



PRE-SALES SOAR

The ongoing Pearl Horizon controversy has not made a dent in the number of purchased pre-sale residential units

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WORLD BRIEFS



AP PHOTO

PHILIPPINES Justice officials asked a court yesterday to formally designate the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army, as terrorist groups in a move that could further damage chances of a resumption of stalled peace talks.

INDONESIA Four Indonesian provinces have declared emergencies in anticipation of worsening forest fires that each year spread health-damaging haze across much of Southeast Asia.



AP PHOTO

JAPAN-N. KOREA Japan's military has witnessed a ship-to-ship transfer on the high seas that it “strongly suspects” violates U.N. sanctions on North Korea, in the third such incident reported by Japan in the past month.

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AUSTRALIA-US Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull is heading to the United States, accompanied by the largest Australian political and business delegation ever to visit.

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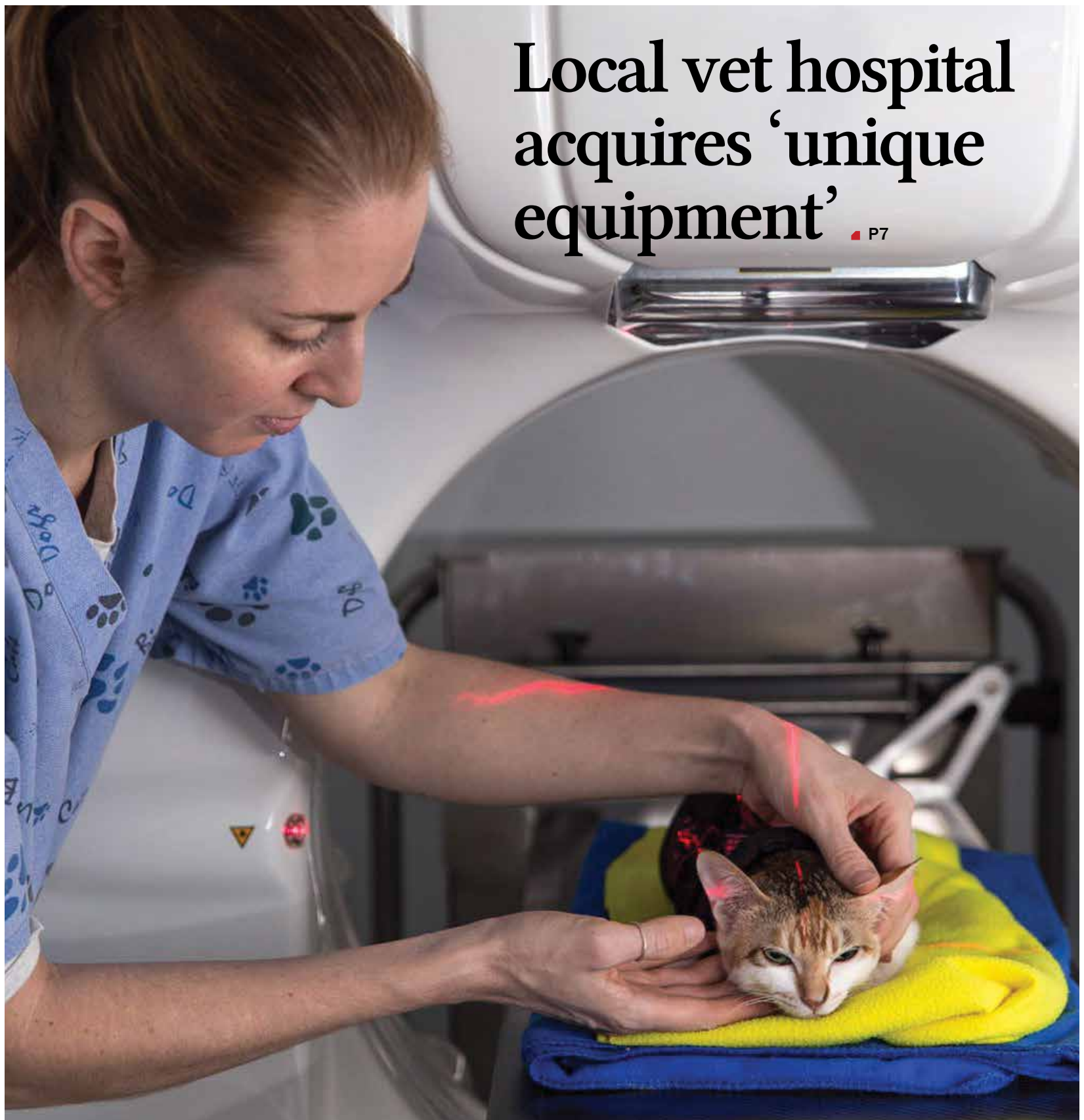
PAKISTAN says it has been given three months to prove it is doing enough to stay off an international watch list for countries that fail to curb the financing of terror groups.

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Beijing to allow maids from Macau, HK

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RAFAEL LOPES



Local vet hospital acquires ‘unique equipment’

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PROPERTY

Pre-sale residential purchases soar despite ongoing Pearl Horizon scandal

Daniel Beitler

THE ongoing Pearl Horizon controversy has not made a dent in the number of purchased pre-sale residential units within the Macau market, which soared almost 220 percent quarter-to-quarter in the final three months of last year to a total of 803 units.

The ongoing controversy – which still appears to have no end in sight – has not deterred other buyers from purchasing pre-sale residential units.

According to information released yesterday by the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC), the transaction volume of pre-sale residential units in the fourth quarter of 2017 increased nearly 220 percent, while their value was up more than 200 percent to MOP7.36 billion.

Many of the purchased pre-sale residential units were in Novos Aterros da Areia Preta (286), Baixa da Taipa (200) and Fai Chi Kei (170).

Purchases of existing residential units dropped by 22 to 1,815 units, though the transaction value increased 4.3 percent to MOP10.41 billion.



In terms of average price per square meter of usable area, the average price of existing residential units (MOP90,047) and pre-sale residential units (MOP137,586) decreased by 2.1 percent and 5.2 percent respectively quarter-to-quarter.

However, the overall average price of residential units grew by 6.4 percent to MOP105,654 as the proportion of generally high-priced pre-sale residential units as a share of the total

transaction volume of residential units (30.7 percent) rose significantly by 18.7 percentage points.

For the whole year of 2017, the number of residential units and parking spaces sold and bought dropped by 0.9 percent year-on-year to 13,985, whereas the transaction value increased 15 percent to MOP85.23 billion. Of this amount, the transaction value for pre-sale residential units (2,043) and exist-

ing residential units (8,538) totaled MOP20.41 billion and MOP49.04 billion respectively.

The average price of residential units was MOP100,822 per square meter in 2017, up by 16.8 percent year-on-year. The average prices of those in the Macau Peninsula (MOP91,769), Taipa (MOP115,160) and Coloane (MOP128,205) rose by 18.8 percent, 16.7 percent and 15.7 percent respectively. During the same period, the average prices of existing residential units (MOP90,412) and pre-sale residential units (MOP137,597) increased 15.7 percent and 16.3 percent respectively year-on-year.

In regards to construction in the private sector, at the end of 2017's fourth quarter there were 20,529 residential units in the design stage, 9,324 under construction and 1,295 under inspection.

The Pearl Horizon controversy has been one of the most widely publicized cases related to land issues since the 1999 handover.

Project developer Polytec Asset Holdings failed to construct a large number of residential units on a plot of land in the

north of the peninsula, before the local government repossessed it when the concession expired in December 2015. This left dozens of pre-sale buyers out of pocket, leading to a lengthy judicial battle and numerous street protests over the last few years.

Polytec blames government bureaucracy for its failure to develop the plot in a timely fashion. Its chairman, Or Wai Sheun, claimed prior to the concession expiry that the MSAR government had been reviewing the residential complex's architectural plans for seven years, creating an impasse for the developer.

Last month the MSAR government said it had a basic plan in mind for the development site, but that it would wait to disclose the details "in order to protect the interest of the small buyers under the terms of the Land Law."

Just a few weeks later, the Court of First Instance made its first ruling on the case, deciding that the developer should reimburse more than MOP2 million to an individual who purchased one of the pre-sale residential units.

GAMING

MGM China records revenue growth of 3.35 percent

MGM China Holdings has released its selected financial data for the three final months of last year as well as for the whole of 2017.

During 2017, the company recorded a revenue of HKD15.4 billion (USD1.97 billion), up 3.35 percent from HKD14.9 billion in the previous year. Meanwhile, adjusted EBITDA stood at HKD4.6 billion, edging up about HKD100 million from last year.

According to a statement from the Macau-based subsidiary, an adjusted EBITDA margin of 30 percent was maintained, the same as in 2016.

For the final quarter of last year, MGM China recorded year-on-year revenue growth of 16 percent to HKD4.3 billion and an adjusted EBITDA growth of 23 percent to HKD1.3 billion. In the same period, total gaming revenue in Macau was up by approximately 8 percent. Adjusted EBITDA margin for the quarter reached 30.2 percent, up by 170 basis points sequentially.

MGM Resorts International reported fourth-quarter net income of \$1.4 billion, which came almost entirely from its massive one-time windfall from the nation's new tax law.

The company also provided a clear picture of how the mass shooting at the Mandalay Bay casino-resort last fall affected its operations.

The Las Vegas-based company said it had a profit of \$2.42 per share. Its earnings excluding the big tax windfall passed late last year amounted to less than a penny per share.

The casino and resort operator posted a revenue of \$2.6 billion in the period, exceeding Wall Street forecasts.

"Despite the clear challenges we had in the fourth quarter, our earnings were relatively well-protected, and we

finished the year strong," MGM Chairman and CEO Jim Murren told investors. "This is the second time we talk to you since we experienced the great shock to our community in October, and yet our fourth quarter materialized as we expected as we discussed in our last call. In fact, it was a touch better."

The reporting period started on October 1, the same day a high-stakes gambler killed 58 people and injured hundreds more after he shattered the windows of his suite on the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay and unleashed gunfire on a coun-



MGM Resorts International reported fourth-quarter net income of USD1.4 billion

try music festival below. He then killed himself.

The company on Tuesday said it experienced a "short-lived uptick in cancellations" following the shooting. The com-

pany reported Mandalay Bay's occupancy rate was 80.5 percent during the reporting period, down from 85.8 percent during the same quarter in 2016. MDT/AP

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Domestic workers in favor of moving to Beijing under specific conditions

Lynzy Valles

FOREIGN domestic workers interviewed by the Times said that they would agree to move to Beijing if the city's labor protection law is more extensive than that of Macau's.

Beijing's municipal commission of commerce said yesterday that the municipality is considering allowing foreign professionals to bring their own domestic workers to Beijing this year.

Under this amendment, domestic workers holding foreign passports, including those who are working in Hong Kong and Macau would be allowed to work in China's capital under the condition that employers hold a working visa or permanent residence in Beijing.

These employers should also provide an employment contract and personal guarantee for domestic employees.

Authorities said in a statement that the move would attract high-level foreign talent and would help the city's domestic service system to improve.

Currently, foreign household services are still illegal in Beijing.

Speaking to the Times, some domestic helpers hoped that the move would come to pass under the provisions that China and their respective country of origin would have a mutual memorandum. "[They would] agree to move to Beijing if the labor pro-

BLOOMBERG



The central business district of Beijing

tection law and salary would match China's standards and if the government has an agreement from our government," said Eric Lestari, the former president of an Indonesian migrant group.

Many workers will want to move.

YOSA WARIYANTI
INDONESIAN MACAU WORKERS UNION

Yosa Wariyanti, president of the Indonesian Macau Workers Union said that domestic workers would want to see a concrete legal policy and standard contracts before they agreed to move to the

sprawling capital.

"We heard that the salary [can be higher] in China than in Hong Kong and Macau, so many workers, I think, will want to move. But not all, since some workers enjoy living and working in Hong Kong and Macau," said Wariyanti.

Some household workers also expressed that they would consider moving to Beijing, along with their employers, if living conditions are better than that of Macau.

The municipal commission of commerce, together with 11 other departments of the city, jointly issued a circular in December 2017, encouraging innovation in home services and the introduction of foreign maids, according to state news agency, Xinhua.

Just last year, Shanghai be-

came the first city in mainland China to grant a residence for foreign domestic workers to enter the city.

The Philippine Consulate General continuously reminds its nationals in the region that it is illegal to work and obtain employment in China as domestic helpers and private tutors.

It informed its compatriots to exercise caution in dealing with agents, individuals and recruitment agencies in both Macau and the Philippines who offer employment in mainland China as nannies, domestic workers and private tutors.

The Times knows of cases where domestic workers are brought to Guangzhou, along with their employers, as cleaners in the employers' residences.

250 boxes of unused firecrackers to be destroyed

A total of 250 boxes of unused firecrackers and fireworks will be destroyed today, the Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau (IACM) announced yesterday. Sales of these items within the area designated for the discharge of firecrackers and fireworks in Macau and Taipa ceased yesterday. The IACM is still counting the number of collected undischarged firecrackers and fireworks, but already estimated that the number will be 50 percent more than that of last year. During the period of destruction, both the Ponte Governador Nobre de Carvalho and R. da Torre de Macau will be closed to transportation.

Student enrolment for 2018/2019 opens on March 1

The Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEJ) has informed in a statement that parents and guardians of students who are enrolling in the different primary and secondary education schools for the 2018/2019 academic year, can obtain the necessary information and proceed with enrolment at their chosen schooling institution from March 1. A total of 65 schools will accept applications for admission to the school for the first year of primary education and 55 school units will open for enrolment to the first year of secondary level. The DSEJ also noted that payment for the reservation fee of the school vacancy for the new students should not be made before April 11. If necessary, parents can go to the DSEJ website to access specific information on enrolment under the section "A guide to school enrolment information." The guide includes information about student enrolment of different levels of education, as well as, links to school websites and application forms.

HEALTH

90-year-old died from flu and pneumonia

THE second fatal case of influenza was confirmed earlier this week at the Conde de São Januário Hospital Center (CHCSJ), according to a statement released by the Health Bureau (SSM).

The victim was a local male resident aged 90. He already suffered from several chronic diseases, among them

dementia, before he was diagnosed with the flu.

On February 12, the patient was delivered to the CHCSJ, where he was diagnosed with influenza B and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. While there, he was admitted for treatment.

His condition improved, but symptoms of pneumonia and shock

were later presented.

His death was announced on Tuesday morning, with the reported cause being chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and pneumonia.

According to the SSM, the patient did not receive the seasonal flu vaccination for 2017-2018.

In addition to the nonagenarian, a 64-year-

old local man is in a serious condition due to the flu, having been diagnosed with influenza A and pneumococcosis. He also was not vaccinated during the 2017-2018 seasonal flu vaccination period.

In January, a 4-year-old girl died from type A influenza virus at the Kiang Wu Hospital.

Since the beginning of the year until Tuesday, 42 cases of flu were recorded along with pneumonia or other complications. eighty percent of the patients were not vaccinated. In eight cases, there was no need

for hospitalization; 24 patients have already been discharged, and two cases were fatal.

Eight people are still hospitalized, one of whom (the aforementioned 64-year-old man) is still in a critical condition. The remaining seven are stable.

Between February 17 and February 19, at the CHCSJ, on average 40 adults and 81 children showed up daily with flu symptoms, which represents 5.6 percent and 32 percent of the total patients respectively visiting the CHCSJ during that same period.

View protection stirs worries

Lam Iek Kit, member of the Urban Planning Committee, expressed his worries about the landscape view surrounding Our Lady of Penha Church to Ponte Governador Nobre de Carvalho, according to a report by Cheng Pou. The protection plan for Macau's historical area proposed 11 locations be protected because they are sites from which the public can view the city's landscape. Earlier, the government said that it has no intention to protect the area. The president of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), Mok Ian Ian, informed that the issue is still under consultation, and that the IC holds an open stance regarding the topic.

CNY | TOURISM

Upward moment for Hong Kong, but Macau has the momentum



WHEN Chinese tourists choose a family travel destination, Hong Kong Disneyland would seem like a logical choice. But it's the nearby Macau that has all the momentum.

Tourists are flocking to Macau, with record arrivals from China last year, and Hong Kong itself is seeing a rebound in mainland visitors, with a double-digit surge in such tourists during the Chinese New Year following a 3.9 percent increase last year. Meanwhile, the number of mainland visitors to Hong Kong Disneyland dropped for a third straight annual period, according to the theme park's results released Tuesday.

Chinese families traveling to Hong Kong are finding other distractions for

entertainment besides the Disney theme park, as shopping and dining options help drive the retail market for the city. Chinese travelers may be skipping Hong Kong Disneyland as they already have a Disney park in Shanghai, which attracted 11 million visitors in its first year after opening in June 2016. Macau, about a one-hour ferry ride away, also may offer a more interesting temptation.

The world's biggest gaming hub has started to see a rebound of leisure tourists, with mass gaming revenue growth in the last quarter expanding at a faster pace than the previous three months. Macau regulators are pushing casino resorts to offer more family-friendly entertainment, posing a further challenge to Dis-

ney's park.

MGM China Holdings Ltd.'s new USD3.4 billion property, with a 2,000-seat theater, is part of that effort to transform Macau's Cotai Strip into a family destination. The resort, which opened in time for the new year, should help drive the highest earnings gain for MGM China among its peers this year, according to a note from Morgan Stanley. MGM China on Tuesday reported stronger-than-expected earnings for its fourth quarter, as mass-segment revenue grew 22 percent from a year earlier.

Analysts and retailers selling everything from jewelry to cosmetics are optimistic the upward trend will continue for both Macau and Hong Kong this year. As for Disneyland, it still may get its magic back. Visitation has been improving since the second half of 2017, and October Golden Week and Lunar New Year both recorded double-digit growth, according to Apple Daily, citing Samuel Lau, chief executive officer. **MDT/Bloomberg**

LEGAL EXPERT

Proposal to ban non-Chinese judges on 'national security matters' may influence HK

THE measure announced by the Macau government to amend a law aiming to prevent foreign judges for ruling on "matters of national security," might "dent confidence" in Hong Kong's judicial system, sending a "very wrong message" if the proposal goes ahead, Simon Young, a Hong Kong legal scholar told the South China Morning Post (SCMP).

The proposal will be presented before Hong Kong lawmakers as early as next month, but it has already raised criticism from local senior legal professionals such as the president of the Macau Lawyers Association (AAM), Neto Valente, who described it as "unconstitutional." Added criticism from across the Pearl River now comes with Young expressing concerns about the future of Hong Kong's foreign judges, especially after two of the small but significant cadre were subjected to verbal attacks over rulings they recently made

in high-profile cases.

Young, an associate dean (for Research) at the University of Hong Kong's faculty of law, said to SCMP, "it is unclear why Macau is taking the step at this time," warning, "this is a worrying development. Perhaps the real reason is a fallacious belief that Chinese judges will be more patriotic and more likely rule in a way that protects national security." However the legal scholar also noted, "I'm not aware of any rational or empirical basis to support such a belief. In Hong Kong, when foreign judges are appointed to the Court of Final Appeal they are first and foremost a 'Hong Kong judge', not a foreign judge."

Young also pointed out that "any move to interfere with the chief justice's (or any other court leader's) discretion to empanel the most suitable judges to hear cases could amount to an interference with the exercise of independent judicial power

and would thus violate Article 83 of the Macau Basic Law." He noted that if this were to occur in Hong Kong, it would violate Article 85 of the Hong Kong Basic Law. Young further added "any move towards excluding foreign judges from hearing cases, which they would otherwise be entitled to hear, may lead people to think that their government does not trust foreign judges. This would be a very wrong message to send and would dent confidence in one of the most successful aspects of the Hong Kong and Macau's judiciaries since their respective handovers." At the beginning of the month, the Secretary for Administration and Justice, Sonia Chan, informed the press about the proposal to enforce this measure, insisting that the aim was not to discriminate against non-Chinese judges but to make the operations of the judiciary smoother, and to accelerate trial proceedings.



CGD president Paulo Macedo pictured in Macau

Caixa Geral de Depositos offshore in Macau closes

THE Portuguese state-owned banking corporation, and the second largest bank in Portugal, Caixa Geral de Depositos (CGD) has officially closed its offshore branch in the region. The confirmation follows an order from the Chief Executive (CE) published in yesterday's government Official Gazette, which revokes the executive order number 7/2013 that granted the finance institution the authorization to operate this branch in Macau.

The intention of

the CGD to close several of its offshore branches was already acknowledged in July last year when the president of the bank, Paulo Macedo, announced during the presentation of the bank's half-year results that he intended to close offshore branches in at least Macau and the Cayman Islands.

At that time, he noted that new deposits were already suspended and clients were being contacted to decide the destination of approximately EURO 350 million (arou-

nd MOP3.48 billion) which the branch was holding in the clients' accounts.

CGD is one of the major shareholders of Banco Nacional Ultramarino (BNU), one of the main banks in the region, in addition to being a money issuer alongside the Bank of China.

Back in mid-January this year, a similar order from the CE also revoked the authorization for the establishment of an offshore concession to another Portuguese bank — Banco Portugues de Investimento. **RM**



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- C.** For those patients who are willing to wait for MALO CLINIC in Macau to proceed with the treatments, we are putting all our efforts in finding a partnering healthcare organization at the moment in order to continue our practice.

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

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Once again, we would like to apologize for all the inconvenience this has put on you all. Thank you all for your understanding and support. We hope to find solutions for everyone's cases as soon as possible so that we may keep providing quality dental service to you all.

Yours Sincerely.

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+ INFO



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Renato Marques

GREEN Cross, the largest and the oldest Veterinary Hospital in Macau has just acquired unique equipment that puts Macau on the leading edge of house animals' veterinary medicine. Starting from last week, the Clinic has had at its disposal a Computed Tomography (CT) Scan, especially designed for animals. The machine is a prototype and will provide Macau's pets with the best possible diagnostic care. Henrique Galvão, a veterinary physician specialized in orthopedic surgery and endoscopy, is one of the managers of the hospital and he explained to the Times, "this is a machine that only exists in major reference centers in the world, namely universities and research institutes. It's a prototype and so it also carries a risk (for us) to acquire this very unique equipment but it's a controlled risk and we believe that the benefits [of it] can easily outweigh the challenges [such as the acquisition price]."

In terms of benefits, Galvão explained that the CT Scan can provide detailed 3D images of the internal anatomy, making it the best diagnostic tool to diagnose head and spinal injuries, lung and liver cancers, brain tumors, bone and joint degenerative diseases as well as hernias and some kinds of fractures in cats, dogs and exotic animals.

Local vet hospital acquires 'unique equipment'



Another big advantages is that through the CT Scan, "we can use it as a help to guide minimal invasive surgical techniques, like placing a needle in the spinal cord or guiding a venous catheter for example from a leg to the heart."

"It [is already] allow[ing] us to detect a lot of clinical situations that until now were impossible to detect and also to provide a correct diagnosis and information to the pet owners," Galvão said. He went on to note that on the first

day of use, "it was possible to detect two situations, one in a dog suffering from epilepsy and another in a cat that had fallen from a third floor and had lost mobility on the rear legs that before [the CT Scan] was impossible to reach a conclusive diagnosis. It is a great help on the most complex cases and we do have many."

As for challenges, Galvão noted the need of space (the machine is not much smaller than the human version of it) and the need of a professional team of people

that can operate it and make proper use of the equipment, citing an example, "we humans, when doing a CT Scan, need to be able to control ourselves and remain completely still, as animals it is an even more complex situation as we do need to resort to 'breathing stop' and complete immobilization through anesthesia, which can only be done by a very well trained expert in this field."

The cost of the machine was MOP5 million and with their in-

vestment the veterinary hospital aims to provide a better service and to cut expenses that were previously shouldered by pet owners; to perform this kind of procedure, it was previously necessary to travel to the two available CT scan machines in the neighboring territory of Hong Kong.

According to information from the clinic, the equipment will be accessible to other Macau veterinary clinics, examinations using the CT Scan machine will be available through referrals.

HKZMB

3,000 slots available at Macau east parking lot

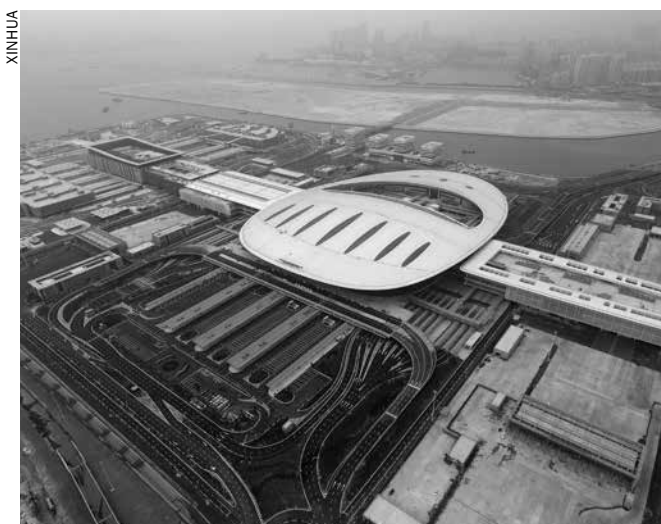
THREE thousand parking spaces will be available at the east parking lot of the Macau port of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge (HKZMB), according to a notice published yesterday in the Official Gazette.

The parking spaces will be open to the public for the parking of light vehicles.

The Transport Bureau also reserves the right to change the number of parking lots in the future in response to the actual needs of the public.

Vehicles with nine seats including the driver's, vehicles weighing over 3.5 tonnes, and vehicles taller than two meters, will not be allowed to enter the parking facilities.

Parking fares include day and night parking periods. The day parking period is from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., and the night parking period will be applied from 10 p.m. to 10 a.m..



The port of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge in Zhuhai

A MOP180 fare will be charged for each parking period. If a driver uses the parking spaces longer than the period for which they reserved the parking lot, then a fee of MOP270 for every extra parking period will have to be paid.

Parking space users must make an appointment to reserve the spaces at least 12 hours before they intend

to use them, and can only reserve spaces up to 30 days in advance.

One or more consecutive parking periods can be appointed, with an allowed maximum of 16 consecutive parking periods.

A total of 5,143 parking spaces for private cars and motorcycles will be available at the east parking lots of the Macau port.

AD



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fim/finishes: 24/03/2018

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propina/fee:
MOP 480 *

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Apple is said to negotiate buying cobalt direct from miners

Jack Farchy and Mark Gurman

APPL Inc. is in talks to buy long-term supplies of cobalt directly from miners for the first time, according to people familiar with the matter, seeking to ensure it will have enough of the key battery ingredient amid industry fears of a shortage driven by the electric vehicle boom.

The iPhone maker is one of the world's largest end users of cobalt for the batteries in its gadgets, but until now it has left the business of buying the metal to the companies that make its batteries.

The talks show that the tech giant is keen to ensure that cobalt supplies for its iPhone and iPad batteries will be sufficient, with the rapid growth in battery demand for electric vehicles threatens to create a shortage of the raw material. About a quarter of global cobalt production is used in smartphones.



Apple is seeking contracts to secure several thousand metric tons of cobalt a year for five years or longer, according to one of the people, declining to be named as the discussions are confidential. Apple's first discussions on cobalt deals with miners were over a year ago, and it may end up deciding not to go ahead with any deal, another person said.

An Apple spokesman declined

to comment. Glencore Plc Chief Executive Officer Ivan Glasenberg late last year named Apple among several companies the miner was talking to about cobalt, without giving further details.

The move means Apple will find itself in competition with carmakers and battery producers to lock up cobalt supplies. Companies from BMW AG and Volkswagen AG to Samsung SDI

Co. are racing to sign multi-year cobalt contracts deals to ensure they have sufficient supplies of the metal to meet ambitious targets for electric vehicle production.

Cobalt is an essential ingredient in lithium-ion batteries for smartphones

So far no major deals have been announced, although BMW's head of procurement told Germany daily FAZ in early February that it was close to securing a 10-year supply deal.

Cobalt is an essential ingredient in lithium-ion batteries for smartphones. While smartphones use

around eight grams of refined cobalt, the battery for an electric car requires over 1,000 times more. Apple has around 1.3 billion existing devices, while Apple Chief Executive Officer Tim Cook has been bullish about the prospects for electric vehicles.

The price of the metal has more than tripled in the past 18 months to trade at more than USD80,000 a metric ton. Two-thirds of supplies come from the Democratic Republic of Congo, where there has never been a peaceful transition of power and child labor is still used in parts of the mining industry.

In recent years Apple has stepped up its engagement with cobalt suppliers after the origin of the metal in its supply chain came under scrutiny from human rights groups. In a report in early 2016, Amnesty International alleged that Apple and Samsung Electronics Co.'s Chinese suppliers were buying cobalt from mines that rely on child labor.

Last year Apple published a list of the companies that supply the cobalt used in its batteries for the first time, and said it would not let cobalt from small-scale mines in Congo into its supply chain until it could verify that the "appropriate protections" were in place. **Bloomberg**

Asian retailer Lotte accepts resignation from jailed co-CEO

ASIAN retail and chewing gum giant Lotte has accepted the resignation of its co-CEO after he was convicted of bribery and embezzlement in a wide-ranging corruption scandal that brought down South Korea's president.

The company said yesterday that Shin Dong-bin has left his CEO post at Lotte Holdings but will remain on its board as vice chairman. Shin, a son of Lotte's founder, was convicted and imprisoned earlier this month.

His Japanese co-CEO,

Takayuki Tsukuda, will head the holding company at the heart of Lotte's complicated ownership structure, Lotte Holdings said in an emailed statement.

Japan typically adopts a tough stance toward convicted executives, who are usually sacked from chief executive positions when indicted by authorities.

Lotte Holdings in Japan controls Hotel Lotte, which controls Lotte's various South Korean businesses. Shin's resignation will inevitably weaken ties between

Lotte's businesses in South Korea and in Japan, the company said.

Before he was convicted and given a two-and-a-half year jail term earlier this month, Shin had sought to improve transparency and reform South Korea's fifth-largest conglomerate. Founded by his father in Japan, Lotte is well-known across Asia with a sprawling business that encompasses retailing, confectionery, chemicals, hotels and entertainment.

Shin's imprisonment

came as a shock to the Korean business community and to Lotte itself. Just a week before a Seoul district court ordered him to be jailed, a Seoul appeals court released another business tycoon involved in the same scandal: Samsung Vice Chair Lee Jae-yong. He had spent nearly a year in prison on bribery and other charges but won a suspended sentence on appeal.

Lee's release fueled a public outcry and anger toward the perceived soft treatment of business elites



Shin Dong-bin (center), a son of Lotte's founder

by South Korea's judiciary system. Many in Seoul had expected Shin would also avoid imprisonment because he appeared to be less deeply implicated in the case.

Shin's imprisonment has left Lotte bereft of leadership at a time when it is facing various challenges. The company was looking

to sell its retail businesses in China after a diplomatic tussle between China and South Korea over a U.S. missile defense system that battered Lotte's businesses there. Shin had been solidifying his control over Lotte after a bruising public feud with his older brother who had also sought to take control. **AP**

corporate bits

WYNN PALACE EARNS THREE NEW FORBES AWARDS



Wynn Palace has earned Five-Star triple crown for its hotel, spa, and Sushi Mizumi restaurant on the 2018 Forbes Travel Guide Star Rating list.

Collectively, Wynn Resorts has the most Forbes Travel Guide's (FTG) Five-Star

awards of any independent hotel company in the world, the gaming operator noted in a statement.

"Wynn Palace is the first and only resort in the world with more than one thousand rooms to receive Five Stars. That accomplishment

is a testament to the team of employees who deliver a flawless experience to our guests each and every time," said Matt Maddox, CEO of Wynn Resorts.

Wynn Palace offers a range of custom-designed spa treatments, and dining experiences including Sushi Mizumi, an intimate 14-seat Five Star restaurant serving the finest seafood imported fresh daily from Tokyo's famed Tsukiji Market.

Also of note for 2018, Wynn and Encore Macau will maintain its exclusive status as the only resort in the world with eight FTG Five-Star awards, and Wing Lei restaurant at Wynn Las Vegas remains the only FTG Five-Star Chinese restaurant in North America.

FORBES NAMES CONRAD FIVE-STAR HOTEL



Forbes Travel Guide has unveiled its annual Star Rating list, naming Conrad Macao, Cotai Central, a Forbes Travel Guide Five-Star Hotel

for the fourth year in a row.

Conrad Macao also has the distinction of being the only Conrad Hotel in the world to achieve this status.

Bodhi Spa at Conrad Macao was also awarded a Four-Star rating for the fifth consecutive year.

"It is a tremendous honour for us to receive such a prestigious accolade. Our mission is to ensure our discerning guests enjoy a wonderful experience during their visit to Macau, and to be recognized for this dedication to excellence with a Forbes Five-Star rating for the fourth straight year is incredibly rewarding for the devoted team here at Conrad Macao," said Bede Barry, general manager of Conrad Macao.

The hotel has 654 spacious guestrooms including 224 suites located in a 40-storey tower overlooking the Cotai Strip.

AP PHOTO



CHINESE MEDICINE

Stuck in an opioids crisis, US officials turn to acupuncture

Jennifer McDermott, Dake Kang & Mike Stobbe, Providence (R.I.)

MARINE veteran Jeff Harris was among the first to sign up when the Providence VA hospital started offering acupuncture for chronic pain.

"I don't like taking pain medication. I don't like the way it makes me feel," he said.

Harris also didn't want to risk getting addicted to heavy-duty prescription painkillers.

Although long derided as pseudoscience and still questioned by many medical experts, acupuncture is increasingly being embraced by patients and doctors, sometimes as an alternative to the powerful painkillers behind the nation's opioid crisis.

The military and Veterans Affairs medical system has been offering acupuncture for pain for several years, some insurance companies cover it and now a small but growing number of Medicaid programs in states hit hard by opioid overdoses have started providing it for low-income patients.

Ohio's Medicaid program recently expanded its coverage after an opioid task force urged state officials to explore alternative pain therapies.

"We have a really serious problem here," said Dr. Mary Applegate, medical director

for Ohio's Medicaid department. "If it's proven to be effective, we don't want to have barriers in the way of what could work."

The epidemic was triggered by an explosion in prescriptions of powerful painkiller pills, though many of the recent overdose opioid deaths are attributed to heroin and illicit fentanyl. Many opioid addictions begin with patients in pain seeking help, and acupuncture is increasingly seen as a way to help keep some patients from ever having to go on opioids in the first place.

For a long time in the U.S., acupuncture was considered unstudied and unproven — some skeptics called it "quack-u-puncture." While there's now been a lot of research on acupuncture for different types of pain, the quality of the studies has been mixed, and so have the results.

Federal research evaluators say there's some good evidence acupuncture can help some patients manage some forms of pain. But they also have described the benefits of acupuncture as modest, and say more research is needed.

Among doctors, there remains lively debate over how much of any benefit can be attributed simply to patients' belief that the treatment is working — the so-called "pla-

cebo effect."

"There may be a certain amount of placebo effect. Having said that, it is still quite effective as compared to no treatment," said Dr. Ankit Maheshwari, a pain medicine specialist at Case Western Reserve University, who sees it as valuable for neck pain, migraines and a few other types of pain problems.

■ Acupuncture is increasingly seen as a way to help keep some patients from ever having to go on opioids in the first place

Many doctors are ambivalent about acupuncture but still willing to let patients give it a try, said Dr. Steven Novella, a neurologist at Yale University and editor of an alternative medicine-bashing website. He considers acupuncture a form of patient-fooling theater.

Acupuncturists and their proponents are "exploiting the opioid crisis to try to promo-

te acupuncture as an alternative treatment," he said. "But promoting a treatment that doesn't work is not going to help the crisis."

Acupuncture has been practiced in China for thousands of years, and customarily involves inserting thin metal needles into specific points in the ears or other parts of the body. Practitioners say needles applied at just the right spots can restore the flow of a mystical energy — called "qi" — through the body, and that can spur natural healing and pain relief.

In government surveys, 1 in 67 U.S. adults say they get acupuncture every year, up from 1 in 91 a decade earlier. That growth has taken place even though most patients pay for it themselves: 2012 figures show only a quarter of adults getting acupuncture had insurance covering the cost.

The largest federal government insurance program, Medicare, does not pay for acupuncture. Tricare, the insurance program for active duty and retired military personnel and their families, does not pay for it either. But VA facilities offer it, charging no more than a copay.

Jeff Harris signed up for acupuncture two years ago. The 50-year-old Marine Corp veteran said he injured his back

while rappelling and had other hard falls during his military training in the 1980s. Today, he has shooting pain down his legs and deadness of feeling in his feet.

Acupuncture "helped settled my nerve pain down," said Harris, of Foxboro, Massachusetts.

Another vet, Harry Garcia, 46, of Danielson, Connecticut, tried acupuncture for his chronic back pain after years of heavy pain medications.

Acupuncture is "just like an eraser. It just takes everything away" for a brief period, and keeps pain down for up to 10 days, said Garcia.

About a decade ago, the military and Veteran Affairs began promoting a range of alternative approaches to pain treatment, including acupuncture, yoga, and chiropractic care.

In 2009, former Army Surgeon General Dr. Eric Schoomaker chartered a task force to re-evaluate the Army's approach to pain, which had centered on opioids. The focus was understandable — "nobody who has his leg blown off screams for acupuncture," said Schoomaker, who is now a professor at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, a military medical school in Bethesda, Maryland.

But he added there was also openness to acupuncture and other approaches among soldiers and sailors who, while overseas, had tried non-drug approaches for chronic pain. Schoomaker said he was inspired to seriously consider alternative approaches by his wife, a yoga instructor.

Now two-thirds of military hospitals and other treatment centers offer acupuncture, according to a recent study.

The military's openness to alternatives is "because the need is so great there," said Emmeline Edwards of the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, a federal scientific research agency. "Perhaps some of the approaches have been used without a strong evidence base. They're more willing to try an approach and see if it works."

Her agency is teaming up the Pentagon and the VA to spend USD81 million on research projects to study the effectiveness of a variety of nondrug approaches to treating chronic pain.

While research continues, insurance coverage of acupuncture keeps expanding. California, Massachusetts, Oregon and Rhode Island pay for acupuncture for pain through their Medicaid insurance programs. Massachusetts and Oregon also cover acupuncture as a treatment for substance abuse, though scientists question how well it reduces the cravings caused by chemical dependency. **AP**

INVESTMENT

Vancouver's housing market gets tougher for wealthy Chinese

Natalie Obiko Pearson

VANCOUVER, one of the hottest housing markets in North America, is getting a little tougher for wealthy Chinese buyers.

British Columbia Finance Minister Carole James announced measures targeting foreign buyers and speculators in the first budget since her government was elected on a pledge to make housing more affordable for residents of Canada's Pacific Coast province.

Starting from yesterday, foreigners will pay the province a 20 percent tax on top of the listing value, up from 15 percent now, and a levy on property speculators will be introduced later this year, according to budget documents released this week. The government will also crack down on the condo pre-sale market and beneficial ownership to ensure that property flippers, offshore trusts and hidden investors are paying taxes on gains.

Premier John Horgan faces formidable demands after taking power in a fiercely contested election last July. His New Democratic Party made expensive promises to topple the Liberals, whose 16-year-rule brought the fastest growth in Canada, but also surging property while incomes stagnated.

Public outrage has surged amid perceptions that global capital seeking a stable sanctuary, especially from China, is driving double-digit gains in Vancouver, the country's most expensive property market.

"The expectations that we will do everything in our first budget are huge," James told reporters in the capital Victoria. "Our goal is fairness - fairness for the people who live here, who work here



Downtown Vancouver, Canada

and pay their taxes here."

James said a raft of new measures are intended to "moderate" the surge in housing prices, which she said had emerged as one of the top concerns of both residents and businesses struggling to recruit workers due to the high cost of living.

The new speculator tax takes effect this fall and will apply to foreign and domestic investors who don't pay income tax in the province. It will start at 0.5 percent of the property's assessed value in 2018 and rise to 2 percent thereafter. Primary residences and homes leased as long-term rentals will be exempt.

"B.C.'s real estate market should not be used as a stock market. It should be used to provide safe and secure homes," said James. "That's why we're cracking down on speculators who distort our market."

The levy, she said, will also capture "satellite families" - a term with Chinese origins to describe

those families where the breadwinner remains in the home country while the children and spouse reside abroad to take advantage of educational and employment opportunities.

Public outrage surged amid perceptions that global capital, mainly from China, is driving double digit gains in Vancouver

The foreign buyers' tax will also be extended beyond the Vancouver region to properties in Victoria and other parts of the provin-

ce. Taxes on the province's most expensive properties will also rise - homes worth more than CAD3 million (USD2.4 million) will pay a 5 percent property transfer tax when sold, up from 3 percent.

Separately, the government and Airbnb Inc. have reached an agreement requiring the company collect an 8 percent provincial sales tax and as much as a 3 percent local tax on short-term rentals, according to budget documents.

Public outrage has been further stoked by fresh media reports alleging Vancouver casinos and real estate have become vehicles in recent years for laundering the illicit proceeds of high-rolling Asian gamblers and drug dealers with links to the Chinese fentanyl trade.

"We're taking steps to counter tax fraud and money laundering - that starts with closing loopholes and better access to information," James said. The province has asked the federal govern-

ment to create a multi-agency group to target tax evasion, money laundering and housing, according to budget documents.

James vowed that investors flipping pre-sale condos will have to pay tax. Developers will be required to collect ownership information on the selling and re-selling of contract assignments in new buildings, and the data will be shared with tax authorities.

She also vowed to bring more transparency to murky ownership records -- it isn't clear who owns nearly half of Vancouver's most expensive properties, according to a budget document. The province will demand more information about beneficial property ownership in tax forms. That information will also be made publicly available and shared with tax authorities and law enforcement agencies, James said.

The budget plan forecast a CAD219 million surplus in the fiscal year beginning April 1, more than the CAD151 million projected for the year ending March 31. The surplus is expected to rise to CAD281 million in 2019-2020, according to the budget. Economic growth is pegged at 2.3 percent this year, following a 3.4 percent expansion in 2017.

Over the next three years, it includes plans to invest more than CAD1 billion in childcare, CAD1.6 billion in affordable housing, and to also eliminate healthcare premiums at an annual cost of about CAD1 billion.

That plan will be funded by a new health tax on employers, as well as the new and expanded housing measures. Combined, they will create extra tax revenue of CAD880 million this fiscal year and CAD2.2 billion the following year, according to budget documents. **Bloomberg**

EAST CHINA SEA

Japan sees transfer at sea that may violate N. Korea sanctions

JAPAN'S military has witnessed a ship-to-ship transfer on the high seas that it "strongly suspects" violates U.N. sanctions on North Korea, in the third such incident reported by Japan in the past month.

A maritime Self-Defense Force PC-3 surveillance plane and an escort ship

saw a North Korean-flagged tanker alongside a smaller ship on Feb. 16 about 250 kilometers off Shanghai in the East China Sea, the Foreign Ministry said this week.

Photos posted on the Foreign Ministry website show the two ships with what appear to be hoses running between them.

The ministry identified the North Korean tanker as the Yu Jong 2. It said the other vessel is of unknown nationality, but had "Min Ning De You 078" written in Chinese on its bow, which is shorthand for an oil ship from Ningde city in China's coastal Fujian province.

The U.N. has toughened sanctions on North Korea

to pressure it to give up its nuclear weapons development. Japan and the U.S. have said the sanctions must be enforced strictly to be effective, and asked China in particular to tighten enforcement.

The Foreign Ministry said Japan had notified the U.N. Security Council of the transfer. **AP**



North Korean-flagged tanker Yu Jong 2 (left) and Min Ning De You 078 lying alongside in the East China Sea

AUSTRALIA

Authorities boost Indian Ocean travel safety after MH370



Australian search and rescue coordinator Rick Allen (second from left) trains foreign rescue officials in the Australian Maritime Safety Authority control room in Canberra

Rod McGuirk, Canberra

AUSTRALIAN authorities say they have helped make the Indian Ocean safer for air and sea travelers since Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 vanished in the vast expanse four years ago through search and rescue training with island nations.

Search and rescue officials from Mauritius, the Maldives and Sri Lanka are visiting the Australian Maritime Safe-

ty Authority headquarters in Canberra this week as part of a regional training program that began in 2015.

Rick Allen, an Australian search and rescue coordinator who is taking part in the training, said five Sri Lankan fishermen were rescued faster and more efficiently after their boat sank in 2016 thanks to the three countries having an Australian online broadcast system to alert merchant shipping to emergencies.

"We're all about strengthening the response options that are available in search and rescue. We're particularly dealing in that remote northwestern part of the Indian Ocean," Allen said.

"Already we're seeing benefits. So the program not only involved work-shopping, meeting together, it also involved delivering systems and delivering tool that enable our partners to work more effectively in search and res-

cue," he added.

Australia has developed particular expertise in search and rescue operations that test the limits of the distances that search planes can stay airborne.

Because of Australia's isolation, the nation of just 24 million people has search and rescue responsibility for around 10 percent of the Earth's surface.

From a downtown second-floor control room in land-locked Canberra, the authority

coordinated a massive multinational search by air and sea search for Flight 370.

The plane is thought to have crashed in the remote, far southern Indian Ocean on March 8, 2014.

The Boeing 777 with 239 passengers and crew on board was initially thought to have crashed on its flight path from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to Beijing. Subsequent information confirmed the plane had flown far off course.

Aircraft based in the west coast city of Perth searched for more than a month across more than 4.6 million square kilometers of ocean.

An aviation official from Mauritius has been attending the training sessions since they began in January 2015. A wing flap confirmed to be part of Flight 370 was found on a Mauritius beach in May 2016, brought by ocean currents from the presumed-but-still-not-found crash site.

"The great thing about this program is the human-centered approach," said Mohammad Karimbocus, chief officer in the Mauritius Department of Civil Aviation.

"It is also concentrating on getting people competent enough to deal with the unexpected and unlikely disaster scenario — all in the light of the MH370 tragedy," he added.

While Flight 370 motivated the program, officials worked on more mundane scenarios this week in Canberra's Joint Rescue Coordination Center, where maritime and aviation incidents are managed side by side.

The maritime officials handled the imaginary rescue of a merchant seaman who fell overboard from a cargo ship deck off the north Australian coast near the city of Darwin. Aviation officials dealt with a scenario of a light plane that reported smoke in the cockpit while flying toward Darwin. **AP**

PHILIPPINES

Court gives Aussie life sentence for child trafficking

APhilippine court has sentenced an Australian man to life imprisonment after finding him guilty on human trafficking and child pornography charges.

Drew Frederick Shobbrook, 51, listened quietly as the verdict was read in a court in Cebu city. Footage shot by local broadcaster ABS-CBN of the proceedings showed Leslie Ann Fernandez, a Philippine national co-accused

in the case, crying next to Shobbrook.

Both were arrested during a 2013 operation in which 15 girls were rescued by Philippine authorities.

According to the International Justice Mission, a global organization that partners with local authorities to fight human trafficking and child sexual abuse, Shobbrook used girls for pornographic images and videos that he then distributed online.

Three victims testified at the trial that girls were also offered to other foreigners for sexual exploitation, according to the organization.

Attorney John Tanagho of the IJM said the conviction sends a strong message to perpetrators of human trafficking for online sexual exploitation of children in the Philippines.

"Whether someone is a foreigner or a Filipino, if they sexually abuse Filipino children online or by

creating child pornography, then they will be held accountable," Tanagho said.

The IJM says there has been an increasing number of cases involving the online sexual exploitation of children in the Philippines, with the crime spreading as more people gain access to the internet. More than 80 percent of victims rescued from online sexual exploitation are minors. **AP**



Australian Drew Frederick Shobbrook arrives at a regional trial court for sentencing yesterday

PRIME Minister Malcolm Turnbull heads to the United States yesterday, accompanied by the largest Australian political and business delegation ever to visit the U.S.

President Donald Trump's softening opposition to joining the Trans-Pacific Partnership will be up for discussion when he meets Turnbull at the White House tomorrow. The trade deal among 11 countries includes Australia, which also has a bilateral free trade partnership with the United States.

Turnbull, a wealthy 63-year-old former Goldman Sachs partner, sees himself as having a lot in common with Trump, as they are both successful businessmen who entered politics relatively late in life.

Security risks in the Asia-Pacific region created by a more assertive China and North Korea's nuclear ambitions will also be on the agenda.

Turnbull will be seeking a clear picture from Trump on how he expects the North Korean crisis to unfold, said Kim Beazley, a former Australian defense minister who was ambassador to Washington until 2016.

"Generally speaking, when an Australian prime minister meets an American president, the globe is traversed, all sorts of things, the commitments we have in common, where we're going to go

AUSTRALIA

Turnbull off to US for talks with Trump, governors

AP PHOTO



in Iraq and all the rest of it," Beazley told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

"The difficulty facing Mr. Turnbull is nobody can be absolutely sure how the current president

engages on any of those fronts," Beazley added.

While in Washington, Turnbull will address the U.S. National Governors' Association.

Trade Minister Steven Ciobo

said the most significant Australian political and business delegation to ever visit the United States signified the strength of the bilateral relationship.

The United States is Australia's

most important security partner, while China is Australia's biggest trading partner. Australia attempts to avoid taking sides in U.S. and Chinese rivalry.

A recent Australian foreign policy statement and the U.S. National Defense Strategy both view China and Russia as potential threats to global security.

Trump and Turnbull both dismiss speculation that their relationship had been damaged by their first, terse telephone conversation as national leaders last year in which the president reluctantly agreed to honor an Obama administration deal to resettle up to 1,250 refugees that Australia had rejected.

Turnbull has since met Trump in New York, but the Washington meeting will be their first in the context of an official state visit.

Two-way trade between the United States and Australia was USD52 billion and growing last year, with the United States enjoying a trade surplus, according to Australian government figures. **AP**

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Speaker: Ms. Lalita Raman, Senior Corporate Trainer of Dale Carnegie

FMCC Seminar

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	Secondary school	10:00 am
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Student survivors from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, where 17 students and faculty were killed in a mass shooting

USA

Florida shooting survivors in Washington, demand action on guns

Brendan Farrington, Josh Replogle & Tamara Lush, Tallahassee (Fla.)

STUDENTS who survived the Florida school shooting prepared to flood the Capitol today [Macau time] pushing to ban the assault-style rifle used to kill 17 people, vowing to make changes in the November election if they can't persuade lawmakers to change laws before their legislative session ends.

About 100 Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School students arrived at a Tallahassee high school to extended applause yesterday [Macau time] after a 640-kilometer trip on three buses. They told the 500 students and parents waiting for them that they are fighting to protect all students.

"We're what's making the change. We're going to talk to these politicians tomorrow. We're going to talk to them the day after that. We're going to keep talking, we're going to keep pushing until something is done because people are dying and this can't happen anymore," said Alfonso Cal-

deron, a 16-year-old junior. "You guys are what we're trying to protect."

Despite their enthusiasm and determination, the students and their supporters aren't likely to get what they really want: a ban on AR-15s and similar semi-automatic rifles. Republican lawmakers are talking more seriously about some restrictions, but not a total ban.

Instead, they're discussing treating assault-style rifles like the one suspected gunman Nikolas Cruz is accused of using in the Valentine's Day attack more like handguns than long guns. That could mean raising the minimum age to purchase the weapon to 21, creating a waiting period and making it more difficult for people who exhibit signs of mental illness from buying the weapon even without a diagnosis.

Democrats attempted to get a bill to ban assault rifles and large-capacity magazines heard on the House floor. Republicans, who dominate the chamber, easily dismissed it. Students who were at the Capitol ahead of their classma-

tes who arrived later found Republicans steered the conversation away from gun restrictions.

Rachel Catania, 15, a sophomore at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland said she got a lot of non-answers from the politicians she spoke with.

■ Republican lawmakers are talking more seriously about some restrictions, but not a total ban

"I know it's going to be hard, but I know we can do it," she said. "We're not going to be the school that got shot, we're going to be the school that got shot and made something happen. A change is going to happen."

The students on the seven-hour bus ride checked their phones, watching videos and reading comments on social

media about the shooting, some of which accused them of being liberal pawns.

As the grieving Florida students demanded action on guns, President Donald Trump yesterday directed the Justice Department to move to ban devices like the rapid-fire bump stocks used in last year's Las Vegas massacre. It was a small sign of movement on the gun violence issue that has long tied Washington in knots.

"We must do more to protect our children," said Trump, a strong and vocal supporter of gun rights. He added that his administration was working hard to respond to the Florida rampage.

The students planned to hold a rally to put more pressure on the Legislature.

"I really think they are going to hear us out," said Chris Grady, a high school senior aboard the bus.

The Feb. 14 attack initially appeared to overcome the resistance of some in the state's political leadership, which has rebuffed gun restrictions since Republicans took control of both the governor's

office and the Legislature in 1999. However, many members of the party still have strong resistance to any gun-control measures.

The Parkland students also plan to meet with top legislative leaders, including House Speaker Richard Corcoran and Senate President Joe Negron.

Florida has a reputation for expanding gun rights. Negron sponsored a 2011 bill that Republican Gov. Rick Scott signed into law that banned cities and counties from regulating gun and ammunition sales.

Scott organized three committees to look at school safety, mental health and gun safety issues that met yesterday and vowed to make changes to better protect students. While Scott told reporters several times that "everything is on the table," he did not answer whether his proposal would include any bans on any type of weapons.

Instead, Scott said he is interested in making it harder for people who are temporarily committed to obtain a gun. He also pledged to increase spending on school safety programs and on mental health treatment.

Authorities said Cruz, 19, had a string of run-ins with school authorities that ended with his expulsion. Police were repeatedly called to his house throughout his childhood. His lawyers said there were many warning signs that he was mentally unstable and potentially violent. Yet he legally purchased a semi-automatic rifle.

Stoneman Douglas senior Diego Pfeiffer was realistic about what change would happen before the Legislature goes home March 9, but said anything is a good first step.

"The best case scenario is we move a step forward and that's all we're asking here. We're asking to help save student lives," he said. "Whether it's funding or mental health or gun safety or any of that sort of stuff — I am pro any of that."

But he also said if change doesn't come in the Legislature, he noted he's now 18 and he has the power of his vote.

"You're our senators and you're our representatives for now. If you don't help us make a change soon, you will be left in the dust," he said. "I'm happily going to vote for anybody who's going to be on our side, the side of children's lives. How can you say no to that?"

Lush reported from St. Petersburg, Florida. Associated Press writers Gary Fineout in Tallahassee and Sadie Gorman in Washington contributed to this report. **AP**

Aron Heller, Jerusalem

ISRAEL

Media claims Netanyahu confidant to testify against him

ISRAELI media reported yesterday that one of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's closest confidants has turned state witness and will incriminate him in corruption allegations, the latest in a dizzying series of developments that threaten to topple the beleaguered Israeli leader.

Police would not confirm whether long-time aide Shlomo Filber would testify against Netanyahu, but all the major Israeli media outlets said a deal to do so had been reached.

Filber, the former director of the Communications Ministry under Netanyahu, is under arrest on suspicion of promoting regulation worth hundreds of millions of dollars to Israel's Bezeq telecom company. In return, Bezeq's popular news site, Walla, allegedly provided favorable coverage of Netanyahu and his family.

The reports came shortly after another bombshell allegation that a different longtime confidant attempted to bribe a judge in exchange for dropping a corruption case against Netanyahu's wife.

The prime minister, who held the communications portfolio until last year, has not yet been named a suspect, though he may soon be questioned. Ne-

tanyahu has denies all the charges, calling them part of a media witch hunt, and has vowed to carry on.

Still, the string of accusations appears to be taking its toll. Senior Cabinet ministers from his ruling Likud party, who until just recently have marched out dutifully to defend him, have largely gone silent. Netanyahu himself appeared ashen in video released late Tuesday calling the claims "total madness."

Aluf Benn, editor-in-chief of the Haaretz daily, wrote yesterday that "these are the final days of Benjamin Netanyahu's rule."

Other leading columnists suggested that if Filber told all he knew, Netanyahu was probably more worried about avoiding prison than staying in office.

"When so many dark clouds accumulate in the sky, the chances of rain increase," wrote Nahum Barnea in Yediot Ahronot. "His appearance lent the fight he is waging the dimensions of a Shakespearean tragedy. This

AP PHOTO



Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu

isn't the end. It isn't even the beginning of the end. But it cannot have a different end."

The latest probes come days after police announced that there was sufficient evidence to indict Netanyahu for bribery, fraud and breach of trust in two separate cases.

Attorney General Avihai Man-

delblit, a Netanyahu appointee, will make the final decision on whether to file charges — a process that is expected to take several months.

Netanyahu is accused of receiving lavish gifts from Hollywood mogul Arnon Milchan and Australian billionaire James Packer. In return, police say Netanyahu

operated on Milchan's behalf on U.S. visa matters, legislated a tax break and connected him with an Indian businessman.

In the second case, Netanyahu is accused of offering a newspaper publisher legislation that would weaken his paper's main rival in return for more favorable coverage. **AP**

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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)

SWIM ON THE RIFFLERS

TIME: 11am-6pm (closed on Mondays)

UNTIL: February 25, 2018

VENUE: 10 Fantasia – A Creative Industries Incubator

ADMISSION: Free

EMAIL: cipa_slcd@yahoo.com

THE MEMORABLE TIME – THE TRADITIONAL HANDICRAFT INDUSTRIES OF MACAU

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

UNTIL: February 25, 2108

VENUE: Macau Museum

ADMISSION: MOP15

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2835 7911

DISCOVER MACAU: MUSEUM OF TAIPA AND COLOANE HISTORY

TIME: 10am-6pm daily (last admission at 5:30pm; closed on Mondays)

ADDRESS: Rua Correia da Silva, Taipa

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8988 4000

LANGUAGE & THE ART OF XU BING

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

UNTIL: March 4, 2018

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

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

THE GOLDEN PARADE –IMPERIAL WEAPONRY FROM THE PALACE MUSEUM

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

UNTIL: March 11, 2018

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

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

Offbeat

BICYCLIST BLAMES WAZE FOR DIRECTING HIM INTO LINCOLN TUNNEL

A New York City bicyclist delivering Chinese food is blaming the Waze navigation app for directing him into the busy Lincoln Tunnel, where bikes are banned.

A Port Authority of New York and New Jersey spokesman says 19-year-old Bruce Lee was stopped yesterday [Macau time] after he pedaled into the tunnel, which connects Manhattan and New Jersey.

The Staten Island man told police that he was directed into the tunnel under the Hudson River by the Waze app on his phone.

He was arrested on charges of trespass and criminal possession of a weapon after a dagger was found in his possession. It wasn't immediately clear if he had a lawyer who could comment.

TV canal macau



13:00 TDM News (Repeated)

13:30 News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast

15:00 Miscellaneous

16:35 Miscellaneous

18:35 What's Up

19:00 Brazilian Soap Opera (Repeated)

19:50 Portuguese Serie

20:30 Main News, Financial & Weather Report

21:00 TDM Talk Show

21:35 Non-daily Portuguese News

21:40 Yes, Chef! Sr 2

22:10 Brazilian Soap Opera

23:00 TDM News

23:30 Champions League Highlights

23:50 Miscellaneous

00:20 Miscellaneous

01:00 Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)

02:00 European League: Sporting x Astana (Live)

04:05 European League: Braga x Marselha (Live)

06:10 RTPi Live

cinema



CINETEATRO

22 FEB

OZZY

ROOM 1

02:15, 04:00pm

Director: Alberto Rodriguez

Language: Cantonese

AGENT MR CHAN

ROOM 1

5:45, 7:45, 9:45pm

Director: Cheung Ka Kit

Starring: Dayo Wong Tze Wah, Charmaine Sheh Sze Man

Language: Cantonese (Chinese & English)



BLACK PANTHER

ROOM 2

(2D) 02:15, 04:45, 9:45pm

(3D) 07:15pm

Director: Ryan Coogler

Starring: Chadwick Boseman, Lupita Nyong'o

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 134min



FERDINAND

ROOM 3

02:00, 06:00, 8:00pm

Director: Carlos Saldanha

Starring: John Cena, Kate McKinnon, Bobby Cannavale

Language: Cantonese

Duration: 108min

MONSTER HUT 2

ROOM 3

4:00, 10:00pm

Director: Raman Hui

Starring: Tony Leung Chiu-wai, Bai Baihe, Jing Boran

Language: Cantonese (Chinese & English)

Duration: 110 min

this day in history



1986 FILIPINO COUP LEADERS TELL MARCOS TO GO

Two senior members of the Philippines government have taken refuge in the defence ministry building in the capital, Manila, after denouncing President Ferdinand Marcos.

Yesterday, Defence Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and chief of staff Lieutenant-General Fidel Ramos accused the president of planning to arrest leaders of the opposition.

They called on ministers and army officers to help them topple Marcos and then took over Camp Aguinaldo, the defence ministry.

Speaking from Camp Aguinaldo, Mr Enrile told the press Mrs Aquino had won the election and Marcos should step down.

"We had no plans to stage a coup d'etat. But we are going to defend ourselves from an imminent assault," Mr Enrile said.

Lt-Gen Ramos told American TV all 13 regional army commanders had pledged their support for a coup, while Marcos claimed he had control of "99% of the military".

Heavily armed troops have surrounded the building and President Marcos has said the situation is "under control".

He also accused the two men of conspiring to assassinate him and his wife, Imelda, and demanded their surrender.

In elections held on 7 February, the main opposition party, led by Corazon Aquino, and President Marcos both claimed victory.

The US has attempted to mediate by sending US special envoy Philip Habib who reports back to President Reagan later today.

Mrs Aquino, widow of Benigno Aquino assassinated on his return from exile three years ago by Marcos supporters, rejected Mr Habib's proposal last week for a power-sharing government.

Mrs Aquino has accused the president of stealing power and called for a one-day general strike next week and a boycott of businesses owned by the Marcos entourage.

The head of the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines, Cardinal Jaime Sin, is also demanding an uprising.

He has called on the people to support Mr Enrile - despite the fact that he helped Marcos impose martial law in 1972 - and Lt-Gen Ramos.

"If such a government does not of itself freely correct the evil it has inflicted on the people then it is our serious moral obligation as a people to make it do so," he said.

"The way indicated to us now is the way of non-violent struggle for justice."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The following day hundreds of thousands of civilians responded to calls for an uprising by surrounding troops at Camp Aguinaldo with barricades of buses, sandbags, logs and rubble.

The army put up little resistance to this "people power" and on 25 February Ferdinand Marcos and his wife were forced to flee to the United States. Marcos died in Hawaii in 1989.

Both were indicted by a US court on charges of fraud but Imelda was acquitted in 1990. In 1991 she was allowed home and ran for president but lost.

Two years later a Filipino court sentenced her to 18 years for corruption. She appealed and was acquitted.

Mrs Corazon Aquino was sworn in as the country's first woman president the day the Marcos' left.

She survived six coup attempts before she stepped down in 1992 to support her former Defence Minister Fidel Ramos as the next president.

YOUR STARS

Aries

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Regardless of advice coming from friends, you feel like taking a chance - yet again. That's almost always your best bet, especially when it comes to relationships (even secret ones).

Gemini

May 21-Jun. 21

You've always been seen as chatty, friendly and outgoing. You're never afraid to say just what's on your mind, and you're great at saying it in the sweetest fashion. What's locked deep in your heart is another story.

Leo

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

You choose your friends with care, and though you have quite a few of them, the best ones are there thanks to their brains, charm and entertaining personalities - not to mention their reliability.

Libra

Sep.23-Oct. 22

You've always been devoted to taking care of others, and you've definitely done more your share of that recently. Now it's your turn to be cared for! Luckily, an appealing caregiver comes along today.

Sagittarius

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

If you need to shift gears, then you need to stop working. Close the spreadsheet, trash the to-do list and drop all work-related business. Don't just put them down, put them away for quite some time.

Aquarius

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Something pops up that you never expected - and surprising you is quite a challenge! You have the sneaking suspicion that you may have come down with a bad case of love at first sight.

Taurus

April 20-May 20

Close down that spreadsheet and wipe the sweat off your brow. If you really want to remake yourself, it takes more than just budgets and lists. You've got to go shopping, of course.

Cancer

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You've got every right to keep on smiling until your face hurts. That's even more true if you're near someone who's wearing the exact same expression - which you're sure to be, after what's been going on lately.

Virgo

Aug. 23-Sept. 22

If you've been wondering whether or not you did the right thing recently, stop it. You're about to get an unsubtle hint letting you know that you're not just headed in the right direction.

Scorpio

Oct. 23 - Nov. 21

Even though you're super familiar with the various highs and lows of loving relationships, you're still just about to dive in again. Let's hope the other party knows what a huge deal this is.

Capricorn

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Just when you thought you were all done, at least for now, you're asked once again to go way above and beyond the call of duty. It doesn't mean you have to trash your plans for tonight, though.

Pisces

Feb.19-Mar. 20

It's not easy, but if you just hang on for a bit longer, you and your mate (or business partner) can learn at least one important lesson from recent drama - especially what goes down today.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy

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

Easy+

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

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	5	2					7	6
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				6	7			5

Hard

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	6	3			4			
							7	
	5							
	4						1	6
2						3		
								4

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Hem's partner; 4- TV studio sign; 9- Let's just leave ___ that; 13- Altar in the sky; 14- Utah's ___ Mountains; 15- Look happy; 16- Blind; 18- Fencing blades; 19- Get ready to drive; 20- To come nearer to; 22- Now; 25- Meets with; 26- Metal fastener; 28- "Peer Gynt Suite" dancer; 32- Sheet music abbr.; 35- Chair designer Charles; 37- Celestial being; 38- Dirty; 40- Existence; 42- Fish feature; 43- Rhino relative; 45- Marsh of mystery; 47- Memo letters; 48- Foot part; 50- Official language of India; 52- Adolescent; 54- Gives slack; 58- Warship; 62- Street show; 63- Cherish; 64- Volcanic; 67- Pave over; 68- Crazy as ___; 69- LAX posting; 70- Greenish blue; 71- Minimum; 72- Brillo rival;

DOWN: 1- ___ la vista; 2- Disney mermaid; 3- Bet; 4- Go faster than; 5- Zilch; 6- "Wheel of Fortune" buy; 7- ___ girl!; 8- Rough files; 9- Impressive; 10- ___ yellow ribbon...; 11- Actor Guinness; 12- New Ager John; 15- Sister of Venus; 17- Shades; 21- Legume; 23- Dull; 24- Arabian republic; 27- Place on a scale; 29- End-of-workweek shout; 30- Count (on); 31- ___ want for Christmas...; 32- ___ spumante; 33- Horse color; 34- Tears; 36- Slow mover; 39- Pertaining to the shore; 41- Football Hall of Famer Marchetti; 44- Marijuana cigarette; 46- Something smelly; 49- Church seat; 51- This ___ outrage!; 53- Maritime; 55- Great Lakes tribesmen; 56- Swell!; 57- Transmits; 58- Trading center; 59- Zip-___-Doo-Dah; 60- ___ chance!; 61- Dominion; 65- Mauna ___; 66- Long-leaved lettuce;

Yesterday's solution

G	E	L	S	K	N	E	A	D	S	R	E	A	M
U	N	I	T	A	I	S	L	E	S	L	E	C	
A	L	K	A	I	B	S	E	N	S	O	R	A	
R	A	E	A	S	S	O	C	I	A	T	I	O	
I	M	P	L	E									
	I	A	T	R	I	C							
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O	L	D	E										
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S	E	D	G	E	S								
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E	X	T	R	E	R								
A	M	I	A										
V	A	N	S										
E	S	S	E										

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HKD 00sq ft

1st floor car park space

Ref: 17115539

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HKD 4,990sq ft

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Taipa

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Stunning Sun Terrace

HKD 8,800 / 420 sq ft

Ref: 17110660

Apartment C, Vai Fat

Taipa

1 Bedroom Apartment

Modern Fitted Kitchen

HKD 12,800 / 800 sq ft

Ref: 17110659



AP PHOTO



Alina Zagitova

WINTER OLYMPICS | FIGURE SKATING

Gold drought about to end for Russians

Barry Wilner, Gangneung

FRIENDS, rivals, and soon, medalists.

The only question is: Which Russian teen figure skating star will end the nation's gold medal drought?

Alina Zagitova or Evgenia Medvedeva will almost certainly take gold in one of the Winter Games marquee events after they went 1-2 in the women's short program yesterday with the highest scores ever. The 15-year-old Zagitova and the 18-year-old Medvedeva train with the same coach, hang out together and set world records just minutes apart.

With a dominating lead over the field, their friendly competition is the main drama left when the women compete in the free skate tomorrow. With all of Russia waiting for the first gold medal of the Pyeongchang Olympics, you'd think their relationship could become frayed, but only on the ice.

"We can talk about anything to each other," the 18-year-old Medvedeva said, "and when we take the ice it's sport and we must fight. Every competition I feel like [is] a little war."

Added Zagitova, 15: "We are friends first and rivals second, because you have to have competitiveness in sport."

Medvedeva had not lost a competition in two years until

she was beaten by Zagitova at the European Championships in Moscow. That set the stage for a showdown with a glaring spotlight — as the Russian fans are hoping for a high-profile success at this Olympics where the nation is officially banned because of a doping scandal.

The youngsters responded with world records. Yet neither thought they had done their best.

"I'm satisfied with my performance today. It was not my best, but it was OK," said Medvedeva, who held the record for a few minutes with a score of 81.61. "All the battle is still ahead."

A group of Russian fans swayed together in the stands and chanted her name when that number was posted.

Three skaters later came her training comrade, who put down a more difficult program, including a triple lutz-triple loop combination that outdid Medvedeva's flip-toe loop combo.

So, another world record, 82.92.

And again the Russian fans rocked back and forth, this time chanting Zagitova's name.

"Well done to her," Medvedeva said. "She did everything she could."

Not exactly, Zagitova said.

"A few imperfections," she explained.

Oh really?

"I'm happy I was able to cope with my nerves and skate well, set a world record," she added, "but I've still got something to work towards and I can't afford to relax."

Medvedeva had set the previous record for a short program in the team event last week, when her team won silver. Zagitova handled the free skate.

Russia had never won Olympic gold for women until Adelina Sotnikova took home the medal in Sochi. The nation could have two straight after the free skate.

Canada's Kaetlyn Osmond and Gabrielle Daleman, second and third respectively at last year's worlds, had varying success.

Osmond, in her best performance of the season, nailed everything with speed and precision to wind up third with 78.87 points. Daleman looked confused and made a gesture with her hands as if to say "What happened?" after going down on the second half of a combination jump. She was seventh Wednesday.

"I left nothing out on the table and I'm really glad I could do that," said Osmond, the 2017 world silver medalist.

Italy's Carolina Kostner, the bronze medalist at Sochi and, at 31 the veteran in this field, struggled and wound up just ahead of Daleman.

It was not a strong showing for the Americans, each of whom had a major mistake.

Nine days after becoming the first U.S. woman and third overall to land a triple axel in the Olympics, Mirai Nagasu came down on two feet on the jump, then fell to the ice. While the rest of her program was clean, Nagasu's chances for an individual me-

dal to go with her team bronze were damaged. Nagasu, 24 and the fourth-place finisher at the Vancouver Games, earned 66.93 points, a season's best, but was ninth.

"Sometimes it isn't the right day, and today was one of those days," Nagasu said. "This isn't a sport where mistakes are forgiven. You only get one shot." **AP**

AP PHOTO



Evgenia Medvedeva

Rob Harris, London

FOOTBALL | CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

LIONEL Messi finally managed one of the few things he had yet to achieve in football.

At his ninth attempt, the five-time world player of the year finally scored against Chelsea, salvaging a 1-1 draw yesterday and halting his longest drought against any opponent after 730 minutes.

By cancelling out Willian's opener, Messi also gave Barcelona a narrow edge in their Champions League round-of-16 matchup heading into the second leg at Camp Nou on March 14. The night's other game produced a far more conclusive outcome with Thomas Mueller and Robert Lewandowski both scoring twice as Bayern Munich beat 10-man Besiktas 5-0.

It was far tighter at Stamford Bridge, with Chelsea deploying Eden Hazard as a false nine and containing Barcelona's energetic pressing before being made to pay for a rare slip in concentration in the 75th minute.

Andreas Christensen, the 21-year-old center back who displaced 32-year-old captain Gary Cahill from the starting lineup, passed laxly across his own penalty area. Barcelona capitalized. Andres Iniesta beat Cesar Azpilicueta to the ball, skipped past the defender's attempt to tackle and squared for the unmarked Messi to turn into the bottom of the net. It prevented Barcelona from slipping to only its second loss in all competitions since August.

"We lacked more clear-cut chances, but the good thing is we managed to force an error out of them and score an equalizer," Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde said through a translator. "We go back to

AP PHOTO



the Camp Nou happy."

Twice, though, Barcelona had gifted Willian the space to hit the post in the first half. It was third time lucky in the 62nd for

Willian, who drifts in and out of the team but was the outlet of Chelsea's most dangerous moments against the five-time European champions.

The Brazilian was left unmarked just outside the penalty area to receive a pass from Eden Hazard. Sergio Busquets charged forward to block

Willian but ended up on flat on his back after Willian shimmied past him.

"We gave too much space to Willian to shoot," Valverde said. "The pass to him was perfect, the control was perfect. And we just had to get closer to him."

They didn't. Willian picked out a gap in the defense to send the ball into the bottom right of the net.

"We stayed compact, had a plan," Willian said, "and did exactly what we expected."

Described by Valverde as a "clash of styles," this was not a meeting of equals.

While Barcelona enjoys a seven-point lead at the top of the Spanish league, Chelsea is in a scrap to even secure one of the Premier League's four Champions League qualification places. Recent damaging defeats at Bournemouth and Watford have left Chelsea with only a one-point hold on fourth place — and no chance of defending its title with Manchester City 19 points ahead.

Now Chelsea, which won its only European title in 2012, has to find a way to at least score at Barcelona next month to secure passage to the quarterfinals for the first time since 2014.

"We have to go there to attack and score because 90 minutes defending at the Nou Camp is an eternity," said Cesc Fabregas, who joined Chelsea from Barcelona. "It is a suicide mission." **AP**

FOOTBALL | CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Bayern cruises to 5-0 win over Besiktas, closer to semis

THOMAS Mueller and Robert Lewandowski both scored twice as Bayern Munich defeated 10-man Besiktas 5-0 to all but secure progress to the Champions League quarterfinals for the seventh straight season.

Bayern played with an extra man after Domagoj Vida was sent off early for bringing down Lewandowski as the last defender, but didn't open the scoring until the 43rd minute when Mueller netted from close range. The floodgates opened after the break, though, as Kingsley Coman doubled the lead and Mueller grabbed his second midway through the second half.

Lewandowski polished

off the win with two late goals to give Bayern a seemingly insurmountable five-goal cushion ahead of the second leg of the last-16 tie in Istanbul on March 14.

"The red card definitely played into our hands," Mueller said after the biggest home first-leg win in the knockout stages of the Champions League.

It was Bayern's 14th straight win across all competitions — a record for Jupp Heynckes as coach, who was spoiled for choice with all his outfield players fit.

"The keys to the win were the sending off, and then, later, the first goal before the break," said Heynckes, whose side leads the Bundesliga by a huge margin.

"The Champions League is another competition. I think we still need to improve."

Besiktas didn't take up its allocation of away tickets for the game for fear of a ban following fan-trouble at Lyon in the Europa League last season, but many visiting supporters nevertheless managed to get tickets to cheer on their side.

After a promising start, Besiktas' hopes took a blow when Vida was sent off in the 16th minute. Lewandowski was free after a mistake from Besiktas captain Atiba Hutchinson and Vida mistimed his challenge to bring him down.

Vagner Love fired a great chance over for the visitors, but Bayern dominated

chances thereafter. David Alaba's effort was blocked, then Mats Hummels headed straight at goalkeeper Fabri after a brilliant cross from James Rodriguez.

Just when it looked like Besiktas weathered the storm, Mueller got the breakthrough for Bayern before the break, scoring from close range after good work from Coman.

Lewandowski pulled the ball back for Coman to score early in the second half, and Mueller grabbed his second a quarter-hour later, prodding Joshua Kimmich's cross in from close range.

Bayern kept pushing for more and Lewandowski was quickest to the rebound when Fabri saved Hum-

AP PHOTO



Bayern's Lewandowski scored twice

mels' effort late on, before Mueller set him up for his 16th Champions League goal in as many games.

Bayern president Uli Hoeness ruled out any talk of Bayern repeating its 2013 treble from Heyn-

ckes' previous stint.

"No. That's crazy. We have to take it from one round to the next," said Hoeness, later contradicted by Mueller, who said the treble was "possible." **AP**

opinion

Made in Macao

Jenny Lao-Phillips



ON CNY RED PACKETS

The most popular tradition of the Lunar New Year is of course the practice of giving and receiving Lai Si (red packets). But not everyone knows that there are actually quite a few different practices when it comes to giving out Lai Si, which dictates when and to whom these Lai Si are to be given.

The tradition for married couples is to give Lai Si to every unmarried member of the family, friends, colleagues, and to service providers with whom the couples often interact.

Appropriate recipients would be the security guards in their buildings or waiters and waitresses of restaurants they frequent. However, this is only practiced in the Guangdong area of China, as well as Hong Kong and Macao. This makes us the most generous Lai Si givers amongst all the places that observe this tradition. Moreover, it is also mostly in our part of South China that Lai Si is given out from Chinese New Year (CNY) Eve until the 15th day of the Lunar New Year. Most places only give out Lai Si on CNY Eve, or only within the first week of the new year.

In the areas around Beijing and Shanghai, the practice is for parents to give Lai Si to their children only on New Year's Eve. The children put the Lai Si under their pillows that evening so as to ensure good luck (Lai Si means luck) throughout the next year. Generally, in Beijing, no Lai Si is given out after CNY Eve.

In Taiwan, the practice of giving out Lai Si is not limited to married couples. Everyone who has entered into the society (those who have completed their education and started working) is expected to give Lai Si to children. However, in Taiwan, they only give out Lai Si across the first five days of CNY.

I have also learnt that places of similar culture such as Japan and Korea, also have the tradition of giving out Lai Si, but only to children. The only difference is that they do not use red packets. Usually, they put money in an envelope or even just give the cash to the children for good luck.

Aside from when and to whom Lai Si should be distributed, there is a common misconception of having to use brand new bills for Lai Si.

Traditionally, Lai Si was supposed to be a small red packet with a small paper inside which had words of good wishes written on it. Then around a few hundred years ago, people stopped writing wishes, and substituted them with cash. However, the obsession of using new bills only started late last century. The logic behind it was that because Lai Si is for good luck for the new year, everything must be new, including the bills. But I doubt how many recipients really care if the bills in the Lai Si are new or old. Most kids only care about how much money they accumulated in the new year.

That brings me to the final point. What should we do after receiving the Lai Si? Some people follow the tradition of putting them under the pillow until after the 7th day of the lunar new year (or 15th day for some), for luck, before opening them up and discarding the red packets. Some people open them right away and start using the money. The truth is, there is really no rules on when to open the Lai Si or what they should be used for. It is just the act of giving Lai Si that represents giving out luck to people. How they wish to use it is up to them.

THE BUZZ VILLARREAL OPENS PROBE INTO SEMEDO'S REPORTED ARREST

Spanish club Villarreal says it is investigating the actions of defender Ruben Semedo after reports that he was arrested for a violent incident. The club said it is "highly concerned" about the issue and "will take the appropriate disciplinary actions with utmost rigor based on the seriousness of the events."

The statement was released after Spanish media reported that the Portuguese player was taken into custody Tuesday for allegedly being involved in a hostile confrontation with another man last week. Police did not immediately confirm Semedo's arrest.

New strikes kill 10 in rebel-held suburbs of Syrian capital

NEW airstrikes and shelling on the besieged, rebel-held suburbs of the Syrian capital killed at least 10 people yesterday, a rescue organization and a monitoring group said.

Syrian government forces and Russian aircraft have shown no signs of letting up their indiscriminate aerial and artillery assault on eastern Ghouta since they stepped up strikes late Sunday.

At least 260 people have been killed since Sunday night, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group, including 10 people in a wave of strikes on the town of Kafr Batna.

The Syrian Civil Defense search-and-rescue group, also known as the White Helmets, said government forces targeted the town with airstrikes, artillery fire, and barrel bombs — crude, explosives-filled oil drums dropped from helicopters at high altitudes. It reported that several other people were wounded.

The locally-run Ghouta Media Center reported strikes on Kafr Batna and other towns in the region outside Damascus.

The Russian military is supporting Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces and was instrumental to



the all-out assault on the eastern half of Syria's largest city, Aleppo, in late 2016 to eject rebels from their enclave there.

Tens of thousands of civilians ended up fleeing their homes. Many have been unable to return. Hundreds more were killed in indiscriminate shelling and bombardment. A subsequent U.N. investigation charged that the campaign amounted to forced displacement of a population and rose to the level of a war crime.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said earlier

this week eastern Aleppo could serve as a model for eastern Ghouta.

Pro-government forces have been amassing since the weekend on the perimeter of the rebel-held region, a collection of towns and farmland that once provided grain and fruit to the capital before nearly seven years of warfare turned it into a landscape of havoc and despair.

At least 400,000 people have been killed in Syria's civil war, sparked by a violent crackdown on popular demonstrations against Assad in 2011. AP

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein



CNY selfie. A man takes a smartphone photo of a woman at a display to celebrate the Lunar New Year at an upscale shopping mall in Beijing yesterday.

Station	Air quality	
Roadside	35-55 Good	
High Density Residential Area	35-55 Good	
Ambient	35-55 Good	

SOURCE: DSMG

WORLD BRIEFS



BAHRAIN A prominent human rights activist in Bahrain was sentenced yesterday to five years in prison over tweets alleging prison torture in his country and misconduct in Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen, despite wide international criticism of his trial.



ISRAEL One of Prime Minister Netanyahu's (pictured) closest confidants has turned state witness and will incriminate him in corruption allegations, the latest in a dizzying series of developments that threaten to topple the beleaguered Israeli leader. More on p15

POLAND A controversial law that makes it a criminal act to blame Poles for Holocaust crimes they did not commit will not lead to criminal charges, a Polish government official said yesterday.

SPAIN Madrid's International Contemporary Art Fair has yanked a photo exhibition called "Political Prisoners in Contemporary Spain," prompting charges of censorship against the government-funded body which operates the event venue.



BRAZIL's congress approved a decree to put the military in charge of Rio de Janeiro's security forces as soldiers and police spread out throughout in the city to combat rising crime.

PERU Police say at least 25 people were killed when their bus veered off a highway and tumbled 200 meters down a cliff in southern Peru.