



REALTORS TURN TO HENGQIN

Around one-third of Hengqin property buyers in 2017 were locals, according to a Macau-based real estate agency

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AL PRESIDENT COMMENTS ON SOU'S CASE

All was done according to the law in Sulu Sou's case, Ho Iat Seng reiterated yesterday during a meeting with journalists

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PROPOSAL SPARKS RARE PUBLIC DISSENT

Well-known figures in China have penned open letters to reject a plan that would allow Xi Jinping to rule indefinitely

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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'"

WORLD BRIEFS



THAILAND The prime minister of Thailand's military government, which took power in a coup in 2014, said yesterday the country will have elections by February next year, though he suggested the date is conditional on the political situation remaining calm.

CAMBODIA A court in Cambodia has ordered the seizure of the headquarters of the country's former opposition party, which was dissolved last November after a ruling that it was involved in trying to overthrow the government.



PAPUA NEW GUINEA Severe damage to phone networks and roads from a powerful earthquake in Papua New Guinea was hindering efforts to assess the extent of the destruction yesterday, although officials in the remote central region feared dozens of people may have been injured or killed.

NEW ZEALAND Lawmakers from New Zealand's main conservative party yesterday chose their first indigenous Maori leader as they regrouped after an election loss. [More on p12](#)

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Jockey Club staying in business until 2042

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MUSIC

Sitarist Anoushka Shankar ready for Macau debut

P2

MUSIC

Shankar to perform 'Land of Gold' in Macau premiere

SITAR sensation Anoushka Shankar will perform her latest "Land of Gold" concert at the Macao Cultural Center (CCM) on March 20, accompanied by a group of musicians.

The British-Indian sitar player and composer will be accompanied by percussionist and co-composer Manu Delago, double bassist and keyboardist Tom Farmer, and master of the Indian shehnai, Sanjeev Shankar.

Contrasting flowing, meditative traditional ragas with dense electronics and amplified beats, the humanitarian album is Shankar's response to the international refugee crisis and a cry against injustice.

The virtuosa is the daughter of the legendary musician Ravi Shankar and picks up where her father left off, granting audiences a peek into India's musical traditions.

Weeks before her Macau premiere, Shankar shared that the concept of "Land of Gold" originated as her response to the plight of refugees.

"It coincided with the time when I had recently given birth to my second child. I was deeply troubled by the intense contrast between my ability to provide for my baby, and others who desperately wanted to provide the same security for their children but were unable to do so," Shankar said in an interview.



Anoushka Shankar

"It was a disturbing comparison that played on my mind, fuelled by a sense of growing outrage, that the mass displacement of this vulnerable tide of people had been caused by external political decisions and detached acts of war," she said.

Shankar affirmed that music for a good cause is always worth pursuing – whether the concert achieves direct change or makes a difference in a more

subtle manner, such as touching the hearts of listeners.

The combination of instruments in the "Land of Gold" concert is quite different from previous instalments.

Shankar explained that Manu Delago came on board as a co-writer and collaborator when the concert was first conceptualized. It was then that she realized that the team would be pairing the sitar with a variety of specific

percussive sounds.

The sitarist chose the traditional shehnai – an evocative Indian wind instrument – and a string instrument to bring the final compositions together.

"As a quartet, this sound becomes very international and evokes many feelings and emotions in a listener," she noted.

Questioned on what she expects from the local audien-

ce, Shankar replied, "I don't have any specific expectations from the audience in Macau, just a hope that they enjoy our music."

The sitarist added that she understands that there are slight cultural differences in the way concert-goers from different regions will respond to the performance.

The sitar has been a part of

I don't think there is something as an heiress to someone's musical legacy.

ANOUSHKA SHANKAR

Shankar's life since she was young. She was always fond of the sound of it, which she also attributed to the fact that she grew up around her father's concerts and music lessons in their household.

"It was definitely a choice that I had but as I said, it was something that was always around me from the beginning, so it did influence my choice," she said.

Shankar works with a variety of genres, including but not limited to Indian classical music, jazz, electronica and flamenco.

"I don't think there is something as an heiress to someone's musical legacy. [...] So if there is a musical legacy it is one that I share with all of his disciples," she noted.

Shankar's "Land of Gold" will be held at CCM's Grand Auditorium at 8 p.m. on March 20.

CRIME

Fire in hotel likely caused by neighbor's cigarette butt

As Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesperson said that a fire in a high-end hotel is likely to have been caused by a cigarette butt thrown by someone from the residential complex next to the hotel.

The case was reported by the Fire Services (CB) to the PJ. On Sunday morning, firemen were called to extinguish a fire that

occurred in the pool area of the Mandarin Oriental Hotel.

According to CB's preliminary report, the blaze appears to have started at the corner of the pool area on the fourth floor of the hotel. The apparent cause of the fire was a cigarette butt that set fire to the floor.

Upon further investiga-

tion, the CB has for now abandoned the idea that the cigarette butt might have been left by a hotel guest or staff member, since the area was closed off and inaccessible. Surveillance cameras in the hotel did not capture footage of any person in the area, leaving the most probable explanation to be that the cigarette butt

was thrown from one of the apartment buildings nearby.

The PJ is still investigating this case. No injuries were sustained in the fire despite damage to the hotel.

In a separate case reported by the Public Security Police Force, a local male aged approximately 30 years old or over, was

caught driving under the influence of alcohol on Friday morning, February 23, after a traffic accident occurred in Avenida da Amizade in the surroundings of Oceanus Casino.

According to the police report, the man had driven out of his lane and crashed into another vehicle. Both drivers were uninjured but were taken to the

Conde de São Januário Hospital Center for blood alcohol level testing. The driver tested positively for alcohol, at a concentration of 2.74 grams of alcohol per blood liter.

The case has been forwarded to the Public Prosecutions Office for further prosecution under charges of driving under the influence of the alcohol. **RM**

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MJC granted surprise 24-year concession renewal

Daniel Beittler

THE Macau Jockey Club (MJC) was yesterday granted a 24-year concession in a surprise move that appears to have caught off-guard the company's own director.

The government yesterday revealed that the MJC will be permitted to continue its "exclusive operation of horse racing" until August 31, 2042, but with strings attached.

Under a plan presented to the government, the company is to invest between MOP1.5 billion and MOP2 billion for the improvement of the site's facilities and for the development of non-gambling activities. Lawmaker and a director of SJM Holdings, Angela Leong, said yesterday that the company's diversification plans may include a riding school for children as well as a shopping center.

The details of the plan are expected to be revealed today in the government's Official Gazette.

The government said that should the company fail to adequately invest in the facility, its concession would be suspended.



The Macau Jockey Club racetrack in Taipa

The new concession's 24-year lifespan took many by surprise, including – possibly – the director of the Macau Horse Racing Company, Thomas Li, who told Ponto Final on the weekend about his confidence that a new concession would last "over two years."

The agreement announced yesterday, around 12 times longer than that estimated by Li, was justified in a statement from Secretary for Economy and Finance Lionel Leong, who said that

the concession would help to develop Macau as a world center of tourism and leisure.

"Everyone knows that there have always been losses in the past. We hope that with this large investment the company can reverse its financial situation and, more importantly, contribute to the Macau SAR Government with more non-gambling elements," Lionel Leong said yesterday, according to Radio Macau.

The secretary refused to take

questions from journalists on the matter.

The Macau Horse Racing Company has posted annual losses since 2004, accumulating a deficit exceeding MOP4 billion and debts amounting to MOP1.3 billion.

For this reason, economist and animal rights activist Albano Martins is doubtful that a MOP1.5 billion injection can be put to good use.

"It doesn't make sense to invest MOP1.5 billion in a company that is [essentially] bankrupt," he told the Times yesterday. "The company will need to pay off its debt with some of that money and after that, what remains [of it]?"

Moreover, Leong is also insisting that the company work to pay its outstanding tax obligation to the government sooner than previously thought. This will represent a further drain on the MOP2 billion injection.

Asked about the possible intentions behind the 24-year concession, Martins speculated that "the concession is for [MJC] to redevelop the land – I can only assume – for real estate purposes."

"[But] the decision to grant the concession was, in political ter-

ms, a very unwise decision," he added. "This is land that could be used for housing or schools. Nobody gives that sort of concession for a company that is broke. It is very strange. In terms of [socio-economic] cost-benefit, this decision is a disaster."

Martins thinks that the official terms of the concession, which according to Macau law must be published today in the Official Gazette, will outline the proportion of the Jockey Club site that can be utilized for non-horse-racing activities, such as real estate.

“Nobody gives that sort of concession for a company that is broke. It is very strange.”

ALBANO MARTINS
ECONOMIST, ANIMA PRESIDENT

The silver lining for Martins is that he believes that the new deal with mark the final days of the company's horse-racing activities.

"[Soon] they will not have any animals there, so I am very happy that this business is finishing. My only point [of concern] now is that of an economist."

EDUCATION

10 percent of continuing courses disqualified from subsidies

THE Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEJ) reported that a few continuing education courses were deemed ineligible for governmental subsidies after failing to meet the govern-

ment's requirements. Yesterday, during a TDM program, Wong Chi Iong, Chief Executive of the Division of Continuing Education under the DSEJ, noted that, until January, the

third phase of the DSEJ's continuing education development program approved a total of more than 40,000 courses, although 10 percent of these were not approved for subsidies.

According to Wong, the cases without approval are related to the disqualification of course lecturers, unreasonable tuition fees, as well as poor course completion rates. DSEJ has been critici-

zed for failing to set up criteria for students' attendance rate at specific institutions. One institution was denied inclusion in the subsidy fund despite their efforts to improve the attendance rate.

Wong said that this specific case was rejected due to the low attendance rate, since only 30 percent of the students finished the minimum of 70 percent of the classes.

DSEJ talked with the institution three times to advise them of the reason behind the rejection.

Wong expressed his understanding that students might be unable to attend the courses due to family or work reasons. He hopes that the courses' organizers can nurture better performance in those courses to attract more residents to pursue continuous education.

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Chan's hotel plan changes in response to public

Former lawmaker Melinda Chan's hotel construction plan changed in order to address society's concerns, according to a report by TDM. Chan, who is the president of the Fisherman's Wharf, International Investment Ltd. had originally planned to build a 90-meter-tall hotel near the Fisherman's Wharf. To ease society's uneasiness, Chan said that the height will be shortened to 60 meters. "It is unnecessary to make part of the people feel uncomfortable," said Chan. The former lawmaker hopes that her company will be able to apply for permission from the government soon.

Environmental evaluation of vehicle detention center expected in Q2

A public tender for the environmental evaluation of the Public Security Police Force (PSP)'s new vehicle detention center opened yesterday. The awarded company will be in charge of the center's air, noise and ecological evaluation. The 10 bids that were received by the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT), were from companies based in mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau. The maximum service length is 220 days. The evaluation is expected to start in the second quarter of this year. The center occupies an area of approximately 6,000 square meters.

Court rejects STDM's appeal over land plot

The Court of Second Instance (TSI) rejected the appeal of the Sociedade de Turismo de Divisões de Macau, S.A. (STDM), regarding the concession of a land plot located in the landfill zone of the outer harbor of Macau. On November 8 of 2016, the Macau government issued a Chief Executive order declaring the end of that land's lease. The company appealed to the TSI, alleging that the CE's order contained flaws, including breaching the principles of impartiality and the lack of a prior hearing before the announcement.

Around one-third of Hengqin home buyers in 2017 were locals

Julie Zhu

IN a press conference yesterday, Centaline Macau Property Agency Limited (Centaline Property) announced that they are "very optimistic" about the real estate market development in Hengqin.

Contrary to predictions, the actual number of online property transactions in Zhuhai, in 2017, decreased 55.7 percent year-on-year to approximately 29,576, with 3,815 transactions being recorded in Hengqin, down 39.5 percent.

Even though these decreases were recorded from Hengqin and the entire Zhuhai area, non-residence property transactions still surged up to 3,344 transactions.

In 2017, the most popular area for investment in Hengqin remained the border service area, where the number of properties sold grew 154.92 percent year-on-year, with transactions of properties in Hengqin's port area occupying 47 percent of the total.

Centaline Property holds optimistic expectations for the property market in Hengqin's recreational region in 2018.

According to Centaline Property's statistics, in 2017, 32.34 percent of Hengqin property buyers were Macau residents, 18.8 percent were Zhuhai residents and 18 percent were Hong



Stanley C. M. Poon, managing director of Centaline Macau

Kong residents.

"First, the transportation [to Hengqin] is indeed convenient, [...] the HKZMB will open soon. [...] I think we all can see the obvious [growth in Hengqin's property price]," said Stanley C. M. Poon, managing director of Centaline Macau Property Agency Limited.

Regarding Macau, 8,315 property transactions were recorded in 2017, with the property price for each square meter sitting at approximately MOP100,000, re-

presenting 17 percent growth.

Centaline Property foresees that, once the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge becomes operational, more capital, goods, and human flow will enter Macau, which will pull the city's real estate market upwards.

The company expects Macau's property prices to increase about 15 percent this year.

In 2017, 284 and 117 transactions were recorded concerning office and industrial spaces, respectively.

For an office space, the average per square foot price was MOP7,500 and for office space in different areas near NAPE the average per square foot price was MOP6,800. The price for a traditional office space at Nam Van area averaged MOP7,400, and MOP14,000 for "A level" office spaces.

Centaline Property predicted that there is a chance Macau's commercial property prices might return to MOP10,000 per square foot in 2018 due to the opening of the HKZMB and the development of the Greater Bay Area.

Regarding shops, Centaline Property expects a 20 to 30 percent increase in the number of transactions in 2018.

On the sidelines of the press conference, Poon also disclosed that Centaline Property (Macau) received a total of MOP175 million in commissions last year – about MOP140 million of which was generated from Macau, and MOP30 million from Hengqin.

"Basically, both places recorded increases, but [the increases] were slightly smaller than those of 2016," said Poon, adding that "many of [my] colleagues are optimistic about 2018. [...] hoping that both sides [Macau and Hengqin] combined will accumulate MOP280 million in commissions [in 2018]."

Restaurants, retailers see business improvement

ACCORDING to the latest business survey of the restaurant and retail sectors, both types of establishments showed year-on-year improvement in December 2016.

The survey, commissioned by the Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEC), interviewed 167 restaurants (accounting for 53 percent of the sector's revenue) and 135 retailers (accounting for 70 percent of the sector's revenue).

Among these, 44 percent reported higher year-on-year revenue in December, while 24 percent showed little change. Chinese restaurants' turnover grew 59 percent from the previous year, while Japanese and Korean restaurants' takings increased by 44 percent.

Regarding retail traders, over 60 percent of interviewed retailers registered a year-on-year sales rise in December. Moreover, 80 percent of leather goods retailers, 78 percent of supermarkets, 67 percent of department stores and 67 percent of cosmetics retailers recorded higher turnover.

According to DSEC, most restaurants and similar establishments expected their business to slacken in January 2018 at the time the survey was conducted. Only 15 percent of the interviewed establishments predicted a year-on-year rise in revenue.

On aggregate, retailers expected no significant change in their business in January 2018. Among those interviewed, 28

percent predicted a year-on-year sales decline and 31 percent expected an increase.

In accordance with the survey results for the whole year of 2017, the restaurant sector showed general improvement over 2016. More than 60 percent of interviewed businesses reported year-on-year revenue growth or no change for most months of the year, except for February (during the post-Chinese New Year slowdown) and August (after Typhoon Hato).

Retail trade improved significantly in the fourth quarter of 2017, with interviewed retailers reporting the highest year-on-year sales increases since the survey was launched, according to DSEC.

HEALTH

SSM issues warning for hazardous weight loss product

THE Health Bureau (SSM) has issued a warning to all citizens about a weight loss product dubbed "Sin Den Beauty", which contains two chemical compounds that authorities consider health hazards.

The SSM notice, which urges citizens not to buy or consume the product, follows a similar warning made by Hong Kong health authorities. According to the notice, the hazardous compounds – sibutramine and phenolphthalein – act as an appetite suppressant and a laxative, respectively. The product may increase the risk of contracting cancer and cardiovas-

cular disease, and can cause rashes, allergies, colitis, dermatitis and excessive bleeding.

SSM stated that it is illegal to import the product to the region, in view of its health hazards. It will closely monitor the situation to ensure the product is not still being illegally imported and circulated on a small scale. SSM added that any citizens who have already purchased the product must immediately cease consumption and deliver the remaining product to the SSM's Pharmaceutical Affairs Department, which is located on the second floor of the China Plaza Building.



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B. For all patients who will be in Portugal during this period, Macau MALO CLINIC will manage the necessary bookings, follow-up and patients' medical records to our colleagues in any MALO CLINIC in Portugal.

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

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

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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.

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+ INFO



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NY comptroller says Wynn board was complicit in abuse

THE New York state comptroller accused the board of Wynn Resorts Ltd. of doing nothing to stop the alleged sexual misconduct of Steve Wynn, who abruptly stepped down this month as chairman and chief executive of the casino operator he founded.

“Wynn Resorts’ board members were complicit in Steve Wynn’s pervasive pattern of sexual abuse and harassment, setting a tone at the top that permitted Steve Wynn to wield his power unchecked,” Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli said in a complaint in Nevada state court.

DiNapoli, as head of the third-largest public retirement fund in the U.S., which holds Wynn shares, sued current and former Wynn board members and officers for breach of fiduciary duty. The board was aware since at least 2016 of the allegations against Wynn, brought up by his ex-wife in a lawsuit, and did nothing to stop his misconduct, according to the Feb. 22 lawsuit.

Wynn Resorts’ board, which oversees a USD17.4 billion company with casinos in Las Vegas and the Chinese territory of Ma-



cau, has been criticized for deference to founder Wynn, who resigned as CEO after reports that he allegedly pressured employees to have sex. Wynn has denied the claims, while regulators in Macau and the U.S. have said they are looking into the matter.

The Las Vegas-based company is facing numerous shareholder lawsuits after the shares fell about 19 percent last month

when the Wall Street Journal reported allegations Wynn pressured employees to have sex with him.

The New York State Common Retirement Fund held 183,800 Wynn Resorts shares as of Jan. 31 and will vote its shares against all incumbents and insiders nominated for the board at the annual meeting, DiNapoli said in a statement Monday. **MDT/Bloomberg**

The Journal of Contemporary Asia relocates base to UM

THE Journal of Contemporary Asia, a Social Sciences Citation Indexed (SSCI) journal, relocated its institutional base to the University of Macau (UM) Centre for Macau Studies (CMS) in February this year.

Agnes Lam, acting director of the CMS and a lawmaker, said that the journal’s move to the CMS is timely, since the center intends to strengthen its capacity in social science research and situate Macau studies within the scope of broader Asian perspectives, according to a statement by the university.

The relocation of the peer-reviewed academic journal will help to develop researchers’ profiles and link scholars in Macau to more regions in Asia.

The journal’s editor-in-chief, Kevin Hewison, has been appointed adjunct professor of the center, together with its co-editors.

Ngo Tak-Wing, from UM’s Faculty of Social Sciences, will also join the editorial team as a co-editor. Ngo is also the editor of China Information, another SSCI-indexed journal hosted by UM.

The Journal of Contemporary Asia is a top-ranking journal in the field of Asian studies. It was founded in 1970, and is currently published by Taylor and Francis.

The journal publishes articles that deal with the economic, political, and social developments of Asia.

In particular, the journal has an interest in theoretically-informed research, and promotes the works of Asian-based researchers.

According to the 2017 Journal Citation Report, the Journal of Contemporary Asia has an impact factor of 1.141 and has been ranked No. 7 in the category of area studies and No. 2 in Asian studies.

AD

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AL president reiterates law abidance in Sulu Sou's case

LEGISLATIVE Assembly (AL) president Ho Iat Seng stressed yesterday during a meeting between journalists and lawmakers that "the political system of Macau privileges the predominance of executive power, with a relationship of complementarity between this power and the legislative, whilst the judicial power enjoys its own autonomy." Consequently, Ho said that the AL has been operating "in the context of predominance of the executive power."

During yesterday's event, the AL president also addressed the Sulu Sou case, although avoided any direct reference to the lawmaker. The AL president said that "a recent case" has been dealt "with due respect for judicial autonomy and by the principle of non-interference in judicial bodies." Ho added that the Basic Law and the statute of lawmakers were respected



Ho Iat Seng

during the process.

Talking with journalists on the sidelines of the meeting, Ho Iat Seng said that he mentioned the case because "the speech cannot be the same every year and, as always, this year we must also talk about issues that are on the agenda."

Also attending the event, lawmaker Sulu Sou, who is currently suspended – a decision of

the AL plenary he is appealing – commented on Ho's speech saying that local courts could be called to check if AL procedures were made according to the law. "I always disagree that the Legislative Assembly should be 100 percent independent," he told TDM.

Sou also said that the AL is "not very successful" when monitoring the government.

Exhibitions record a MOP38.62 million deficit in 2017

A total of 1,381 MICE events were held in Macau during 2017, up by 105 year-on-year. According to information released by the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC), the number of participants and attendees increased by 10.4 percent to 1,901,000.

The number of meetings and conferences held in Macau in 2017 was 1,285 (+90), with a 39 percent increase in the number of participants (+245,000). The number of exhibitions decreased by 4 year-on-year to 51, while the number of attendees rose by 7.2 percent to 1,608,000.

According to information collected from the 51 exhibition organizers, after deducting the expenditure and financial support from government and other organizations (MOP71.85 million) from the receipts, these exhibitions recorded a deficit of MOP38.62 million. In 2016, the deficit stood at MOP48.05 million.

The exhibitions held in 2017 attracted 5,533 exhibitors, with 28.6 percent (1,582) of them coming from mainland China and 35.9 percent (1,989) from Macau. There were 99,000 professional visitors and those coming from Ma-

cau (53,000) made up the largest component at 53.3 percent.

Regarding the fourth quarter of 2017, a total of 378 MICE events were held, including 354 meetings and conferences, 18 exhibitions and six incentives. The total number of participants and attendees was 694,000.

The number of meetings and conferences held in the fourth quarter went up by 2, year-on-year, and the number of participants rose by 23.8 percent to 86,000.

The number of exhibitions held in the fourth quarter increased by 2, year-on-year, to 18, and number of attendees surged by 45.8 percent to 591,000, according to DSEC.

According to information provided by the exhibition organizers in the fourth quarter, receipts and expenditure of the 18 exhibitions amounted to MOP76.73 million and MOP114 million respectively. The receipts were primarily generated from financial support provided by the government and other organizations (75.3 percent of the total) while the expenditure was mainly incurred on production, construction and decoration (27.1 percent of the total).

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CHINA

Move to extend leader's role fuels business anxiety

Joe McDonald, Paul Wiseman

THE ruling Communist Party's move to let leader Xi Jinping remain China's president indefinitely is fueling anxiety that Beijing might be undermining reforms needed to keep its economy healthy.

Businesspeople and economists see a slide toward one-man rule under Xi, already China's most dominant figure since the 1980s, and away from impartial institutions needed to support private businesses that generate new jobs and wealth.

Private sector analysts expect little short-term impact from the party's decision to eliminate the constitution's term limits for the presidency. But they say concentrating more power in Xi's hands could hamper business and chill investment by making China's economy more unpredictable and less able to respond to challenges.

Market-oriented reform requires "regulatory institutions that are backed by rule of law," said Andrew Polk, an economist at Trivium/China, a research firm in Beijing.

"To the extent that the change of term limits undermines the rule of law, that makes those liberalizing reforms more difficult, if not impossible," Polk said.

Analysts see the change as a signal Xi, who took power in 2012, is breaking with a tradition under which his predecessors Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao shared power with other party leaders and stepped down after two five-year terms.

Xi said in 2013 that power "must be confined within the cage of institutions," but that ple-

BLOOMBERG



dge "is now meaningless," Evan Medeiros of Eurasia Group said in a report.

The 64-year-old leader has built up his own authority at the expense of others. He has appointed himself to head bodies that oversee reform and other initiatives, stripping the No. 2 party figure and top economic official, Premier Li Keqiang, of his post's most important duties.

Some analysts see a potential upside in the short run: Now that lower-level officials cannot be sure Xi will leave in 2022, they might be less likely to resist his ambitious agenda to reform health care, reduce poverty and develop high-tech industry.

"It's more likely that a leader firmly in control will do the difficult things that need to be done," said David Dollar, a former U.S. Treasury and World Bank official

in Beijing who follows China at the Brookings Institution.

Longer term, they see no benefit but big risks for a state-dominated economy in which growth slowed to 6.8 percent from a year earlier in the latest quarter and is forecast to decelerate further this year.

A crucial cost is heightened "key man risk," or anxiety about how the system will respond if anything happens to Xi. That could make foreign companies more skittish about investing in an economy where business groups say many believe regulators improperly support their Chinese competitors.

It is unclear what Xi gains, Andy Rothman of Matthews Asia said in a report. Xi already was "powerful enough to push through significant reforms," he said, including slashing more than

2 million jobs in a campaign to streamline bloated coal and steel industries.

"It is difficult to interpret this decision, announced Sunday, as anything other than a lust for power by Xi Jinping," Rothman said.

Xi has promised to make China's economy more productive by giving market forces a bigger role. But he tempered that goal by affirming plans to build up state industry and the party's role in business.

The potential negative consequences of bad policy become magnified because of this move.

ANDREW POLK
ECONOMIST AT TRIVIUM/CHINA

Foreign companies are under pressure to restructure joint ventures with Chinese partners to give the party a formal voice in hiring, investment and strategy decisions. Business groups and lawyers say the demand has no basis in Chinese law and might be aimed at turning private companies into tools to carry out party development plans.

Reform advocates complain Xi has done too little to curb the dominance of state industry and

control surging debt that prompted global rating agencies to cut Beijing's credit rating last year.

"Yes, on one hand, Xi Jinping clearly has some economic advisers who want to push ahead with economic reforms," said Barry Naughton, an economist at the University of California San Diego. He cited Liu He, Xi's top economic adviser, who is meeting U.S. officials in Washington this week to discuss economic relations amid disputes over steel, technology and other issues.

"When things are good, Xi is willing to listen to them. But that's not the only Xi Jinping," Naughton said. "The other Xi Jinping is this focused individual who cares enormously about power [and] who is also the biggest obstacle to economic reform."

A marathon anti-corruption campaign led by Xi that has snared thousands of officials and state company managers is hugely popular with a Chinese public that is sick of rampant graft.

At the same time, he has pressed for quicker official decision-making. That overturned a system under which Chinese officials sometimes spent years debating costs and benefits of policy changes.

Xi's emphasis on a military-style, Leninist approach that requires lower-level officials to carry out orders, with few chances to speak up about potential pitfalls, has led to blunders.

This winter, a campaign to cut air pollution by eliminating coal use in 3 million households in China's north left families shivering when local authorities failed to install replacement natural gas supplies fast enough.

In 2014, financial markets boomed after the state press called repeatedly for higher stock prices. Markets soared and then collapsed, forcing Beijing to spend tens of billions of dollars to stabilize prices.

"The potential negative consequences of bad policy become magnified because of this move," said Polk. **AP**

corporate bits

GEG ANNOUNCES SALARY RISE FOR STAFF



Galaxy Entertainment Group announced that all eligible team members will be entitled to a pay rise that will be between 2.5 percent and 8 percent of their monthly salary, effective from April 1. According to the gaming

operator, over 70 percent of the team members will enjoy salary increases that are higher than 2.5 percent.

Eligible team members at the senior manager grade and below who joined GEG on or before April 1, 2018

will enjoy the higher salary. For team members with monthly salary of MOP24,000 or below, an increment of MOP600 will be awarded, resulting in salary increases ranging from 2.5 percent to 8 percent. For team members with a monthly salary above MOP24,000, a 2.5 percent salary increase will be awarded. In addition, eligible team members who joined GEG between January 2 and April 1 of this year will enjoy a salary increase after their probation and 90 days of service, Galaxy announced.

In addition, male team members, who have been in service with GEG for one year or above, will be eligible for five days of paid paternity leave, to be taken within 30 days of the birth of their child or children.

FORD TESTS SELF-DRIVING CARS



Ford Motor Co. is making Miami-Dade County its new test bed for self-driving vehicles. The automaker and its partners — Domino's Pizza, ride-hailing company Lyft and delivery company Postmates — are starting pilot programs

to see how consumers react to autonomous and semi-autonomous vehicles. Self-driving startup and Ford partner Argo AI already has a fleet of cars in the area making the highly detailed maps that are necessary

for self-driving. Ford also will establish its first-ever autonomous vehicle terminal in Miami, where it will learn how to service and deploy its test fleet.

More services will likely be introduced as the partnership goes on, including Chariot, an app-based shuttle service owned by Ford. It's all part of Ford's effort to find viable business models for fully autonomous vehicles and get them on the road by 2021.

"This is, I think, the future of any automotive company or mobility company. If a majority of the world's population is going to be living in cities, we need to understand how to move those people around," said John Kwant, Ford's vice president of city solutions, who inked the deal with Miami-Dade.



A Bruce Springsteen tribute band plays at the Hard Rock Cafe in Atlantic City

Hard Rock casino to flood Atlantic City with live music

Wayne Parry, Atlantic City

ATLANTIC City's newest casino promises to flood the city with live music. The music-themed Hard Rock casino opening this summer promises to become an East Coast musical mecca, with over 200 nights of live music in its first year.

The global gambling, entertainment and resort company is also enlarging the concert venue at the former Trump Taj Mahal to fit 7,000 seats, up from the 5,200 it formerly held.

Jim Allen, CEO of Hard Rock International and a veteran Atlantic City casino executive, promised an audience last week at a local church that the new casino will offer more live music than Atlantic City has ever seen.

"When's the first time someone has done 200 shows in Atlantic City?" he asked. "When's the last time you saw entertainment on a night other than Saturday in Atlantic City? We're going to make that commitment."

By comparison, the near-

ly 15,000-seat Boardwalk Hall hosted 11 big-name concerts last year, in addition to stage shows and non-musical events. The musical offerings of individual casinos — and their frequency — vary widely, with most restricted to weekends.

Rummy Pandit, executive director of the Levenson Institute of Gaming, Hospitality & Tourism at New Jersey's Stockton University, said Hard Rock's entertainment schedule will expand Atlantic City's appeal.

"Bringing entertainment into the city mid-week at off-peak times will be a particularly persuasive reason for visitors to consider extending their stay," he said. "Turning a two-night weekend stay into a long weekend or mid-week getaway can make a huge difference for Atlantic City's lodging, food and beverage, retail, gaming and tourism businesses."

The director of the Center for gaming Research at the University of Nevada Las Vegas said having a diverse lineup will lure more people.

"If people get into the habit of visiting Atlantic City for live music, they may continue to do so," David Schwartz said.

Hard Rock boasts the world's largest collection of music memorabilia, some of which has already made its way into the still unfinished Atlantic City facility. Items include a dress worn by Mariah Carey, a jumpsuit worn by Whitney Houston and an acoustic guitar autographed by Jon Bon Jovi.

Even the casino's business cards have a musical theme. At the top of each one is the phrase, "Please allow me to introduce myself," the opening line from the Rolling Stones' classic "Sympathy For The Devil." Employee name tags are in the shape of guitar picks.

Allen said the live shows will range from top A-list performers in the Mark Etess Arena (Hard Rock is keeping the name of the venue in honor of the former Trump executive who died in a helicopter crash before it opened) to clubs or smaller performance spaces inside the casino.

And despite the ubiquitous guitars, it won't be only rock 'n' roll. Allen promises a diverse musical mix for every taste.

"You're looking at the person who just signed Jay-Z and Beyoncé to play Hard Rock Stadium" in Miami, he told an audience at the New Shiloh Baptist Church last week. **AP**

When's the last time you saw entertainment on a night other than Saturday in Atlantic City?

JIM ALLEN
CEO OF HARD ROCK INTERNATIONAL

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ANALYSIS

Why 'Emperor Xi' should worry the US

James Stavridis

THE last emperor of China, Pu Yi, abdicated in 1912. He was the 12th emperor of the historically important Qing dynasty, which lasted 267 years. With his departure, two millenniums of empire, usually with a single individual dominating all of China, ended. Since then, the nation has moved toward an authoritarian system under Communist Party control, but has frequently changed leaders since the death in 1976 of Mao Zedong. Over recent decades, the party has observed a limit of two five-year terms - a system that has provided reasonable stability while also allowing some level of change. That era seems to be ending.

In an increasingly predicted maneuver, the Chinese Central Committee is likely to formally abolish the term limit on presidential power, creating the conditions for the incumbent, Xi Jinping, to remain in office indefinitely. Xi will also be bringing in his long-term associate Wang Qishan as vice president, further hampering younger officials from developing centers of political power. This has been foreshadowed for at least two years in a series of "power moves" by Xi, ranging from the harsh anti-corruption campaign (headed by the 69-year-old Wang) that eliminated many rivals, to his appearing in military garb at official events, emphasizing his control of the People's Liberation Army.

While Xi had already estab-

lished himself as the most powerful Chinese leader since Deng Xiaoping, this latest maneuver is still a radical change, presenting both opportunities and challenges for his nation.

In terms of opportunity, Xi has demonstrated that he is a competent, serious, balanced leader who has improved the economy, enhanced China's global reach, strengthened its already significant military capability, and reduced corruption - a significant set of achievements in the public's eyes. With his potential to rule China for another decade or longer, China will experience a steady hand on the tiller of public policy.

Xi's popularity is already strong, and this move - at least in the short term - will enhance his already powerful public persona. Finally, the 64-year-old Xi's presumed longevity will provide China a leader with a clear, boldly stated strategic goal for its expanding role on the global stage. He laid this out in a major speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, roughly a year ago.

But there will be challenges as well. No matter how competent and effective a leader he is, Xi will be faced with several knotty problems: a badly damaged environment; a superheated real-estate market; badly skewed gender demographics (far more men than women); geopolitical and international legal disputes over the South China Sea; and an aging population (as the saying goes, China will grow old before

it grows rich). When growth begins to slow significantly, which it must over time, these irritants in the political and economic system will build up internal pressures and create political discontinuities, just as they always have in other authoritarian societies.

This presents the greatest risk for China. In the end, democracy, for all its flaws and shortcomings, is a safety valve for society when things become frustrating or go wrong - and something always goes wrong. Democracy allows the people to change leaders without bloodshed and anarchy. The Chinese people have been relatively content with their authoritarian system while hitting growth targets of 10 percent annually, building glittering new infrastructure, moving millions out of the countryside and into the urban settings, and lifting hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. But what will happen when internal pressures grow and there is

■ **Xi's presumed longevity will provide China a leader with a clear strategic goal for its expanding role on the global stage**

no mechanism to change leaders?

From the U.S. perspective, Xi's consolidation of power will make China an even more formidable competitor both within East Asia and globally. Countries in the neighborhood - most of which are U.S. allies, partners or friends - will see a single, powerful figure at the top of the Chinese leadership structure and be more inclined to enter into cooperative agreements with what they correctly view as a stable power. Globally, over the long term, authoritarian leaders also have advantages over the revolving door of real democracy. They gather decades of experience and can develop ambitious strategic plans that they will execute themselves.

Contrast this with the U.S. tendency to whipsaw in policy when we change administrations - look at Barack Obama and the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement, followed by Donald Trump's complete rejection of the treaty and tendency to blame China first for our economic problems. Washington will have to respond with an overarching strategy for dealing with China that transcends our individual administrations. This will be challenging but not impossible: The idea of containment against the Soviet Union (obviously not the right approach for China) in the Cold War, for example, was a consistent pillar of foreign policy for decades of presidents.

Perhaps most worrisome is the possibility that if Xi eventually comes under serious domestic pres-

sure, he may be inclined to create external threats to maintain his own popularity. Authoritarian leaders like Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and Vladimir Putin in Russia have done so, painting the U.S. as a nefarious enemy.

A hypernationalist turn in Beijing could lead to confrontation between the U.S. and China, and a path toward the so-called Thucydides Trap, in which a rising power confronts an existing power - a dynamic that has led so often to war over the past 2,400 years. It will take diplomacy, economic cooperation and leadership on both sides to avoid this.

One of the most iconic novels in the long history of China was written in the mid-18th century: "The Dream of the Red Chamber" by Cao Xueqin. It is a huge, sprawling depiction of Chinese society under the Qing dynasty, when rival families fought for power in a complex hierarchy under a powerful emperor, with a vastly changing international environment as backdrop. The lesson is that influence rooted in friendship with the emperor (who is never actually named in this dreamy novel) is fragile and uncertain. Much as in the Red Chamber, leaders in China will have to maneuver in a deeply complex internal world, even as China emerges as a fully formed leading actor in the global scene. This will challenge Western democracies at every level. Let us hope we are ready. **Bloomberg**

Term limit proposal sparks public dissent

IN a rare public expression of dissent in China, a well-known political commentator and a prominent businesswoman have penned open letters urging lawmakers to reject a plan that would allow President Xi Jinping to rule indefinitely.

Their impassioned statements on a popular messaging app were circulated widely after the ruling Communist Party announced a proposal Sunday to amend the constitution to scrap term limits on the president and vice president.

In a statement on WeChat to Beijing's members of China's rubber-stamp parliament, Li Datong, a former editor for the state-run China Youth Daily, wrote that lifting term limits would "sow the seeds of chaos."

"If there are no term limits on a country's highest leader, then we are returning to an imperial regime," Li told The Associated Press yesterday. "My generation has lived through Mao. That era is over. How can we possibly go back to it?"

Wang Ying, a businesswoman who has advocated government reforms, wrote on WeChat that the Communist Party's proposal was "an outright betrayal" and "against the tides."

"I know that you (the government) will dare to do anything," she wrote, "and one ordinary person's voice is certainly useless. But I am a Chinese citizen, and I don't plan on leaving. This is my motherland too!"

In a message that was swiftly deleted by censors, sociologist Li Yinhe called the removal of term limits "unfeasible" and would "return China to the era of Mao."

Li added, however, that delegates to the National People's Congress, China's parliament, are likely to pass the amendment unanimously since "they aren't really elected by the people, therefore they don't represent the people in voting, but will vote according to the leadership's design."

An official at the information department of the congress' Standing Committee said that he was not aware of the open letters.

While Xi, 64, is broadly popular in China for his economic stewardship, muscular foreign policy and emphasis on stability, it's difficult to determine how the move to end term limits has been received overall. Few Chinese dare speak out on political topics, even online, while the media are entirely state controlled and public polling on sensitive issues is nonexistent.



The congress is all but certain to pass the constitutional amendment when it meets for its annual session early next month, at which it will grant Xi a second five-year term and appoint new ministers and other government officials.

Under the 1982 constitution, the president is limited to two five-year terms in office, but Xi — already China's most powerful leader since Mao — is seemingly convinced that he's the only one who can realize his vision for China and wants additional terms to see through his agenda of fighting corruption, eliminating poverty and transforming China into a modern leading nation by midcentury.

A simple thirst for power is another possible motivation.

Government and party spokesmen have yet to offer any detailed explanations of the reasoning behind the dropping of

If there are no term limits on a country's highest leader, then we are returning to an imperial regime.

LI DATONG
FORMER EDITOR, CHINA YOUTH DAILY

term limits. Nor is it clear whether Xi will seek to remain president for life or will only stay on for a set number of additional terms.

"The fact that this proposal was possible means that Xi Jinping's influence is growing," said Chen Jieren, a Beijing-based independent political scholar. "The party is recognizing his achievements in fighting corruption. People have confidence in and respect for his resoluteness."

But Chen added: "China is not Cuba. Through the past few decades, Chinese people have come to understand that no one should be in power for life."

Foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said earlier in the week that the proposal "was made in accordance with the new situation and the practice of upholding and developing socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era."

In a commentary yesterday, the official China Daily newspaper mentioned the proposal to strip out language in the constitution limiting the president and vice president to two five-year terms, saying it was "necessitated by the need to perfect the party and the state's leadership system."

While Chinese censors have moved swiftly to delete satirical online commentary on the move, a range of opposition views continue to be shared. The Global Times, a newspaper published by the Communist Party, said "outside forces" were trying to challenge the party's leadership. **AP**



Rights group alleges China using big data as repression tool

HUMAN Rights Watch says it has found new evidence that authorities in one of China's most repressive regions are sweeping up citizens' personal information in a stark example of how big-data technology can be used to police a population — and potentially abused.

The rights group used publicly available government procurement documents, media reports and interviews to assemble details of the policing program called the "Integrated Joint Operations Platform" in Xinjiang, a sprawling area in northwest China that security officials say harbors separatist and religious extremist elements.

Unidentified sources inside Xinjiang described to Human Rights Watch the computer and mobile app interfaces of the IJOP software that tracks almost all citizens of the Turkic-speaking Muslim Uighur ethnic minority and stores detailed information including their travel history, prayer habits, the number of books in their possession, banking and health records.

Procurement notices show that the IJOP also deploys license plate tracking and facial-recognition cameras to follow people in real time and provide "predictive warnings" about impending crime, Human Rights Watch said.

Although surveillance is pervasive in many countries, including the United States, and has the potential for abuse, the technology is being deployed far more broadly in Xinjiang, said Maya Wang, senior China researcher at Human Rights Watch and the report's author.

"In China the programs are very explicitly focused on people who are politically threatening or an entire Uighur ethnic group," Wang said.

An official in the press office of Xinjiang police headquarters this week confirmed AP's

questions had been received but said leaders were out and he had no idea when or if there would be a reply. The official, like many Chinese bureaucrats, declined to give his name because he wasn't authorized to speak to reporters.

China's 10 million Uighurs already face a raft of restrictions not imposed on people of the Han ethnicity, who are the overwhelming majority in China. Uighurs face multiple hurdles in procuring passports and those who have them are required to leave them with the police. Hotels are required to register their presence with the local authorities and frequently turn them away to avoid the hassle. Frequent road blocks and checkpoints across the vast Xinjiang region enable authorities to stop people and check their mobile phones for content that might be deemed suspicious.

Such pressure was ratcheted up following a series of deadly attacks blamed on Uighur extremists seeking independence from Chinese rule.

A 2017 investigation by The Associated Press showed that thousands of Uighurs in Xinjiang, and possibly many more, have been sent to an extrajudicial network of political indoctrination centers for months at a time for reasons including studying abroad and communicating with relatives abroad.

The AP also found evidence in government documents and procurement contracts of the Xinjiang government compiling biometric and personal data and systematically rating its Uighur citizens' political reliability.

The Human Rights Watch report reveals for the first time that the disparate data collection efforts appear to be unified under one central digital database that calculates citizens' political risk. **AP**

Darlene Superville, Washington

OLYMPICS DIPLOMACY

Trump sees talks with North Korea only under 'right conditions'

PRESIDENT Donald Trump responded to an overture from North Korea for talks with the U.S., saying that will happen only "under the right conditions."

Trump raised North Korea at an annual White House meeting with the nation's governors after a North Korean envoy sent a message through South Korea on Sunday. The envoy said the North has "ample intentions" of holding talks with the U.S.

The White House said in response that it would take a wait-and-see approach. Trump followed up.

"We want to talk only under the right conditions," Trump said. The administration's position is that North Korea must get rid of its nuclear and missile programs before any talks can take place. The U.S. has applied a series of sanctions, including a fresh round last week, in what it says is a "maximum pressure campaign" to force North Korea to disarm.

The Trump administration says it's open to talks with North Korea, primarily to explain how America will maintain its pressure on the country until it takes steps toward eliminating its nuclear weapons. U.S. officials differentiate talks from negotiations. For those to occur, they first want Pyongyang to accept that its nuclear program will be on the table.

Speaking to the governors, Trump praised Chinese President Xi Jinping for bolstering his country's sanctions against the North and warned that Russia is "behaving badly" on the issue of sanctions.

"Russia is sending in what China is taking out," Trump said.

During Sunday's closing ceremony for the Olympics Games, the office of South Korean Pre-

AP PHOTO



Ivanka Trump (left) and Kim Yong Chol, vice chairman of North Korea's ruling Workers' Party Central Committee (right) at the closing ceremony of the Winter Olympics

sident Moon Jae-in announced that a North Korean delegate to the Olympics said his country is willing to hold talks with the U.S. The move comes after decades of tensions between the two countries, which have no formal diplomatic relations, and a year of escalating rhetoric, including threats of war, between Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

The North has "ample intentions of holding talks with the United States," Moon's office said. The North's delegation also agreed that "South-North relations and U.S.-North Korean relations should be improved together," the statement said.

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Sunday that the U.S., South Korea and the international community "broadly agree" that denuclearization must be the outcome of any dialogue with North Korea. She said North Korea has a bright path ahead of it if it chooses denuclearization.

"We will see if Pyongyang's message today, that it is willing to hold talks, represents the first steps along the path to denuclearization," she said in a written statement. "In the meantime, the United States and the world must continue to make clear that North Korea's nuclear and missile programs are a dead end."

Trump once scolded Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who favors diplomacy with North Korea over military confrontation, for "wasting his time trying to negotiate with Little Rocket Man," which is Trump's derisive nickname for North Korea's leader.

At the Olympics opening ceremony earlier this month, the North Korean leader's sister, Kim Yo Jong, shared a VIP box with Moon and Vice President Mike Pence, who led a separate U.S. delegation, creating some awkward moments. Though Pence stood to cheer the entrance of the U.S. team, he remained seated when athletes from North and South Korea marched together behind

a "unification" flag, leaving Moon to instinctively turn around and shake Kim's sister's hand.

Pence and Kim Yo Jong did not speak. Pence's office claimed afterward that the North pulled out of a planned meeting at the last minute.

During her visit, Ivanka Trump sat in the same box with Kim Yong Chol, vice chairman of North Korea's ruling Workers' Party Central Committee. They did not appear to interact when Jae-in shook hands with dignitaries at the beginning of Sunday's closing ceremony.

Trump stepped up the pressure campaign against North Korea on Friday by slapping sanctions on scores of companies and ships accused of illicit trading with the pariah nation. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said the U.S. has now blacklisted virtually all ships being used by the North.

Trump has vowed to use force if necessary to prevent North Korea from acquiring a nuclear-tipped missile that could strike the U.S. mainland. At a White House news conference on Friday, he warned that the U.S. would move to "phase two" in its pressure campaign if sanctions don't work. Trump said such a step could be "very rough" and "very unfortunate for the world." He did not elaborate.

"If we can make a deal it will be a great thing. If we can't, something will have to happen," Trump said. **AP**

NEW ZEALAND

National Party turns to indigenous Maori leader

AP PHOTO



Simon Bridges

LAWMAKERS from New Zealand's main conservative party yesterday chose their first indigenous Maori leader as they regrouped after an election loss.

National Party members selected 41-year-old Simon Bridges from among five candidates. He is a former lawyer and prosecutor who was first elected to Parliament 10 years ago. He held several ministerial portfolios in the previous government, including energy, labor and transport.

The party also chose a Maori deputy leader after Paula Bennett fended off one challenger to retain her position.

Maori make up about 15 percent of New Zealand's

population of 5 million people and first arrived in the country hundreds of years before Europeans.

New Zealand has had three women serve as prime minister but has never had a Maori prime minister, an opportunity Bridges would have if he wins the next election in 2020.

"I'm really excited about the opportunity I've got ahead," Bridges said. "I hope Maori are proud of me."

He said he wants to appeal to a "broad cross-wrangle" of New Zealanders because that's what his party represents.

Bridges replaces former Prime Minister Bill English, 56, who announced earlier this month that he

was quitting politics.

The National Party was in power for nine years before the election in September, when it won the most votes of any single party. But the liberal Labour Party was able to forge an alliance with two smaller parties and form a government under Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern.

The selection of Bridges could help blunt criticism that Ardern, 37, was better able to connect with a younger generation than English. Bridges and Ardern have faced off before, when they appeared on breakfast television together as "young guns" representing their respective parties.

Opinion polls indicate the popularity of Ardern and

the Labour Party have risen since she was elected, and Bridges said the National Party would face the next election as underdogs.

Ardern has moved quickly to fulfill campaign pledges such as banning foreign speculators from buying homes, increasing spending on education and making the nation carbon neutral by 2050.

Her announcement last month that she was pregnant attracted intense interest around the world. She is due to have her first child in June, when she plans to take six weeks' leave.

The challengers who Bridges beat were lawmakers Amy Adams, Steven Joyce, Judith Collins and Mark Mitchell. **AP**

SOUTH SUDAN

Amid war, a Miss World pageant carries on

Sam Mednick, Juba

ARUAL Longar was 9 years old when she decided to become a beauty queen. Growing up in refugee camps, the South Sudanese native watched her aunt compete on the world stage and dreamed of doing the same.

Today, the soft-spoken winner of last year's Miss World South Sudan says she's harnessing her powers to preach love and unity in her conflict-torn country.

"South Sudan is a place of war," the 25-year-old said. "But it can't stop us from achieving things."

Amid the ethnic violence, famine and mass displacement in five years of civil war, a Miss World pageant carries on in one of the world's most devastated countries.

Held in Freedom Hall, the main event venue for the elite of the capital, Juba, the pageant bears the signatures of any beauty contest worldwide. The young women compete on stage in front of hundreds of people and are judged on appearance and performance as well as intellect.

The Miss World qualifying pageant launched in 2011, the year South Sudan gained independence from Sudan. What began with 20 applicants from around the country and the diaspora has now grown to about 60. The global organization funds the local pageant; South Sudan's government, while supportive, says it doesn't contribute money.

The first round of auditions for this year's event will begin in the coming weeks, with the winner to be announced in August. The



The winner of Miss World South Sudan 2017, Arual Longar, spends time at a shelter for street children in Juba, South Sudan

new Miss South Sudan will compete for the global title of Miss World.

"This is a positive thing for women," said Shelina Doro, a women's protection officer with the United Nations. Even though beauty pageants can be "up for interpretation," she said that at the moment in South Sudan "this is what we have."

Women and girls have been targets for horrific physical and sexual violence amid the civil war that began in late 2013, enduring the threat of rape as they go about the daily basics of gathering water and firewood to survive. For the vast majority of people in the deeply impoverished East Afri-

can country, the annual beauty pageants are unknown or simply a dream.

But the organizers are determined to deliver on the theme "beauty with a purpose." Each year's Miss World pageant requires contestants to pick a cause that supports communities.

"Whatever it is they want to do, we help them push it out," Eva Lopa, one of the longtime judges, told The Associated Press. She said many of the young women choose issues close to home such as HIV/AIDS or campaigns to help the elderly who have suffered from years of conflict.

Since winning the Miss South Sudan title four years ago,

25-year-old Modong Manuela said she's been given an unprecedented platform to travel the country advocating for girls' education.

"I've been able to give back to my community," Manuela said. "Every time I talk, girls say: 'OK, it's possible to access things to study and become an important, empowered person.'"

After winning the pageant, Manuela created her own line of reusable sanitary napkins that allow girls to attend school while they're menstruating, a challenge for many young women across Africa.

However, other women's advocates cautioned against the idea

that women must be paraded and judged on their beauty before they are heard.

"It continues to perpetuate stereotypes of women, providing unrealistic expectations to young women and girls that looks are the most important when they could be focusing on other things that show the whole range of skills and capacities that they have," said Funmi Balogun, a women's rights activist working with U.N. Women in South Sudan.

But organizers said not only has the pageant been successful in drawing attention to the plight of girls in the country, making it more socially acceptable for women to work hard and "have brains," it also has had a significant impact globally.

"It really helps our country in terms of how we're perceived outside," said Clara Benjamin, a former supermodel involved with the pageant. "They think we're just a war-torn country and we're always fighting and then they see our girls and are like: 'You're from South Sudan?'"

The beauty pageant encourages the country's women to be proud of their looks, Benjamin said.

"It's the epitome of being comfortable in your own skin," she said. "We've been taught to be beautiful and black and proud and gorgeous."

Pageant organizers are now considering applying for Miss Universe, once owned by President Donald Trump. Despite Trump's reported vulgar comments about African nations, Benjamin said she thinks he would be a big supporter of South Sudan's participation: "I think it'll be great for

NIGERIA

Students too scared to return to school after attack

FRIGHTENED students stayed away from the school in northern Nigeria where Boko Haram extremists seized 110 girls in a raid a week ago, while the military said it had handed over the town's security to police ahead of the attack because it was "relatively calm."

The mass abduction from the Government Girls Science and Technical College in Dapchi has reminded many of Boko Haram's kidnapping of 276 girls from a boarding school in Chibok in 2014.

Anger has been growing as the government stru-

ggles to respond to the latest attack. Teachers resumed classes a day after Nigeria's government for the first time acknowledged the number of girls missing, but students were absent.

"They are too frightened to go there. We parents are equally frightened to see our daughters go there," said Mohammed Mele, who has two children in the school. "Many other parents are not likely to send their children back," another parent, Mohammed Ibrahim, told The Associated Press.

The school will reopen when "frayed nerves

cool down," Yobe state education commissioner Mohammed Lamin said.

The fate of the 110 girls is not known, but witnesses have said the Islamic extremists specifically asked where the girls' school was located. Some witnesses reported seeing young women taken away at gunpoint. Information Minister Lai Mohammed said 906 students were in the school at the time.

The military rejected reports that its recent withdrawal from Dapchi caused the Boko Haram attack, but in a statement it confirmed having handed over security of the

town to local police "on the premise that Dapchi has been relatively calm and peaceful." The military has not said when that handover occurred.

The Bring Back Our Girls movement that brought the Chibok mass abduction to world attention has embraced the cause of the Dapchi families, though with some astonishment that the tragedy has happened again. As the fourth anniversary of the Chibok kidnappings approaches, the movement says 112 of those schoolgirls are yet to be found.

"It is terribly EXHAUS-



The Government Girls Science and Tech College in Dapchi, Yobe State, where 110 girls were abducted

TING but WE SHALL STAND. WE SHALL," one of the movement's organizers, Oby Ezekwesili, said on Twitter of the Dapchi attack.

The latest mass abduction is a major

challenge for President Muhammadu Buhari, who has called the Dapchi kidnappings a "national disaster" and vowed that no effort will be spared to locate the girls. **AP**

At least 34 people were killed yesterday by airstrikes and shelling, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. The U.N. estimates that nearly 400,000 people live in dire conditions from the siege in eastern Ghouta, which has been under intensive bombing by government forces for weeks.

A Russia-ordered "humanitarian pause" has gone into effect to allow civilians to leave a rebel-held enclave near Damascus, giving a brief respite to the residents of the besieged area that has been under intense attack by the Syrian government for weeks.

Syria's state-run Al-Ikhbariya TV broadcast footage from a crossing point manned by the Syrian military between the enclave, known as eastern Ghouta, and Damascus, saying preparations were under way to allow civilians to leave, including medical cars. The TV said a restaurant was also set up there.

The Wafideen crossing point is near Douma, one of the largest towns in eastern Ghouta, only a few kilometers from Damascus. The TV showed small buses waiting at a parking area but there were no signs of

SYRIA | AIRSTRIKE KILLS 34

Russia-ordered 'pause' goes into effect east of Damascus

anyone coming out of the enclave.

Al-Ikhbariya's journalist on the ground said mortar shells had targeted the crossing, preventing civilians from leaving. It was not immediately possible to verify the claim.

The Russian five-hour humanitarian pause, ordered by President Vladimir Putin, comes as a U.N. cease-fire failed to take hold in eastern Ghouta, and residents and aid groups said such unilateral pauses are not internationally monitored.

The enclave's residents fear they could face harassment and possibly arrest if they go into government areas, after years of living in the rebel-held enclave.

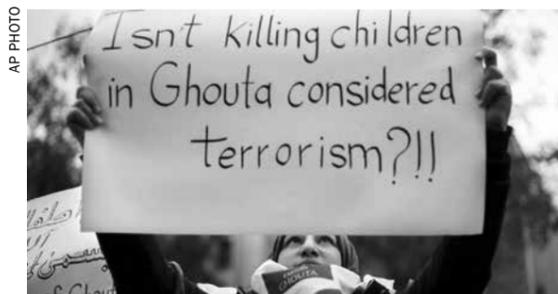
Ingy Sedky, spokeswoman for the International Committee of the Red Cross, said humanitarian corridors need to be well planned and must be implemented with the consent

of parties on all sides.

"This is essential so that people can leave safely, if they chose to do so," she said. "And for those who decide to leave, all measure should be taken to provide assistance, protection and shelter to them. And those who remain must be pro-

tected from any attacks."

A weekend resolution unanimously approved by the U.N. Security Council for a 30-day cease-fire across Syria failed to stop the carnage in eastern Ghouta where more than 500 people have been killed since last week. AP



BBC: Syrian women 'sexually exploited in return for aid'

WOMEN in Syria have been sexually exploited by men delivering aid on behalf of the UN and international charities, the BBC reported yesterday.

Aid workers said the men would trade food and lifts for sexual favors. Despite warnings about the abuse three years ago, a new report by BBC shows it is continuing in the south of the country.

UN agencies and charities said they had zero tolerance of exploitation and were not aware of any cases of abuse by partner organizations in

the region.

Aid workers told the BBC that "the exploitation is so widespread that some Syrian women are refusing to go to distribution centers because people would assume they had offered their bodies for the aid they brought home."

One worker claimed that some humanitarian agencies were turning a blind eye to the exploitation because using third parties and local officials was the only way of getting aid into dangerous parts of Syria that international staff could not access.

The United Nations Population Fund conducted an assessment of gender based violence in the region last year and concluded that humanitarian assistance was being exchanged for sex in various governorates in Syria.

The report, entitled "Voices from Syria 2018", said: "Examples were given of women or girls marrying officials for a short period of time for 'sexual services' in order to receive meals; distributors asking for telephone numbers of women and girls; giving them lifts to their houses 'to take something in return' or obtaining distributions 'in exchange for a visit to her home' or 'in exchange for services, such as spending a night with them'."

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POKER STARS LIVE MACAU

what's ON



11TH MACAU DESIGN BIENNIAL (HGM)

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

UNTIL: March 31, 2018

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

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

THE DINOSAUR HUNT

TIME: Round the clock ("Dino Escape" green-screen experience only available from 12pm-8pm)

UNTIL: April 15, 2018

VENUE: Studio City Macau

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8868 6767

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF MACAU – EXHIBITION

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

UNTIL: March 31, 2018

VENUE: Gallery of Carmo Post Office in Taipa

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2837 8138

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

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MONKEY KING

TIME: 4pm & 8pm daily (except on Thursdays)

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Offbeat

ACTRESS STACEY DASH FILES FOR CALIFORNIA CONGRESSIONAL RACE



Stacey Dash, the actress turned conservative political commentator, has filed paperwork to run for a congressional seat in Southern California.

Documents submitted yesterday to the Federal Election Commission show the "Clueless" star intends to run as a Republican in California's 44th District, a seat held by Democrat Nanette Barragan.

Registered Democrats outnumber Republicans by a wide margin in the Los Angeles-area district that contains the areas of Compton, Watts, San Pedro and North Long Beach.

A representative for the 51-year-old Dash didn't immediately respond to a request for comment. Dash hinted on social media this month that she was considering a run, even posting a "Dash to DC" logo.

Dash co-starred in the 1995 coming-of-age comedy film "Clueless." She worked as an on-air contributor at Fox News until 2016.

TV canal macau



13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
15:00	Miscellaneous
16:25	Zig Zag
17:35	Miscellaneous
18:25	Brazilian Soap Opera (Repeated)
19:15	TDM Interview (Repeated)
19:50	Portuguese Serie
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	Portuguese Documentary
21:55	Miscellaneous
22:10	Brazilian Soap Opera
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Miscellaneous
00:20	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
00:55	RTPi Live

cinema



CINETEATRO

28 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 SWEDISH PRIME MINISTER ASSASSINATED

The Swedish prime minister has died after being shot in a street ambush in central Stockholm. His wife was wounded.

Olof and Lisbeth Palme were attacked as they were leaving a cinema at about 2330 local time. Mr Palme was shot twice in the stomach, his wife was shot in the back. Police say a taxi-driver used his mobile radio to raise the alarm. Two young girls sitting in a car close to the scene of the shooting tried to help the Prime Minister.

He was rushed to hospital but was dead on arrival. Mrs Palme is being treated for her injury, but it is not thought to be life threatening.

Mr Palme, 59, and a social democrat, was serving his second term as leader. He believed in open government and shunned tight security.

He had two bodyguards to protect him on official functions but frequently walked unattended through the Swedish capital and went on holidays unescorted to his summer cottage on the island of Gotland.

His assassination will come as a shock to the Swedes. They have always taken great pride in the fact their prime minister could walk openly in the streets without the security which accompanies other heads of state.

Mr Palme will be remembered as a campaigner for the working classes and Third World causes. He was first elected as prime minister in 1969.

He became a leading advocate of peace and non violence and campaigned for an end to the war in Vietnam.

He saw himself carrying the banner of Social Democracy through Europe at a time when the Right was only temporarily in triumph.

He once said: "I know that the Thatchers and the Reagans will be out in a few years. We have to survive till then."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Olof Palme's deputy Ingvar Carlsson was chosen to succeed him as Social Democratic party leader.

At the time of his death, Mr Palme had been accused of being pro-Soviet and not safeguarding Sweden's interests. Arrangements had been made for a trip to Moscow to discuss Soviet submarine incursions into Swedish waters.

A drug addict and social outcast, Christer Pettersson, 42, was sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder in July 1989. The verdict immediately became controversial as the court's two judges voted for acquittal but six lay assessors disagreed. In October 1989, Pettersson was cleared. Although several witnesses thought they could place him at the scene of the crime, no motive was ever found for the killing.

Pettersson died in September 2004. He was reported to have confessed to the killing before his death.

The investigation into Olof Palme's death remains open.

In November 2006 police recovered a Smith and Wesson revolver believed to have been used in the murder. It was found in a lake in central Sweden.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 No one ever accused you of being shy, unwilling to speak your mind or let everyone nearby know exactly how you arrived at the opinions you express. You're showing the world how it's done right now.

Taurus April 20-May 20 You may not literally hit the jackpot, but it's still hard to beat the streak of good luck that is coming your way. It's not just in one area of your life, either - expect good fortune in love.

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 You're at your very best when dealing with conversation, communication, and travel, all of which are in play today. Your energy flow should help you quite a bit when dealing with other people in almost any way.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Just one thing can be counted on in your world today: Nothing you've planned - not even to the smallest detail - turns out as you'd imagined it. That's even more true for some secret relationship.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Expect an invitation to somewhere sweet by at least one awesome friend, colleague or random hottie who keeps looking at you funny. It may be getting old, though, if the thrill of the hunt has passed.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 For most of the day, things should move along quite well for you, especially with a certain work project you've been dealing with constantly, long after quitting time.

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 Though some believe otherwise, balance by itself isn't what you crave the most. In fact, you often find yourself enjoying extremely unbalanced situations (and people) for a time.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 When it comes to emotional closeness, you're absolutely without parallel. You can make almost anyone feel quickly comfortable, whether it's through conversation or a spontaneous hug.

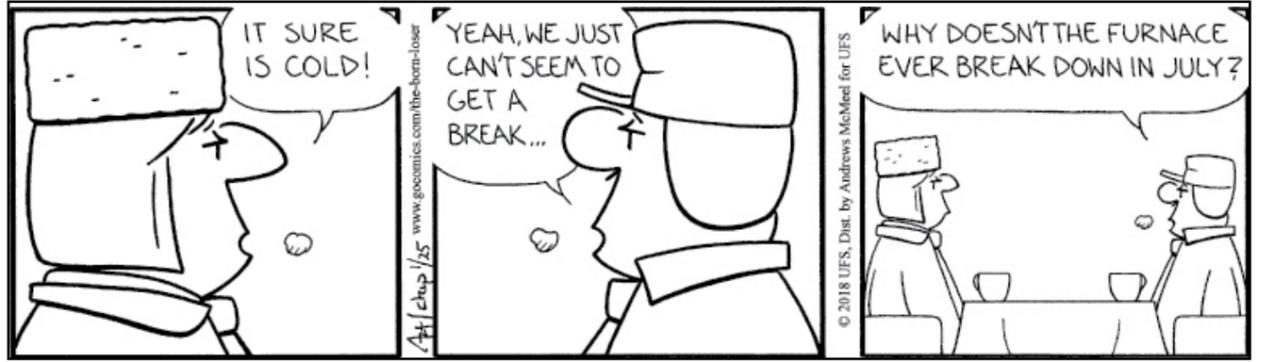
Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 It's definitely time for you to stop working on behalf of others, daydreaming about what you'd rather doing with your life or helping your friends get their plans off the ground.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 If you thought yesterday's turn of events was crazy - and a burden on your tight schedule - expect today to be even more so. The good news is that these days are also quite delightful.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 As spontaneous as you may be most of the time, you do love it when people insist on starting long conversations about whether or not love at first sight really exists.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 You usually prefer to keep your guest list pretty minimal - like a party of two, three or four tops. Right now, though, you're suddenly thinking of how awesome it would be to have everyone you know together at your place.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy

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

Easy+

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

Medium

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

Hard

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

WEATHER

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

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Specific geographical places; 6- One of superior rank; 11- Lotion letters; 14- Glad; 15- Low-budget prefix; 16- ___-Mart; 17- Gives off; 18- Republic in S South America; 20- Ed.'s in-box filler; 21- Daly of "Judging Amy"; 23- Jeter of the Yankees; 24- Chirp; 26- Normally; 28- Sweeping implements; 30- Scrub (a mission); 31- Actor's parts; 32- Sarge's superior; 33- Ciao!; 36- Burrows and Vigoda; 37- Clear of vermin; 38- Greek temple; 39- ___ anglais (English horn); 40- Marriott competitor; 41- Ship floors; 42- I ___ vacation!; 43- Federal soldier in the Civil War; 44- Tidal river; 47- Enticed; 48- Spoil; 49- Auction off; 50- Mythical bird; 53- Showing no remorse; 56- Novelist Calvino; 58- ___ Rosenkavalier; 59- At attention; 60- Like some checking accounts; 61- Time to remember; 62- Totaled, as a bill; 63- Boarded;

DOWN: 1- Excuse me; 2- Super Bowl XXXIV champs; 3- Letter-writer; 4- Quick on the uptake; 5- Methods; 6- Intended; 7- Land unit; 8- Slow run; 9- The loneliest number; 10- Graceful roundness; 11- Eddy; 12- Discussion group; 13- Like good pie crusts; 19- Nipple; 22- Affirmative reply; 25- Troubles; 26- German submarine; 27- And ___ goes; 28- Bric-a-___; 29- ___ Cop; 30- It comes from the heart; 32- Dull; 33- Explosive surge in a fire; 34- Symbol of slavery; 35- "___ quam videri" (North Carolina's motto); 37- Textile worker; 38- Hawaiian goose; 40- Low shrub; 41- One dearly loved; 42- Sisters; 43- Actor Brynner; 44- Musical study piece; 45- Less loony; 46- Jewelled crown worn by women; 47- Resulted in; 49- Faction of a group, often religious; 51- Bread spread; 52- "Barton Fink" director; 54- Altar constellation; 55- Guys; 57- Likewise;



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Rugby Academy

Fast and frantic rugby by the Macau Bats in Bangkok tournament

Donald Shaw, Bangkok
Special to MDT

THE Macau Bats had an eventful and ultimately very successful weekend of tournament rugby at the Bangkok International Tens. The club fielded three teams in the U10, U12 and U16 age groups. The teams displayed great resilience and no small amount of skill to return to Macau with some silverware.

Saturday's pool games were full of fast and frantic rugby. The U10s lost their first two games - narrowly to Centaurs from Singapore (1-2) and Kuala Lumpur Tigers (0-4). The team then rallied to defeat Sathit Kaset from Thailand (4-0). This secured third place in the pool and a semi-final on Sunday against the Centaurs. The stronger team from Singapore ran out convincing winners (0-5). This gave the Bats a place in the Shield Final against Sathit Kaset and the Bats put on their strongest performance to win 6-0 and secure the Shield - the first piece of silverware of the weekend. Bats coach Dell Griffin commented "This was a great experience for our younger players and a really positive result to win the Shield. This will give us great encouragement to continue to improve."

Meanwhile the U12s had turned in a number of impressive performances on Saturday, winning their three pool matches against the Bangkok Lions (3-0), Singapore Centaurs (5-0) and Singapore Dragons (2-1) to give themselves a strong chance of getting through to the Cup Final. The team duly secured their place by defeating the KL Cobras (7-1) early on Sunday morning to set up a final against KL Tigers.

The Cup Final was one of the best games of the weekend with a substantial crowd enjoying the game and getting fully involved. The Bats took an early lead, however the Tigers struck back to equalize. The Bats were playing an impressive scrummaging game and scored again to lead 2-1 at half-time. The Tigers then scored a try early in the second half to set up an enthralling final phase. The Bats played valiantly but succumbed in the final play of the game with the Tigers winning 3-2. Despite the loss the team put in a great performance over the course of the weekend.

According to coach Saj Fernando, "This was the finest group of games that the team has played, everyone played their part and we are all tremendously proud of their achievement. This has made the practice and extra work that the boys have been putting in all worthwhile."

The U16s got off to a difficult start in their pool game against Surin, the initial loss was overturned when it was established that Surin had fielded several overage players and the Bats were awarded a 10-0 win. This was followed by a much better performance against the KL Tigers, with the Bats unlucky to only draw the game 5-5. A tough game against the pool leaders Singapore Centaurs saw the Bats go down 17-0. This set up an exiting final pool game against the Philippine Volcanoes, who won this tournament in 2017, with the winner progressing to the Plate final. A very tight game followed with the Bats scoring a fine try and then holding their defensive line well as the Philippine team tried to break through. Full-time saw the Bats win 7-0 to take their place in the Plate final where they would play Singapore Dragons.

Having endured a tense game against the Volcanoes, the Bats tried to establish a quick lead in the final game, however each try from the Bats was matched by the Dragons, the difference being that Macau was able to gain extra points from the conversions. Halftime saw the Bats lead by 14-12, the Dragons then briefly led 17-14 in the second half before some fast breakaway runs enabled the Bats to score two tries and run out deserved 28-19 winners and secure the Plate.

Coach Paul Baker commented "Given the difficult start we had against Surin it was a tremendous credit to the team to bounce back and qualify for the plate final. To then win the Plate against a very good Singapore Dragons side was the icing on the cake."

A very happy Macau Bats tour party returned home late Sunday with an array of silverware - Plate winners (U16); Cup runners-up (U12) and Shield winners (U10).



Macau Bats U10 team winning the Shield at Bangkok International 10s



Macau Bats U10, U16 and U12 captains with their respective team cups from Bangkok International 10s.



BASKETBALL | NBA

Davis scores 53, Pelicans beat Suns for sixth straight win

Brett Martel, New Orleans

ANTHONY Davis' authoritative put-back dunk in the final minutes summed up a night on which his relentless play around the basket forced Phoenix's three tallest players to foul out.

Davis scored a season-high 53 points, grabbed 18 rebounds and blocked five shots, and the New Orleans Pelicans extended their winning streak to six with a 125-116 victory over the hapless Phoenix Suns yesterday [Macau time].

"Thank, you Anthony, for carrying us," Pelicans guard Jrue Holiday said. "Look at his numbers, man. He's something else."

Davis has scored no fewer than 27 points in a game during New Orleans' streak, scoring at least 38 five times and more than 40 four times.

After the 6-foot-10 Davis hit his 21st free throw, the Suns had to guard the Pelicans' All-Star power forward with 6-foot-8 small



New Orleans Pelicans forward Anthony Davis (23)

forward Josh Jackson because 7-footers Dragan Bender and Alex Len and 6-foot-10 Marque-

se Chriss had all fouled out with nearly five minutes still to play.

"A lot of their bigs were in foul trouble. I just wanted to hang around the rim as much as possible, knowing I had the size advantage," Davis said. "We'll take any type of win, any type of way we can get it."

Holiday scored 20 points for the Pelicans, whose season-best unbeaten run has pulled them into a tie with Portland for fifth place in the Western Conference despite being without All-Star DeMarcus Cousins, who was lost for the season Jan. 26 with a torn Achilles.

Emeka Okafor, brought back to the NBA for the first time since 2013 about a week after Cousins' injury, scored 14 points.

"Right now, everybody's playing their part. Everybody's doing it together," Davis said. "And then we're doing it without one of our main guys, so it makes it more special, especially when everybody thought we were going to go down in the standings. We're actually

moving up."

Devin Booker had 40 points and 10 rebounds for Phoenix, which lost its 10th straight and still has not won this month. T.J. Warren added 23 points and Josh Jackson had 20 points and 12 rebounds for the Suns, who led by as many as 17 in the second quarter but fell behind for good with about five minutes left in the fourth quarter.

New Orleans native Elfrid Payton scored 16 points, and his layup pulled Phoenix within 116-114 with 2:29 left, but the Pelicans scored the next five points on Darius Miller's 3 and Holiday's driving dunk, and Phoenix did not threaten again.

"We are playing a lot better and I like that we are still fighting. Executing down the stretch is something that will come with us," Booker said. "We are a young team and we have to learn that."

Pelicans coach Alvin Gentry angrily called a couple timeouts in the first half after watching Phoenix score easily on open shots. **AP**



FOOTBALL

Atletico says Carrasco and Gaitan joining Chinese club

Atletico Madrid says it has reached a deal for the transfer of midfielders Yannick Carrasco and Nicolas Gaitan to Chinese club Dalian Yifang. Carrasco had been with Atletico since mid-2015. The Belgian player made 124 appearances for the Spanish club. Gaitan arrived in 2016. The Argentina international made 49 appearances and scored four goals. The transfers' financial details were not immediately disclosed. Atletico is second in the Spanish league, seven points behind Barcelona.

AD

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opinion

Macau Matters

Richard Whitfield



SOME TRANSPORT GRIPES

Hac Sa Beach on Coloane Island was a cheap car park for Macau residents for years until they recently put in parking meters. After less than 3 years of use the parking meters are being ripped out and replaced by a new system which has a single pay point for every 10+ parking bays. The new system only has instructions in Portuguese and Chinese which is incredibly parochial for a supposedly international city like Macau. But I am more amazed by the waste and poor planning that led to the previous parking meters being installed for such a short time before they were replaced – incompetence or corruption? I suspect corruption, and we will see if it gets investigated.

Then we have the giant bus, truck and trailer park that is the industrial area behind the One Oasis housing estate on Coloane Island. Every large vehicle and trailer in Macau seems to park there overnight and when not in use and you regularly see workers transferring goods between containers in the area. Why are these vehicles permitted to clutter this area? In most countries bus, truck and heavy machinery owners need to have transport yards to store their vehicles but in Macau they seem to be able to store everything on public roads with impunity – why is this?

Before the parking meters, cars parked at Hac Sa Beach for months and were never towed, as they would have been in most other countries. Nonetheless, I know of two government vehicle impound lots – one near the go-kart track and another near “The Dome” sports center that never seem to be used. They fascinate me because of the high quality vehicles they contain which just seem to be rotting away – There is a Bentley, a Porsche Boxster and other convertibles and sports cars and any number of expensive German machines in these lots. For years I have asked random people what was the story with these impound lots because vehicles seemed to arrive but never leave. Only recently has one person told me that they occasionally put the vehicles up for tender. Anybody know when? And how they advertise these tenders?

Then we have the situation where it is almost impossible to import a vehicle from Hong Kong and get it registered for use in Macau. A friend used to have a London cab that he could only drive round his car park because he could not get it registered here. And yet, I am told it is not uncommon to ship Macau cars to and from Hong Kong for repainting because the quality of the workmanship done there is so much higher. The situation seems nonsensical to me. I, for one, would like to be able to buy a car in Hong Kong ship it here and easily register it because the selection of vehicles available there is so much larger.

And we have the never-ending saga of when Macau vehicles will be able to drive on Hengqin Island. It has been talked about for years and years and every few months the question is raised again during news lulls. Quite frankly, I expect to die before being able to drive on Hengqin island, which is a pity because there are interesting places to see there, and I have always liked such sightseeing. On a somewhat related topic there is the issue of driving to/from Hong Kong over the bridge once it is finally completed. It ain't going to happen.

These little stories just illustrate how poorly the Macau population is served by the officials it has appointed to manage the transport system. I see incompetence and self-serving behavior everywhere I look and we deserve better.

THE CHINA DEFENDS DETENTION FOR GRAFT SUSPECTS AS LAW-BASED

Chinese anti-graft official says a new regulation allowing the detention of corruption suspects for up to six months without charge is “based on rule of law.”

The head of Beijing’s anti-corruption watchdog body, Zhang Shuofu, yesterday said the rights of those in custody would be ensured, along with their living conditions and medical care.

The system was introduced last year to replace earlier powers wielded by Communist Party

investigators that were seen as unregulated and prone to abuse.

In China, party members suspected of corruption are first investigated by the dreaded Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, which has broad powers to restrict their movements and compel testimony.

President and party leader Xi Jinping has made cracking down on corruption a hallmark of his first five years in power.

Police: Kim Jong Nam told friend he feared for his life

Shah Alam

A police investigator testified yesterday that the estranged half brother of North Korea’s leader told a friend in Malaysia that his life was in danger six months before he was killed at an airport.

Indonesian Siti Aisyah and Doan Thi Huong of Vietnam have been charged with murdering Kim Jong Nam by applying the banned VX nerve agent to his face in a crowded Kuala Lumpur airport terminal on Feb. 13 last year. They allegedly conspired with four North Korean men who fled Malaysia the same day.

Chief police investigator Wan Azirul Nizam Che Wan Aziz told the court that Kim’s friend provided a driver for him during his trip to Kuala Lumpur last year after Kim told him that “my life is in danger” and “I am scared for my life” six months before he was killed. He didn’t say why Kim feared for his life.

If they are convicted, the two women could face the death penalty, but not if they lacked intent to kill. Defense lawyers say the women believed they were playing a prank for a hidden-camera TV show and had previously been paid to conduct similar pranks. Prosecutors contend



Indonesian Siti Aisyah (center) in a police car arrives for a court hearing at Shah Alam High Court

the women knew they were handling poison.

Aisyah’s lawyer, Gooi Soon Seng, also asked the policeman if Hong Song Hac, one of four suspects believed to have fled back to North Korea, was an official with the North Korean Embassy in Indonesia at the time. Wan Azirul initially said he didn’t know but then agreed when shown a document provided by the Indonesian foreign ministry.

Gooi told reporters later that police had failed to investigate the background of the four other suspects. He said the involvement of another North Korean Embassy official reinforced the belief that the embassy and its government were involved in the plot.

The court heard earlier that a North Korean Embassy of-

icial in Kuala Lumpur met with the four suspects at the airport before they left and helped them to check in. The court was also told that a car used to take the suspects to the airport was bought by the embassy in the name of one of its citizens just months earlier.

Kim, the eldest son in the family that has ruled North Korea since its founding, had lived abroad for years after falling out of favor. It is thought he could have been seen as a threat to the rule of his half brother, Kim Jong Un.

Malaysian officials have never officially accused North Korea of involvement in Kim’s death and have made it clear they don’t want the trial politicized.

The trial is to resume March 14. AP

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

Cesare Abbate/ANSA via AP



A person walks in front of the San Francesco di Paola Basilica during a snowfall in Naples, Italy. The Arctic storm dubbed the “Beast from the East” saw temperatures across much of Europe fall Monday and yesterday to their lowest level this winter.

Station	Air quality
Roadside	40-60 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	40-60 Moderate
Ambient	40-60 Moderate

SOURCE: DSI/MG

WORLD BRIEFS



SYRIA A brief, Russia-ordered “humanitarian pause” went into effect yesterday as Syrian and Russian forces set up a corridor to allow civilians to leave a rebel-held enclave near Damascus, but by the end of the five-hour pause, no civilians had crossed over from the embattled territory.

ISRAEL Jerusalem’s mayor yesterday suspended a plan to impose taxes on properties owned by Christian churches, backing away from a move that had enraged religious leaders and led to the closure of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

CZECH REPUBLIC A Czech court ordered the release of a Syrian Kurdish politician yesterday, angering Turkey, which had requested his extradition.



GERMANY The government is hoping to avoid bans on driving diesel cars in cities despite a court ruling that paves the way for such measures to improve air quality.

NIGERIA’s military says it has rescued more than 1,100 people, including women and children, who had been held by Boko Haram extremists in different parts of the Lake Chad region near Cameroon. More on p13

MEXICO A state assembly candidate in the southern Mexican state of Guerrero was killed just days after another office-seeker was shot to death in the same city, authorities reported.

BRAZIL Federal police believe a 2014 World Cup stadium in the city of Salvador was overpriced by more than USD130 million, and those funds were diverted to political campaigns.