



AFC CUP SEEN AS 'UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY'
Benfica de Macau kicks off today its participation in the Asia Football Confederation Cup 2018 group stage

P4 FOOTBALL



IC HEAD 'CONVINCED MACAU IS AN OPEN CITY'
Mok Ian Ian said yesterday that she was not aware of any censorship over Macau's cultural activities

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POPULATION BACK UP TO 650,000

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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'"

WORLD BRIEFS



TAIWAN will look to its domestic arms industry as well as foreign suppliers to respond to China's continuing military buildup, but has no interest in engaging in an arms race with its cross-strait rival, the defense ministry said yesterday. More on p10

CAMBODIA Prime Minister Hun Sen rejected a request from opposition leader Sam Rainsy for talks about the country's political problems, denigrating his archrival as a traitor and a convict.



JAPAN A volcano in southern Japan had its biggest eruption in years yesterday, shooting smoke and ash thousands of meters into the sky and grounding dozens of flights.

EAST TIMOR-AUSTRALIA Australia and East Timor will sign a treaty that draws the first-ever maritime border between the neighbors, resolving years of bitter wrangling with a deal that carves up billions of dollars of oil and gas riches that lie beneath the Timor Sea. More on p12



SRI LANKA's president declared a state of emergency yesterday amid fears that anti-Muslim attacks in several central hill towns could spread. More on p12

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Koreas to hold summit at border in April

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ARTS FESTIVAL

Asian programs increased, budget reduced

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Broad money supply increases in January

Macau's money supply continued to grow in January, the Monetary Authority of Macau said yesterday. The currency in circulation and demand deposits grew 2.7 percent and 8.6 percent month-to-month respectively. Resident deposits grew 2.6 percent from the preceding month to MOP591.6 billion, while non-resident deposits also rose 1.3 percent to MOP257.5 billion. Meanwhile, public sector deposits with the banking sector decreased 0.4 percent to MOP191 billion. At the end of January, loans as a proportion of deposits for the resident sector dropped from 59.7 percent at the end of December 2017 to 58.6 percent. Similarly, the ratio for both the resident and non-resident sectors fell from 87.6 percent to 87 percent.

Two arrested for transporting drugs

One Cameroonian man and one Malaysian woman have been arrested for transporting drugs to Macau. According to the Judiciary Police, the Cameroonian man was spotted on Sunday at the Macau International Airport by a PJ officer. After being taken to the hospital, the suspect excreted 67 grains of methamphetamine, weighing a total of 1.02 kg, an amount that is worth approximately three million patacas. On Monday, the police then arrested the woman, who was supposed to receive the drugs from the Cameroonian. The male suspect admitted that he had been promised USD4,000 for smuggling the drugs into Macau's neighboring regions.

Community wants Earth Deity temple

Some senior citizens living in Seac Pai Van public houses expressed their hope of having a location near their houses where they can worship the Earth Deity. The only Earth Deity worship space in Macau was previously demolished. Many of the Seac Pai Van public house senior residents hope to have a place to worship the Earth Deity, provided the facility does not affect public safety. Cultural Affairs Bureau deputy director Leong Wai Man said that IC will communicate with the related government department regarding the matter.

Rotary clubs hope for more RhD negative blood donors



Fatima Ferreira (center) and presidents of local Rotary clubs

THE 16th edition of the Rotary Blood Donation Day is aiming to attract more diverse blood donors, particularly RhD negative donors, to maintain a sufficient reserve of the blood type in the city.

To be held at the recreation area and exhibition hall of the Flower City Garden on March 25, the event aims to promote awareness of the blood requirements of hospitals and the significant benefits of blood donation to the public, to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of blood reserve in the city.

Data provided by the Macau-based Rotary clubs showed that there was a total of 13,053 residents who registered for

blood donation in 2017, while the Macau Blood Transfusion Services collected 14,288 blood units – an increase of 151 blood units over the 2016 levels.

However, 2017 suffered from an 8 percent decrease of registered RhD negative blood donors, and a decrease of 14.7 percent of RhD negative blood units.

RhD negative donors in Macau are rare; an average of 150 persons out of 1,000 Caucasians have this blood type and at this point it is imperative to reserve more RhD negative blood.

According to the Rotary clubs, the Macau Blood Transfusion Services hopes that all sectors of the community in Macau

will collaborate towards the aim of active participation in blood donation from all ethnic groups living in Macau.

"It is important for people to be aware that there is a need for this type of blood in Macau," said Fatima Ferreira, president of the Rotary Club of Macau, in a press conference held yesterday.

"The percentage is low so we have to bring awareness to this issue in the foreigner population," she added, hinting that there was a decrease after the region's handover in 1999.

Ferreira said that the rotary clubs hope to see an increase in the number of blood donors during the Blood Donation Day. She added that they

are hoping to see a diversity of nationalities participate in the annual event.

"We hope that we will have an increase but we can't tell because sometimes people have already donated blood [right before] the event starts," said the president.

Since 2012, registered MSAR residents have been able to draw blood samples from the Macau Blood Transfusion Services to check their eligibility for bone marrow donations.

The percentage is low so we have to bring awareness to this issue in the foreigner population.

FATIMA FERREIRA
PRESIDENT OF ROTARY CLUB OF
MACAU

Until December 2017, a total of 963 residents registered as bone marrow donors.

Some 921 of them successfully became either a bone marrow or blood stem cell donor. So far, only one donor has successfully donated bone marrow. **LV**

Labor Bureau starts training of 30 inspectors

THE Labor Affairs Bureau (DSAL) kicked-off a one-year training course which aims to train new inspectors for the department.

According to a DSAL statement, the course, organized by DSAL will also involve the participation of the

Juridical and Judicial Training Centre (CFJJ) and the Macao University of Science and Technology (MUST). In her speech, the deputy director of DSAL, Ng Wai Han, called on trainee inspectors to fully engage in their learning in order to master the professional skills nee-

ded to serve the people, a task with a high sense of responsibility. She asked the trainees to continue their mission in the future by effectively addressing and solving labor issues. The course content focuses on legal knowledge regarding the field of work, the procedu-

res and techniques in the conciliation and treatment of cases, the English language and other working practice subjects. Through recruitment and testing, DSAL selected the 30 best-performing applicants to be trained in the inspectors' course, which will consist of

theory training for six months, followed by practical training in the DSAL for the same period. After a final examination, the 12 most accomplished trainee inspectors will move into full-time work at the bureau.

Some of the duties of DSAL inspectors include reconciliation on labor disputes, investigation of work accidents, inspection visits to workplaces, and combatting illegal work.

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ARTS FESTIVAL

Asian programs increased, budget reduced

Julie Zhu

THE 29th Macao Arts Festival (MAF), organized by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), will be held from April 27 to May 31. The IC announced the program at a press conference yesterday. This year's edition, themed Origin, has a budget of MOP22 million, which equates to one million less than last year.

According to the organizers, the program symbolizes the "spring of life," and explores a wide range of topics designed to broaden the audiences' reflections about life, spurring the audiences to recall the core meaning of life through different artistic manifestations.

The 29th MAF comprises a total of 26 programs in seven categories, such as "Family Entertainment," "Quintessence of Tradition" and "Melodious Music." It gathers productions from mainland China, Macau, and abroad, as well as a program aimed at promoting arts in the community. In

total there will be more than 100 activities.

The opening performance, "Das Kapital", will be presented by the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre. The performance is a new version of Karl Marx's grand classic in celebration of the 200th anniversary of his birth, incorporating Macau's elements and illustrating the duality of capital by way of black humor. The closing performance, "13 Tongues," is a captivating dance, music and folklore show by dance group Cloud Gate 2.

As usual, the MAF will offer shows from European countries, including the UK, Belgium, Portugal and Germany.

The event will also bring several performances from mainland China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Israel.

In comparison with previous years, Asian programs increased from 15 percent to 23 percent of the program this year.

"This edition of the festival features shows from 11 countries and regions that showcase not only avant-garde

art but also seek to explore alternative performances of non-western shows," said IC president Mok Ian Ian.

"There are even more connections and interactivity between local and foreign artists and between local elements and universal themes," said Mok, adding "the Macao Arts Festival continues to pursue its aim to promote the development of local arts, striving to offer a performance and exchange platform to performing artists. [...] A wide range of topics is suitable for audiences of all ages."

In this edition of the festival, local artists will join hands with European and Asian artists in the performances in the one of the category called "Groundbreakers: Connection." Dirks Theatre Arts Association will collaborate with an Irish director and its international actors team.

In the "Cross-Disciplinary Creations: Theatre" category, the 29th MAF presents artistic expression in various forms, including dance and an

installation play.

Several performances within this category of the festival present perspectives related to daily life.

Family programs will allow people of all ages to participate in the festival. The family show "Infinita" by German troupe Familie Flöz takes ordinary, daily activities as topics and examines the common experiences of life, triggering reflections and an understanding of life philosophies.

In the "Quintessence of Tradition" category, the festival organizers will feature classic stories that have been refined over time.

The 29th MAF Outreach Program features 28 programs which total 44 activities, including lectures, artists' talks, art critiques, accessibility services and movie screenings.

The Outreach Program aims to promote artistic activities. Apart from the performances of the Performing Arts Gala, this edition of the MAF also offers the public a workshop by Israeli theatre troupe The

Key Theatre, in which children will learn how to manipulate paper puppets.

A graffiti workshop will also be hosted by a local graffiti art group. In addition, five films have been selected to be screened in different neighborhoods.

In order to allow people with visual and hearing impairments to enjoy arts without barriers, arts accessibility services will be made available in several shows.

The IC president claims that the MAF is becoming "more diversified and more in touch with reality."

"It widened the scope of its target audience and further strengthened local productions, playing an important role in artistic cooperation, artistic cooperation and exchange as well as in the training of local talents," said Mok.

Tickets for the 29th MAF are available at the Macau Ticketing Network from 10 a.m. on March 11. Reservations can be made by phone or online from 12 p.m. onwards on the same day.

Early bird discounts of 20 percent, subject to certain criteria, are available from March 11 to 18 and a 20 percent discount will be offered from March 19 onwards.

Admission to all the Outreach Program activities will be free and applications to attend will open on March 12.



FOOTBALL

Participation in AFC Cup a 'unique opportunity' for Benfica Macau

Renato Marques

FOOTBALL club Benfica de Macau is ready to participate in the Asia Football Confederation (AFC) Cup 2018 group stage. Several Benfica representatives have acknowledged this opportunity as "unique" with team coach Bernardo Tavares saying, "we are going to try to do our best since this is a unique opportunity for Benfica de Macau and for Macau's football [in general]."

Tavares was launching the match, scheduled for today, at the pre-match press conference held yesterday afternoon at the Macau Stadium. In the coach's opinion, "the fact that we play the Taiwan team in the first home match can be an extra motivation, since theoretically it is the easier team [from the group]." Tavares went on to promise that Benfica will be "a fierce team and a team that will fight for the 3 points [match win]."

In response to the reports that Benfica is the favorite to win,



Benfica's coach Bernardo Tavares

Tavares said the fact that Benfica has already completed six championship matches this season in comparison to the opponents, whose championship has not started yet, might play in favor of the Macau team. However, he went on to add that, "the fact they haven't yet started the championship also provides a surprise factor, as we [don't have a] chance to access data

and video to study the team. Our only footage of an official match from the Taiwan team goes back to last season's final match in November."

Benfica's president, Duarte Alves, said that "this participation is an all new chapter in the history of Macau football," adding, "I hope these six matches [...] can give a good image of football in Macau and that [that will]

further motivate the population and the press to follow the 'King of the Sports' in the MSAR and obviously to get a wider exposure from the club and from our sponsors that grant the chance for us to [play] here."

This participation is an all new chapter in the history of Macau football.

DUARTE ALVES
BENFICA PRESIDENT

Alves also hopes that other local teams will learn and be motivated to believe that it is possible to play at this level and to host these kinds of games in Macau. The president believes the example will spur local teams on to work harder individually and

collectively "elevat[ing] the level of football in Macau."

On the side of Hang Yuen FC, the coach Hung Chin-Hwai hopes that it will be a very competitive match, remarking that there are no favorites; "[i]t's 50-50," Hung said. Still, he hopes to win the match and to give victory to the club but also to Taiwan, as he feels the responsibility of being the first Taiwanese team playing in the AFC Cup competition.

A Haitian player of Hang Yuen FC, Jean-Marc Alexandre, said "the team is prepared, we have been physically prepared for the match by the coach and team staff, we are now only missing the mental part which is the game itself to be played [...] I can say that everyone is really excited for the game and to show everyone what we can do."

To prepare the team for the match against Benfica, coach Hung noted that they have been doing "video analysis, and [could observe] that Benfica plays strong football but my team is good in pressing and movement so I expect a good match."

Remarking on the group teams and upon which teams he believes to be stronger sides, Hung noted, "Probably [North Korea's] 4.25 SC team, as they are the most experienced team and have several players playing in their national team."

AD



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Registration Deadline	9 March 2018 (Friday) (on first-come-first-served basis)

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IC head 'convinced Macau is an open city'

THE president of the Cultural Affairs Bureau, Mok Ian Ian, said yesterday at a press conference for the Macao Arts Festival that she was not aware of any censorship over Macau's cultural activities.

The statement comes in response to the cancellation of several authors scheduled to appear at The Script Road - Macau Literary Festival 2018. Organizers said they canceled the authors' appearances after authorities "officially" warned them that the visit to Macau was "inconvenient," hence their entry in Macau was not assured.

"I also learned about it yesterday from the media that four of them can't come," the IC president said yesterday. "Regarding all Macau clubs or individuals who organize cultural activities, or conduct activities which will benefit Macau's cultural career and cultural industry's development, [the IC] always holds a positive, supportive and open attitude."

"I'm convinced Macau is a free, safe and open city," added Mok.



Jung Chang

Among the canceled authors is headliner Jung Chang, the acclaimed author of "Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China", which the Asian Wall Street Journal has called the "most read book" about China. She is also the writer of "Mao: The Unknown Story", a controversial biography of the PRC founder Mao Tse-tung.

In November last year, Chang appeared at the 2017 Hong Kong International Literary Festival to discuss another of her books; a

less controversial account of Empress Dowager Cixi.

Interviewed by the South China Morning Post during her stay in Hong Kong, Chang hinted that she was allowed to enter mainland China. "A lot of good things have happened, but it doesn't mean I'm ecstatic when I go to China. I'm always torn because there are problems with development. And, of course, my books are banned. How can I be entirely happy in China?" she told SCMP.

Population reaches more than 650,000

THE total population at end-2017 increased by 8,200 year-on-year to 653,100, with the female population accounting for 53 percent of the population, according to information released yesterday by the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC).

The elderly population (aged 65 and over) made up 10.5 percent of the total, up by 0.7 percentage points year-on-year. The proportion of the adult population (aged 15-64) dropped slightly to 76.7 percent. The ageing ratio rose to 83 percent, indicating a continuous ageing of the population.

In 2017, there was a total of 6,529 live births, down by 617 year-on-year. Mortality decreased by 128 year-on-year to 2,120 in 2017, with 59.1 percent being males. Regarding cause of death, mortality from malignant neoplasms (growths or cancers) (726) was the highest, accounting for 34.2 percent of the total deaths, down by 2.1 percentage points year-on-year; mortality from pneumonia and influenza (317) and heart diseases (199) made up 15 percent and 9.4 percent of the total, respectively.

Non-resident workers totaled

179,456 at end-2017, up by 1,818 year-on-year. Following the completion of several large-scale entertainment facilities and residential projects, the number of non-resident workers in construction dropped by 12.8 percent year-on-year, marking the third consecutive year of decrease. Still according to DSEC, Chinese immigrants went down by 2,121 year-on-year to 4,206 in 2017, with those coming from Guangdong Province dropping by 2,010 to 2,866. The number of individuals granted residency rights increased by 80 year-on-year to 1,527. Meanwhile, 913 illegal Chinese immigrants were repatriated to the mainland, down by 377 year-on-year.

The number of marriage registration cases recorded in 2017 (3,883) was similar to the figure in 2016. Median age at first marriage was 28.8 for bridegrooms and 27.5 for brides. The number of divorce cases went up by 234 year-on-year to 1,479, of which divorce by mutual consent made up 94.5 percent.

At end-2017, the number of households totaled 191,500, up by 2,300 year-on-year.

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CHIEF Executive Chui Sai On yesterday met with one of China's top think tanks in a sidelines meeting from his trip to Beijing for the opening of the National People's Congress. He discussed with the National Development and Reform Commission several ideas over how to expedite the territory's economic development.

In particular, he asked for advice on the city's Five-Year Development Plan, its participation in the Belt and Road Initiative and how the MSAR can best utilize the new waters granted to it by the Central Government, otherwise known as the "Medium-to-long-term Plan for the Usage and Development of the Waters of the Macao Special Administrative Region (2016-2036)".

The plan proposes a studied approach regarding the usage and development of 85 square kilometers of additional waters surrounding Macau that are under the SAR Government's administration. It states that development should meet the following principles: foster diversification of the city's economy; serve the public interest; and improve people's quality of life.

CE meets with top think tank on NPC sidelines

The Commission's Chairman, He Lifeng, expressed his support for Macau's participation in the Belt and Road Initiative, and for the local government's efforts to integrate Macau's development with overall national development as outlined in the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China.

He said the Commission would endeavor to continue working to support Macau's involvement in the Belt and Road Initiative.

In addition, Chui pledged to continually improve the well-being of Macau residents.

"The Macau SAR government will continue to ensure diverse economic development and keep improving the well-being of Macau residents. This is the principle of development for us," he said, as cited by public broadcaster TDM. "We hope you will give us guidance and support for both our short-term and long-term goals."



He Lifeng (left) and Chui Sai On

CHINESE MEDICINE KEY TO ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

TRADITIONAL CHINESE medicine (TCM) was a major emerging industry in Macau and key to propelling the city's economic diversification, Chui Sai On said yesterday. The CE made the comments during

a meeting in Beijing with the Minister of the China Food and Drug Administration, Bi Jingquan. The meeting was aimed at exploring views on the development of Macau's Chinese medicine sector.

NPC | CPPCC

Ho thinks China's gov't report lays out clear thoughts

THE president of the Legislative Assembly (AL), Ho Iat Sang, said that China's latest government work report lays out China's clear development plan.

While attending the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in Beijing, Ho praised the Central Government's plan, expressing the view that China will undergo significant changes over the next five years.

Regarding the omission of the statements, "Macau people governing Macau" and "Hong Kong people governing Hong Kong" from the work report of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), Ho expressed a belief that it is not always necessary to repeat these phrases in China's work report, according to Macao Daily News.

In Ho's opinion, the CPPCC report clearly indicated China's support for the two SAR governments and the two chief executives' administrations.

As well as Ho, other CPPCC Macau members raised their proposals during the CPPCC in Beijing.

Chan Meng Kam suggested that China should amend the regulation of the Greater Bay Area



A plenary meeting of deputies from Macau yesterday in Beijing

development policy, in particular the article which defines Macau residents as outsiders [people living outside China].

Cheong Meng Seng wants China to grant the SARs' residents' Home Return Permits in the form of mainland ID cards.

Ma Iao Lai suggested that the Central Government should coordinate all types of interests and competition among Macau, Hong Kong and Guangdong, in terms of the Greater Bay Area development, to avoid further contradictions and problems which might unwittingly be generated due to the "two systems."

Melinda Chan expressed her hope that China can establish facilities for Macau students in Hengqin.

MGTO signs agreements in Beijing over int'l film festival

THE director of the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO), Helena de Senna Fernandes, met with representatives of the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) and industry operators in Beijing on March 5 and 6 (yesterday) and signed a memorandum of understanding to foster cultural exchange, according to MGTO.

The memorandum concerned cooperation for the International Film Festival & Awards - Macao, with the aim of fueling the tourism development in Macau "with culture as an enhancer."

A second memorandum of understanding was signed with the China International Culture Communication Center (CICCC).

The film festival is jointly organized by MGTO and the Macau Films & Television Productions and Culture Association, with the primary aim being to showcase the city through the works of international filmmakers and thereby attract more visitors to Macau.

With the next edition of the film festival to be unveiled in December, the memorandums help to build a "platform for cultural dissemination, help propagate traditional Chinese culture across the world as well as promote Macau's tourism growth

through cultural elements," according to Macau's tourism authority.

Senna Fernandes also met with the director general of the Department of Affairs on Tourism of Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan of the CNTA, Li Yaying, on Monday.

The two parties exchanged opinions regarding the Creative City of Gastronomy designation bestowed on the MSAR last year. They also discussed developments regarding the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Bay Area and the outlook of the regional tourism industry.

Later, at an evening banquet hosted by MGTO, Senna Fernandes remarked that following the new designation of Macau as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy, the tourism authority is keen to build relationships with other member cities in the Creative Cities Network.

Furthermore, MGTO will use the gastronomy designation as a "key driver" to attract visitors from Beijing to Macau to experience the MSAR's culinary experiences.

According to MGTO, over 350,000 Beijing residents traveled to Macau in 2017, up by 8.8 percent compared with 2016. A total of 25 flights currently run weekly between the two cities.

Two tourists injured by tents on IC grounds

Yesterday, tents and an exhibition board that had been set up in front of the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) at the Tap Seac Square fell due to strong winds, injuring two mainland tourists. Afterwards, the two tourists, who were members of a mainland group tour, were admitted to hospital. After the accident, IC personnel immediately went to the scene to learn about the situation and to accompany the wounded to the hospital for examination, according to a statement released by the IC yesterday afternoon. The IC said that the two victims did not sustain any serious injuries. The IC has also reported the case to the Tourism Crisis Management Office.

Worker found dead in air conditioner room

A 45-year-old mainland employee of the Four Seasons Hotel was found dead in the hotel's air conditioner room, according to the Judiciary Police (PJ). The man's corpse was discovered by his colleagues. Prior to his death, he had been ordered to carry out some work at said location. Injuries were found on the man's head and arms. No suspicious wounds were discovered. The PJ suspects the case might have been caused by an industrial accident. Staff from the Labour Affairs Bureau also visited the scene of the man's death.

1,727 public housing project applications canceled

The Housing Bureau (IH) has announced the disqualification of some of the public housing project applications it has received, according to a statement the Bureau released on Monday. Between February 8 and March 2, the IH received a total of 7,894 submissions for the new round of public housing applications. Some 1,727 of these applications were delivered with insufficient documents. Applicants that had submitted incomplete applications were given until March 2 to supplement their applications with the needed documents. On Monday, the IH announced the cancellation of 1,727 incomplete applications. Besides this update, the IH also announced that it has already initiated evaluation procedures regarding the remaining applications.

SINGAPORE

Blue diamond initial coin offering cancelled

A Singapore-based company has called off a USD2 million initial coin offering backed by a 2.08-carat blue diamond that gave investors a chance at a raffle for a luxury dinner. The event's organizer, V Diamonds, said yesterday that it would process thousands of refunds for investors who bought tokens for an ownership stake in the ring. V Diamonds' founder Ville Oehman agreed to buy the ring and dinner from the Russia-based World of Diamonds Group as part of a wider promotion. In November he began selling the tokens for \$2 or more. Investors had a chance to win a lavish dinner on a private jet, enlivened by fireworks. In a joint statement, V Diamonds and the World of Diamonds Group said the cancellation was a "mutual decision."

JAPAN

Kobe Steel chief quits as report finds new misconduct cases

The chief executive of major Japanese steelmaker Kobe Steel is stepping down over a scandal that surfaced last year involving massive falsification of data from inspections of the company's products. Hiroya Kawasaki, who is also chairman and president, said yesterday he is stepping down from all three positions. Kawasaki, 63, resigns after Japan's third-biggest steelmaker said an independent investigation into its faked data scandal found further instances of misconduct. He will step down April 1 and his successor will be selected in coming days, the company said in a statement.

Chinese firms to pay USD14 million back wages in Saipan

Sophia Yan, Honolulu

FOUR China-based construction firms will pay nearly USD14 million in back wages and damages to thousands of Chinese workers for construction of a casino in the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Investigators found the contractors paid employees less than what was required by law, according to a U.S. Department of Labor statement released Monday.

The settlement by the companies will affect more than 2,400 employees.

U.S. officials say workers entered on tourist visas and without proper visa authorization. They were also forced to incur debt of thousands of dollars for airfare and recruitment fees prior to their employment in Saipan, according to the settlement.

"These settlements ensure that thousands of workers will

receive the wages they legally earned, while simultaneously sending a strong, clear message to other employers," said Bryan Jarrett, the Labor Department's Wage and Hour Acting Administrator in a statement. "Employers who evade the law in an attempt to reduce expenses must not gain a competitive advantage over those who play by the rules. Regardless of where work is performed in the U.S. or its territories, we will continue to enforce the law and level the playing field."

The Chinese laborers worked 13 hours a day without weekends or holidays, and had their passports confiscated upon arrival in Saipan, said Li Qiang, the executive director of New York-based China Labor Watch, an advocacy group. Li communicated with the affected workers and liaised with U.S. officials to seek retribution for owed wages.

"More Chinese companies



A casino being built in Saipan

are expanding abroad, and in regions like the U.S. and Europe, hiring labor there can be expensive," Li said. "Firms will prefer bringing Chinese workers." But oftentimes, the workers are lured with false promises such as high wages and even help in obtaining a green card -- none of which materializes once they arrive. Higher fines and penalties levied by U.S. authorities will help combat these practices, Li said.

Hong Kong-based Imperial

Pacific International contracted with the four Chinese firms for construction on Saipan. The company said in a statement Tuesday that it's pleased a settlement was reached.

Monday's settlements are part of a wider investigation into the company's casino and hotel project on the island.

Saipan island in the western Pacific is the seat of government of the Northern Mariana Islands. AP

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ANGOLA

New airline may be equipped with Bombardier Q-400 aircraft

THE new domestic air carrier in Angola will be able to operate with Q-400 type aircraft produced by Canadian company Bombardier, thereby correcting several years of errors in which Boeing 737-700 aircraft were used for short-haul flights and little demand, said Transport Minister Augusto da Silva Tomás.

The minister, who made the remarks at the end of a working visit to Canada, said that the longstanding mistakes he mentioned had clearly contributed to the airline's negative financial results.

Tomás, quoted by Angolan state news agency Angop, said that the means and equipment that will drive the business have been identified, and are intended to reduce distances between Angola's

regions, at low competitive prices, while complying with international civil aviation standards.

The minister also said that flagship airline TAAG will lead the consortium providing domestic air transport and said that the consortium will become one of the country's private air operators.

Last January, China's Xi'an Aircraft Industry Company, a subsidiary of state-owned Aviation Industry Corporation of China, announced it had sold two MA-60s to Angola.

MA-60s are short-to-medium-range turboprop aircraft certified by the China Civil Aviation Administration in June 2000 and which due to low operating and maintenance costs are popular in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. **MDT/Macauhub**

MOZAMBIQUE

Anti-money laundering capacity bolstered

MOZAMBIQUE has improved its ability to supervise, prevent and combat money laundering following the approval by the country's parliament of an update to the law creating the Mozambican Financial Information Office (GIFiM), according to Mozambican daily newspaper Notícias.

Among other measures, the government's proposed update seeks to improve GIFiM's ability to receive financial transactions that are suspected of being associated with illicit activities such as terrorist financing.

Economy and Finance Minister Adriano Maleiane, who presented the proposal to parliament, said that the review of the law also aims to give GIFiM powers to inspect and sanction entities subject to its supervision.

Maleiane, who based the pro-



Residential and commercial buildings stand on the city skyline seen from the top of a skyscraper in Maputo

posal on the need to adapt it to United Nations (UN) conventions, as well as the 40 recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), said

that this supervision "will be conducted in matters of prevention and combat of money laundering and terrorist financing." **MDT/Macauhub**

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Taiwanese soldiers move during a military exercises to show its determination to defend itself from Chinese threats, in eastern Taiwan, in January

DIRE STRAIT

Taiwan says it will beef up defense to respond to China

Johnson Lai, Taipei

TAIWAN will look to its domestic arms industry

as well as foreign suppliers to respond to China's continuing military buildup, but has no interest in engaging

in an arms race with its cross-strait rival, the defense ministry said yesterday. The remarks from spokes-

man Chen Chung-ji came a day after China announced an 8.1 percent rise in its military budget for this year to

1.1 trillion yuan (USD173 billion), the world's second largest after the United States.

"Taiwan has no intention of getting involved in an arms race with China, or with neighboring countries," Chen told reporters at a briefing. "However, we expect to strengthen our capabilities in self-developing arms, including locally built vessels and aircraft, or even information and communication warfare."

China regards Taiwan as Chinese territory to be eventually brought under its control, by force if necessary.

Under China-imposed diplomatic isolation, Taiwan has few avenues for purchasing arms abroad apart from the United States, which despite only having unofficial ties with the self-governing island democracy, is legally bound to ensure it has a credible defense.

Under President Tsai Ing-wen, Taiwan has also sought to reinvigorate its domestic arms industry including in building trainer aircraft and possibly ships and submarines.

Such foreign and domestic weapon systems aimed to "satisfy the needs of de-

fensive warfare, and assure the security of Taiwan, as well as to maintain regional stability and peace," Chen said.

With the world's largest standing military of between 2 million and 2.3 million members, China is preparing to launch its second aircraft carrier while integrating stealth fighters into its air force and fielding an array of advanced missiles able to attack air and sea targets at vast distances.

Taiwan's armed forces are far smaller, although the island has universal conscription and a pool of reserves nearly 3 million strong. Its commanders have sought to capitalize on the physical barrier posed by the 160-kilometer-wide Taiwan Strait to fend off a possible Chinese attack.

As part of a pressure campaign against Tsai, China has sent bombers and fighter planes to fly around Taiwan and sailed its sole operating aircraft carrier through the strait with its battle group. China's missile arsenal is also considered a key component in any assault, able to overwhelm Taiwan's air defenses by sheer force of numbers. **AP**

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Beijing asks for hold on UN ban of North Korea traders

CHINA'S government said yesterday it asked for a hold on a U.S. request for United Nations sanctions against ships accused of helping North Korea evade sanctions imposed over its weapons programs while it looks into who would be affected.

Beijing needs time to investigate because the request to ban violators from global ports and blacklist trading companies covers a "large number of ships and entities," said a foreign ministry spokesman, Geng Shuang.

Washington requested the sanctions following reports foreign traders are helping North Korea violate limits on oil imports and other trade imposed in an effort to pressure leader Kim Jong Un to stop nuclear and missile development.

China was long North Korea's diplomatic protector and accounts for most of its trade but has supported the latest sanctions out of frustration with Pyongyang's weapons development. Beijing has argued against measures that might destabilize Kim's government.

"It takes some time for us to look into the matter together with other agencies," said Geng at a regular news briefing.

"We put a hold on the relevant proposal for a technical reason," he said. "We will make our decision in light of the Security Council resolutions' requirements and on the basis of the fact."

U.S. and Japanese authorities say they have photographer traders transferring oil at sea to North Korean vessels in violation of the sanctions.

South Korean authorities have seized two vessels suspected of moving oil to the North. Taiwanese authorities are investigating a businessman suspected of arranging oil sales. Australian authorities have arrested a man accused of trying to broker sales of goods including components for ballistic missiles to North Korea.

Last week, the Maldives government denied a report by Japan's foreign ministry that a Maldivian-flagged ship transferred goods to a North Korean-flagged tanker at sea. **AP**

NPC cites support for ending presidential term limits

Christopher Bodeen, Beijing

CHINA'S ceremonial legislature said yesterday that a broad consensus has been reached on amendments to the constitution, including one to abolish term limits that will allow Xi Jinping to continue as president indefinitely.

Critics have questioned that assertion, pointing to a lack of public involvement in the drafting process and the surprise announcement of the measures just a week before the opening of the legislature's annual session.

The amendment process was set in motion by Xi at a meeting of the ruling Communist Party's Politburo on Sept. 29, according to a report submitted to the National People's Congress at its session opening.

A total of 21 amendments are part of the package, of which the decision to abolish the previous limit of two consecutive terms for the president and vice president and insert "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese characteristics for a New Era" into the constitution's preamble, are the most significant.

The amendments are expected to easily pass by the required two-thirds majority before the congress ends on March 20. The congress will also appoint Xi to a second five-year term as president.

Term limits were introduced in the drafting of China's modern constitution in 1982



■ **The secretive manner in which the amendments were drafted is a break from past practice**

in hopes of avoiding another dictatorship such as that exercised by Communist China's founder, Mao Zedong, until his death in 1976. Mao's rule was characterized by disastrous

economic policies and the chaos and violent ideological battles of the Cultural Revolution.

The removal of those restrictions would allow Xi to rule for the rest of his life should he choose to do so. China holds no competitive elections for higher office and Xi has sidelined other politicians and factions within the party that might challenge his rule, while cracking down severely on civil society and independents calling for democratic reforms.

That has some concerned about the negative effects of one-man rule, including the

possibility of even greater political repression and misguided policies arising from untested convictions and decision making free of challenge.

Criticism of the move, and the process by which it was arrived at, have been posted on social media, sparking swift action to remove them by government censors.

The NPC report said a working group was formed to spearhead the process of soliciting a wide range of opinions on the amendments, led by NPC Chairman Zhang Dejiang and assisted by Xi loyalists.

Committees across the coun-

try submitted 118 reports and 2,639 individual suggestions, including from people outside the party, the report said. Further rounds of consultation in December involved retired statemen and party elders, think tanks and scholars, it said.

Following the process of solicitation, "all regions, departments and sides" voiced their approval, determining that "the party central's proposed constitutional amendments were ripe," and it was determined by a vote at the end of January that they be submitted to this month's NPC meeting, the report said.

The report and party officials say the abolishment of term limits is necessary to align the office of president with Xi's other two, more powerful positions as head of the party and the committee controlling the armed forces, neither of which is bound by term limits.

However, the secretive manner in which the amendments were drafted is a break from past practice, said Beijing-based political commentator Zhang Lifan. The first word most Chinese had of the move to eliminate term limits came on Feb. 25.

"In every previous amendment to the constitution, public opinions were solicited openly, but we haven't seen any information beforehand this time," Zhang said.

"The disruptive amendment has brought about a constitutional crisis casting doubt on the legitimacy of the Communist Party in the future," he said. "No country would revise its constitution at will and no country would put the role of a party into its constitution. I really don't know how the crisis can come to an end."

China's 1982 constitution has been amended four times, most recently in 2004. AP

HE LIFENG

Chief economic planner says growth target can be met

CHINA'S top economic planner expressed confidence yesterday that stronger consumer spending will help the country meet a 6.5 percent growth target that is little changed from last year despite efforts to promote more sustainable, energy-efficient activity.

Efforts to promote domestic consumption and reduce reliance on trade and investment are making progress, and consumption could account for more than 60 percent of growth this year, He Lifeng, chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission,

said at a news conference. That would be up from last year's 58.8 percent.

The 6.5 percent growth target announced Monday would be among the world's highest if achieved.

"It is in line with expectations and objectively can be realized through hard work," He said at the news conference, held during the meeting of China's ceremonial legislature.

Private sector analysts say the decision to set a target again this year indicates Chinese leaders still are concerned with the total growth figure despite saying they want to switch

to other indicators such as job creation and income growth. Some suggested hitting this year's target might require Beijing to pump up activity by easing bank lending, which would set back reform efforts.

The world's second-largest economy grew 6.9 percent last year — above the official target of "6.5 percent or higher" — but that was due partly to a boom in lending and real estate sales that regulators are trying to cool due to fears of rising debt.

"The government still set a growth target for 2018 despite the rhetoric about



He Lifeng, chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission

moving away from the speed of growth to quality of growth," UBS economists said in a report.

They noted that the official target for growth of

retail sales is 10 percent, or a faster pace than the overall economy, while Beijing refrained from setting a goal for investment.

"Not setting a national target may be another sign that the central government is de-emphasizing on growth," said the UBS economists.

SRI LANKA

President declares emergency amid anti-Muslim violence

SRI Lanka's president declared a state of emergency yesterday amid fears that anti-Muslim attacks in a central hill town could spread.

Details of the emergency decree were not immediately announced, and it was unclear how it would affect life on the South Asian island nation, where Buddhist-Muslim tensions have flared in recent years as extremist Buddhist organizations have spread.

A tweet from the office of President Maithripala Sirisena said the decree would "redress the unsatisfactory security situation prevailing in certain parts of the country." It said the country's security forces "have been suitably empowered to deal with criminal elements in the society and urgently restore normalcy."

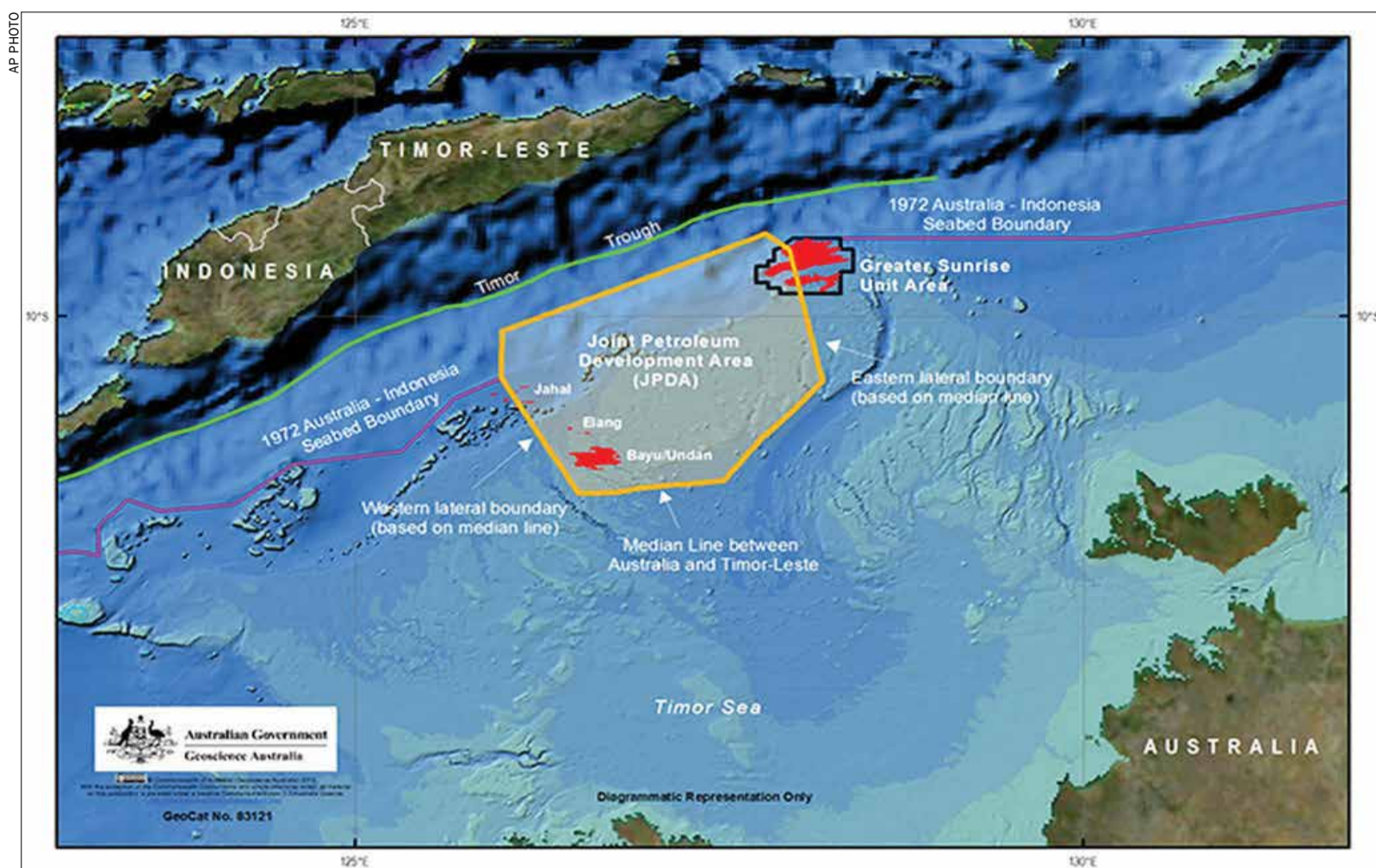
The announcement came after Buddhist mobs swept through the town of Kandy on Monday, burning at least 11 Muslim-owned shops and homes. The attacks came after a Buddhist man was reportedly killed by a group of Muslims. Police later announced a curfew in the town.

Lakshman Kiriella, a lawmaker from Kandy, said in Parliament that the attacks were "carried out by outsiders."

"I am ashamed as a Buddhist and we must apologize to the Muslims," he declared.

So far no violence has been reported in any other part of the island nation.

Sri Lanka has long been divided between the majority Sinhalese, who are overwhelmingly Buddhist, and minority Tamils who are Hindu, Muslim and Christian. The country remains deeply scarred by its 1983-2009 civil war, when Tamil rebels fought to create an independent homeland. While the rebels were eventually crushed, a religious divide has taken hold in recent years, with hard-line Sinhalese groups accusing Muslims of forcing people to convert and destroying sacred Buddhist sites. AP



This undated map shows Australia's maritime arrangements with East Timor

OCEANIA

Australia and East Timor settle bitter border differences

Rod McGuirk, Canberra

AUSTRALIA and East Timor will sign a treaty that draws the first-ever maritime border between the neighbors, resolving years of bitter wrangling with a deal that carves up billions of dollars of oil and gas riches that lie beneath the Timor Sea.

Australia and its impoverished half-island neighbor are to sign the agreement at the United Nations today (Tuesday), putting to rest a dispute that has dominated and soured relations since 2002, when East Timor emerged as a fledgling nation independent of Indonesia.

The terms of the deal negotiated in The Hague through the Permanent Court of Arbitration have not been made public. But achieving East Timor's ambition of a border midway between the two countries would encourage Indonesia to renegotiate its own much longer maritime boundary with Australia agreed in 1971 under outdated international law. The Indonesian border with Australia extends east and west of the new East Timor-Australia boundary and the vast expanse Indonesia allowed Australia is a source of increasing irritation in the capital Jakarta.

The revenue split from the new agreement is crucial for East Timor, with a population

of 1.3 million people who are among the poorest in the world. Unemployment is high and young people are increasingly looking abroad for work.

East Timor's oil revenues, which finance more than 90 percent of government spending, are rapidly dwindling due to the exhaustion of existing fields in its territory. The country's USD16 billion sovereign wealth fund could be empty within 10 years because the government's annual withdrawals are exceeding its investment returns, according to La'o Hamutuk, an East Timorese research institute.

Influential East Timorese Catholic Bishop and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo welcomed the border resolution as an economic boon for his deeply Catholic country.

Influential East Timorese Bishop and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ximenes Belo welcomed the border resolution

"We thank God because our sea becomes more widespread [...] our economic zone becomes bigger," Belo said. "In the sea and on the sea bed, there is much wealth. Timorese will diligently explore and make this wealth contribute to us."

Portugal, East Timor's former colonial master, never had a border with Australia. Australia began negotiating a border with Indonesia after the Indonesian military's brutal 24-year occupation of East Timor began in 1975.

But by 1989, after a decade of talks, Australia and Indonesia agreed to disagree on where the line should be drawn for the sake of allowing oil and gas drilling in the resource-rich Timor Sea to proceed. The rival border options became the north and south edges of a box called the Joint Petroleum Development Area. Australia and Indonesia shared the royalties piped from that disputed seabed.

Australia pressured East Timor into accepting the same border compromise in a 2002 treaty to provide legal certainty for developers of the massive Greater Sunrise oil and gas field, an untapped resource in the Timor Sea worth tens of billions of dollars.

East Timor's negotiating team was led by independence hero Xanana Gusmao, the na-

tion's first president.

Australia was widely criticized in 2016 over its unsuccessful rejection of the Permanent Court of Arbitration's jurisdiction to hear East Timor's border complaint. Many saw Australia as undermining its lecturing of China to abide by international law on Chinese territorial claims in the South China Sea.

Australia and East Timor signed a 2006 treaty on sharing of future Greater Sunrise revenue. But the relationship plumbed new depths when East Timor later accused Australian spies of bugging its Cabinet discussions to achieve an unfair negotiation advantage. Australia denied the allegation.

Don Rothwell, an Australian National University professor of international law, said the new border could trigger a trilateral negotiation over an Indonesian claim for a share of Greater Sunrise.

Rothwell expects the East Timor border will extend further south than Indonesia's border with Australia, giving it more territory.

"Indonesia might then say: 'Well, look. If Australia has been prepared to do this deal with East Timor, then we think we should revisit the boundaries negotiated in the 1970s,'" Rothwell said. AP

Koreas to hold summit at border in April; Kim hints at tests suspension

NORTH Korean leader Kim Jong Un has agreed to hold a landmark summit meeting with South Korea's president next month and impose a moratorium on nuclear and missile tests if his country holds talks with the United States, a senior South Korean official said yesterday.

Chung Eui-yong, South Korea's presidential national security director, said the two Koreas agreed to hold their third-ever summit at a tense border village in late April. He also said the leaders will establish a "hotline" communication channel to lower military tensions, and would speak together before the planned summit.

Chung led a 10-member South Korean delegation that met with Kim during a two-day visit to Pyongyang, North Korea's capital. They returned yesterday.

The agreements follow a flurry of cooperative steps taken by the Koreas during last month's Pyeongchang Olympics in South Korea. Tensions had run high during the previous year because

of a barrage of North Korean weapons tests.

The two past summits, in 2000 and 2007, were held between Kim's late father, Kim Jong Il, and two liberal South Korean presidents. They resulted in a series of cooperative projects between the Koreas that were scuttled during subsequent conservative adminis-

trations in South Korea.

Chung said North Korea agreed to suspend nuclear and missile tests for as long as it holds talks with the United States.

North Korea also made it clear that it would not need to keep its nuclear weapons if military threats against it are removed and it receives a credible security guarantee, Chung said. **AP**



Kim Jong Un meets South Korean National Security Director Chung Eui-yong in Pyongyang (Photo provided by "KCNA" - Korean Central News Agency).

Meeting thrusts Kim Jong Un into the limelight

Foster Klug, Seoul

NORTH Korean leader Kim Jong Un grins, just on the verge of a belly laugh, as he grasps the hand of a visiting South Korean official. He sits at a wide conference table and beams as the envoys look on deferentially. He smiles broadly again at dinner, his wife at his side, the South Koreans seeming to hang on his every word.

Kim is used to being the center of gravity in a country that his family has ruled with unquestioned power since 1948, but the chance to play the senior statesman on the Korean Peninsula with a roomful of visiting South Koreans has afforded the autocratic leader a whole new raft of propaganda and political opportunities.

Photos released by North Korean state media

yesterday showing Kim meeting with the envoys on Monday evening are all the more remarkable coming just months after a barrage of North Korean weapons tests and threats against Seoul and Washington had many fearing war.

North Korean TV later broadcast video from the meetings that showed Kim smiling and laughing during the meeting, proposing a toast at the dinner reception, and waving as two limousines carrying the South Korean delegates left the main building of the ruling Workers' Party.

It wasn't immediately clear how the images were reported in North Korea, but they spread rapidly across the southern part of the peninsula a day after the North said Kim had an "openhearted talk" with 10 envoys for South

Korean President Moon Jae-in. Kim reportedly expressed his desire to "write a new history of national reunification" during a dinner that the South Korean government said lasted about four hours.

The meeting marked the first time South Korean officials have met with the young North Korean leader in person since he took power after his dictator father's death in late 2011. It's the latest sign that the Koreas are trying to mend ties after one of the tensest years in a region that seems to be permanently on edge. The South Korean delegation led by presidential national security director Chung Eui-yong returned to the South yesterday, hours before Moon's office was to hold a media briefing on the outcome of the visit.

Given the robust history of bloodshed, threats and

animosity on the Korean Peninsula, there is considerable skepticism over whether the Koreas' apparent warming relations will lead to lasting peace. North Korea, some believe, is trying to use improved ties with the South to weaken U.S.-led international sanctions and pressure, and to provide domestic propaganda fodder for Kim.

But each new development also raises the possibility that the rivals can use the momentum from the good feelings created during North Korea's participation in the South's Pyeongchang Winter Olympics last month to ease a standoff over North Korea's nuclear ambitions and restart talks between the North and the United States.

The role of a confident leader welcoming visiting, and lower-ranking, offi-

cials from the rival South is one Kim clearly relishes. Smiling for cameras, he posed with the South Koreans and presided over what was described by the North's official Korean Central News Agency as a "co-patriotic and sincere atmosphere."

Many in Seoul and Washington will want to know if, the rhetoric and smiling images notwithstanding, there's any possibility Kim will negotiate over North Korea's breakneck pursuit of an arsenal of nuclear missiles that can viably target the U.S. mainland.

The North has repeatedly and bluntly declared it will not give up its nuclear bombs. It also hates the annual U.S.-South Korean military exercises that were postponed because of the Olympics but will likely happen later this spring. And achieving its

nuclear aims rests on the North resuming tests of missiles and bombs that set the region on edge.

But there was nothing about the Koreas' very real differences in the North Korean report. Kim was said to have offered his views on "activating the versatile dialogue, contact, cooperation and exchange" between the countries.

He was also said to have given "important instruction to the relevant field to rapidly take practical steps" for a summit with South Korean President Moon, which the North proposed last month.

Moon, a liberal who is eager to engage the North, likely wants to visit Pyongyang, its capital. But he must first broker better ties between North Korea and Washington, Seoul's top ally and its military protector. **AP**

USA

Republicans want Trump to back off his tariff proposal

IN a remarkably public confrontation, House Speaker Paul Ryan and other Republican allies of President Donald Trump are pleading with him to back away from his threatened international tariffs, which they fear could spark a dangerous trade war. Trump retorted: "We're not backing down."

The president yesterday said U.S. neighbors Canada and Mexico would not be spared from his plans for special import taxes on steel and aluminum, but he held out the possibility of later exempting the longstanding friends if they agree to better terms for the U.S. in talks aimed at revising the North American Free Trade Agreement.

"We've had a very bad deal with Mexico; we've had a very bad deal with Canada. It's called NAFTA," he declared.

Trump spoke shortly after a spokeswoman for Ryan, a Trump ally, said the GOP leader was "extremely worried" that the proposed tariffs would set off a trade war and urged the White House "to not advance with this plan."



U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer adjusts his headset during a press conference regarding the seventh round of NAFTA renegotiations in Mexico City

Likewise, Republican leaders of the House Ways and Means Committee circulated a letter opposing Trump's plan, and GOP congressional leaders suggested they may attempt to prevent the tariffs if the president moves forward.

Trump's pledge to implement tariffs of 25 percent on steel imports and 10 percent on aluminum imports has roiled financial markets, angered foreign allies and created unusual alliances for a president who blasted unfavorable trade deals during his

2016 campaign. Union leaders and Democratic lawmakers from Rust Belt states have praised the planned tariffs, joining with advocates within the administration including Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and White House trade adviser Peter Navarro.

But the president has been opposed internally by Defense Secretary James Mattis and White House economic adviser Gary Cohn, who warned against penalizing U.S. allies and undercutting the economic benefits

of the president's sweeping tax overhaul.

Likewise, the statement from Ryan's office said, "The new tax reform law has boosted the economy, and we certainly don't want to jeopardize those gains."

Asked about that public rebuke, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said, "Look, we have a great relationship with Speaker Ryan. We're going to continue to have one, but that doesn't mean we have to agree on everything."

Canada is the United States'

No. 1 foreign supplier of both steel and aluminum. Mexico is the No. 4 supplier of steel and No. 7 for aluminum.

Congressional Republicans say any tariffs should be narrow in scope, and they privately warned that Trump's effort could hurt the party's hopes to preserve its majority in the fall elections.

As the president dug in on his position, any potential compromise with foreign trading partners and Republican lawmakers was expected to still include some form of tariffs.

"Trump is not someone who retreats," said Stephen Moore, an economist with the conservative Heritage Foundation and a former campaign adviser. "He's going to need to be able to declare some victory here."

The tariffs will be made official in the next two weeks, White House officials said.

"Twenty-five percent on steel, and the 10 percent on aluminum, no country exclusions — firm line in the sand," said Navarro, speaking on "Fox and Friends."

Republican critics on Capitol Hill and within the administration argue that industries and their workers that rely on steel and aluminum for their products will suffer. The cost of new appliances, cars and buildings will rise for Americans if the president follows through, they warn, and other nations could retaliate. **AP**

AD

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BRITAIN will respond “appropriately and robustly” if Russia’s involvement is established in the case of an ex-Russian spy who fell ill after coming into contact with an “unknown substance” in southern England, the U.K. foreign secretary said yesterday.

Boris Johnson told lawmakers in the House of Commons that he wasn’t “pointing fingers” as to who might be responsible for the collapse of Sergei Skripal, who was found slumped on a bench together with his daughter Yulia on Sunday. But he stressed that if state involvement was proven, Britain would take action.

“I say to governments around the world that no attempt to take innocent life on U.K. soil will go either unsanctioned or unpunished,” he said.

British counterterrorism specialists offered expertise to police as they sought to unravel the mystery of why the two collapsed in Salisbury, 145 kilometers southwest of London. Though authorities were trying to keep an open mind, the incident drew parallels to the death of former Russian agent Alexander Litvinenko, who was poisoned with radioactive polonium in 2006 in London.

“I think we have to remember that Russian exiles are not immortal. They do all die and there

UK

British counterterror help inquiry after ex-Russian spy collapses

can be a tendency for some conspiracy theories,” Metropolitan Police assistant commissioner Mark Rowley told the BBC. “But likewise we have to be alive to the fact of state threats as illustrated by the Litvinenko case.”

Skripal, 66, was convicted in Russia on charges of spying for Britain and sentenced in 2006 to 13 years in prison. He was freed in 2010 as part of a spy swap, which followed the exposure of a ring of Russian sleeper agents in the U.S.

The Kremlin said Russia hasn’t been approached by British authorities to help in the investigation. But Dimitry Peskov, President Vladimir Putin’s spokesman, said yesterday at a daily conference call with media in Russia that “Moscow is always ready to cooperate.”

Both Skripal and his daughter are in critical condition in intensive care. A small number of emergency services personnel

were assessed immediately after the incident, and police said yesterday that all but one remained hospitalized.

The discovery led to a dramatic decontamination effort. Crews in billowing yellow moon suits worked into the night spraying down the street, and the Salisbury hospital’s emergency room was closed. A pub and a restaurant remain “secured,” but police didn’t say how long the cordons would be in place.

A security camera image of a man and woman walking through an alleyway connecting the Zizzi restaurant and the bench where Skripal and the woman were found is believed to be of interest to police.

“Police had a good look at the footage and were interested in these two people. It was the only image they took away,” said Cain Prince, 28, the manager of a nearby gym. “They wanted a list of everyone in the gym between 3



A Police officer secures the area as a police tent covers the spot in Salisbury where former Russian spy double agent Sergei Skripal and his companion were found critically ill

p.m. and 4 p.m. as well.”

Public records list Skripal as having an address in Salisbury.

Skripal served with Russia’s military intelligence, often known

by its Russian-language acronym GRU, and retired in 1999. He then worked at the Foreign Ministry until 2003 and later became involved in business. **AP**

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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

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

Offbeat

JAZZ HALL'S SIGNATURE SOUSAPHONE STOLEN IN NEW ORLEANS



Ben Jaffe, tuba player and director of the Preservation Hall Jazz Band

Be on the lookout for a wraparound tuba: Someone has stolen the signature sousaphone belonging to Preservation Hall in New Orleans.

Creative director and musician Ben Jaffe wrote about it on the traditional jazz venue's Facebook page, saying he bought it after Hurricane Katrina to replace one lost to the 2005 storm.

A photo shows him playing the brass sousaphone, which has "Preservation Hall, New Orleans" painted on the bell. He says it was taken last week, after a performance at New Orleans Airlift.

Jeanette Jaffe said they've received multiple calls since the message was posted a week ago, but none led to recovery of the instrument. She says some callers even offered their own instruments.

There's a reward.

Sousaphones can cost up to USD13,000.

TV canal macau



13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
15:00	Miscellaneous
15:55	Champions League: Liverpool - Porto (Repeated)
17:40	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
22:10	Brazilian Soap Opera
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Champions League Highlights
00:35	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
01:10	RTPi Live

cinema



CINETEATRO

01 - 07 MAR



MONSTER HUT 2

ROOM 1

2:30, 7:30pm

Director: Raman Hui

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

Language: Cantonese (Chinese & English)

Duration: 110 min

AGENT MR CHAN

ROOM 1

4:30, 9:30pm

Director: Cheung Ka Kit

Starring: Dayo Wong Tze Wah, Charmaine Sheh Sze Man

Language: Cantonese (Chinese & English)



BLACK PANTHER

ROOM 2

02:15, 04:45, 9:45pm

Director: Ryan Coogler

Starring: Chadwick Boseman, Lupita Nyong'o

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 134min



CONCERTO OF THE BULLY

ROOM 3

2:15, 4:00, 9:30pm

Director: Fung Chi-Chiang

Starring: Ronald Cheng, Cherry Ngan, Jacky Cai

Language: Cantonese (Chinese & English)

IS THE ORDER A RABBIT? DEAR MY SISTER

ROOM 3

5:45, 7:00, 9:15pm

Director: Hiroyuki Hashimoto

Starring: Ayane Sakura, Inori Minase, Risa Taneda

Language: Japanese (Chinese & English)

Duration: 60min

this day in history



1965 GOLDIE THE EAGLE EVADES CAPTURE AGAIN

A golden eagle which escaped from Regent's Park Zoo is still on the loose after outsmarting his keepers' latest attempts to recapture him.

Goldie the Eagle escaped from the central London zoo eight days ago and has been dodging his captors ever since.

He has spent most of the past week flying round the park - although he has also been spotted in Tottenham Court Road, Euston and Camden Town.

A crowd of about a thousand gathered in Regent's Park today to watch the bird being chased by keepers, police, firefighters and even a BBC reporter. The Navy has also been consulted about supplying a net and line-firing rifles.

Goldie, who has lived at the zoo for five years, escaped while his cage was being cleaned. He left behind his mate, Regina.

Joe McCorry, deputy head keeper of birds of prey at London Zoo, has predicted Goldie will be caught once he gets hungry.

The zoo has received hundreds of telephone calls and letters offering advice for his capture. Two teams of keepers have been tracking his progress using two way radio sets on loan from the Civil Defence.

The closest Goldie has so far come to being recaptured was yesterday while he was devouring a Muscovy duck in the grounds of the American Ambassador's residence in Regent's Park.

But he was scared off at the last minute when a reporter tried to throw a coat over him and the bird abandoned his meal half-eaten.

Goldie has also attacked two Cairn terriers but members of the watching crowd managed to beat him off.

BBC reporter John Timpson recently returned from covering the Queen's trip to Ethiopia tried to charm Goldie back to earth using an Ethiopian bird pipe - perhaps not surprisingly this play also failed.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Goldie the eagle was recaptured, as predicted, once he became hungry.

After 12 days of freedom in the park, the deputy head keeper, Joe McCorry, lured him with a dead rabbit tied to a rope near one of the eagle's favourite haunts, the wild fowl sanctuary. An hour and a half later, Goldie swooped down for his last picnic in the park. The keeper quietly walked up and caught him with his bare hands, secured his legs and took him back to the zoo.

He was declared unhurt after his ordeal and returned to his cage with his mate. London Zoo subsequently reported a big increase in visitor numbers, up to 6,500 from 3,700 on the corresponding Sunday the previous year.

Goldie made a second bid for freedom in December 1965 - but was recaptured after four days.

John Timpson, who was best known as a presenter of BBC Radio 4's Today programme, died in November 2005 at the age of 77.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 There's nothing quite so satisfying as a job well done. Remind yourself of that if your enthusiasm starts to wane in the face of what seems like a mountain of details all clamoring for your attention.

Taurus April 20-May 20 You may end up becoming so absorbed in having a life that you forget all about love. Of course, this is exactly what the stars are waiting for when they hit you with a whammy of something deliciously romantic.

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 The key to long-term achievement is keeping everything on the down low when a certain boss type is going mad with power. While it may be tempting to point out areas in which they could.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Someone you care about may be acting a little distant, but it's not you - it's them, so don't take their mood to heart. It's doubly important that you don't let their funk put a damper on your high spirits.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Sitting there in limbo? That's absolutely normal, so stop pressuring yourself and take a break instead. It's an excellent time to take off on a vacation, even if that means sitting in the park and listening to music.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 Life is far from ordinary for you right now. The stars stir up your world and bring lots of unusual and unpredictable influences into your daily routine. This affects everything you do, think or say.

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 Isn't it time you, well, grew up? You can pay your bills, buy a house and hold down a job, and still, that's not really the mark of a truly mature person - those are just the accessories that we think signify adulthood.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 Your colleagues adore you, and it's no wonder - you work extremely hard and don't think twice about pitching in when someone else needs a hand. Your office practically feels like a second home.

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 Pinning your hopes on one prospect? Be careful, or the glitter might wear off, especially the more you burden it with your aspirations. Take a look at its real worth before you consider abandoning it.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 Get off the fence and be clear when communicating with a group. You've been trying too hard for too long to be everything to everybody, and it's making you crazy - and not winning you the fans you hoped it would.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 An extraordinary alliance with a work mentor or office buddy will help you break free of a limiting role on the job, and you've never been more grateful to be given the opportunity to spread your wings and fly.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 Winging at the thought of some less-than-stellar behavior on your part and feeling, oh, just a touch defensive? Brush off criticisms - including your own - and focus resolutely on the present and future.

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-German river; 5- Cherish; 10- Gardner and others; 14- Adidas rival; 15- 2:1, e.g.; 16- Starchy food grain; 17- Like Death Valley; 18- Soften; 20- Columbus's birthplace; 22- Toothpaste type; 23- Tennis's Monica; 24- Higher; 26- Youth org.; 27- Embroidery frame; 30- Warned; 34- Ultimatum words; 35- 007's alma mater; 36- Summer cooler; 37- Achy; 38- Actor's parts; 40- above; 41- U.K. record label; 42- Has a bug; 43- Join together; 45- OK to consume; 47- Cock; 48- Spud bud; 49- Rhythm; 50- Eye drops; 53- Skill; 54- Blow one's top; 58- Antagonistic; 61- On ___ with; 62- Comics canine; 63- Pong maker; 64- Japan's first capital; 65- Grounded fleet; 66- SĂo Paulo feature; 67- Remain;

DOWN: 1- Obstacle; 2- Suffix with concession; 3- Related by blood; 4- Double; 5- Jackie's second; 6- Peril; 7- Web-footed mammal; 8- Monetary unit of Cambodia; 9- Ages and ages; 10- Debt that remains unpaid; 11- Antidote holder, maybe; 12- Entr'___; 13- Goes out with; 19- City on the Ruhr; 21- Mil. addresses; 25- Juvenile; 26- Bloom; 27- We're Off ___ the Wizard; 28- Fragrance; 29- Reason for a raise; 30- Dined; 31- Unspoken; 32- Elicit; 33- Discourage; 35- Overhead trains; 39- Grand ___ Opry; 40- Losers; 42- Bottomless pit; 44- Bishop of Rome; 46- Hawk homes; 47- Hinder; 49- Experiment; 50- New Mexico art colony; 51- Terminates; 52- Squabbling; 53- Broadway beginning; 55- ___ the crack of dawn; 56- Graph prefix; 57- Cafeteria carrier; 59- Feedbag bit; 60- Tell it like it isn't;

Yesterday's solution crossword grid with filled-in words.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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BASKETBALL | NBA

Larry Legend: Nance has career game as Cavs beat Pistons

Tom Withers, AP Sports Writer

AS Larry Nance Sr. waited in the hallway following the best game of his son's career, the former All-Star was approached by a young Cavaliers fan.

"I'm not Larry Nance Sr.," he said, reaching down to shake hands with the youngster. "I'm Larry Nance Jr.'s father."

And a proud papa. His kid put on quite a show.

Nance posted career highs with 22 points and 15 rebounds in his first start for Cleveland, and the Cavaliers closed a disappointing five-game homestand on a positive note with a 112-90 win yesterday [Macau time] over the Detroit Pistons, who haven't won on the road in nearly two months.

LeBron James scored 31 points before taking a seat on the bench after the Cavs outscored the Pistons 36-21 in the third quarter to blow it open.

Nance, though, was the story.

With Cleveland missing three big men — All-Star Kevin Love, Tristan Thompson and Jeff Green — because of injuries, the Cavs needed someone to step up and Nance came through. Wearing the same No. 22 his father had retired by Cleveland, the 25-year-old Nance had the best game of his young career.

"It just kind of felt easy," Nance said. "The guys were giving me all the opportunity in the world to make my shots, and I just happened to be making them."

It was only one game, but Cleveland's latest look was encouraging. The Cavs have been in a funk lately as they try to integrate four new players, but they got a win before embarking on a two-week, six-game trip.

Cavs coach Tyronn Lue will



Cleveland Cavaliers' Larry Nance Jr. (22) drives against Detroit Pistons' James Ennis (33)

stick with Nance as a starter while Thompson recovers from a sprained right ankle that will keep him out at least two weeks. And beyond that, it's possible Lue could keep Nance in his first five.

Since joining Cleveland in a trade last month, Nance has shown he can consistently make a mid-range jumper that he rarely tried with the Lakers.

"I didn't know he could shoot it," Lue said. "He never shot it in L.A. But coming here, just watching him shoot, he has 3-point range also, which I didn't know.

If he can continue to make that shot, it helps our offense out tremendously."

Nance said the new surroundings have freed him up to show more of his game.

"Whatever it was, I just wasn't that comfortable shooting them in L.A.," he said. "But whether it's the coaching staff or the guys, they have the utmost confidence in me shooting that shot and I feel great shooting it, too."

James was his usual brilliant self, making 5 of 7 3-pointers and adding seven rebounds and seven assists. With the Cavs com-

fortably ahead, James sat the entire fourth quarter, a rarity in this odd season.

Blake Griffin scored 25 to lead Detroit, which has lost nine straight away from home. The Pistons haven't won on the road since Jan. 10. Andre Drummond scored 15 but didn't reach double-digit rebounds for the first time in 19 games.

James led the way, but it was Nance who helped negate Drummond and Detroit's size advantage with several big plays. By halftime, Nance had matched his career best with 18 points.

Griffin credited Nance with fueling the Cavs.

"Just his energy alone, forget the points, his second-chance rebounds, his hustle plays were a difference maker," Griffin said. "He plays very, very hard. He's talented. He's got a high ceiling."

SUPER SLAM

For the second straight game, Nance upstaged James with a sensational dunk.

J.R. Smith scooped a pass toward the rim that Nance grabbed with one hand and slammed home, triggering another eruption from the crowd and his teammates on the bench.

"It was a heck of a pass," Nance said. "It was right on the money."

PITIFUL PISTONS

Detroit fell to 2-9 since Feb. 9 and is 6-9 since Griffin arrived in a blockbuster trade. Drummond and Griffin were both assessed technicals against the Cavs.

"We aren't giving ourselves much of a chance to win because we're playing so frustrated right now — frustrated with the referees, frustrated even more by the ball not going in the basket," coach Stan Van Gundy said. "It's very hard to play like that."

TIP-INS

Pistons: Van Gundy doesn't have a timetable for G Reggie Jackson's return. He's been out since Dec. 26 with a sprained right ankle. The Pistons are 10-21 since his injury. "There's nothing imminent with him," Van Gundy said. "He did a little bit of one-on-one against one of the video guys today, but that's as far along as he is."

Cavaliers: J.R. Smith had another head-scratching game, failing to score in 22 minutes. He scored 19 in the second half Saturday after not attempting a shot in the first half. [...] Green (sore lower back) moved with ease while doing drills following the morning shootaround. He felt good enough Sunday to go roller skating along with Smith and James, who posted video of the outing on Instagram. **AP**

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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'"

SUMO

Japan's ancient sport needs some brighter days

Jim Armstrong, Tokyo

THE most damage inflicted in sumo in recent times has been to the image of Japan's tradition-steeped national sport.

An alcohol-fueled restaurant brawl that left a Mongolian wrestler with a fractured skull and a sexual assault scandal involving the sport's highest-ranked referee have rocked the sport in recent months. Those episodes followed a match-fixing investigation in 2011 and the death of a teenage wrestler in training in 2007 that have tainted sumo over the last decade.

Organizers are hoping to restore its battered reputation when the Spring Grand Sumo tournament starts on the weekend.

Takanoiwa, who fractured his skull in an altercation with former Grand Champion Harumafuji in a restaurant last October, is hoping to make a comeback at the Osaka event.



Mongolian Harumafuji (left) pushes opponent Takanoiwa during a bout last year

"I'm just focusing on doing my best," the 28-year-old Takanoiwa told reporters last week during a training session for the tournament. "It will take a bit more time to be ready."

A healthy Takanoiwa wouldn't solve all sumo's problems but would be a big step in the road to recovery.

He was hurt after a group of Mongolian wrestlers had assembled at a restaurant during a regional tour.

Harumafuji was reported to have become aggravated when Takanoiwa repeatedly checked his mobile phone while the two were conversing.

In addition to Harumafuji,

who was forced to retire last November in the wake of the incident, Grand champion Hakuho was also present and had to defend his inability to intervene before the situation got out of control.

The altercation dominated news programs and headlines for weeks. Adding to the bad publicity, the sport's top-ranked referee was forced to resign earlier this year over a sexual harassment scandal.

Shikimori Inosuke apologized to the Japan Sumo Association for allegedly kissing a teenage referee and touching him on the chest while intoxicated during a regional tour of Okinawa in December.

Inosuke said he had no recollection of the incident, and the junior referee declined to file charges.

In the wake of the scandal, though, Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko didn't attend January's New Year tournament for the first time in four years.

Weeks after that, Egyptian wrestler Osunaarashi was caught driving without a license after a vehicle collision and was ordered to pay a USD4,700 fine.

The recent incidents are just the latest scandals to rock the sumo world.

In 2011, the JSA decided

to cancel the Spring tournament after revelations that 14 wrestlers were involved with match-fixing.

In 2010, grand champion Asashoryu, also of Mongolia, announced his retirement following reports that he injured a man while intoxicated.

In the most troubling case in 2007, the 17-year-old wrestler Takashi Saito died when he was beaten over the head with a beer bottle at the direction of his trainer.

Saito's stable master Junichi Yamamoto and three wrestlers were subsequently arrested and charged with manslaughter. In May 2009, Yamamoto was sentenced to six years in prison.

The incident brought substantial political pressure to the governance of the sport in Japan.

In response to the latest scandals this year, the Japan Sumo Association announced that a third-party committee has been convened and will question every member of the JSA. About 900 people, including active wrestlers and elders, will be included in the inquiry.

"Our goal is the preservation of sumo," committee chairman Keiichi Tadaki, a former prosecutor general, said. **AP**

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opinion

Views On China

Andy Mukherjee, Bloomberg

COOL THE HONG KONG PEG FEVER (AGAIN). IT'S GOING NOWHERE

Rumors of the Hong Kong dollar peg's impending demise have always been vastly exaggerated. This time is no different.

At 7.8321 to one U.S. dollar, the city's currency is close to the weak end of a tightly controlled trading band that centers on 7.8, and allows for moves between 7.75 and 7.85. To extrapolate from that mundane fact that the 35-year-old anchor is about to be swept away is wishful (or fearful) thinking.

For one thing, where's the crisis of confidence that would force the currency board system to collapse? Yes, the city's housing prices are bubbly, but with banks like HSBC Holdings Plc paring mortgage rates to as low as 1.25 percentage points over the interbank rate, demand for the world's least affordable property is still intact.

Something traumatic has to happen for investors to suddenly start believing that the Hong Kong Monetary Authority's HKD1.8 trillion (USD230 billion) in U.S. dollar assets aren't enough to back its HKD1.7 trillion in liabilities. And before they translate those beliefs into bearish bets, they have to consider how the monetary authority bled speculators during the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis.

Why would Hong Kong's reaction be any less vigorous now? The local currency is weak because a glut of liquidity from mainland China has kept interbank rates relatively low and falling at the same time as expectations for the pace of U.S. monetary tightening increase. The three-month Hong Kong interbank offered rate is at just over 1 percent - half of U.S. dollar Libor.

It's worth noting that this situation is unusual. In a currency board system, supply and demand are reflected through changes in interest rates instead of the exchange rate. If U.S. interest rates rise and Hong Kong rates don't, then traders can make a risk-free profit by borrowing local dollars and investing them in greenbacks (as long as they expect the peg to hold, that is).

This arbitrage activity would suck liquidity out of the Hong Kong dollar market, forcing local interbank rates higher until they are back in balance with those of the anchor currency. So the gap between Hibor and U.S. rates cannot widen indefinitely. Interest-rate parity conditions demand that they converge, eventually - unless the peg breaks. Hence the recent flurry of speculation.

The gap will close, perhaps sooner rather than later if smartphone maker Xiaomi Corp., which is targeting a valuation of as much as \$100 billion, selects Hong Kong as one of the venues for its planned initial public offering. Lufax, a wealth manager owned by Ping An Insurance (Group) Co., is also hoping for a \$60 billion valuation from a float in the city.

People borrowing Hong Kong dollars to subscribe to hot IPOs would cause Hibor to rise - and discussions about the stability of the peg to stop. That's what happened last September when ZhongAn Online P&C Insurance Co. raised \$1.5 billion.

As my colleague Shuli Ren wrote back then, retail investors, who subscribed for more than 400 times their \$300 million allotment, borrowed in excess of HKD50 billion from brokers when orders opened. That was almost a third of the prevailing HKD180 billion of interbank liquidity. The Hong Kong dollar climbed from a low of 7.8252 on Sept. 5 to 7.8034 on Sept. 20.

This is the most likely, business-as-usual ending to the latest episode of currency weakness. A rarer, black-swan-type event could occur if China undergoes a credit meltdown.

If capital flight caused Hibor to rise uncontrollably, devaluation might be the only choice to avoid a depression.

Impossible? No. Highly improbable? Most certainly. With President Xi Jinping being anointed as China's leader for life, the last thing he would want is Chinese banks going belly up in the hub of the vaunted Greater Bay area. That would do no good to a strongman leader's reputation.

When the yuan is fully convertible, Hong Kong could voluntarily embrace it. That would make perfect sense. Until then, whichever reason you choose - Xiaomi, or Xi - a forced end to the local currency's peg isn't in the cards.

THE BUZZ TRUMP SAYS MORE STAFF WILL LEAVE AS HE SEEKS 'PERFECTION'

President Donald Trump is denying his White House is chaotic but says more staff will leave as he seeks "perfection."

Trump tweets yesterday: "The new Fake News narrative is that there is CHAOS in the White House. Wrong! People will always come & go, and I want strong dialogue before making a final decision." Trump says: I still have some people that I want to change (always seeking perfection). There is no

Chaos, only great Energy!"

The president was pushing back against news report the White House is again being consumed by dysfunction and disarray.

Trump last week made a surprise announcement he was slapping tariffs on steel and aluminum imports. His communications director abruptly announced her resignation, and questions persist about the longevity of other top White House aides.

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

SOURCE: DSMG

WORLD BRIEFS

SYRIA A Russian military cargo plane crashed as it was descending to land at an air base in Syria yesterday, killing all 32 people onboard, the Russian Defense Ministry said.



ISRAEL-IRAN Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says Iran is responsible for "darkness descending" on the Middle East by building an anti-Israel empire.

NIGERIA Police say a suicide bomber riding a bicycle with explosive devices strapped to his body killed three people when he detonated himself in a crowded suburb of Nigeria's northeast city of Maiduguri.

ROMANIA A top Romanian court has struck down legislation that would have allowed lawmakers and other public officials to own businesses.



ITALY The former Italian premier, Matteo Renzi (pictured), has challenged members of his defeated Democrats to publicly declare if they'll support the 5-Star Movement, throwing down the gauntlet as he tries to prevent his party from fracturing and backing its political nemesis.

MEXICO A group of influential Mexican intellectuals and writers penned an open letter to President Enrique Pena Nieto, asking him to either bring charges or drop what is widely seen as a politicized investigation of an opposition presidential candidate.

Child marriages decline, led by big fall in South Asia

A significant fall in the number of child marriages in South Asia has helped reduced the rate of marriage for girls globally, the U.N. children's agency said yesterday.

More educational opportunities for young girls, government investments in adolescent girls and strong advocacy about the illegality of child marriage saw 25 million fewer child marriages in the last decade.

UNICEF says progress in India helped reduced the risk of a girl in South Asia marrying before her 18th birthday to about 30 percent from nearly 50 percent.

Some 650 million women living today were married as children.

A girl forced to marry young is less likely to finish school and more likely to be abused and suffer pregnancy complications, said Anju Malhotra, UNICEF's principal gender adviser. Such marriages also are more likely to perpetuate poverty.

In India, the legal age for marriage is 18 for women and 21 for men. Parents responsible for underage marriages can be imprisoned and government programs aim to encourage girls to stay in school, but the prac-



A child bride, who is only fourteen years old (right) performs rituals with the groom after getting married at a Hindu temple, in India

tice persists in a largely conservative culture where marriage is viewed as the most important event in a girl's life.

The global burden of child marriage has shifted to sub-Saharan Africa. According to UNICEF data, about 1 in 3 of the world's most recently married girls are in sub-Saharan Africa, compared to 1 in 5 a decade ago.

"Each and every child marriage prevented gives another girl the chance to fulfill her potential," said Malhotra. "But given the world has pledged to end child marriage by 2030, we're going to have to collectively redouble efforts to prevent millions of girls from having their childhoods stolen through this devastating practice." AP

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/Shizuo Kambayashi



Kobe Steel President and CEO Hiroya Kawasaki bows during a press conference in Tokyo yesterday. Kawasaki is stepping down over a scandal involving massive falsification of inspections data of products (see page 8).