed — was short and to the point:

"The apostolic nunciature has received the message you emailed Dec. 7 to the apostolic nuncio," it read, "and at the same time communicates that your request has been met with an unfavorable response."

One could argue that Francis didn't pay attention to Cruz's letter, since he receives thousands of letters every day from faithful around the world. He can't possibly read them all, much less remember the contents years later. He might have been tired and confused after a weeklong trip to South America when he told an airborne press conference that victims never came forward to accuse Barros of cover-up.

But this was not an ordinary letter, nor were the circumstances under which it arrived in the Vatican. **AP**

BELGIUM

Paris attacks suspect in Brussels for shootout trial

Lori Hinnant, Brussels

THE only surviving member of the Islamic State cell that attacked Paris in November 2015 refused to rise for a Belgian court yesterday during his first appearance in public since his arrest nearly two years ago.

Salah Abdeslam is on trial in his hometown of Brussels on charges of attempted murder for a police shootout from which he fled. The man who covered for his getaway with a spray of automatic gunfire died. Abdeslam's escape was short-lived — he was captured on March 18, 2016, in the same neighborhood where he and many of his Islamic State fighter colleagues grew up.

Abdeslam arrived in the Bel-

gian capital yesterday morning after being transferred from a prison in France. Security was high at the Brussels courthouse, with armed guards and multiple checkpoints leading to the courtroom.

The bearded Abdeslam, flanked by masked guards, did not answer questions as proceedings began in the courtroom.

Abdeslam has previously refused to speak to investigators in France about the attack there that killed 130. Days after his capture, extremists struck in Brussels. In total, 162 people died in the two attacks.

The trial relates to the 2016 shooting in Brussels, some four months after the Paris attacks. Abdeslam and two

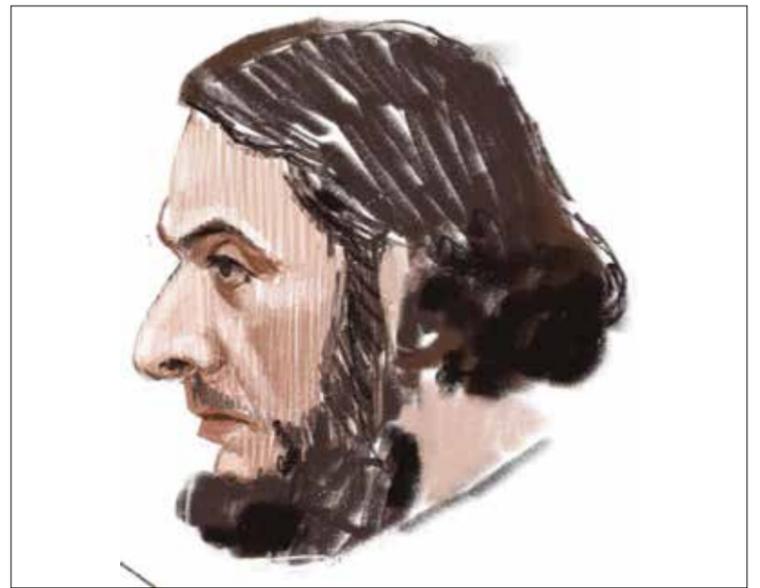
suspects were hiding in an apartment when police arrived for a routine search. Three officers were wounded in the shootout that followed and one suspect was killed. Abdeslam was captured a few days later in the flashpoint Brussels neighborhood of Molenbeek.

"We want to see what elements will be provided in order to have a better understanding of this series of events and terror attacks, in France and in Belgium," said Guillaume Denoix de Saint Marc, a member of V-Europe, a victims' association.

"This trial is one of the pieces of a global puzzle which will answer some of our questions. But at the same time, we expect to be very disappointed and to learn nothing." AP



Belgian judge Marie-France Keutgen presides over the trial of Salah Abdeslam (sketch below) at the Brussels Justice Palace



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what's ON



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TIME: 1:30pm-10pm (Mondays to Fridays)

10:30am-10pm (Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays; 90 minutes per session, maximum capacity is 150 people at one time)

UNTIL: February 28, 2018

VENUE: MGM Art Space

ADMISSION: MOP150 (MOP120 for Macau residents; free admission for children aged 2 or under)

REPRESENTING WOMEN THROUGH MAM COLLECTION – 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY

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

UNTIL: February 25, 2018

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

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

SEALS OF 108 HEROES OF SHUI HU LEGEND FROM THE MAM COLLECTION

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

UNTIL: February 26, 2018

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

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

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UNTIL: February 25, 2018

VENUE: Macao Science Center

ADMISSION: MOP25

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2888 0822

Offbeat

FAMILY'S DOG TURNS UP 10 YEARS AFTER VANISHING FROM HOME



Jody Berisko, an employee at Animal Protectors of Allegheny Valley gets a kiss from Abby

A family has been reunited with its dog 10 years after the dog went missing.

Debra Suierveld and her family assumed their dog Abby had died after she ran away in 2008 from their home in Apollo, but decade-old sadness turned to joy on Saturday when Suierveld received word someone had found the dog.

The black Labrador mix showed up on George Speiring's front porch in Lower Burrell, 16 kilometers west of Apollo. Speiring contacted Animal Protectors of Allegheny Valley, which discovered the dog's microchip and was able to contact Suierveld.

Someone had taken good care of Abby over the years. Abby is in great health and remembers things the family taught her, Suierveld said.

"She would lie on the floor and cross her paws, and she remembers my daughter's commands, and she remembers the commands I taught her," Suierveld told KDKA-TV.

Suierveld called her 22-year-old daughter, who is a student at Miami University, in Oxford, Ohio, to share the news.

"She cried," Suierveld told the Tribune-Review.

Suierveld's family has planned a reunion dinner on Sunday to welcome Abby back.

"It feels like a part of my kids' childhood is back, part of our family is back," Suierveld said. "It's pretty awesome."

TV canal macau



13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
15:00	Miscellaneous
16:10	NOS League: Porto x Braga (Repeated)
17:50	Brazilian Soap Opera (Repeated)
18:40	TDM Sports (Repeated)
19:50	Portuguese Serie
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	TDM Interview
21:30	Grimm Sr. 2
22:10	Brazilian Soap Opera
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Europe 30
00:15	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
01:50	RTPi Live

cinema



CINETEATRO

1 Feb - 7 Feb



MAZE RUNNER: THE DEATH CURE

ROOM 1
(2D) 02:15, 04:45, 9:345pm
(3D) 07:15pm

Director: Wes Ball

Starring: Rosa Salazar, Thomas Brodie-Sangster

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 142 min



THE POST

ROOM 2
02:30, 04:45, 7:15, 9:30pm
Director: Steven Spielberg
Starring: Tom Hanks, Meryl Streep, Sarah Paulson
Language: English (Chinese)
Duration: 116min

STAYCATION

ROOM 3
2:30, 9:30pm
Director: Johnson Lee
Starring: Johnson Lee, Louisa So, Ti Lung, Chin Siu-ho, Andrew Lam, Yuen Chau
Language: Cantonese (Chinese & English)
Duration: 101 min



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

ROOM 3
5:00, 9:30pm
Director: Tomonori Sudô
Starring: Ayako Kawasumi, Jôji Nakata, Noriaki Sugiyama
Language: Japanese (Chinese)
Duration: 120 min

this day in history



2001 SHARON SWEEPS TO POWER

The leader of the right-wing Likud party, Ariel Sharon, has won a landslide victory to become the new prime minister of Israel. He called for a government of national unity to bring peace to the Middle East.

The outgoing prime minister, Ehud Barak, said he was resigning as Labour leader and leaving parliament.

Addressing jubilant supporters in Tel Aviv, Mr Sharon ruled out territorial concessions to the Palestinians over Jerusalem and urged them to "cast off the path of violence and return to the path of dialogue".

He said: "Today the state of Israel has taken a new road, the road of peace, security and unity."

Mr Barak ruled out his party's participation in a national unity government without agreement on a joint plan of action.

"Friends, we have lost a battle, but we will win the war," he told supporters. "Our path is the one and only path, the path that will lead Israel to peace and security."

Mr Sharon has a fearsome reputation as a ruthless and fearless soldier and politician. As defence minister he was the main architect of Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

He was removed from office in 1983 by an Israeli tribunal that found him indirectly responsible for the massacre of hundreds of Palestinians by Lebanese Christian militiamen in two Beirut refugee camps under Israeli control.

But he made his political comeback just one year later as trade and industry minister in a Likud-Labour national unity government.

Minutes after voting ended on Tuesday evening, exit polls gave Mr Sharon a lead of 19%. Partial results broadcast later on Israeli television suggested an even greater lead for the Likud leader.

Turnout, according to electoral officials, was about 60% - the lowest in Israeli history.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat was conciliatory in his response to Mr Sharon's victory.

"We respect the decision of the Israeli people," Mr Arafat said. "We hope the peace process will continue."

But his comments came after Palestinians had held what they called a "day of rage" to coincide with the voting and Mr Sharon's expected victory.

Demonstrators chanting "Sharon is a butcher" clashed with Israeli soldiers in the West Bank towns of Ramallah and Hebron.

Mr Sharon will inherit the same fractured and fractious parliament which gave Mr Barak so much trouble.

Some Israeli commentators say there may have to be new parliamentary elections within six months.

In that event, his rival Binyamin Netanyahu could challenge him for leadership of the Likud Party and supplant him as prime minister.

The new Israeli prime minister may also find himself constrained by the realities on the ground.

If he tries, as his record suggests he may, to use the iron fist to curb Palestinian anger, analysts say he will find there are no purely military solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian problem.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

In June 2002 following a series of suicide bombings, work began on building a security wall, 640 km (440 miles) long, between Israel and the West Bank.

An effort to revive the peace process resulted in the publication of a new roadmap for peace in April 2003.

Ariel Sharon's mission was to fight for Israel's security, in the belief that the end justifies the means.

But his plans for Israeli settlers to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank - completed in August 2005 - provoked ire from his staunchest supporters and were repeatedly voted down by his right-wing Likud Party.

He finally left Likud in November 2005 to found a new centrist party, Kadima (Forward).

On 4 January 2006, Mr Sharon suffered a major stroke and went into a coma.

Three months later, on 11 April, the Israeli cabinet declared him "permanently incapacitated".

Ehud Olmert was then promoted from acting PM to the full premiership having secured a victory for Kadima in elections held the previous month.

YOUR STARS

Aries
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Wear something really awesome today, because you're definitely all about the huge crowds, fun distractions, and loud merrymaking. If there's a carnival somewhere nearby, get moving right away.

Taurus
April 20-May 20
You may feel like your nose has been to the grindstone so long that it's been shaved down quite a bit. Keep up those efforts, though, and you should soon see it all come to fruition.

Gemini
May 21-Jun. 21
Fireworks go off when you start to engage in a one-on-one conversation on some deeply stimulating topic. If you're enjoying the debate for its own sake, be sure to let the other person know.

Cancer
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
You're ready to make such a big splash that the people around you should carry umbrellas. Only the best is good enough for now, and that's definitely a welcome change of pace from your usual low-key self.

Leo
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Energy is what it's all about for you right now. You're hotter than the sun and you've got a magnetic energy that draws others close. Everything's goes your way, no matter what you're doing.

Virgo
Aug. 23-Sept. 22
Creativity and good feelings about your fellows are just erupting out of you today. That's an incredibly powerful combination you've got going for you, so be sure to focus all that energy in the right place.

Libra
Sep.23-Oct. 22
Your people are playing follow-the-leader, but at least for now, you're the one leading the way. Everyone is happy to mosey along with you, especially when you decide to indulge in fun and games.

Scorpio
Oct. 23 - Nov. 21
It might be a great day for you on the job, but only if you make a serious effort to focus your energy and keep yourself from distractions brought by higher-ups. Some of them may actually be looking for trouble.

Sagittarius
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Sometimes difficult situations can work out simply because you just know deep down that that's how it has to be, particularly when it comes to taking on new projects.

Capricorn
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Try to avoid taking much of anything at face value right now. Instead, try looking beneath the surface and get at someone else's motives. This is particularly smart if a deal seems too good to be true.

Aquarius
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Only stubborn fools refuse to compromise. Remember that during today's negotiations, no matter the venue. To keep things moving along, you need to keep a broader perspective in mind.

Pisces
Feb.19-Mar. 20
It's quite tempting to tell others what they need to hear, especially when you're sure you could really help them. You need to avoid interference now, though. Hold your tongue - and keep it held.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy

2		7	8		6			
4				2	1			
3				4				5
	4	8	9					
7	1						3	9
			2	3	7			
5		2						3
		8	3				5	
6		7	5				9	

Easy+

	5			1		2		
2		6						3
7		4			6	8		
3	1	5						
	8	7		9				
			6	4		1		
5	9		8				6	
2				6		4		
4	7			3				

Medium

6				8	2	4		
4					9			
	2	9	5					
	6	8	7				4	
1		2			9			
8			9	3	1			
			1	7	5			
	5							3
8	9	3						1

Hard

4		6						
					3	7		
					1			
	6	7						
9							5	
		2	9			6		
						8	9	
1								

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-10	3	clear/cloudy
Harbin	-27	-15	clear/cloudy
Tianjin	-8	2	clear
Urumqi	-18	-10	clear
Xi'an	-4	6	clear
Lhasa	-2	17	clear
Chengdu	2	9	cloudy
Chongqing	5	11	cloudy
Kunming	0	10	overcast/cloudy
Nanjing	-2	4	clear
Shanghai	-5	10	clear
Wuhan	-3	7	clear
Hangzhou	6	11	drizzle/overcast
Taipei	4	14	clear
Guangzhou	8	13	cloudy
Hong Kong			
WORLD			
Moscow	-12	-10	flurry/overcast
Frankfurt	-2	1	sleet
Paris	-1	5	sleet
London	0	5	sleet/drizzle
New York	-3	1	clear/overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1-Diving duck; 5- Atomize; 10- Official records; 14- Mandlikova of tennis; 15- Come up; 16- Drench; 17- Walked on; 18- Flora and fauna; 19- "Puppy Love" singer; 20- Equality of weight; 23- Pull; 24- Sleek swimmer; 25- Billiard shot; 27- "The Merry Widow" composer; 29- Despot Amin; 31- Holiday start; 32- Color TV pioneer; 34- Just ___; 35- Aviv preceder; 36- Powerful computer; 40- Have title to; 41- Hide in the shadows; 42- Arafat's org.; 43- Brit. lexicon; 44- "Wheel of Fortune" buy; 45- Take ___ for the worse; 49- ___ say more?; 51- Brown ermine; 55- Marshal at Waterloo; 56- Supernatural; 59- Slippery ___ eel; 60- Caught congers; 61- Shakespearean villain; 62- Forum wear; 63- Zhou ___; 64- ___ for All Seasons; 65- Fencing weapon; 66- Data; 67- Chamber workers; Abbr.;

DOWN: 1- "Fiddler on the Roof" setting; 2- Product model; 3- Adequate; 4- Dry watercourse; 5- Wooden shoe; 6- Publish; 7- ___ Janeiro; 8- Group of stars; 9- 365 days; 10- Yoga posture; 11- Substantial; 12- Act of seizing authority; 13- Alias; 21- Ceramics; 22- Needle-shaped; 26- ___ Brooks, filmmaker responsible for "Blazing Saddles"; 28- Dadaist Jean; 30- "Pirates of the Caribbean" star; 33- Give ___ for one's money; 34- Hunky-dory; 36- Sugar apple; 37- Not legally an adult; 38- Semilunar; 39- Small child; 40- Suffix with ball; 46- Wild; 47- President before Bush; 48- Hose; 50- Mother of Perseus; 52- I cannot ___ lie; 53- ___ a time (singly); 54- ___ Ababa; 57- Goes out with; 58- Long and Peeples; 59- Dined;



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- PSP 28 573 333
- 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
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
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- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
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Dave Zeitlin, Philadelphia

THE rain and hail that pelted Philadelphia for much of the day dissipated just as people across the city spilled out of sports bars, apartments and houses.

They all had one destination: Broad Street.

It was time for a celebration 58 years in the making.

Yesterday [Macau time], just as Nick Foles led the Philadelphia Eagles to a surprise Super Bowl victory over the New England Patriots in Minneapolis, the scene more than 1,000 miles away in Philly was jubilation and pandemonium.

Fireworks were set off. Car horns blared. And Philadelphians young and old descended on Broad Street, the iconic thoroughfare that will soon host a parade to commemorate the city's first major pro sports championship since the Phillies won the 2008 World Series.

"The city deserved it," said 66-year-old Lou Potel, who threw a party at his home just off Broad before joining a much bigger party outside. "It's a great city, and now we have a Super Bowl to go along with it."

Like so many other fans, Potel's love for the Eagles has been passed down from generation to generation. He went to the Super Bowl with his son the last time the Eagles played in the title game in 2004, and said that watching the championship with his son "made up for it."

Dustin Seidman, 42, and his wife Staci, 41, decided to bring their 10-year-old son and 8-year-old daughter to the festivities on Broad Street, even as drunken fans sprayed beer and climbed trash trucks, street poles and awnings. Social media video showed the awning outside the Ritz-Carlton Hotel collapsing with more than a dozen people on it, but it was unclear if there were any injuries.

There were many other young

AP PHOTO



AMERICAN FOOTBALL

Philadelphians take to the streets to celebrate Super Bowl

kids on Broad Street, with parents weaving strollers between people and cars and some even holding infants in carriers. One youngster rode a scooter while wearing an Eagles helmet.

"We wouldn't miss this," Dustin Seidman said. "It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience."

As his son then asked to keep walking north to City Hall, he added: "Does life get any better than this?"

For Staci Seidman, the thought of her late grandfather, a die-hard Eagles fan, immediately crossed her mind when the game ended. She wasn't alone.

Rick Campitelli, 63, who came

into the city to watch the game with his son, said he wished his father-in-law could have been alive to see this moment.

"This is the greatest," said Campitelli, wearing the jersey of Wilbert Montgomery, the former Eagles running back to whom he once sold insurance. "I was hoping they would do it before I died, and they did it."

The scene in Boston was far more somber as fans inside the Banshee Bar had to come to terms with a rare loss for Tom Brady. Some, however, took it in stride.

"I've got nothing to complain about," Boston resident Bill

Crowley said. "It's the greatest dynasty in NFL history and this loss tonight doesn't change that."

"They'll be back," Conor Hobert added. "One hundred percent, they'll be back."

Sam Murphy, 40, actually made the trip from Boston to Philadelphia, flying in Sunday morning before planning to fly back for work Monday. The longtime Eagles fan and Boston resident joked he couldn't be within 100 miles of his home, instead deciding to watch the game with his old University of Pennsylvania roommate Rob Ballenger, 41, at Grace Tavern,

near 23rd and South Streets.

While standing in the back of the packed bar, Murphy drank Newbolds in honor of his father-in-law Ron Skubecz, who loved that beer and who once gave his children a football signed by Eagles legend Chuck Bednarik. Skubecz, a lifelong Eagles fan, died just three weeks ago, making the championship even more emotional for Murphy.

"This is Philly at its best," said Murphy, as he, Ballenger and hundreds of other new friends paraded down South Street to get to the party on Broad. "This team is what Philly is all about." AP

WINTER OLYMPICS

North, South Korea share the ice in figure skating

AP PHOTO



North Korea's Ryom Tae Ok and Kim Ju Sik (center) practice next to South Korea's Kim Kyu-eun (front right)

NORTH and South Korean figure skaters shared the same ice yesterday for the first time at the Pyeongchang Olympics.

The North's pair of Ryom Tae Ok and Kim Ju Sik didn't socialize much with the South Korean and Japanese athletes in their practice session, but South Korean skater Alex Kam said they'd shared a few words.

"We didn't have much time to talk because our warmup schedule was different, but we just said 'Hi'," Kam said. "We were

just talking about our schedule for this weekend."

Fresh off a third-place finish at the Four Continents championship in Taiwan last month, Ryom and Kim are the only North Koreans who met the Olympic qualifying standards in their sport prior to being invited. They're also rare among North Korean athletes in having competed at several competitions abroad, where they'd mixed with foreign skaters including Kam and his partner Kim Kyu-eun.

They're likely to be respectable mid-level competitors in Pyeongchang, though aren't considered medal contenders.

"They're really friendly and really bright, so it wasn't too difficult to get close to them," Kam said. "It was nice to train alongside them because they're a really good team, so when there's good teams training with us, it pushes us a bit more."

Despite their Four Continents bronze last month, Ryom and Kim had a

few problems in practice. Ryom fell hard on a throw and failed to land two jumps, though she and Kim showed off an impressive lift, as Ryom perched on top of her partner with seemingly little effort.

Ryom and Kim regularly consulted their coaches rinkside and Kim at one point visibly winced when a Japanese skater fell near him.

They didn't stop to chat with the dozens of assembled South Korean and international journalists. AP

opinion

Views on China

Shuli Ren, Bloomberg

HONG KONG'S A LUSH COUNTRY GARDEN FOR CHINA DEVELOPERS

Getting tired of high-yield dollar bonds? Don't worry, China's innovative real estate developers can always find a way to tempt you.

Profit margins in the market for dollar debt are thinning as a huge local savings pool pushes down yield premiums to almost their lowest level since 2009. Meanwhile, the Federal Reserve is dominating headlines again, with a March rate hike looking all but certain (traders are betting on a 93 percent probability).

Against that background, China Evergrande Group managed Wednesday to sell a HKD18 billion (USD2.3 billion) five-year convertible bond. Granted, the developer had to revise its aggressive terms - it had wanted to issue a perpetual, with the option of deferring coupon payments - but this is nonetheless an achievement for a high-yield real estate company with an estimated 162 percent net debt-to-equity ratio.

Take a look at the terms and you know this is another win for Evergrande. The coupon is just 4.25 percent, by far the lowest among its bonds. The conversion price of HKD38.99 is a 40 percent premium to Evergrande's close before the deal - but the shares have already run up by close to 380 percent in the past year, so perhaps there is not much upside left?

The secret sauce is the Hong Kong dollar, which is pegged to the U.S. currency. Evergrande's previous issues were in greenbacks or yuan.

Not coincidentally, two other high-yield developers tapped into the Hong Kong dollar bond pool this year. Country Garden Holdings Co. issued HK\$15.6 billion of debt Jan. 16, and CIFI Holdings Group Co. came in a week later with HK\$2.8 billion. Both are convertibles with zero percent coupons. As I've written, the two companies now deserve investment-grade ratings, at least according to the Bloomberg risk calculator.

Before 2015, the Hong Kong dollar bond market was vibrant, with issuers ranging from Tencent Holdings Ltd. to Kingsoft Corp. Investors in China piled in, because the bonds counted toward a HKD10 million investment that opened the door to permanent residence in the city. Then the Hong Kong government suspended the Capital Investment Entrant Scheme, and the local-currency market became a boring place dominated by sovereigns and China's big banks.

The developers' entry this year is bringing the market back to life. Evergrande and Country Garden are the second- and third-largest issuers, behind the Chinese government and ahead of Bank of China Ltd.

And they're clever, tapping into an unsung cousin's thirst for yield and growth. A preliminary search by Gadfly suggests there are at least a dozen funds with more than HKD26 billion of assets under management that track only Hong Kong dollar-denominated bonds.

The HKD17 billion Shroder International Selection Fund, for example, is full of stodgy Hong Kong government debt. The fund, whose aim is capital growth and income, might like some convertibles from China's top-tier developers, which grossed more than 500 billion yuan (almost \$80 billion) in sales last year. The well-regarded \$5.2 billion Value Partners Greater China High Yield Income Fund, which loves China real estate developers, has 2.1 percent of its money in Hong Kong dollar bonds. (Evergrande's two dollar bonds are already in the fund's top 10 holdings.)

China's big developers know a good thing when they see it in Hong Kong. They're the early birds tapping pent-up demand, giving them less reason to fear the Fed.

THE US INVESTIGATOR OF IVORY, RHINO HORN TRADE KILLED IN KENYA

Kenya police and officials say an American investigator into the illegal ivory and rhino horn trade has been found stabbed to death in his home.

Nicolas Kamwende, head of criminal investigations in Nairobi, says a family member went to Esmond Bradley Martin's house yesterday [Macau time] to check on him after he did not respond to phone calls and found the body on a

bed with a stab wound to the neck.

Conservationist Paula Kahumbu says Martin led investigations into the illegal trade of elephant ivory and rhino horn that threatens the two species with extinction. Kahumbu says he was at the forefront of exposing ivory traffickers in the U.S., Congo, Vietnam, Nigeria, Angola, China and recently Myanmar.



Station	Air quality
Roadside	55-75 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	55-75 Moderate
Ambient	55-75 Moderate

SOURCE: DSI/MG

WORLD BRIEFS

PAKISTAN's prime minister has pledged his government's continued support for the struggle of the people of Kashmir.



IRAQ American troops have started to draw down from Iraq following Baghdad's declaration of victory over the Islamic State group last year, according to Western contractors at a U.S.-led coalition base in Iraq.

ISRAEL-PALESTINE A Palestinian stabbed an Israeli man to death at a bus stop near a West Bank settlement yesterday before fleeing the scene, Israeli officials said.



TURKEY says it has detained 573 people for criticizing its offensive in northern Syria since the operation began earlier this month.

FRANCE's national weather agency Meteo France said yesterday about half the country is on alert for dangerous levels of snow and ice. Meanwhile, the French Alps and Pyrenees are under a lower-level alert for avalanches.



COSTA RICA Two candidates with the same last name and opposing stances on gay marriage, an issue that came to dominate Costa Rica's presidential campaign, led election returns and appear headed to a runoff to decide who will be the Central American nation's next leader.

US-VENEZUELA Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said that the U.S. is still considering restricting the sale of oil from crisis-torn Venezuela.

ECUADOR Citizens voted by a landslide to limit presidents to two terms in a nationwide referendum that delivered a blow to former President Rafael Correa's hopes of returning to power.

Combat helicopter crashes in southern Japan

Mari Yamaguchi, Tokyo

A Japanese military helicopter carrying two crewmembers crashed in southwestern Japan yesterday, ripping the top floor off a house and setting it on fire, officials said.

The Defense Ministry said both crewmembers suffered heart and lung failure.

The Boeing AH-64 combat helicopter, belonging to the Ground Self-Defense Force's Metabaru training camp, crashed in Kanzaki city in Saga prefecture, defense officials said.

Public broadcaster NHK showed orange flames and black smoke rising from the charred house, which had its upper floor torn off. Witnesses reported a big boom and ripping noises from the sky before the crash.

The four residents of the damaged house were believed to have been away at the time of the accident, said Masaki Endo, a disaster official at the Saga prefectural government. No one else on the ground was believed to have been hurt, he added.

Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera said the helicopter fell nose down after losing contact with air traffic control. He said the cause



of the accident is under investigation.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe ordered the grounding of all 12 helicopters of the same type for safety checks, Kyodo News agency

reported.

The crash follows a series of emergency landings and other incidents involving U.S. military aircraft on Japan's southern island of Okinawa. AP

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/Tatan Syuflana



CNY preparation. A worker arranges large candles for sale in preparation for the Lunar New Year in Tangerang, Indonesia.