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Chinese Premier sets robust growth target

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WORLD BRIEFS

PHILIPPINES The government’s legal counsel asked the Supreme Court yesterday to expel the chief justice for allegedly not declaring her assets, in a new attempt to remove the nation’s judicial leader.

AUSTRALIA The most senior Catholic Church leader to be charged with sexual abuse came close to confronting his accusers yesterday in a video-linked Australian court hearing to test the strength of the prosecution’s case.

MYANMAR About 200 people marched in Myanmar’s biggest city yesterday to protest government plans to amend a law governing public demonstrations to make it easier to charge participants with crimes and increase penalties for violations.

No legal charges filed following asbestos case near school
Primary school students accused of arson

Renato Marques

A group of three local primary school students aged 10 and 11 years old were accused of arson. Police (PJ) spokesperson informed yesterday during the joint press conference held at the PJ’s headquarters. The spokesperson said that the boys allegedly set fire to a burger box from a fast food restaurant where they had eaten. The case occurred on March 1 and was communicated to the PJ by the Fire Service (CST), who noted the arson occurred in front of a store located at the Rua de Francisco Xavier Pereira at the Mong Ha Area. CST were alerted to the fire by a passerby who witnessed the three suspects playing with fire. The man told the PJ that he witnessed his three children set the fire by shouting at them. After that, they ran in the direction of a fast food restaurant located nearby, in the Avenida de Venceslau de Morais. The PJ then started to investigate the case and reviewed surveillance cameras in the area in order to try to identify the suspects. According to the information provided by the PJ, the case only progressed because one of the suspects was recognized in footage from the next day (March 2) of the surveillance cameras of the Mong Sin Public Housing Building where he lives. Questioned by the police, the child told his version of events, then revealed the identity of the other two suspects. The three children claim that they were eating in the fast food restaurant. As they were leaving, one of them, who was in possession of a lighter, lit the burger box outside and setting fire to it “just for fun.” Since the minors are relatively young (10 and 11 years old), they cannot be criminally prosecuted. Thus, the case was forwarded to the Public Security Police Force (PSP) which will proceed to follow up with the children’s school.

In a separate case, also reported by the PJ, on March 4, between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m., a special operation was undertaken by the police; around 20 inspectors were mobilized with the aim of performing inspection-related activities in the City of Dreams Casino and the casino surroundings. This raid was designed to target people performing illegal money exchange operations. These artists have been responsible for many fake cases and the raid caught a total of 15 people (six males and nine females) red handed. All the detainees are from mainland China, and are aged from 26 to 55 years old. All the detainees have been accused of performing illegal activities related to currency exchange.

In a separate story, the PSP noted a report from the Identification Services Bureau claiming that three people participated in a fake marriage scheme in order to obtain resident authorization in the region.

According to the investigation on the documents received and exchanged with mainland counterparts, the task which the resident came to Macau in 2004, right after divorcing her mainland husband. Almost immediately, she married a local man. In 2012, the same woman filed a divorce from her Macau husband, and less than one month after this, she remarried her first husband from the mainland. She then filed a request with the Macau Government for a residency authorization for her first (and now current) husband.

Due to the facts, the police believe that there is strong evidence that the three people are involved in an illegal scheme to seek residency in Macau by fake marriage. All three suspects are aged around 50 years old and are either unemployed or retired.
The President of the New Macau Association (NMA), Kam Sut Leng, has suggested the local government establish an independent organization to handle non-physical sexual harassment cases.

In Kam's opinion, the government is responsible for establishing the facts in this type of sexual harassment. Kam proposed the independent organization to be similar to Hong Kong's Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), which is an independent legal organization which possesses investigation rights over sexual, disability, family and racial discrimination.

"We can see that protection against verbal or [other] non-physical [sexual harassment] is very rare in Macau," Kam said, adding that Macau authorities need to adopt the same standard as Hong Kong.

Kam proposed that Macau should establish a database to record all complaints, information on cases, and other data related to sexual harassment, alongside the reasons for accepting or rejecting each case.

"This way, it would be able to provide reliable references to the government to inform future amendments to related laws," the activist also thinks that the government should set up a sexual harassment prevention team within each government department, as well as draft prevention instructions to pre-empt sexual harassment cases which might occur.
Macau’s Patuá classified among most vulnerable languages

Daniel Beitler

A recent academic paper on contact languages has found the Macanese Patuá to be “critically endangered”, placing it among the most vulnerable languages worldwide.

A contact language is a marginal language used for basic communication between people without a mutual language. The Macau Patuá, one such contact language, evolved from the descendants of Portuguese settlers in Macau, who often married Chinese natives or other peoples from nearby Portuguese territories, such as Malacca and Ceylon (Sri Lanka).

In the paper, titled “Contact languages around the world and their levels of endangerment”, author Nala H. Lee of the National University of Singapore assessed 96 contact languages through a “Language Endangerment Index” that is based on four factors: intergenerational transmission, absolute number of speakers, speaker number trends, and domains of use. Each factor is rated on a scale of 0 (safe) to 5 (critically endangered).

Patuá is rated “critically endangered” — the most vulnerable category — for each of the factors except for the absolute number of speakers, despite there being only an estimated 50 proficient speakers.

This puts the creole language as one of the most endangered of the 96 contact languages in the assessment.

In justifying the ratings for each of the four categories, Lee writes that Patuá (like other similar languages) is “only spoken among a limited subset of people from the grandparents’ generation or older,” and is “spoken by a small percentage of the community [in which it is found], and speaker numbers are decreasing rapidly.”

According to an estimate from 2007, there may be as few as 50 proficient speakers of the creole language, although other estimates suggest thousands may have some familiarity with it. Nevertheless its usage in the modern world is limited to very few domains, “such as in ceremonies, songs, prayers and in limited domestic activities.”

Some scholars suggest that half of the world’s languages will no longer be spoken by the end of the century.

The most notable use of Patuá in Macau is an annual comedy and satire show staged by Doci Papiaçam di Macau (literally, “sweet language of Macau”), a group that seeks to preserve the unique dialect through original productions.

In 2009, UNESCO classified Patuá as a “critically endangered” language, and in 2012 Patuá-language Theater was inscribed on the list of Macau SAR’s Intangible Cultural Heritage.
No further legal action has been taken following the presence of asbestos in demolition work carried out in a plot located in Taipa at Padre Tomás Pereira Avenue. The demolition and construction works were conducted illegally and a local school was affected.

In January, several parents from the Macau Anglican College refused to bring their children to school following the discovery of asbestos, which can cause serious chronic respiratory disease, in the vicinity.

The toxic material was discovered as a rooftop was being demolished in the area.

Questioned by the Times, the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT), stated that it has issued an embargo order to the owner of the construction site, and that the work was suspended – as has been previously reported.

The bureau’s statement implied that no further fines were handed out to the owner, despite the fact that the works were conducted with no legal permits, and that they put the schoolchildren at risk.

"In order to ensure that materials containing asbestos do not impact the environment, the board of the Environmental Protection Services (DSPA) has commissioned a professional body to carry out the inspection. So far, there have been no abnormal situations," it noted.

"The DSPA also required the site owner to reduce the chance of asbestos case close to school

manager to minimize pollution and carry out subsequent control work, according to expert suggestions, until the safety of the site is confirmed," DSSOPT added.

The bureau also noted that since there was damage caused to the building by Typhoon Hato in August last year, a delay in completion was caused in the opening of the market, and that Hato inspired some new structural changes to reduce the chance of similar damage in the future.

The Secretary for Administration and Justice, Sonia Chan, has visited the market yesterday, stating that the new facility is one of the measures planned by the government to improve local citizens quality of life.

Patane Market opens today

The new market in the Municipal Complex of the Patane will open to the public today. The new venue, located on the Avenida de Demétrio Cunati, will finally replace the temporary market, offering more space and better living conditions for citizens, according to the Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau (IACM). One of the features of the new complex is the car park, that will begin operating on March 5.

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Pop art exhibition revives Asian-American youth icons

A pop art exhibition

A pop art exhibition opened at the Rui Cunha Foundation yesterday evening, showcasing the works of California-based contemporary artist Louise Leong.

Leong, whose family is from Macau, has an artistic background in silkscreen printmaking, a technique traditionally used for the commercial production of t-shirts. Having studied this method for fine art application, Leong today creates contemporary pop art using characters, products and icons from her youth.

“A lot of my imagery is bound in childhood memories of play and nostalgia,” said Leong yesterday at the exhibition opening. “A lot of people see my work and say that they remember [these items] from my childhood. As we grow older these memories grow further and further apart from us, and so I like to make art to recall those memories, and I think that resonates with people.”

Among the items depicted Leong’s work are ice tea beverages and cartoon characters — some recalled from her childhood, and others a product of her imagination.

A lot of this just comes back to nostalgia. I draw things that link to my roots and my childhood.

LOUISE LEONG

“I am inspired by childhood play memories and children’s media, like comic books and cartoons. I loved them as a child, and I continue to surround myself with them,” she said. “I’ll see something and think: oh I need to paint that. It’s very childlike; the way that children paint and draw what they know. It’s not always conscious for them.”

Part of the reason that mascots and cartoons are so special to me is because when you are a child, even before you can speak, you can recognize images,” she added in conversation with the Times. “A lot of this just comes back to nostalgia. I draw things that link to my roots and my childhood.”

Leong was the U.S. curator for the “Macau x San Francisco Art of Illustration” show, a 2016 exhibition showcasing 40 artworks from 20 artists based in either Macau or the United States. According to organizers, the exhibition was designed to connect both places with “a visual language shared with a sense of humor, surrealism and graphic appeal.”

Leong’s work resonates broadly with other Asian-Americans who have a connection to the items, characters and products shown in her art.

As for Macau audiences, for whom these items are somewhat commonplace, Leong thinks her art can help to revive memories of their youth.

“At the very least it might be novel to see a painting of something so commonplace in a gallery like this,” she said.

Planet J confident of growth this year

Planet J announced last week that it has added augmented and virtual reality games to the indoor theme park and has invited government officials to experience its eight gaming zones.

Billed as “Asia’s love-action-role-play” theme park, the park offers a series of fantasy games; however, acquiring revenue has been problematic for the company.

Director of Planet J, Damon Chan, admitted that the MOP1 billion investment has not become profitable. Chan expressed his belief that the slow start was due to inadequate promotion.

Although the theme park opened in 2016, it only started to promote its site in January 2017. The introduction of online promotion led to a 30 percent increase in its visitors.

“We will continue to do promotion for visitors in 2018. I expect to see double [in visitor numbers] at least,” Chan told the press.

Planet J was designed to be capable of hosting a total of 7 million people per year and they hope to see more visitors and reach a total that is closer to their full capacity this year.

“I can say that our promotion is not enough, so we will let more Macau, mainland and Hong Kong residents know more about it; these are our main markets,” said the director.

At Planet J, each player is accompanied by a “magic book” — a personalized mobile device that connects with more than 200 games.

Visitors will have to move through a series of themed zones, completing challenges that can be seen on the device.

“We independently created every game, which other places do not have. We went through a tough time, because we created [the games] ourselves,” said Chan.

When questioned about whether they could continue to build the business even without profit, Chan said, “the number of visitors is lower than the minimum of our requirement; if you look at all the theme parks around the world, it takes three to five years for a theme park before it reaches its maturity.”

The director defended their progress, saying that although they have not reached their visitor arival goals, he is confident that through the promotions that will be conducted this year they will hit their target.

“It is a right decision to have opened it in Macau, even though we haven’t started to make money,” Chan concluded.

Corporate Bits

MGM celebrates CNY with seniors charity

On March 3 MGM celebrated the start of the Chinese New Year with senior members of the Women’s General Association of Macau. As part of the celebration, a lion dance was performed by MGM’s Junior Lion Dance Troupe, alongside other singing performances.

The celebration was jointly organized by five service centers operating under the Women’s General Association of Macau. The event achieved its goal of spreading the holiday’s warmth and kindness to approximately 200 senior members, according to a press release issued by the gaming operator.

The five centers included the Family Service Centre, Centro de Apoio Familiar da Zona Norte, Centro de Apoio Multiplo a Familia “Alegria em Harmonia,” Joyful Family Service Centre, and the Posto de Apoio Familiar das Ilhas.

MGM held a series of its signature initiatives, including the “Spring Clean for Love” and “Haircut for Love” programs during the Chinese New Year. The events were made possible through the participation of its Golden Lion Volunteer Team members.

REGISTRATION FOR ASIAN ATTRACTIONS EXPO OPENS

The International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) has opened its registration for the Asian Attractions Expo (AAE) 2018, which will be held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre in Hong Kong on June 5 to 8.

According to IAAPA’s press release, more than 8,000 global amusement park and attractions industry professionals from more than 50 countries will gather to buy, learn, and network at the largest international conference and trade show for industry in Asia.

More than 300 exhibiting companies will take part, displaying and unveiling the latest innovations, products, and services that will shape the future of the industry.

The conference offers attendees 15 general education sessions on topics including security, water parks in Asia, show management, employee engagement and theme park developments.

In addition, the conference will also feature a program designed for leaders with fewer years of experience in attraction management, and a program to learn about the latest developments on ride and compliance safety standards.
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Axa bets market set for rebound with USD15.3b XL deal

Jack Farchy, Javier Blas

NOBLE Group Ltd. said its outgoing chief executive Officer Thomas Buberl is betting the worst is over for insurance.

His USD15.3 billion offer for XL Group Ltd., the company’s biggest ever, will make Axa the top provider of commercial casualty coverage just as premiums rise after last year’s hurricanes and California wildfires. The deal will also show the insurer to focus on parts of the industry that are less sensitive to financial markets, a key target for insurers after investment income was hurt by a decade of low interest rates.

Shareholders were less than enthusiastic about the deal. The Paris-based firm fell the most since June 2016 after the announcement, with analyst Daniel Bischof of Baader Helvea AG saying that the deal has a sound logic, but the price is at the upper end of expectations. Axa is paying $27.60 a share, a premium of about one-third compared with the stock’s closing price on Friday. XL’s shares had gained 25 percent this year before yesterday’s announcement.

The price “means a substantial part of the expected synergies were passed on to existing shareholders,” Bischof wrote. It should result in a lower cost of equity for Axa and reinforces the firm’s growth potential, he said.

Axa’s premium was also falling for most of the past decade, driven by a lack of natural disasters and competition from cheaper rivals. The $3 billion losses last year from weather-related disasters including Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria is finally leading to increases in pricing, prompting an uptick in deals.

Buberl, the 44-year-old CEO, agreed the biggest-ever purchase of a U.S. insurer by a European buyer less than two years after taking the position. XL had also attracted interest from competitors including Germany’s Allianz SE, Bloomberg reported earlier.

“This is not an obvious fit for Axa,” UBS Group AG analyst Colm Kelly wrote in a note to clients. In recent years, “Axa has grown via bolt-on acquisitions to achieve scale, not large-scale M&A.”

The deal does chime with Buberl’s plan to focus on products that require technical expertise and regular customer contact, which may allow the firm sell additional policies to the clients. It will lead to annual pretax synergies of $400 million and will be cash-accrue, according to Axa’s statement yesterday.

“From a P&L perspective, Axa needed in my view a stronger presence in the U.S.” Davide Serra, CEO of money manager Algebris Investments, said in an interview on Bloomberg Television. Focusing on that segment “over the medium term, it’s a safer bet.”

The insurer plans to finance the acquisition using cash in hand, subordinated debt and proceeds from an IPO of its existing U.S. operations. It’s also arranged 9 billion euros ($11 billion) of back-up bridge financing.

The IPO, which Axa announced last year, will see the insurer list its U.S. Life & Savings unit and its 64 percent stake in Alliance-Bernstein in the second quarter. Axa plans to accelerate its sell-off of the combined businesses following the XL deal.

Companies like XL Group have become takeover targets after the heavy toll of natural disasters last year pushed prices for coverage higher. Last month, the firm’s CEO Michael McGavick said he was optimistic about XL’s progress on the back of a solid capital position and growth in premiums.

The biggest insurance takeovers this year had been American International Group Inc.’s January agreement to buy Validus Holdings Ltd. for more than $5 billion in cash. SoftBank Group Corp. wants to buy a stake in reinsurer Swiss Re while Nine Group Holdings is buying Standard Life Aberdeen Plc’s insurance business.

Formerly a regional insurer in Normandy, Axa built itself into Europe’s second-largest insurer through major takeovers in the 1990s. Formerly a regional insurer in Normandy, Axa built itself into Europe’s second-largest insurer through major takeovers in the 1990s. Recent deals have been smaller-scale, acquiring assets or setting up partnerships in emerging markets including China, Nigeria and Colombia.

Noble group paid Co-CEO USD20m as company lost billions

The remuneration is about one-third of Noble’s $62.3 million loss in the first six months, said a person familiar with the situation, who asked not to be named as the figures were confidential.

Frase, an oil trader who previously worked at JPMorgan Chase & Co., Lehman Brothers and Goldman Sachs Group Inc., resigned as co-chief executive and head of global oil liquids of Noble in November, after the company agreed to sell its remaining oil trading business to Vitol Group.

Earlier, Noble sold two other energy businesses to trader Mercuria Energy Group Ltd. and Calpine Corp.

His remuneration totaled $202.0 million dollars in 2017, according to Noble’s financial statements, of which $5.5 million was a “share-based payment expense” and $16.7 million described as “other remuneration. That’s more than all the company’s directors put together were paid in the previous year.

Noble’s restructuring plan has come under fire from some investors for its proposal to hand a 20 percent stake in the revamped group to manager GoldblocKs Investment Co., the fifth-largest shareholder, asked in a statement last week: “Why should this same management that had created Noble’s present debacle be rewarded, let alone so richly?”

The financial statements, disclosed last week, report compensation for the company’s executive directors, who are listed as Frase, current CEO Michael McGavick, Chairman Paul Brough, and founder Richard Elman. It further divides the data into remuneration of directors at continuing operations and remuneration of directors at discontinued operations - a classification which applies only to Frase, whose oil trading business is reported as a discontinued operation throughout Noble’s accounts.

In a statement announcing his departure in November, the company said Frase had “decided to resign” to focus on other opportunities, and praised him as “the guiding force behind the expansion and profitability of the Group’s global oil liquids platform.”

The oil- and gas-trading businesses made a net loss of $1.05 billion last year as Noble wound down the unit. A person familiar with the situation said that the $16.7 million in remunerations included retention payments to ensure management continuity as the oil business was sold, explaining that it was a requirement imposed by the company’s banks in order to continue lending through the sale process. It also included a termination payment, and writing off a $5 million loan from the company to Frase, the person said.

A second person familiar with the matter said that while retention payments were paid in 2017, they related to performance in previous years, plus payments to settle tax bills. The second person also said part of the loan was repaid.

Brough, Randall and Elman together received total remuneration of about $15 million last year, according to the statements. Noble Group’s shares have come under greater pressure since the $5 billion loss was confirmed last week. The stock tumbled as much as 7.7 percent to 14.4 Singapore cents yesterday, falling for an eleventh day, before closing at 15 cents.

In a call with analysts last week, Brough responded to criticism that the proposed restructuring would leave some investors with large losses, saying: “We are calling for the write-off of $1.7 billion of debt and exchanging that to equity, and I’m afraid the reality is that doesn’t leave very much for other stakeholders.”

Bloomberg
How to make money out of the National People’s Congress

**China’s biggest political event of the year is a key opportunity to gather valuable trading intelligence about the world’s second-largest economy.**

The National People’s Congress brings almost 3,000 delegates from all over China - including some of the country’s richest and most influential businesspeople - to Beijing to discuss policy and the way forward. It kicked off yesterday with the release of Premier Li Keqiang’s work report, which covered everything from plans for a property tax to cutting air pollution.

While President Xi Jinping and his top cadres have the final say on what’s pushed forward, a range of issues are likely to get an airing at the discussion “sessions” to be held over the next fortnight.

**The Debt CRACKDOWN**

New measures on the debt front could exacerbate pressure on the bond market in the long term, said Xie Le, chief Asia economist at Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria SA in Hong Kong. Winners from further crackdowns could be large banks and insurers as reform improves their asset quality, according to Steven Leung, executive director at UOB Kay Hian (Hong Kong) Ltd.

Deliberating also serves China’s push toward higher-quality rather than faster economic growth. Industries like advanced manufacturing, technology, big data and artificial intelligence are key to this, according to analysts at SWS Research Co. in Shanghai.

**GREENING CHINA**

Xi’s address to the twice-a-decade Communist Party congress in October was heavy on environmental rhetoric, triggering a rally in green stocks. A push to switch millions of households in northern China from coal to gas heating this winter didn’t go smoothly, but did result in reduced air pollution in places like Beijing. The premier also went green yesterday, announcing a 19 percent hike in spending on anti-pollution initiatives.

Policies in this area potentially benefit businesses in new energy and manufacturers of environmental-protection machinery, Pacific Securities Co. said. So-called old economy stocks in the steel, coal and energy industries could take a hit.

Dozens of energy sector chiefs attended the NPC, including the chairman of China National Petroleum Co. and Sinochem Group and the general manager of China Energy Investment Corp., - now the world’s biggest power company - as well as many new energy and manufacturing businesses.

China is pushing hard to become the Detroit of electric cars, with the government targeting 7 million EVs by 2025. Shares of major domestic manufacturers - SAIC Motor Corp., Great Wall Motor Co., Geely Automobile Holdings Ltd. and the Warren Buffett-backed BYD Co. - could react to developments on this front, with Premier Li saying that China planned to further open up the new-energy vehicle sector to foreign investors.

**THE HOUSING MARKET**

China has gone through bouts of tightening limits on property sales and then easing them, only exacerbating the housing-market frenzy by prompting speculators to second-guess policy changes. China will push forward with a property tax, the premier said.

The NPC putting such a levy on its 2018 legislative agenda could impact market sentiment, Wang Tao, head of China economic research at UBS Group AG in Hong Kong, said before Li’s work report was issued. BBVA’s Xia said a tax would mean large numbers of unoccupied properties would likely be sold.

Real estate stocks have been some of the best performers among Chinese equities over the past year, with developers like China Evergrande Group, Sunac China Holdings Ltd. and Country Garden Holdings Co. up at least 140 percent. All three stocks fell on yesterday.

**GAMBLING, AND ‘REFORM’**

Every Chinese province has discussion sessions on issues unique to their area, and the meetings held by Hainan, an island off China’s southern coast, will hold particular allure.

The province is home to besieged conglomerate HNA Group Co. and is said to be mulling allowing online gambling, a lottery or sports betting. Casinos are banned everywhere in China but Macau, so any news on this front could impact gambling stocks in the enclave, as well as property developers, hotel companies, tourism firms and retailers.

“Reform” has been a buzzword among China’s policy elite, with Liu He, Xi’s top economic advisor, saying at Davos that China would surprise the world with its capacity for change. If the “reform concept” is pushed at the NPC, stocks related to China’s Belt and Road initiative, the development of the Shanghai Free-Trade Zone, as well as Hainan could benefit, according to Zhonghai Securities Co.

“The market will be extraordinarily sensitive to policy signals,” said Credit Suisse Group AG analyst Vincent Chan and Hu Shen.

Equities are already moving on the NPC. Defense stocks on the mainland advanced yesterday after China’s finance ministry said in its report to the meeting that military spending will rise 8.1 percent to 1.11 trillion yuan. Chinese telecommunications stocks fell after Li said China will reduce mobile internet service fees by at least 30 percent.

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**One company, two systems, and Tencent’s national service**

**Tim Culpan, Bloomberg**

The founder and chairman of China’s dominant social media company wants greater integration between the mainland and Hong Kong. Specifically, Ma Huateng advocates linking Hong Kong, Macau and the southern province of Guangdong - an area known as the Pearl River Delta. And he’s got just the tool to help: Tencent Holdings Ltd.’s WeChat instant messenger and its one billion global users.

It feels almost sacrilegious to describe WeChat as merely an instant messenger, given that it’s the most pervasive force in Chinese technology. With just one app the Tencent chairman, who’s also known as Pony Ma, has linked a huge swath of China’s communications, payments, social media, shopping, transport, news and games.

With user growth slowing to an estimated 2 percent in the December quarter, WeChat can’t rely on booming uptake of social media to keep growing the top. But it doesn’t need to. Ma’s strategy of driving deeper into consumption has helped the company double the amount of revenue it extracts per user in just two years. It’s the kind of breadth and depth that a one-party state keen on keeping tabs on citizens just two years.

The notion that WeChat is your ID isn’t surprising for Chinese users. In fact, Tencent trialing a virtual ID card in Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong, seems like a natural step. Hong Kongers, though, bristled at increased meddling by China’s government in the affairs of a city that’s supposed to have a high degree of autonomy. Integrating the two identification systems will have them even more wary, which is why Ma wants to play up the practical aspects such as faster border crossings and easier payments. If the plan goes ahead - and it probably will - Tencent will get greater stickiness for its WeChat system, while China will gain an even more convenient channel for tracking people in both political systems.

Shareholders will love it, and so will Xi.
China to recruit civilian astronauts, boost crewed missions

China will begin recruiting civilian astronauts for its military-backed space program and plans to increase the number of crewed missions to around two a year, a top official with the country’s space program said.

China’s third batch of astronaut trainees will include recruits from industry, research institutions and universities who will help build and crew China’s independent space station, Yang Liwei, deputy director of the China Manned Space Engineering Office, told reporters on the sidelines of the annual session of China’s ceremonial parliament.

New astronauts will include maintenance engineers and payload specialists as well as pilots, Yang, who became China’s first man in space in 2003, said last week.

China selected 14 astronauts, or yuhan-gyuan in Chinese, in the late 1990s and another seven in 2010, including two women. A total of 11 have been sent on six missions.

China now operates the Tiangong 2 precursor space station facility, while the permanent station’s 20-ton core module will be launched this year. The completed 60-ton station is set to come into full service in 2022 and operate for at least a decade.

China was excluded from the 420-ton International Space Station mainly due to U.S. legislation barring such cooperation and concerns over the Chinese space program’s strong military connections.

Since China conducted its first crewed missions — becoming only the third country after Russia and the U.S. to do so — it has staged a spacewalk and landed its Jade Rabbit rover on the moon. A mission to land another rover on Mars and bring back samples is set to launch in 2020. China also plans to become the first country to soft-land a probe on the far side of the moon.
KOREA

Seoul envoys to meet Kim Jong Un during Pyongyang trip

Hyung-Jin Kim, Seoul

ENVOYS for South Korean President Moon Jae-in planned to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un at the start of a rare two-day visit to Pyongyang that's expected to focus on how to ease a standoff over North Korea's nuclear ambitions and restart talks between Pyongyang and Washington.

The 10-member South Korean delegation is led by Moon's national security director, Chung Eui-yong. The meeting with Kim, which was announced by Moon's office, would mark the first time South Korean officials have had direct contact with the young North Korean leader in person since he took power after his dictator father's death in late 2011.

Chung's trip is the first known high-level visit by South Korean officials to the North in about a decade.

It wasn't immediately clear what they would discuss or what else is on the itinerary of South Korean envoys' trip. But hopes are high that the Koreans can extend the good feelings created by North Korea's participation in the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics in South Korea last month. Kim's barrage of weapons tests over the last year has raised fears of war.

If North Korea shows a willingness to disarm during the visit by the South Koreans, there is speculation that it and Washington could set up their own talks on the North's nuclear weapons. But North Korea has repeatedly said it won't put its nuclear program up for negotiation, while the United States has made clear that it doesn't want empty talks and that all options, including military measures, are on the table.

Previous warming ties between the Koreas have come to nothing because of North Korean weapons tests and the North's claims that annual U.S.-South Korean war games, which will likely happen this spring, are a rehearsal for an invasion.

After their arrival in Pyongyang, the South Korean envoys met with North Korean officials and worked out details of their trip, which includes attending a dinner hosted by Kim, according to Moon's office.

North Korean officials had no immediate comment. The country's state-run media reported that the delegation had arrived but had no further details.

Before leaving for Pyongyang, Chung said he would relay to North Korea Moon's hopes for North Korean nuclear disarmament and a permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula.

“I will certainly deliver President Moon's resolve to achieve a denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and genuine and permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula,” Chung said. He said he'll push for “in-depth” talks to find ways to help arrange the restart of dialogue between Pyongyang and Washington.

Chung's delegation includes intelligence chief Suh Hoon and Vice Unification Minister Chun Hae-sung. The presidential Blue House said the high-profile delegation is meant to reciprocate the trip by Kim Jong Un's sister, Kim Yo Jong, who became the first member of the North's ruling family to come to South Korea since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War.

Kim Yo Jong and other senior North Korean officials met with Moon, conveyed Kim Jong Un's invitation to visit Pyongyang and expressed their willingness to hold talks with the United States.

After the Pyongyang trip, Chung's delegation is to fly to the United States to brief officials about the outcome of the talks with North Korean officials.

President Donald Trump said talks with North Korea will have only "under the right conditions." Moon has yet to accept Kim's invitation to visit Pyongyang for what would be the third inter-Korean summit talks. The past two summits, one in 2000 and the other in 2007, were held between Kim's late father, Kim Jong Il, and two liberal South Korean presidents.

Some experts say the North's outreach during the Olympics was an attempt to use improved ties with South Korea as a way to break out of diplomatic isolation and weaken U.S.-led international sanctions and pressure on the country. AP

PHILIPPINES

Gov't asks Supreme Court to expel chief justice

The Philippine government's legal counsel asked the Supreme Court yesterday to expel the chief justice for allegedly not declaring her assets, in a new attempt to remove the nation's judicial leader.

Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno, who President Rodrigo Duterte has long wanted to be removed, went on leave from the state's highest court last week. That move came after 13 of her colleagues, including some who have publicly criticized her, forced a consensus that she should take an indefinite leave amid an impeachment attempt against her by the House of Representatives.

The House, which is dominated by Duterte's allies, is expected to impeach her this month based on several allegations filed by a lawyer, including her failure to file her annual statements of assets and liabilities as required by law. If she's impeached, the Senate will turn itself into an impeachment court for her trial.

Sereno and her lawyers have said she should be removed only if convicted in the impeachment trial.

"They are horribly wrong," Solicitor General Jose Calida said at a news conference.

Calida called a petition before the Supreme Court justices questioning Sereno's eligibility for her position after she allegedly failed to file the required annual statement of assets and liabilities 10 times.

"The constitution insists that a member of the judiciary must be a person of proven competence, integrity, probity and independence," Calida told reporters. "Unfortunately, for respondent Sereno, she flunked the test of integrity when she failed to file more or less 10 SALNs."

In the petition, Calida said the Judicial Bar Council, which recommends candidates for chief justice to the president, recommended Sereno for the office despite her failure to submit her asset declarations between 1986 and 2006, when she served as a professor in the College of Law at the state-run University of the Philippines.

A report to the Judicial Bar Council mistakenly reported Sereno has completed requirements, and that misled the council in including her in the final list of candidates for chief justice, the petition said.

Sereno has declared all her income and paid the corresponding taxes, her spokesman said.

An opposition congressman, Edeel Lagman, said Calida deliberately filed the government petition against Sereno before the Supreme Court, where several of her colleagues have shown hostility against her, when he could also go to lower courts. He added that the time required to file such a petition against Sereno may have lapsed.

Lagman said at least seven justices who have been trying to have Sereno removed should inhibit themselves from voting in the new government petition against her.

Sereno's spokesman, Jojo Lacanlao, said she has not committed any wrongdoing and "did not do anything that can amount to an impeachable offense," and looks forward to the trial, where her defense attorneys could confront her accusers.

Last year, Duterte said he wanted Sereno and a top anti-graft prosecutor impeached and accused them of allowing themselves to be used to discredit his administration.

International rights groups and local critics have accused Duterte of drifting toward authoritarianism amid a string of killings in the south. He has been seen a drug war marked by thousands of killings of mostly poor suspects and has publicly threatened his opponents. AP
Trump embracing potential for trade war

Zeke Miller & Kevin Freking, Washington

PRESIDENT Donald Trump is embracing the potential for a trade war after announcing his intent to place tariffs on imported steel and aluminum, as he rebuilds allies who have pushed to be exempted from the stiff duties.

The protectionist policy will be made official in the next two weeks, White House officials said yesterday [Macau time], as the administration defended the decision after criticism was directed at Trump's approval ratings.

Trump appeared unbothered, as he tweeted that American “Steel and Aluminum industries are dead. Sorry, it’s time for a change!”

Trump's announcement last week that he would impose tariffs of 25 percent and 10 percent, respectively, on imported steel and aluminum, rolled markets and ranked allies. While his rhetoric has been focused on China, the duties also will cover significant imports from Canada, Mexico, South Korea, Japan and the European Union.

Speaking on CNN's “State of the Union,” White House trade adviser Peter Navarro said: “At this point in time there’s no country exclusions.”

Steering clear of action would let China “off the hook,” adding the tariffs would drive a wedge between the U.S. and its allies.

“China wins when we fight with Europe,” he said on CBS’s “Face the Nation.” “China wins when the American consumer has higher prices because of tariffs that don’t affect Chinese behavior.”

Trade politics often cut along regional, rather than ideological, lines as politicians reflect the interests of the hometown industries and workers. But rarely does a debate open so wide a rift between a president and his party — leaving him almost exclusively with support from his ideological opposites.

“Good, finally,” said Sen. Sherrod Brown, an Ohio Democrat and progressive as he cheered Trump's move. Sen. Bob Casey of Pennsylvania, a Democrat who has called for Trump to resign, agreed.

“I urge the administration to follow through and to take aggressive measures to ensure our workers can compete on a level playing field,” Casey tweeted.

Trump has threatened to tax European cars if the EU boosts tariffs on American products in response to the president’s plan to increase duties on steel and aluminum.

British Prime Minister Theresa May raised her “deep concern” at the tariff announcement in a phone call with Trump.

May's office says she “raised our deep concern at the president’s forthcoming announcement on steel and aluminum tariffs, noting that multilateral action was the only way to resolve the problem of global overcapacity.”

But Ross rejected threats of retaliation from American allies as “pretty trivial” and not much more than a “rounding error.”

Few issues could blur the lines of partnership in Trump-era Washington. Trade is one of them.

Labor unions and liberal Democrats are in the unusual position of applauding Trump's approach, while Republicans and an array of business groups are warning of dire economic and political consequences if he goes ahead with the tariffs.

This moment of unusual alliance was long expected. As a candidate, Trump made his populist and protectionist positions on trade issues a hallmark, hitting the same themes as one of the Democratic presidential candidates, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders.

“This wave of globalization has wiped out totally, totally our middle class,” Trump told voters in the hard-hit steel town of Mone-

sen, Pennsylvania, during one of his campaign stops. “It doesn’t have to be this way.”

Trump’s criticism of trade agreements and China’s trade policies found support with white working-class Americans whose wages had stagnated over the years. Victories in big steel-producing states such as Ohio, Pennsylvania and Indiana demonstrated that his tough trade talk had a receptive audience.

Both candidates in a March 13 House election in Pennsylvania have embraced the president’s plans for tariffs. They addressed the topic Sunday in a debate that aired on WTAE in Pittsburgh.

“For too long, China has been making cheap steel and they’ve been flooding the market with it. It’s not fair and it’s not right. So I actually think this is long over-due,” said Democratic candidate Conor Lamb.

“Unfortunately, many of our competitors around the world have slanted the playing field, and their thumb has been on the scale, and I think President Trump is trying to even that scale back out,” said Republican candidate Rick Saccone.

But Trump's GOP allies on Capitol Hill have little use for the tariff approach. They argue that other industries that rely on steel and aluminum products will suffer. The cost of new appliances, cars and buildings will rise if the president follows through, they warn, and other nations could retaliate.

The end result could erode the president’s base of support with rural America and even the blue-collar workers the president says he wants to help.

“There is always retaliation, and typically a lot of these countries single out agriculture when they do that. So, we’re very concerned,” said Sen. John Thune, R-S.D.

Sen. Scott Walker, R-Wis., asked the administration to reconsider its stance. He said American companies could move their operations and face retaliatory tariffs.

“This scenario would lead to the exact opposite outcome of the administration’s stated objective, which is to protect American jobs,” Walker said.

The Business Roundtable's Josh Bolten, a chief of staff for President George W. Bush, called on Trump to “teach that” to backstep from his campaign rhetoric on trade.

“Sometimes a president needs to, you need to stick to your principles but you also need to recognize in cases where stuff you said in the campaign isn't true you've got to be drawn back,” he said on “Fox News Sunday.” “The presi- dent needs to have the courage to do that.”

Tim Phillips, president of the Koch Brothers-backed Americans for Prosperity, noted that Trump narrowly won in Iowa and Wisconsin, two heavily rural states. But other countries impose retaliatory tariffs on American agricultural goods.

“It hurts the administration politically because trade wars, protectionism, they lead to higher prices for individual Americans,” Phillips said. “It’s basically a tax increase.

The president wasn’t backing down, at least on Twitter, where he posted this message: “Trade wars are good, and easy to win.” AP

Mideast peace plan in limbo as Netanyahu visits

There’s much to celebrate but plenty of cause for trepidation, too, as President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are meeting at the White House.

For all his talk about brokering the “ultimate deal” between Israelis and Palestinians, Trump’s long-awaited peace plan has yet to arrive, even as Palestinians and other critics insist it will be dead on arrival. And although Israel’s government is overjoyed by Trump’s recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital — with a U.S. embassy set to open in the holy city in May — misgivings are percolating under the surface over Iran, where Israel sees Trump’s efforts to date to crack down on Iran’s arch-enemy as lacking.

One major, growing concern: that the United States is acquiescing to Iran’s growing presence in Syria and influence in Lebanon — two Israeli neighbors.

“If we don’t come up with a strategy against Iran, we’re going to make Israel go to war here pretty soon,” Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said Sunday on ABC’s “This Week.”

Swirling legal investigations distracting both leaders at home, and a stunning fall from grace for Trump’s son-in-law and would-be peace negotiator, Jared Kushner, have added to the mix of politics, personalities and historical grievances that have always hindered Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts. An effort that often seems to now looks even more combustible than normal.

Netanyahu arrived in the United States over the weekend as Washington was gearing up for the annual conference of AIPAC, the powerful pro-Israel lobby. He planned to hold a meeting and working lunch with Trump today [Macau time] before speaking at the conference later in the week. Top-ranking U.S. officials including Vice President Mike Pence and U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley will also address the conference. AP

USA
Hollywood dance between honoring and correcting the past

Lindsey Bahr, Los Angeles

Held one year ago, the 90th Academy Awards would have very likely been a rose-colored nostalgia fest. But this year, with a culture-wide reckoning over decades of sexual misconduct, a film business in decline, a volatile political climate and the fact that last year the esteemed awards, forward-thinking speeches, musical numbers, and a fair amount of promos (“A Wrinkle in Time,” and “Mary Poppins Returns”) and self-congratulations (for “Black Panther”) into its ABC broadcast and the production did its best to appeal to the “regular moviegoer” by trotting out Gal Gadot and other stars to literally give candy to a theater full of people.

The awards also effectively skirted the awkwardness of having an accused man in the spotlight by shifting around the long-held presenter traditions and having Jodie Foster and Jennifer Lawrence present the best actress award instead of Casey Affleck. Emma Stone got her Natalie Portman moment, presenting the directing award to “four men and two women.” Activists like #MeToo creator Tarana Burke were included in a song segment. And three Harvey Weinstein accusers, Ashley Judd, Salma Hayek and Anna-bella Sciorra, were given a moment to themselves on stage for nothing more than the fact that they were brave enough to speak up before a hopeful video played highlighting a changing industry, post #MeToo and more diverse.

The video highlighted Greta Gerwig, the fifth woman to ever be nominated for best director, Yance Ford, the first transgender nominee for “Strong Island,” Dee Rees, whose “Mudbound” scored a historic cinematographer nomination and the Pakistani-born Kumail Nanjiani, nominated for “The Big Sick.” The nominees signaled a renaissance. The winners told a slightly different story.

With a more diverse, more international and younger audience, the winners were locked for three months, went to the expected winners — all esteemed veterans, Christopher Nolan’s “Dunkirk” picked up three technical awards.

But Gerwig’s “Lady Bird” left empty handed, Rachel Morrison did not become the first female cinematography winner (the long-snubbed Roger Deskins got that honor finally for “Blade Runner 2049” after 14 nominations) and Ford was not the first transgender Oscar-winner. There were glimpses of progress, in Chile’s “A Fantastic Woman,” which started the transgenre actress Dania la Vega, won best foreign film, Disney and Pixar’s celebration of Mexican culture, “Coco,” took best animated feature, as well as best song

Kimmel staged a complex and sometimes incongruous dance of attempting to both honor and atone for the past
A whiff of change, of many kinds, at post-Weinstein Oscars

LOOK around, ladies and gentlemen,” Frances McDormand said during her best actress acceptance speech, “We all have stories to tell.” She was referring to the female actors in the Dolby Theatre, all of whom she asked to stand in union. But it felt like the best-actress winner was also addressing the evening’s broader vibe: Change. of many kinds, at the first post-Harvey Weinstein Academy Awards.

McDORMAND HAS SOMETHING TO SAY
She said she had something to say, and she did. Frances McDormand enthusiastically exerted all the women nominees in the room to stand with her, “the actors, the film-makers, the producers, the director, the writers, the cinematographer, the composers, the sex-workers, the designers...” After urging Hollywood to tell the stories of these women, she ended with a two-word message to her fellow women in Hollywood: “Inclusion rider.” “Referring to a star’s ability to demand in their contract a level of diversity in the staffing of a film, both in front of and behind the camera.

NO MORE DRESS CODE
At the Golden Globes, women wore black. At the Grammys, they carried white-tea flowers. By the time the Oscars rolled around, the dress code was finished, and talk was already turning to a new phase of #MeToo and Time’s Up. “We did the dress code thing,” Tarana Burke, founder of the #MeToo movement, told The Associated Press, “and now we’re doing the work. The plan is to continue to do this work to give people resources.” She said that millions of people had used the famous hashtag, and they all had stories and needs that must be addressed.

PEELE MAKES HISTORY
If you ever wanted inspiration to keep plugging away at something, listen to Jordan Peele, who made his history by becoming the first African-American to win the award for best original screenplay, for his groundbreaking horror film, “Get Out.” (It was also his big-screen directorial debut.) Peele told the crowd: “I stopped writing this movie about 20 times because I thought it was impossible. I thought it wasn’t going to work. I thought no one is ever going to make this movie.” But he kept trying, he said, “because I knew if someone let me make this movie, that people would hear it and people would see it.”

MERYL IN THE MIDDLE
Meryl Streep always seems to be in the middle of the discussion at the Oscars, whether onstage or not. The actress, nominated yet again for “The Post,” didn’t win, but people referred to her constantly. Kimmel quipped in a speech that she didn’t get nominated for a stretch in the ’90s, “but that’s only because she was in prison.” Tiffany Haddish carried Streep on the red carpet, then gushed about her onstage. And Jodie Foster and Jennifer Lawrence curtsied to Streep at the podium. Even McDormand used her moment on stage to make a statement on behalf of women. “If I may be so honored to have all the female nominees stand with me,” McDormand said.

We all have stories to tell and projects we need financed,” she added, before uttering the phrase “inclusion rider,” referring to actors signing contracts that mandate a film’s gender and racial inclusivity. Everyone seemed to take this moment of an industry in flux to heart. “We can’t let bad behavior slide anymore,” said Kimmel at the show’s start. “The world is watching us.”

And indeed as the last show in this very long season, made even longer thanks to the Olympics, and with an unprecedented pressure to address all the ills of society and 90 years of movies it was perhaps always going to be too big a feat for one group of entertainers to tackle in a single nearly four-hour production.

There’s only so much they can do, after all, and there is no one like Kimmel to remind everyone that it is still the movie industry. In an aside about the pay disparity between Mark Walhberg and Michelle Williams for “All the Money in the World” reshoots, Kimmel said upon discovering that both actors were represented by the same talent agency that, “This one shook me.”

“If we can’t trust agents, who can we trust?” AP

Looming over all the awards was the #MeToo movement, where women, particularly those in Hollywood, have come forward to share their stories about harassment and assault. In addition to McDormand’s acceptance speech, women made other powerful statements on stage.

Former actress Ashley Judd, whose accusers included Harvey Weinstein, noted that “the biggest thank you of all goes to Time’s Up.”

Jane Fonda (left) and Helen Mirren

Jane Fonda (left) and Helen Mirren

Jimmy Kimmel

Meryl Streep

Correcting the Past

for “Remember Me.”

“The biggest thank you of all goes to Time’s Up.”

For “I, Tonya,” the audience applauded. And Jodie Foster and Jennifer Lawrence commiserated to Streep “I, Tonya’d me.”

Streep, who was nominated for “The Post,” didn’t win, but people referred to her constantly. Kimmel quipped in a speech that she didn’t get nominated for a stretch in the ’90s, “but that’s only because she was in prison.”

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**Offbeat**

**DRAMA IN RED AND NEUTRALS ON OSCARS RED CARPET**

Looks in neutrals, red and purple dominated the drama on the Oscars carpet, along with a healthy dose of shiny gold, but Nicole Kidman stood out in stunning cobalt blue on Hollywood’s biggest fashion night.

Kidman, a presenter, was among the last to walk in Los Angeles when she showed up with a wave to the cameras in her power look, a strapless gown with a huge bow in front. Sandra Bulloch brought the strength in a backless gown and diamond choker with statement red stones.

Figure skaters Adam Rippon and Mirai Nagasu walked to-gether. He wore belt-leather straps that crossed his chest and she chose a sheer, long-sleeve gown in soft blue.

But those princess moments were at a minimum, in favor of reasonably safe and easy looks.

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**What’s ON**

**11TH MACAU DESIGN BIENNALE (HGM)**

- **Time:** 10am-7pm, last admission at 6:30pm
- **Venue:** Macau Museum of Art, Av. Xian Xing Hai, Macau
- **A Dmission:** Free
- **Enquiries:** (853) 8871 9814

**FREE**

**March 31, 2018**

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

**Time:** 9am-7pm

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**THE DINOSAUR HUNT**

- **Time:** Round the clock (“Dino Escape” green-screen experience only available from 12pm-8pm)
- **Venue:** Taipa Village Art Space
- **A Dmission:** Free
- **Enquiries:** (853) 2857 6118

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**Macau Design Biennial (HGM)**

- **Time:** April 13, 2018
- **Venue:** Taipa Village Art Space
- **A Dmission:** Free
- **Enquiries:** (853) 2857 6118

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**What’s ON**

**16TH MACAU DESIGN BIENNALE (HGM)**

- **Time:** April 13, 2018
- **Venue:** Taipa Village Art Space
- **A Dmission:** Free
- **Enquiries:** (853) 2857 6118

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**CINETEATRO**

**01 - 07 Mar**

**MONSTER HUT 2**

- **time:** 5:30, 7:30pm
- **Director:** Raman Hui
- **Starring:** Tony Leung Chiu-wai, Bai Baihe, Jing Boran
- **Language:** Cantonese (Chinese & English)
- **Duration:** 110 min

**AGENT MR CHAN**

- **time:** 4:30, 9:30pm
- **Director:** Cheung Ka Kit
- **Starring:** Dayo Wong Tze Wah, Charmaine Sheh Sze Man
- **Language:** Cantonese (Chinese & English)
- **Duration:** 60 min

**BLACK PANTHER**

- **time:** 02:15, 04:45, 09:30pm
- **Director:** Ryan Coogler
- **Starring:** Chadwick Boseman, Lupita Nyong’o
- **Language:** English (Chinese & English)
- **Duration:** 134 min

**CONCERTO OF THE BULLY**

- **time:** 05:45, 7:00, 9:15pm
- **Director:** Hirokiyo Hashimoto
- **Starring:** Ayane Sakura, Inori Minase, Risa Taneda
- **Language:** Japanese (Chinese & English)
- **Duration:** 60 min

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**TV canal macau**

- **13:00** TDM News (Repeated)
- **13:30** News (RTF) Delayed Broadcast
- **15:00** Miscellaneous
- **16:10** NOS League: Estoril x Braga (Repeated)
- **17:50** Brazilian Soap Opera (Repeated)
- **18:40** TDM Sports (Repeated)
- **19:50** Portuguese series
- **20:30** Main News, Financial & Weather Report
- **21:00** TDM Interview
- **21:30** Grimm S3 - 2
- **22:10** Brazilian Soap Opera
- **23:00** TDM News
- **23:30** Europe 30 - Final
- **00:00** Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
- **00:55** RTP Live
- **03:45** Champions League: Liverpool x Porto (Live)
- **05:50** RTP Live

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**this day in history**

**1961 ‘UKULELE KING’ FORMBY DIES**

One of Britain’s most popular entertainers, George Formby, has died after suffering a heart attack. Lancashire-born Formby, 56, was one of the UK’s best-paid stars during his heyday in the 1930s and 1940s. His nationwide fame was unusual in the era before ownership of television sets was widespread. For six successive years during the 1940s he hea-ded a popularity poll compiled by British cinema-goers who flocked to see him in films such as “Spare a Copper” and “George in Civvy Street”.

His stage persona was that of a good-natured imbibe-ler but he was a shrewd professional who amassed a fortune, earning up to £35,000 per film.

But Formby turned down many more lucrative of-fers, including one from Hollywood, so he could en-tertain British and American troops during the Se-cond World War.

His contribution to the war effort earned him an OBE in 1944.

Born George Hoy Booth in Wigan in 1904, he was the son of Lancashire’s most famous music hall star who first adopted the name Formby for the stage. At the age of seven Formby junior was apprenti-ced to a jockey but weight gain ruled racing out as a career.

Instead he followed his father onto the music hall stage, making his debut as a 17-year-old.

The young Formby made his name with an act which featured a ukulele, the instrument which was to be-come his trademark along with his tooty grin.

From that era stem some of his most famous songs including “When I’m Cleaning Windows” and his ca-tchphrase “Turned out nice again”.

At the height of his career he topped the bill at se-veral Royal Command performances at the London Palladium.

But a weak heart led to his official retirement in 1952 although he had since occasionally appeared on the stage and in pantomimes.

His final heart attack occurred at the home of his fiancée, Patricia Howson. 36. The couple were due to marry in May.

The announcement of their engagement in February was a surprise to many, coming as it did just two months after the death of Beryl, Formby’s wife of 36 years.

**IN CONTEXT**

In a will made a few days before he died George Formby left most of his £40,000 fortune to his fiancée Patricia Howson. He left nothing to his family.

After six years of legal wrangling an out-of-court settlement was reached which gave £5,000 to George Formby’s mother and £2,000 each to his three sisters.

In 1964 Patricia Howson auctioned some of the jewellery her fiancé had given her saying she needed the money to pay her legal bills.

Mr Howson died in 1971 leaving £10,000 in her will. Since his death George Formby has become a cult figure with hundreds of fan clubs around the world.

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**in context**

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**courtesy bbc news**

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YOUR STARS

Aries
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
There's nothing you love more than some friendly competition, but be careful, or your healthy sense of rivalry could go so insane that it turns a casual contest into a major conflict.

Gemini
May 21-Jun. 21
It's vitally important that you believe in yourself in order to achieve success, especially during times like these. Why not? Because you may be surrounded by those who adore walking in your footsteps.

Leo
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag and smile, smile, smile. In other words, your luck is about to take a spectacular turn for the better, and you can happily put to rest any lingering problems.

Libra
Sep.23-Oct. 22
Your imagination is one of your richest assets, but it's important that you don't let it spiral out of control, especially when it comes to romantic matters. It's pretty easy to get so caught up in fantasy.

Sagittarius
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Nix any wallflower tendencies right now, no matter what. You may not be totally in the spotlight, but the spotlight sure loves you, especially during a moment like this.

Aquarius
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Some might accuse you of being too good for your old friends or old ways, and they're right - you're far too good to work yourself on behaviors that stink your potential. Your instincts are vaster than any outside influence.

TAURUS
April 20-May 20
Some intriguing developments in the day sweep aside lingering pessimism, and you realize that restrictions are simply puzzles that need to be figured out, rather than the end of the world.

Cancer
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
It's extremely frustrating when you feel like major decisions in other people's hands, but what you may not realize is that this actually works in your favor right now.

Virgo
Aug. 23-Sept. 22
Your passions heat up deliciously and just in time to review a goal you've set for yourself. Brightened emotions come a hair-trigger reminder. Remember to keep the heat where it belongs.

Scorpio
Oct. 23 - Nov. 21
The situation is similar right now, thanks to your own efforts and those of your lucky stars. Work is gratifying, your wallet is full and you're in love (or about to fall).

Capricorn
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
A loved one might be grumpier than usual and determined to pick a fight. Don't let yourself be bullied. Just because they're in a bad mood doesn't mean you should have to suffer.

Pisces
Feb.19-Mar. 20
If you haven't learned this romantic lesson yet, the stars are about to make you write it on the chalkboard 100 times now to drill it through your head. It's time to speak up for yourself in relationships.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom

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WEATHER

Min
Max
Condition

Beijing -4 -6 clear/cloudy
Harbin -19 -7 cloudy
Tianjin -2 -5 cloudy/overcast
Urumqi -3 -8 clear
Xian 3 8 drizzle/overcast
Lhasa -1 11 cloudy/overcast
Chengdu 10 13 drizzle
Chongqing 12 14 drizzle
Kunming 8 24 clear
Nanjing 3 12 cloudy
Shanghai 7 11 drizzle
Wuhan 7 10 overcast/drizzle
Hangzhou 7 11 overcast/cloudy
Taipei 15 21 drizzle
Guangzhou 19 25 overcast
Hong Kong 18 24 cloudy

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Emergency calls 999
Policing 28 938 938 / 28 283 328
Fire department 28 572 222
Water Supply - Report 28 282 0088
PJ (Open line) 993
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
PSP 28 573 333
Customs 28 559 944
S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) 28326 300
IACM 28 387 333
Tourism 28 333 000
Airport 59 888 88

INFOTAINMENT

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom

Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

ACROSS: 1-Coffin support; 5- Sp. ladies; 9- Pierces; 14- Gumbo veggie; 15- Hard
BONE; 19- Carcass; 22- Fish; 23- Yoke; 24- Turn; 25- Euphoria; 26- Fat-
laden; 27- Tamer; 28- Flu (virus); 29- Dancer; 30- Clique; 31- Pies; 32- Rock; 33- Middle; 34- Chime; 35- Lip; 36- Austrian; 37- Storm...
Dear patients and friends of Taivex Malo Hospital Dental Clinic/Macau MALO CLINIC,

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

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

We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused you.

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

**A.** Go to one of our 18 Malo Clinic clinics in Mainland China, all of which, together with Macau MALO CLINIC, operate under MALO CLINIC China Management, following the exact standards and medical protocols as any international MALO CLINIC.

Macau MALO CLINIC will provide the transport to and from our clinics in Guangzhou or Shenzhen. Macau MALO CLINIC will manage the necessary bookings in all MALO CLINICS in China, as well as follow-up and medical records will be provided to our colleagues in China.

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

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

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

**Office phone**
8862 2208 / 8862 2206

**Cellphone**
00853—8826 9099

**Wechat**
MALODENTAL853
(Can be contacted at any time)

**Email**
service.mino@maloclinics.com.cn

**Website**
http://www.maloclinics.com.cn

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

Thank you all for your understanding and support. We hope to find solutions for everyone’s cases as soon as possible so that we may keep providing quality dental service to you all.

Yours Sincerely,
Australia wins bad-tempered 1st test against South Africa

Gerald Irmay, Durban

Australia needed less than 20 minutes of the final day to take the one more wicket it needed to finish off a 118-run win in a bad-tempered series-opening test against South Africa yesterday, a game overshadowed by an ugly off-field confrontation between players that was caught on a stadium security camera.

On the field, Josh Hazlewood trapped Quinton de Kock lbw for 83 and Australia bowled South Africa out for 298 in its second innings for a commanding win and the early advantage in the four-test series.

Australia had set South Africa a formidable target of 417 to win the test at Kingsmead, or to bat for two days for a draw, and needed less than four overs of the final day to seal victory.

“Really satisfying to win this first test match of the series,” Australia captain Steve Smith said. “The first test is always really important, especially against quality opposition like South Africa.”

Smith was asked few questions about the cricket during his post-match news conference, however, after leaked video from a security camera outside the players’ dressing rooms showed a confrontation between Australia’s David Warner and de Kock as the on-field aggression that characterized the game spilled over.

While the first test is finished, and the teams move to Port Elizabeth for the second match on Friday, fallout from Durban will continue with an investigation into the Warner-de Kock incident.

Warner was shown being restrained by teammates after an exchange of words with de Kock as the players came off the field and made their way through the tunnel and up a staircase that leads to both dressing rooms. Series between the teams, both known for their hard-nosed, aggressive approach to test cricket, are often fierce but Sunday’s incident crossed the line, according to both team captains.

South Africa captain Faf du Plessis said: “For me, if you chirp each other, it’s always on the field. There needs to be boundaries [...] it needs to stay on the field.”

In purely cricketing terms, Australia’s aggressive approach in the field worked, dominating South Africa through most of the match, with fast bowler Mitchell Starc finishing with nine wickets and the Aussie pace trio of Starc, Hazlewood and Pat Cummins making their mark early on in the series.

Australia’s victory would have been much more comprehensive if not for 143 from Aiden Markram and the late resistance from wicketkeeper de Kock in South Africa’s second innings.

But off the back of a 4-0 Ashes rout of England, Australia’s strong run of form continued.

There was a subdued finish to the test on the morning of the final day in a stadium that was nearly empty of fans. That quiet conclusion was in stark contrast to the fiery fourth day’s play on Sunday, when there were a number of incidents that illustrated the on-field aggression.

Warner was at the center of a loud, taunting celebration when he helped run out AB de Villiers, South Africa’s best batsman, for a duck. Australia bowler Nathan Lyon has been charged by the International Cricket Council for his role in the same celebration, when he intentionally dropped the ball on de Villiers as the South African lay on the ground. AP
US Navy carrier's visit to Vietnam puts China on notice

For the first time since the Vietnam War, a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier is paying a visit to a Vietnamese port, seeking to bolster both countries' efforts to stem expansionism by China in the South China Sea.

Yesterday's visit by the USS Carl Vinson brings more than 5,000 crew members to the central coastal city of Danang, the largest such U.S. military presence in Vietnam since the Southeast Asian nation was unified under Communist leadership after the war ended in 1975.

The Carl Vinson, accompanied by a cruiser and a destroyer, is visiting as China increases its military buildup in the Paracel islands and seven artificial islands in the Spratlys in maritime territory also claimed by Vietnam. China claims most of the South China Sea and has challenged traditional U.S. naval supremacy in the western Pacific.

The visit of an aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson to Vietnam signifies an increased level of trust between them, and reflects America's continued naval engagement with the region," said Lt. Hong Hiep, a research fellow at the Singapore-based S.E.A.S-Iususcitabae.

The ship's mission includes technical exchanges, sports matches and visits to an orphanage and a center for victims of Agent Orange, a toxic defoliant sprayed by U.S. forces to deny cover for Communist fighters during the war. It marks a fine-tuning, rather than a turning point, in relations. The U.S. Navy has staged activities in Vietnam for its Pacific Partnership humanitarian and civic missions in nine of the past 12 years.

U.S. Ambassador Daniel Kritenbrink praised the carrier's visit.

"I think the visit by USS Carl Vinson demonstrates our commitment to the U.S.-Vietnam partnership. It also demonstrates the dramatic progress we made in our bilateral relationship in recent years," he said.

The ambassador said the two countries share a range of interests that include "a desire to maintain peace, prosperity, unimpeded freedom of navigation upon which the region and its economies depend." The United States normalized relations with Vietnam in 1995 and lifted an arms embargo in 2016, and the two former adversaries have steadily improved relations in all areas, including trade, investment and security.

The visit of an aircraft carrier is a more than a 100,000-ton manifestation of U.S. global military presence, reaffirms closer relations as Beijing flexes its political, economic and military muscle in Southeast Asia, and Washington seeks to re-establish its influence.

"Although the visit is mainly symbolic and would not be able to change China's behavior, especially in the South China Sea, it is still necessary in conveying the message that the U.S. will be there to stay," Hiep said.

Separately from this week's mission, U.S. officials say American warships continue sailing without prior notice close to China-occupied islands and atolls, an aggressive way of signaling to Beijing that the U.S. does not recognize its sovereignty over those areas.

Hiep said the Carl Vinson's visit is likely to irritate China, but that Beijing will not take it too seriously. "They understand well the strategic rationale behind the rapprochement between Vietnam and the U.S., which was largely driven by China's growing assertiveness in the South China Sea," he said. "However, China also knows that Vietnam is unlikely to side with the U.S. militarily to challenge China.

Venezuela A boycott of the race by Venezuela's biggest parties means Henkel Falcon is by far the most prominent option on the May 20 ballot for those who want to unseat Socialist President Nicolas Maduro — and polls indicate that is the majority in a country with spreading hunger and an almost worthless currency.

US President Donald Trump said yesterday that North American neighbors Canada and Mexico will get no relief from their new tariffs on steel and aluminum imports unless a "new and fair" trade agreement is signed. More on p11.

WORLD BRIEFS

INDIA Tens of thousands of angry protesters poured into the streets more than three days after an Indian-controlled Kashmir yesterday, hurling rocks and shouting anti-India slogans after soldiers killed four civilians and two suspected militants.

TURKEY A court yesterday rejected lawyers' requests for two Greek soldiers arrested in Turkey to be released from custody.

POLAND Firefighters yesterday found the body of a fifth victim in the rubble of an apartment block that collapsed in western Poland.

GERMANY A 51-year-old German has been severely injured after two men threatened with a knife forced him to leave his home near the western city of Dusseldorf.

EGYPT-S. ARABIA Egypt gave a warm welcome to Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman yesterday, with military fanfare and a trip to the Grand Mosque meant to underline a growing strategic partnership.

EUROPESKPT PARTIES SURGE IN ITALY VOTE, BUT NO MAJORITY

Two populist and stridently anti-European Union parties — both former leaders of Italy's parliamentary election at the expense of the country's traditional powers, but neither gaining enough support to govern alone, preliminary results yesterday.

With no faction winning a clear majority in Sunday's vote, a hung Parliament was expected and long, financial markets opened lower on the news and were volatile.

"Un governativo italiano" headed the La Stampa newspaper.

Preliminary results released by Italy's Interior Ministry showed the center-right coalition winning about 37 percent of the parliamentary vote and the populist 5-Star Movement getting about 32 percent. The center-left coalition was far behind with 25 percent support.

The results showed the populist, right-wing and anti-establishment League party led by Matteo Salvini surpassed the keystone argument of the center-right, the Forza Italia party of ex-Premier Silvio Berlusconi.