



MICHEL VAILLANT RETURNS TO MACAU

The fabled comic book hero created by Jean Graton is set to return to Macau for a new episode of his racing adventures

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CLAIMS AGAINST OKADA DROPPED

Wynn Resorts has dropped all claims against co-founder and Japanese business tycoon Kazuo Okada

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RODRIGO RETURNS WITH NEW EXHIBITION

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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'"

WORLD BRIEFS



INDONESIA The conservative province of Aceh known for publicly caning gays, adulterers and gamblers is considering the introduction of beheading as a punishment for murder.

CAMBODIA With political and press freedoms under pressure ahead of elections scheduled for July, the U.N. said yesterday it is a mistake for the government of Prime Minister Hun Sen to prioritize stability and development over human rights.



PHILIPPINES President Rodrigo Duterte announced yesterday that the Philippines is withdrawing its ratification of a treaty that created the International Criminal Court, where he is facing a possible complaint over thousands of suspects killed in his anti-drug crackdown. More on p12

THAILAND Police filed new charges yesterday against a billionaire construction tycoon accused of hunting endangered animals in a wildlife sanctuary.

SOUTH KOREA Prosecutors yesterday questioned South Korea's conservative former President Lee Myung-bak over corruption allegations, making him the latest of the country's leaders entangled in scandal. More on p12

More on backpage

Air links to Moscow, Boracay launched

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PHOTO ARCHIVE



AFC CUP

Benfica wins in N. Korea, makes history in Macau football

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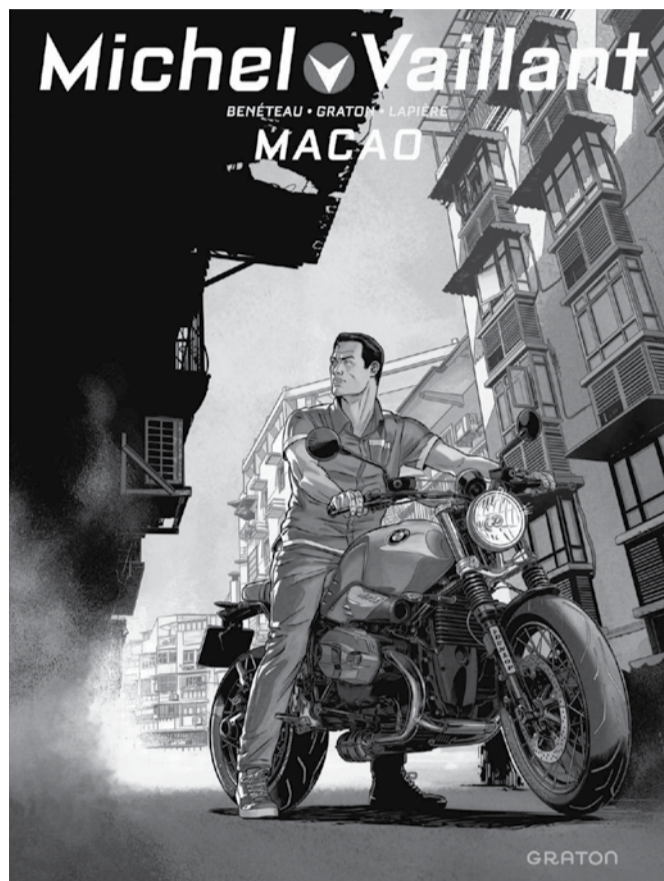
Fabled comic book hero Michel Vaillant returns to Macau

Renato Marques

THE fabled comic book hero Michel Vaillant is set to return to Macau for the new episode of his racing adventures. The book cover was presented yesterday during the press conference where it was announced that the book launch will happen in November during the Macau Grand Prix event.

The plot decision was made by storywriter Philippe Garton, who is both one of the book authors and the son of the original creator of the character back in 1957, Jean Graton. As the storywriter explained during the press conference held as part of the program of The Script Road - Macau Literary Festival, the idea of bringing the character back to Macau was planted after Philippe Graton's participation as a guest in last year's Festival, where he exhibited photographs and a display of the original prints of the comic book.

For the author, this book is an opportunity to "break in" to markets "where traditional Franco-Belgian comics always had difficulty to get in." Franco-Belgian comics stand in contrast to the other two main types of these comic culture (the American Super Heroes stories led by Marvel and the Japanese Manga) that have won widespread popularity around the world. "It is a unique opportunity as there is a huge cultural gap between the French-Belgium graphic novels and the American comics and the Japanese Manga and that's what we are trying to do by reaching the Asian markets and namely the China market. It is something that the huge Euro-



Cover of the new book



Philippe Graton

“These kind of heroes never get old; they keep on moving with the contemporary world.”

PHILIPPE GRATON

pean publishers could never do with all the resources they possess,” Graton said.

Not wanting to unveil much of the actual action, Graton

advanced that for this new season, which he started in 2012, “I wanted to move from the old stories that had a different public. Readers now are more educated, [knowledgeable] not exactly kids but racing fans and even kids are more knowledgeable forcing us to perfect our story details,” Graton said. He went on to note that such facts influenced this new comic greatly as, for example, “regulations [for Formula 3 race] only allow drivers with a maximum age of 26 and Michel Vaillant can hide his age [physically] but would make no sense to put him in a role of a racer, so we decided to give him another role and we came up with another way for

him to continue to be the main protagonist of the story.”

According to Graton, the book will read more as a double-story that unfolds simultaneously, on and off the racetrack in the “relevant places of the true Macau,” he said.

For the creation of such a story, the authors were in Macau during last year's Macau Grand Prix working very closely with the team that featured French racer Sacha Fenestraz and during the event, a Michel Vaillant livery was used on his Dallara-Volkswagen, which was prepared by Carlin Motorsports. The director of the Literary Festival, Ricardo Pinto, who moderated the talk, noted on

the topic: “One of our aims with this festival is to try as much as possible to be the origin or the start of new projects whenever you have guests here and this was one project that was born here at the Literary Festival.”

For Graton, it is “touching” that the comics created by his father 60 years ago “still raise so much interest, maybe because these kind of heroes never get old, they keep on moving with the contemporary world.” Graton added, “Michel Vaillant has been racing against Fangio and other big drivers from the 1950's and now on the next adventure he will face the young talents on the Macau Grand Prix.”

Cleaning inspection on Coloane beaches continues

THE Marine and Water Bureau (DSAMA) announced yesterday that the black oily substance on the Hac Sa and Cheoc Van beaches is subsiding, but a cleaning inspection in the area continues.

This inspection comes after a video went viral

on social media on Tuesday, which showed what seemed to be a ship releasing oil into the Inner Harbor's waters.

The Times contacted the bureau to further enquire about where the alleged oil spill came from and the measures they were undertaking;

however, the only reply received was a statement which was also issued on their website.

“Today, there were essentially no black substances found on the beach of Cheoc Van,” DSAMA assured in the statement they posted on their website.

“While it is possible that these substances are carried by the waters to the beaches, DSAMA has posted warnings on these two beaches, calling on citizens and tourists to pay attention to this situation and not enter the beaches,” it added.

On Tuesday, the bureau

explained that pollutants had drifted ashore and that they could not yet identify the substance.

Yesterday, DSAMA claimed that the substance was only a ‘sludge from a dredging boat while sailing’ in the harbor.

A DSAMA statement indicated that the relevant

departments continue to pay attention to this situation and, if there is an abnormality, they shall immediately follow up on the matter. The Environmental Protection Bureau also sends officials to periodically monitor and inspect Macau's coastal zones.”

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Wynn Resorts drops claims against Okada

WYNN Resorts has dropped all claims against co-founder Kazuo Okada, a Japanese business tycoon the company had accused of paying bribes to Philippine government officials.

The Las Vegas Review-Journal reported that Wynn Resorts voluntarily withdrew its claims of breach of fiduciary responsibility against Okada, founder of Tokyo casino game-maker Universal Entertainment Corp.

The move will make it easier for Wynn's Chief Executive Officer Matt Maddox to bring to a quick close a bitter, six-year battle among shareholders.

It comes on the heels of a surprise announcement last week that Wynn will pay Universal USD2.4 billion to end the fight over a 20 percent stake in the casino operator.

Okada was a Wynn board member in 2012 when the Las Vegas-based company filed a lawsuit against him claiming the bribery allegations threatened its reputation.

The actions stemmed from a separate casino resort Okada was undertaking in the Philippines.

Wynn Resorts currently operates casino-resorts in Las Vegas and Macau and is building one near Boston.

Okada was ousted from Universal last year over fraud accusations. He has denied any wrongdoing.

Universal previously held an almost 20 percent stake in Wynn Resorts through its subsidiary Aruze USA Inc.

Maddox, who took the helm after Steve Wynn stepped down Feb. 6 amid allegations of sexual harassment, has moved aggressively to clean up the company's image and end the lawsuits.

Wynn Resorts has been mired in investigations pertaining to those allegations while fighting Universal and Elaine Wynn.

Steve Wynn sought to end his battle with his ex-wife two weeks ago, filing a motion to invalidate their 2010 shareholder agreement. However, a judge declined his motion because Universal was a party to that agreement.



Kazuo Okada

With Universal out of the case, Steve Wynn intends to ask the judge on Friday to declare the shareholder agreement with his ex-wife invalid, permitting both to sell their shares. **MDT/AP**

WeChat dominates region's mobile app usage

THE latest survey published by the Macao Internet Project and several other organizations shows that WeChat has become Macau's most used mobile application.

The results were included in the 18th annual survey of Macau residents' Internet usage.

According to the report, 74 percent of Macau residents are WeChat users. Some 87 percent, 75 percent, 55 percent and 44 percent of these users use WeChat to exchange text messages, audio messages, captioned pictures dubbed 'moments', and browse official accounts, respectively.

On average, each local user follows eight official accounts on WeChat, with nearly 30 percent following the Macau government's official account.

Besides the continuous growth in the number of local WeChat users, which increased four percent year-on-year in 2017, the results also show higher overall internet access among local residents.



This year, Macau's internet access rate reached 84 percent, higher than the global average of 54 percent. The internet access rate among people aged between 18 and 40 years old is almost at 100 percent.

The fastest growth in terms of internet access rate can be seen among the group of people aged over 60, which recorded a 40 percent increase this year.

In total, Macau has nearly 510,000 internet users. 80 percent (490,000) of these use their mobile devices to access the Internet.

Only 20 percent of local residents use mobile payment platforms to make purchases in shops, indicating that they feel such payment methods lack security.

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Regular air route to Moscow to launch in May

A regular air route between Macau and the capital of Russia is scheduled to commence from May 10, the Civil Aviation Authority of Macau (AACM) said, making it the longest, direct non-charter route operating out of the MSAR.

According to the AACM's destination network, the route will shortly become the 49th operating out of the Macau International Airport. It will be flown once a week starting from May.

The AACM representative added that, at present, there are no plans for other links to Europe.

JSC Royal Flight Airlines, a charter airline based out of Abakan in southern Russia since 1993, will operate the route.

The airline first commenced flights between Macau and the Russian capital in May 2016, offering a twice-weekly charter service. This service was gradually expanded as the route matured.

Macau was the company's first destination in the greater China region. It currently operates charter services between Russian cities, and holiday destinations such as Egypt, Turkey, India, the

United Arab Emirates, Thailand and Indonesia.

AACM confirmed to the Times yesterday that it has approved two new air routes linking Macau to the beach resort destinations of Boracay in the Philippines and Cam Ranh in Vietnam. The Boracay route is operated by Royal Air Charter Service with 14 weekly flights and the Cam Ranh route is operated by Small Planet Airlines with two weekly flights. Both airlines commenced flights on their respective routes in the past five weeks.

Privacy watchdog judges body-mounted cameras to be within reason

THE Office for Personal Data Protection (GPDP) concluded that the proposed measure, for on duty police officers to wear body-mounted cameras, would not be a privacy violation, according to a statement released by GPDP on Tuesday.

The GPDP statement noted the two purposes behind the measure.

First, it is said to be an aid to help the police to enforce the law, and it can only be used in three situations: during incidents that have already occurred or are expected to occur which might compromise the public's order and the quietude within the society; in situations when the safety of people or of private property is at risk of being violated; and, in places where crimes have been committed or where crimes are expected to take place.

GPDP claims that the second purpose aims at su-



perceiving law enforcement procedures carried out by police officers, and that, in view of that, the cameras can only be used when the officers face threats or resistance in the performance of their duties.

According to the GPDP statement, the two purposes are directly related to the "duties, missions or the activities" of the Public Se-

curity Police Force (PSP), which is the responsible body for the implementation of these types of activities, as well as the responsible handler of personal data concerning these same activities.

"After an analysis, GPDP currently has not found any violation of the conditions of the legitimacy and of the principal of propor-

tionality under the personal data protection law," the statement reads.

"In relation to the rights of the data subject, the security measures for the processing of the personal data, and the period for the retention of the data, [the measure] basically corresponds to the respective rules of law."

According to a report by Hoje Macau, lawyer Luís Cardoso said that he is unaware of "what the legal basis for this measure is."

"For better or worse, there has to be a law that properly regulates this situation by providing, for example, information on who can access these images, unless they want to take refuge in the arguments of public order and tranquility, which are subjective concepts for me," the lawyer said.

The PSP said in a statement that, under normal circumstances, police officers would have to clearly announce their intention to film before activating the cameras.

Lawyer Pedro Leal told TDM yesterday that the use of body cameras by the police should be supervised by an independent entity or a judge.

Vietnamese recruited 2 months before Kim Jong Nam's murder



Indonesian Siti Aisyah (second from right) is escorted by police as she leaves a court hearing at Shah Alam High Cour

Eileen Ng, Shah Alam

A Vietnamese woman accused of murdering the estranged half brother of North Korea's leader was recruited by a North Korean suspect at a Hanoi bar two months before the killing, her lawyer said yesterday.

Details about Doan Thi Huong are emerging for the first time since she was charged, along with Siti Aisyah from Indonesia, with smearing Kim Jong Nam's face with the banned VX nerve agent at Kuala Lumpur's airport on Feb. 13 last year. The two are the only suspects in custody, though prosecutors have said four North Koreans who fled the country were also involved.

Lawyer Hisyam Teh Poh Teik told the court that Huong told police shortly after she was detained last year that she was introduced to a Korean man known as Mr. Y by a Vietnamese bar owner in December 2016. Mr. Y has been identified in court as Ri Ji Hyon, one of the four North Korean suspects who fled Malaysia.

Huong said Nguyen Bich Thuy, who was a former co-worker at a pub, called her and asked if she wanted to work for a Korean company as an actress in a "short movie or funny video," according to her police statement read out by Teh. She said she was introduced to Mr. Y at the Hay Bar, which belonged to Thuy and her husband, and asked for a salary of USD1,000 a month.

Huong said she participated in her first prank outside Hanoi's Opera House, where she was told to kiss a stranger on the cheek. She said in the police statement that it was unsuccessful because the person shied away.

Teh told the court that Thuy had declined to come to Malaysia to testify but was questioned by Vietnamese police in March last year and made sworn

statements that supported Huong's claims to police.

The lawyer said Thuy told Vietnamese police that Mr. Y, who speaks fluent Vietnamese, had initially wanted to recruit her but she declined due to family commitments. She said she then remembered Huong loved to act and introduced her.

The youngest of five siblings, Huong, 29, said in her police statement that her parents were farmers and that she studied accounting at Hanoi Business and Technology University and later worked for three years as a waitress in Hanoi.

Teh was cross-examining chief police investigator Wan Azirul Nizam Che Wan Aziz, who acknowledged that he hadn't investigated Huong's claims or contacted Vietnamese police to get details from Thuy. The lawyer said his law firm had written to Malaysia's attorney-general to seek Vietnam's approval for Malaysian police to probe the case there but was refused.

Teh also accused Wan Azirul of being "a biased investigator, not independent and not interested in the truth."

"We are terribly disadvantaged as the investigation didn't focus on this area," Teh told reporters later. The hearing is to resume today.

The two women face the death penalty if convicted, but not if they lacked intent to kill. Prosecutors contend the women knew they were handling poison.

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

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



Bilingual Talent



Baby Sitter



Silk Road

Renato Marques

TITLED "Punacotheca," the new exhibition from Macau-based Portuguese cartoonist Rodrigo de Matos proposes a completely different approach to the "humorous" style that is always present in his works.

With a 10-year-long career in editorial cartoons, Rodrigo accepted a new challenge given to him by the Center for Creative Industries (Creative Macau) to venture into new fields.

A secret wish of his was revealed, the desire to give more value to "how is it done" rather than "what is done," as mentioned in his interview with the Times.

"In editorial cartoons it doesn't really matter how the cartoon is done and what techniques are used because what is important is the core message that is on it," he said, adding, "While in illustration and painting, art is more valued: the way the work is done, the technique, the concept and the outcome," he concluded, noting that this exhibition is for him an opportunity to exercise his skills and technical capabilities without deserting the humor that has been the center stage of his life and career.

Explaining a bit of the idea behind "Punacotheca," the awarded cartoonist said that the "pun," also called paronomasia, is a form of wordplay that exploits multiple meanings of a term, or of similar-

Rodrigo's exhibition explores a different approach to humour

sounding words, for an intended humorous or rhetorical effect.

Puns are the core of Rodrigo's new works, picking up words and expressions that he sees and reads in daily life and newspapers to create something else. By doing so, he creates something that can be both ambiguous and bizarre and above all ludicrous.

In illustration and painting, art is more valued: the way the work is done, the technique, the concept and the outcome.

RODRIGO

Rodrigo thought about "playing" with English and/or Portuguese words and expressions, trying to choose puns that work in both

DANIEL BEITLER



Rodrigo de Matos

languages or at least can be perceived with a minimal knowledge of the English language. Besides presenting a very personal perspective, the works are completely new (except for one) and created specifically for this exhibition, and reflect the daily life and topics of Macau and the surrounding regions.

A series of drawings with the support of "electronic" devices, this exhibition is for the author

"also an opportunity to perfect my technique and try different materials, acrylic paint, permanent pens, or other techniques that have a more symbolic value." Such techniques are explored without the aim of conveying a political message (in contrast to what happens most of the time with editorial cartoons).

For future projects, the artist revealed his intention to pursue another of his old ideas – to ex-

plore Portuguese language proverbs and idiomatic expressions, creating a kind of illustrated dictionary based around those phrases.

The "Punacotheca," presenting a collection of about 30 illustrations and paintings from Rodrigo, will be on display from March 22 until April 21 at Creative Macau on the ground floor of the Macau Cultural Center building. Admission is free.

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Benfica Macau wins in North Korea

BENFICA Macau won the second match of the AFC Cup securing a 3-2 away win against DPR Korea's Hwaepul SC at Kim Il Sung Stadium. Benfica now has two wins from the first two games in the debut AFC Cup campaign.

The final scoreline was the same as in their Group I opener against Hang Yuen FC last week, but yesterday's result, in front of 22,000 people in the DPR Korea capital is one of the finest in Macau's football history. The Macau champions made a sensational recovery as they overtook the opponents on the scoreboard.

Leonel, who also scored a double against the Taiwanese club in the memorable comeback on March 7, opened the scoring after just seven minutes in Pyongyang, only to see parity restored in the 13th minute via Hwaepul captain Jong Chol-hyok from the penalty spot.



Leonel shoots at goal during the match against Hang Yuen FC last week

Kyrgyz international David Tetteh then restored Benfica Macau's lead just before half-time to make the score 2-1 to the visitors at the break.

Just four minutes into the second half, Hwaepul SC forward Pak Chol-song leveled the scores once more, before the final say went to Benfica Macau and Leonel

nel who stunned the home crowd with the winner 15 minutes from time.

The victorious Macau team now sits on six points in the standings and will return to Pyongyang to face 4.25 SC on April 11. Hwaepul SC is yet to pick up a point in their maiden campaign, and they will be hosting Hang Yuen FC next.

Restored Holy House of Mercy elderly home unveils plaque

MACAU Holy House of Mercy unveiled a plaque at its elderly home yesterday in recognition of Sands China's assistance after Typhoon Hato.

A MOP2 million donation from Sands China in December helped to cover the costs of repairing the facility and the restoration work is now complete.

The storm in August caused extensive damage to the elderly home, including major structural damage to its roof.

"We are very grateful to Sands China for its generous contribution, which allowed us to repair the damage to our elderly home after the typhoon," said Macau Holy House of Mercy's president Antonio José de Freitas.

"The residents are happy to have their home restored to a suitable condition, and we want



Wilfred Wong (left) and Antonio José de Freitas

to commemorate the occasion by mounting a plaque as an expression of our appreciation."


Yesterday, Freitas provided Sands China president, Wilfred Wong, with an inspection tour of the roof before Wong and Freitas unveiled the plaque together.

"It's wonderful to see the elderly home back in order, and our appreciation goes out to Holy House of Mercy for the valuable service they provide to society. We are humbled by the kind gesture of mounting a

plaque honouring our company," said Wong.

The donation from Sands China helped cover the costs of the repairs, which included rebuilding and repainting the rooftop, restoring water-damaged ceilings and walls, fixing leaks, and installing new water outlets and pipes.

Sands China has pledged to donate a total of MOP30 million to support Macau's typhoon disaster relief, with another MOP35 million in aid pledged by the Adelson Family Foundation.



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FOOD & BEVERAGE

Back alley cuisine recognized in Taipei's debut Michelin Guide



Joel Robuchon, chef and restauranter, smiles during an interview at his restaurant, L'Atelier Hong Kong

Adela Lin, Samson Ellis

TUCKED away in a nondescript alley not far from Taipei's hostess bar district, Ming Fu isn't the most likely place to find internationally acclaimed cuisine.

The small seafood restaurant was the surprise name among the 20 eateries recognized in Michelin's debut guide for the Taiwanese capital on Wednesday. It now sits alongside the restaurants of such lauded names as Joel Robuchon and Andre Chiang.

In its appraisal, the French tiremaker hailed Ming Fu's "dense and gelatinous" "Buddha jumps over the wall" soup and the signature braised chicken with pickled gourd. To

get a spot at one of its only six tables, diners are warned that reservations are vital.

"Taipei is a city that has incredibly rich gastronomic history," said Michael Ellis, international director in charge of the Michelin Guides. "Taipei has also given birth to a truly dynamic and innovative dining scene."

Cantonese establishment Le Palais was the only Taipei restaurant to receive three stars. Two others were awarded two stars.

The awards are part of Michelin's growing effort to broaden its appeal in Asia. In addition to Taipei, it now publishes guides for Japan, Hong Kong and Macau, Seoul, Shanghai, Singapore and Bangkok. The Thai capital failed

to claim a single three-star award when its guide was released in December.

One notable omission from the Taipei list was Din Tai Fung, perhaps Taiwan's most famous culinary export. The dumpling maker - lauded in a 1993 New York Times article by chef Ken Hom as one of the best restaurants in the world - failed to win any stars, having to settle instead for a mention in Michelin's "bib gourmand" category.

Michelin's restaurant reviewers anonymously award stars based on creativity, quality and service. Three stars are given to restaurants "worth a special journey," two stars for those "worth a detour," and one star is for those deemed "worth a stop." **Bloomberg**



Cathay Pacific Chairman John Slosar

Cathay Pacific Airways loss doubles on intense competition

Kelvin Chan, Hong Kong

CATHAY Pacific's losses more than doubled last year because of rising fuel costs and relentless competition, the Hong Kong airline said yesterday.

The airline posted a HKD1.26 billion (USD160 million) loss for 2017, compared with a HKD575 million loss the year before. Revenue rose 5 percent.

"Fundamental structural changes within the airline industry continued to create a challenging operating environment for our airline businesses," Chairman John Slosar said.

Cathay Pacific Airways Ltd., Hong Kong's biggest airline, also operates regional carrier Cathay Dragon.

The company has been under pressure from rivals including budget airlines around Asia and state-owned mainland Chinese carriers, which have been flooding key routes with passenger seats and driving down prices.

Cathay's fuel bill rose 11.3 percent even after taking into account fuel hedging contracts used to minimize price swings. Jet fuel is the company's single-

biggest expense, accounting for nearly a third of total operating costs.

Congestion at Hong Kong's airport and from air traffic control constraints in mainland China, where the military's tight control of much of the airspace results in aviation bottlenecks, also added to costs.

One-off charges included a 57 million euro (\$71 million) fine levied by the European Commission in a years-long case involving 10 other air cargo carriers accused of colluding to fix fuel and security surcharges.

Last year, Cathay embarked on a sweeping corporate overhaul that included dismissing nearly 600 staff at its headquarters, in its biggest round of layoffs in two decades. Redundancy costs added HKD224 million (\$28.6 million) to staff expenses. But Slosar said there were signs the revamp was paying off, with losses in the second half of the year smaller than in each of the preceding two years.

Cathay's cargo business helped offset some of the pain, with revenue up 19 percent on robust demand, the company said. **AP**

corporate bits

KOREAN STAR TO HOLD 'FANS MEETING' AT THE VENETIAN MACAO



Korean star Hwang Chi Yeul will be holding the "Hwang Chi Yeul Fans Meeting Macau 2018" which will take place at The Venetian Macao's Venetian Theatre on April 21.

Aside from performing some of his biggest singles, Hwang will meet with the

audience through playing games and personal interaction, according to a press release issued by Sands China.

Fans who purchase VIP tickets will automatically be entered into a lucky draw to personally meet the Korean artist.

Hwang released his first solo EP album in 2007, which showcased his unique vocal style, energy and charisma and he gained greater popularity after finishing as the second runner-up in the fourth season of the popular television show "I am a Singer".

Last year, his best-selling mini album, "Be Ordinary" was released and he is now one of the most in-demand Korean celebrities. Hwang is a singer, TV show and awards show host, model and brand ambassador.

NISSAN NAMES NEW CHINA HEAD



Nissan Motor Co. is doubling down on its push in China, naming one of its top executives to head operations in a market the carmaker expects

to be its biggest growth driver over the next five years.

Chief Performance Officer Jose Munoz, promoted to his current role more than a

year ago, will take on added responsibility as head of Nissan's China operations, the Japanese automaker said Wednesday. Makoto Uchida, currently head of purchasing, will become president of Dongfeng Motor Co., Nissan's China joint venture.

China is poised to become Nissan's single biggest market within five years, contributing almost a third of its targeted revenue of 16.5 trillion yen (USD155 billion) by 2022. The carmaker intends to spend 1 trillion yen in China over the period as it vies with global rivals including Volkswagen AG and General Motors Co. to become the largest electrified vehicle maker in the country, which is focused on putting more of such models on the road to reduce emissions.



ANALYSIS

Trade wars aside, Trump's 'Taiwan card' is Beijing's real worry

FORGET steel and intellectual property. The biggest potential flash point between U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping is an island of 23 million people sitting off China's coast.

Even as global investors shift from worrying about a second Korean conflict to a potential China-U.S. trade war, decades-old disagreements over democratically run Taiwan are simmering. For China at least, that is a more serious concern.

"Compared with economic and trade issues, the Taiwan issue is a top priority for Beijing and is more politically sensitive," said Fu-Kuo Liu, an international relations professor at National Chengchi University in Taipei. "The U.S. will measure relations with Taiwan based on its national interest, and Taiwan will be a pawn to Beijing."

The dispute centers on Taiwan's 70-year slide into diplomatic isolation after ending up on the losing side of the Chinese civil war. While the island is self-ruled and enjoys American military protection, China considers Taiwan a province and has made acceptance of its "one-China" claim a precondition for diplomatic ties - including with the U.S.

On trade, China has sought to maintain what it calls "strategic composure" as Trump escalates his threats, launching a probe of U.S. grain imports while war-

ning against a trade war. Trump's planned tariffs on steel and aluminum would apply to a variety of countries, not just China, which accounts for a relatively small portion of American imports. Indeed, Taiwan faces a bigger hit.

But challenging Xi on Taiwan - a central focus of his "Chinese dream" of national rejuvenation - would be another matter.

Trump's firing of U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, a former Exxon Mobil Corp. chief executive officer with many years of China experience adds more uncertainty to the issue. His nominee for the role, Central Intelligence Agency Director Mike Pompeo, warned just days ago of the "Chinese threat" to American interests, although he hasn't said much recently on Taiwan.

Some U.S. national security hawks have long advocated greater Taiwan ties as a bulwark against China. Although Trump signaled he might try that strategy - holding an unprecedented December 2016 phone call with Taiwan's president, Tsai Ing-wen - he later reaffirmed support for the one-China principle while seeking Xi's cooperation on North Korea.

Now, a series of moves in Beijing, Taipei and Washington are threatening to bring the Taiwan question back to the fore. One Chinese official in Beijing said there was concern that Trump could play the "Taiwan card" and

that the government was prepared to take a strong stand against any U.S. moves on the issue.

Tensions have been steadily rising since Taiwan's 2016 election, which replaced a China-friendly government with one run by the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party. Tsai has angered China by refusing to endorse the one-China framework while offering to sign a U.S. free-trade deal and buy more advanced American arms.

In response, China has ratcheted up pressure on Tsai, picking off Taiwan's few remaining diplomatic allies and launching regular

"encirclement patrols" with military jets around its airspace. China's decision Sunday to remove presidential term limits gives Xi even more incentive to see through his pledge for Taiwan's "peaceful reunification."

Meanwhile, Taiwan's allies in the U.S. Congress have pressed for greater support, passing legislation last month allowing for diplomatic exchanges with Taiwan "at all levels," specifically citing "cabinet-level national security officials." Signing the bill and holding such visits would signal whether Trump intends to test China on Taiwan. He could grant

Taiwanese requests to buy advanced weapons such as Lockheed Martin Corp.'s F-35 fighter jets.

While such moves risk provoking a confrontation with China, Trump has shown a willingness to use available leverage in showdowns over North Korea, health care and immigration. And he'll need to apply a lot of pressure, if he expects China to cut anywhere near \$100 billion from its \$375 billion trade surplus with U.S.

"Taiwan is a diplomatic card for Trump to play when he needs to annoy China," said Cheng Yu-Chin, director of the EU-China Economics & Politics Institute in Prague. "In the future, Taiwan will suffer even more, as it gets caught in the middle between a stronger China and an inward-looking U.S."

National security policy documents published by the Trump administration have described China as a "strategic competitor" and urged greater efforts to support allies in the Asia-Pacific region. The U.S. provides military support to the island under the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979.

A stronger line on Taiwan might also find supporters among congressional Republicans. Arkansas Senator Tom Cotton - a vocal Trump ally - has criticized China's efforts to isolate Taiwan and said after the Taiwan Travel Act's passage last month that "only U.S. leadership can push back against this aggression."

China has signaled it will have little patience with the U.S. if it attempts to upgrade its relationship with Taiwan. In December, a senior Chinese diplomat in Washington warned that China would "unify" the island by military force if a U.S. warship made a port call there.

Zhou Qi, director of the Institute of American Studies at the state-run Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said any effort to play the Taiwan card would backfire on the U.S.

"To the Chinese government, Taiwan is the primary issue in U.S.-China relations," Zhou said. "And it can't be used as a bargaining chip in trade talks." **Bloomberg**

ONE SHOT NEWS



Exiled Tibetans shout anti-Chinese government slogans during a rally to mark March 14 uprising day in New Delhi, India, yesterday. Tibetans were marking the tenth year of protests led by Buddhist monks on March 14, 2008 in Tibet that turned violent, leading to an extensive crackdown by China's military.

CHINA slapped a logistics company with fines totaling 5.5 billion yuan (USD870 million) for manipulating the stock market, the biggest ever punishment for such an infringement.

Xiamen Beibadao Group was charged with manipulating the share prices of three Shenzhen-listed companies, Jiangsu Zhangjiagang Rural Commercial Bank Co., Jiangsu Jiangyin Rural Commercial Bank Co. and Guangdong Hoshion Aluminium Co., China's securities regulator said in a briefing in Beijing yesterday. It later clarified that the unit's parent, Shanghai-based Beibadao Group, was the manipulator.

The penalty is almost six times what Beibadao earned by its actions, the watchdog said. Chinese authorities have been mounting a campaign to stamp out illicit behavior in the world's second-biggest equity market, which is dominated by individual, often first-time investors. Liu Shiyu, chairman of the China Securities Regulatory Commission, said in February 2017 that he would pursue market malpractice and wrongdoing no matter whether it's "historical or current."

"The fines will only get bigger and bigger as regulators step up the crackdown on market irregularities, and it's likely we'll begin to see similar cases

XIAMEN BEIBADAO

Gov't levies record USD870 million fine for stock manipulation



being exposed more frequently in the future," said Yin Ming, vice president of Shanghai-based Baptized Capital. "It's a signal to market participants that violent share moves and speculative trades are prohibited, and it's always the authorities' priority to maintain a stable market."

The Shanghai Composite Index's volatility hit historic lows

last year, and despite a recent increase, the market's swings are far smaller than the wild extremes of 2015 and 2016. Liu, who took on his role at the CSRC in February 2016, told senior officials at the time that strictly supervising the market and checking for manipulation was among their main tasks.

Beibadao set up a team of traders who used more than 300

different accounts from March to May 2017, CSRC officials said. A phone call to a number listed for Beibadao was unanswered, and the company doesn't appear to have a website.

The punishment isn't the first multibillion-yuan fine handed down by the CSRC since the crackdown began. In March 2017, an individual investor was ordered to pay 1.17 billion yuan in two cases of manipulation, while one month earlier a 3.47 billion-yuan fine was imposed on a company controller, who was also permanently banned from the securities indus-

try for violations on disclosures and manipulation.

In December, an equities trader in the city of Foshan, in Guangdong province, was fined 54 million yuan for manipulating 15 stocks and making a profit of 27 million yuan. A week later, another trader in nearby Shenzhen copped a 1-million yuan fine for a stock-price manipulation plan that actually lost him money. In April, a former stock market official was fined 251 million yuan for illegal trading activities. Unlike the earlier cases, Beibadao's penalties were aimed at a company rather than an individual.

"In the past, when there was illegal activity in the capital market, the fine was just hundreds of thousands. The cost to violate the rules was so low," said Hong Hao, Hong Kong-based strategist at Bocom International Holdings Co. "Going forward, as long as there is a similar case, I think the regulators will continue to charge huge fines." **Bloomberg**

■ The penalty is almost six times what Beibadao earned by its actions, the watchdog said

Economy strong start faces risks at home and abroad

CHINA'S crackdown on financial risks and trade tensions with the U.S. threaten to undermine a stronger-than-expected start to the year for the world's second-largest economy.

Factory output and investment in fixed assets exceeded economists' expectations in the first two months of this year, climbing 7.2 percent and 7.9 percent respectively from a year earlier as Chinese exports surged. Retail sales also remained robust, statistics bureau data - combined for January and February to smooth effects from the Lunar New Year holiday - showed yesterday.

While the numbers paint a picture of an economy reaping the rewards of a revival in global demand, challenges loom. Chinese policy makers meeting this month have intensified plans to purge debt risk and tighten the fiscal screws by cutting the targeted budget deficit. Externally, the sudden ouster of U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson raises



odds President Donald Trump takes a harder line on China given the huge trade surplus, his No. 1 target.

"At the moment, U.S. growth, European growth, global growth are very strong," Wang Tao, chief China economist at UBS Group AG in Hong Kong, told Bloomberg Television yesterday. "We're a bit wary that deleveraging will drive credit growth and therefore GDP growth a bit slower for the rest of the year. Tariffs from the U.S. are definitely a risk."

A key risk is if China tightens controls on local government debt more severely, causing a sharper slowdown in infrastructure investment, she said.

The China gross domestic product tracker by Bloomberg Economics decelerated to 6.84 percent in February from 7.28 percent in January.

There's also the prospect such strong data could contribute to higher borrowing costs, particularly as global counterparts like the Federal Reserve conti-

nue to normalize rates.

"The economy will struggle to maintain this pace of growth as headwinds from China's tightening monetary policy mount," said William Adams, senior international economist at PNC Financial Services Group Inc. in Pittsburgh who previously worked for the Conference Board in Beijing. "Fiscal policy is also becoming less supportive of growth, compounding the headwinds from tighter credit and monetary policy."

The economic impact

of U.S. trade levies will probably be limited, with Trump likely to stop short of a blanket tariff on a broad set of Chinese exports, Wang said. Still, Tillerson's firing has raised concerns that a new guard in the White House will advance Trump's agenda of ramping up tariffs on key trading partners. Trump nominated CIA Director Mike Pompeo, who has endorsed "pushing back against the Chinese threat," to replace Tillerson.

Trump last week signed an order to impose a 25 percent duty on steel imports into the U.S., and 10 percent on aluminum. He also warned more tariffs are coming.

While demand from outside China remains intact, there are signs it's softening domestically, with cement prices falling since the beginning of the year and slower excavator sales growth, Larry Hu, chief China economist at Macquarie Securities Ltd. in Hong Kong, wrote in a note. He said strength in the first two months may

be the "peak for the year."

Despite the stronger-than-expected data, economists see Chinese growth moderating this year after accelerating in 2017. Policy makers at the annual National People's Congress this month stepped up plans to curb debt risk while cutting the budget deficit target and setting a 6.5 percent growth goal that omitted last year's aim for a faster pace if possible. Yet amid rising trade tensions, exports have remained robust.

Delegates also have undertaken a sweeping reorganization of government, scrapping term limits for President Xi Jinping and giving the central bank power to write financial sector rules. They vote Monday to appoint a People's Bank of China governor.

Yesterday's data showed home sales growth slowed amid an almost two-year campaign to cool the market. Property development investment rose 9.9 percent on-year. **Bloomberg**

PHILIPPINES

Duterte withdrawing country from International Criminal Court

Jim Gomez, Manila

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte announced yesterday that the Philippines is withdrawing its ratification of a treaty that created the International Criminal Court, where he is facing a possible complaint over thousands of suspects killed in his anti-drug crackdown.

Critics expressed shock at Duterte's decision, saying he was trying to escape accountability and fearing it could foster an even worse human rights situation in the country. Others called the move a foreign policy blunder that could embolden China to scoff at Manila's victory in an international arbitration case against Beijing over contested territories.

An ICC prosecutor announced last month that she was opening a preliminary examination into possible crimes against humanity over alleged extrajudicial killings in Duterte's drug crackdown, angering the president.

Duterte said that the court cannot have jurisdiction over him because the Philippine Senate's ratification in 2011 of the Rome Statute that established the court was never publicized as required by law. He called the failure to make the ratification public a "glaring and fatal error."



Thousands of mostly poor drug suspects have been killed under Duterte's drug crackdown. He argued that the killings do not amount to crimes against humanity, genocide or similar atrocities.

"The so-called war against drugs is lawfully directed against drug lords and pushers who have for many years destroyed the present generation, specially the youth," Duterte said in a 15-page statement explaining his legal position.

"The deaths occurring in the process of legitimate police operation lacked the intent to kill," Duterte said. "The self-defense employed by the police officers when their lives became endangered by the violent resistance of the suspects is a justifying circumstance under our criminal law, hence, they do not incur criminal liability."

Duterte also invoked presidential immunity from lawsuits, which he said prevents the ICC from investigating him while he is in office. The president renewed

his verbal attacks against U.N. human rights officials who have expressed alarm over the massive killings.

He said the U.N. expert on extrajudicial killings, Agnes Callamard, had without any proof "pictured me as a ruthless violator of human rights" who was directly responsible for extrajudicial killings. He also criticized ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda, who announced last month that she is opening a preliminary examination into the killings.

Last Friday, the United Nations' human rights chief, Zeid Ra'ad al-Husseini, suggested that Duterte "needs to submit himself to some sort of psychiatric evaluation" over his "unacceptable" remarks about some top human rights defenders.

Zeid demanded that the Human Rights Council, which counts the Philippines among its 47 member countries, "must take a strong position" on the issue, and insisted "these attacks cannot go unanswered."

Duterte has acknowledged his rough ways and tough approach to crime, but suggested many Filipinos have come to accept him.

He has lashed out at European governments, saying they should "go to hell" for imposing conditions on financial aid.

Opposition Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate called Duterte's move to withdraw the country from the Rome Statute a "grave setback to human rights and accountability."

It is "intended to escape accountability by present and even future officials for crimes committed against the people and humanity," Zarate said.

Another opposition lawmaker, Tom Villarin, said Duterte's action "would have unprecedented repercussions on our international standing as a sovereign state."

Villarin said it could also embolden China, which has refused to comply with an international arbitration ruling that invalidated its vast territorial claims in the South China Sea under a 1982 U.N. treaty. The Philippines filed and largely won the arbitration case. **AP**

SOUTH KOREA

Another ex-president questioned in corruption probe

Hyung-Jin Kim, Seoul

PROSECUTORS yesterday were questioning South Korea's conservative former President Lee Myung-bak over corruption allegations, making him the latest of the country's leaders entangled in scandal.

The move came about two weeks after prosecutors demanded a 30-year prison term for his conservative successor, Park Geun-hye, over a separate bribery scandal that led to weeks of massive anti-government protests. Park is jailed as she awaits a court verdict set for early next month.

"I stand here today feeling wretched," Lee said in televised remarks af-

ter arriving at a Seoul prosecutors' office. "I am very sorry for causing worry for the people."

South Korean politicians accused of misdoing often apologize for causing trouble while still denying wrongdoing. Lee has previously called the investigation "political revenge" orchestrated by the

I am very sorry for causing worry for the people.

LEE MYUNG-BAK
FORMER PRESIDENT

current liberal government of President Moon Jae-in, a statement that prompted fury from Moon.

Lee also referred to the 2009 suicide of ex-liberal President Roh Moo-hyun, who leapt to his death amid a high-profile corruption investigation of his family when Lee was president. Moon, who was Roh's chief of staff, previously called the Roh investigation by the Lee government politically motivated.

Prosecutors accuse Lee of taking about 1.75 billion won (USD1.6 million) from the National Intelligence Service, the country's main spy agency, for personal purposes through his aides.

Prosecutors allege Lee took other illicit money from business groups including Samsung and a former lawmaker. South Korean media said the illicitly obtained funds totaled 11 billion won (\$10 million).

Lee is also accused of using an auto parts manufacturer called DAS as a channel to establish illicit slush funds amounting to 30 billion won (\$28 million) and embezzling its official funds.

One of Lee's brothers is DAS' largest shareholder, but prosecutors suspect Lee is its de facto owner.

Nearly all former presidents in South Korea, their family members and key aides have been embroiled in scandals



Former South Korean President Lee Myung-bak arrives for questioning over bribery allegations at the Seoul Central District Prosecutors' Office in Seoul

either just before they ended their terms or after they left office.

South Korea's first president, Syngman Rhee, resigned and fled to Hawaii in 1960 amid protests over allegations of vote-rigging. Park's father, Park Chung-hee, who ruled South Korea for 18 years following a 1961 coup, was gunned down by his own

spy chief during a 1979 drinking party.

Park's successors Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo, both former army generals, spent time in jail after leaving office for bribery, treason and other charges. Presidents Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung saw their terms tainted by corruption scandals involving their sons. **AP**

MYANMAR'S government yesterday rejected two reports presented to the U.N. Human Rights Council that concluded it committed extreme human rights violations, probably amounting to crimes under international law, in its repression of several minority groups.

Government spokesman Zaw Htay said the reports presented Monday by the Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar and U.N. Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Myanmar Yanhee Lee lacked credibility.

The report of the Fact-Finding Mission, chaired by former Indonesian Attorney-General Marzuki Darusman, was based on hundreds of accounts by victims and witnesses of reported human rights violations, as well as satellite imagery, photographs and video footage.

The mission's members were barred by Myanmar's government from entering the country, so its researchers interviewed refugees and others in Bangladesh, Malaysia and Thailand.

Zaw Htay said Buddhist-majority Myanmar had barred the Fact-Finding Mission because it rejected its legitimacy. He questioned the reliability of its research and cast doubts on the credibility of the refugees' stories.

"We are not denying rights

MYANMAR

Gov't says UN findings on human rights lack credibility

violations but we are asking for strong, fact-based, and trustworthy evidence on the allegations they are making," Zaw Htay told The Associated Press by telephone.

He also said Myanmar would no longer cooperate with Lee because she "has made biased, one-sided and unfair accusations against Myanmar."

Lee told the Human Rights Council that violent sweeps by the Myanmar army in Rakhine state that prompted about 700,000 Rohingya Muslims to flee to neighboring Bangladesh "bear the hallmarks of genocide."

She said accountability for the abuses in Rakhine should be "the focus of the international community's efforts to bring long-lasting peace, stability and democratization to Myanmar."

"This must be aimed at the individuals who gave the orders and carried out violations against individuals and entire ethnic and religious groups," she said. "The

AP PHOTO



government leadership who did nothing to intervene, stop, or condemn these acts must also be held accountable."

The situations in Kachin and Shan states, which involve actual combat between government soldiers and ethnic rebel groups seeking greater autonomy, have received much less international

attention than the plight of the Rohingya.

The Fact-Finding Mission said in an interim report presented in Geneva that "patterns of human rights abuse across the country are linked," with events in Rakhine, Kachin and Shan states all "products of a longstanding, systemic pattern of human

rights violation and abuse in Myanmar."

"The long-standing conflicts in Kachin and Shan states have recently intensified, leading to more reports of serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law committed in these areas by the security forces," it said.

Both Darusman and Lee said Facebook had played a key role in the spread of conflict and hate speech in Myanmar.

"We know that the ultranationalist Buddhists have their own [Facebook pages] and really are inciting a lot of violence and a lot of hatred against the Rohingya or other ethnic minorities," Lee said.

Facebook said in a statement there is "is no place for hate speech or content that promotes violence" on its platform and added that it has "worked with experts in Myanmar for several years to develop safety resources and counter-speech campaigns." AP

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Raphael Satter, Paris

OBITUARY

Stephen Hawking, tourist of the

IN his final years, the only thing connecting the brilliant physicist to the outside world was a couple of inches of frayed nerve in his cheek.

As slowly as a word per minute, Stephen Hawking used the twitching of the muscle under his right eye to grind out his thoughts on a custom-built computer, painstakingly outlining his vision of time, the universe, and humanity's place within it.

What he produced was a masterpiece of popular science, one that guided a generation of enthusiasts through the esoteric world of anti-particles, quarks, and quantum theory. His success in turn transformed him into a massively popular scientist, one as familiar to the wider world through his appearances on "The Simpsons" and "Star Trek" as his work on cosmology and black holes.

Hawking owed one part of his fame to his triumph over amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS, a degenerative disease that eats away at the nervous system. When he was diagnosed aged only 21, he was given only a few years to live.

But Hawking defied the normally fatal illness for more than 50 years, pursuing a brilliant career that stunned doctors and thrilled his fans. Even though a severe attack of pneumonia left him breathing through a tube, an electronic voice synthesizer allowed him to continue speaking, albeit in a robotic monotone that became one of his trademarks.

He carried on working into his 70s, spinning theories, teaching students, and writing "A Brief History of Time," an accessible exploration of the mechanics of the universe that sold millions of copies.

By the time he died Wednesday [yesterday, Macau time] at 76, Hawking was among the most recognizable faces in science, on par with Albert Einstein.

As one of Isaac Newton's successors as Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge University, Hawking was involved in the search for the great goal of physics — a "unified theory."

Such a theory would resolve the contradictions between Einstein's General Theory of Relativity, which describes the laws of gravity that govern the motion of



In this March 1989 file photo Dr. Stephen Hawking, 47, answers newsmen with the help of his computer and the assistance of his then wife Jane, in Paris

large objects like planets, and the Theory of Quantum Mechanics, which deals with the world of subatomic particles.

For Hawking, the search was almost a religious quest — he said finding a "theory of everything" would allow mankind to "know the mind of God."

"A complete, consistent unified theory is only the first step: our goal is a complete understanding of the events around us, and of our own existence," he wrote in "A Brief History of Time."

In later years, though, he suggested a unified theory might not exist.

He followed up "A Brief History of Time" in 2001 with the sequel, "The Universe in a Nutshell," which updated readers on concepts like supergravity, naked singularities and the possibility of an 11-dimensional universe.

Hawking said belief in a God who intervenes in the universe "to make sure the good guys win or get rewarded in the next life"

was wishful thinking.

"But one can't help asking the question: Why does the universe exist?" he said in 1991. "I don't know an operational way to give the question or the answer, if there is one, a meaning. But it bothers me."

Hawking often credited humor with helping him deal with his disability, and it was his sense of mischief that made him game for a series of stunts.

He made cameo television appearances in "The Simpsons," "Star Trek," and the "Big Bang Theory" and counted among his fans U2 guitarist The Edge, who attended a January 2002 celebration of Hawking's 60th birthday.

His early life was chronicled in the 2014 film "The Theory of Everything," with Eddie Redmayne winning the best actor Academy Award for his portrayal of Hawking. The film focused still more attention on Hawking's remarkable life.

Some colleagues credited that celebrity with generating new enthusiasm for science.

His achievements, and his longevity, also helped prove to many that even the most severe disabilities need not stop patients from achieving.

Richard Green, of the Motor Neurone Disease Association — the British name for ALS — said Hawking met the classic definition of the disease, as "the perfect mind trapped in an imperfect body." He said Hawking had been an inspiration to people

with the disease for many years.

Hawking's disability did slow the pace of conversation, especially in later years as even the muscles in his face started to weaken. Minutes could pass as he composed answers to even simple questions. Hawking said that didn't impair his work, even telling one interviewer it gave his mind time to drift as the conversation ebbed and flowed around him.

■ Hawking owed one part of his fame to his triumph over amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS

His near-total paralysis certainly did little to dampen his ambition to physically experience space: Hawking savored small bursts of weightlessness in 2007 when he was flown aboard a jet that made repeated dives to simulate zero-gravity.

Hawking had hoped to leave Earth's atmosphere altogether someday, a trip he often recommended to the rest of the planet's inhabitants.

"In the long run the human race should not have all its eggs in one basket, or on one planet," Hawking said in 2008. "I just hope we can avoid dropping the

basket until then."

Hawking first earned prominence for his theoretical work on black holes. Disproving the belief that black holes are so dense that nothing could escape their gravitational pull, he showed that black holes leak a tiny bit of light and other types of radiation, now known as "Hawking radiation."

"It came as a complete surprise," said Gary Horowitz, a theoretical physicist at the University of California, Santa Barbara. "It really was quite revolutionary."

Horowitz said the find helped move scientists one step closer to cracking the unified theory.

Hawking's other major scientific contribution was to cosmology, the study of the universe's origin and evolution. Working with Jim Hartle of the University of California, Santa Barbara, Hawking proposed in 1983 that space and time might have no beginning and no end. "Asking what happens before the Big Bang is like asking for a point one mile north of the North Pole," he said.

In 2004, he announced that he had revised his previous view that objects sucked into black holes simply disappeared, perhaps to enter an alternate universe. Instead, he said he believed objects could be spit out of black holes in a mangled form.

That new theory capped his three-decade struggle to explain a paradox in scientific thinking: How can objects really "disappear" inside a black hole and



Stephen Hawking at his graduation in 1962

universe, dead at 76

leave no trace when subatomic theory says matter can be transformed but never fully destroyed?

Hawking was born Jan. 8, 1942, in Oxford, and grew up in London and St. Albans, northwest of the capital. In 1959, he entered Oxford University and then went on to graduate work at Cambridge.

Signs of illness appeared in his first year of graduate school, and he was diagnosed with ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease after the New York Yankee star who died of it. The disease usually kills within three to five years.

According to John Boslough, author of "Stephen Hawking's Universe," Hawking became deeply depressed. But as it became apparent that he was not going to die soon, his spirits recovered and he bore down on his work. Brian Dickie, director of research at the Motor Neuron Disease Association, said only 5 percent of those diagnosed with ALS survive for 10 years or longer. Hawking, he added, "really is at the extreme end of the scale when it comes to survival."

Hawking married Jane Wilde in 1965 and they had three children, Robert, Lucy and Timothy.

Jane cared for Hawking for 20 years, until a grant from the United States paid for the 24-hour care he required.

“One can't help asking the question: Why does the universe exist?”

STEPHEN HAWKING (1991)

He was inducted into the Royal Society in 1974 and received the Albert Einstein Award in 1978. In 1989, Queen Elizabeth II made him a Companion of Honor, one of the highest distinctions she can bestow.

He whizzed about Cambridge at surprising speed — usually with nurses or teaching assistants in his wake — traveled and lectured widely, and appeared to enjoy his fame. He retired from his chair as Lucasian Professor in 2009

and took up a research position with the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics in Waterloo, Ontario.

Hawking divorced Jane in 1991, an acrimonious split that

strained his relationship with their children. Writing in her autobiographical "Music to Move the Stars," she said the strain of caring for Hawking for nearly three decades had left her feeling like "a brittle, empty shell." Hawking married his one-time nurse Elaine Mason four years later, but the relationship was dogged by rumors of abuse.

Hawking and Mason separated

in 2006.

Lucy Hawking said her father had an exasperating "inability to accept that there is anything he cannot do."

"I accept that there are some things I can't do," he told The Associated Press in 1997. "But they are mostly things I don't particularly want to do anyway."

Then, grinning widely, he added, "I seem to manage to do anything that I really want." AP



Nelson Mandela (right) meets with British scientist Professor Stephen Hawking in Johannesburg in May 2008

Shucks, Finns: Finland tops 2018 global happiness index

Jari Tanner, Helsinki

FANS of skiing, saunas and Santa Claus won't be surprised to hear Finland is the happiest place to live.

The World Happiness Report published yesterday ranked 156 countries by happiness levels, based on factors such as life expectancy, social support and corruption.

Unlike past years, the annual report published by the U.N. Sustainable Development Solutions Network also evaluated 117 countries by the happiness and well-being of their immigrants.

Europe's Nordic nations, none particularly diverse, have dominated the index since it first was produced in 2012. In reaching No. 1, Finland nudged neighboring Norway into second place.

Rounding out the Top 10 are Denmark, Iceland, Switzerland, Netherlands, Canada, New Zealand, Sweden and Australia. The United States fell to 18th place



from 14th last year.

Relatively homogeneous Finland has about 300,000 foreigners and residents with foreign roots, out of its 5.5 million people.

Its largest immigrant groups come from other European nations, but there also are communities from Afghanistan, China, Iraq and Somalia. John Helliwell, a co-editor of the World Happiness Report and

professor emeritus of economics at the University of British Columbia, noted all the top-10 nations scored highest in overall happiness and the happiness of immigrants. He said a society's happiness seems contagious.

"The most striking finding of the report is the remarkable consistency between the happiness of immigrants and the locally born," Helliwell

said. "Those who move to happier countries gain, while those who move to less happy countries lose."

Meik Wiking, CEO of the Copenhagen-based Happiness Research Institute, said the five Nordic countries that reliably rank high in the index "are doing something right in terms of creating good conditions for good lives," something newcomers have

noticed.

He said the happiness revealed in the survey derives from healthy amounts of both personal freedom and social security that outweigh residents having to pay "some of the highest taxes in the world."

"Briefly put, [Nordic countries] are good at converting wealth into well-being," Wiking said. The finding on the happiness of immigrants "shows the conditions that we live under matter greatly to our quality

“Briefly put, (Nordic countries) are good at converting wealth into well-being.”

MEIK WIKING
HAPPINESS RESEARCH
INSTITUTE

of life, that happiness is not only a matter of choice."

The United States was 11th in the first index and has never been in the Top 10. To explain its fall to 18th, the report's authors cited several factors.

"The U.S. is in the midst of a complex and worsening public health crisis, involving epidemics of obesity, opioid addiction, and major depressive disorder that are all remarkable by global standards," the report said.

It added that the "sociopolitical system" in the United States produces more income inequality — a major contributing factor to unhappiness — than other countries with comparatively high incomes.

The United States also has seen declining "trust, generosity and social support, and those are some of the factors that explain why some countries are happier than others," Wiking said. AP

what's ON



MACAU NARRATIVE BY IU-PUI CHAN

TIME: 11am-7pm

UNTIL: March 31, 2018

VENUE: Macau Tower T1 Art Gallery

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2835 8330

DISCOVER MACAU: MUSEUM OF TAIPA AND COLOANE HISTORY

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

ADDRESS: Rua Correia da Silva, Taipa

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8988 4000

TREASURE OF SACRED ART OF ST. JOSEPH'S SEMINARY

TIME: 10am-5pm daily (Closed on Wednesdays, open on public holidays)

VENUE: St. Joseph's Seminary and Church, Rua do Seminário

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2835 7911

MANDARIN'S HOUSE

TIME: 10am-6pm daily (Last admission at 5:30pm; closed on Wednesdays, open on public holidays)

ADDRESS: No. 10, Travessa de António da Silva

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2896 8820

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

Offbeat

SNOW JOKE: WEATHERMAN NAMED METEOROLOGIST RUNS FOR OFFICE



A former TV weatherman who legally changed his name to Meteorologist Drew Anderson says there's a 100 percent chance he'll run for Congress in Pennsylvania under the new moniker.

LNP reports Anderson is collecting signatures to get on the Republican primary ballot for a run against U.S. Rep. Lloyd Smucker. Anderson says he's looking for a climate change in Washington.

LNP says Anderson lives in West Chester but may move to Lancaster if he wins.

It says the weatherman changed his name from Drew Anderson last year and left his job at WPMT-TV Fox 43 in York two weeks ago. Anderson also has worked for NBC affiliate WGAL-TV in Lancaster and as a science teacher.

LNP says locksmith Bill Neff also is seeking to run against Smucker in the primary.

TV canal macau



13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
15:00	Miscellaneous
16:35	Zig Zag
17:45	Miscellaneous
18:40	What's Up
19:05	Brazilian Soap Opera (Repeated)
19:50	Portuguese Serie
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	Miscellaneous
21:35	Non-daily Portuguese News
21:40	Yes, Chef! Sr 2
22:10	Brazilian Soap Opera
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Champions League Highlights
23:50	Macau Documentary
00:15	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
00:50	Miscellaneous
02:00	European League: Viktoria Plzen x Sporting (Live)

cinema



CINETEATRO

15 - 21 MAR



TOMB RAIDER

ROOM 1

2:30, 4:45, 7:15, 9:30pm

Director: Roar Uthaug

Starring: Alicia Vikander, Daniel Wu, Dominic West

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 118 min



7 DAYS IN ENTEBBE

ROOM 2

2:30, 7:30, 9:30pm

Director: Jose Padilha

Starring: Rosamund Pike, Daniel Brühl, Eddie Marsan

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 106 min

TURN AROUND

ROOM 2

04:30pm

ROOM 3

07:30pm

Director: Ta-pu Chen

Starring: Jay Shih, Yu-chiao Hsia, Allen Chao, Lu Yi-ching

Language: Chinese (Chinese & English)

Duration: 108min



THE HURRICANE HEIST

ROOM 3

2:30, 4:30, 9:30pm

Director: Rob Cohen

Starring: Toby Kebbell, Maggie Grace, Ryan Kwanten

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 103min

this day in history



1990 OBSERVER JOURNALIST EXECUTED IN IRAQ

Britain has strongly condemned the Iraqi authorities over the execution of The Observer journalist Farzad Bazoft in Baghdad.

Mr Bazoft - who came to live in Britain from Iran in the 1980s - was convicted by the Iraqis of spying four days ago. He was hanged at dawn after a last minute appeal for clemency from the British prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, failed.

In the Commons this afternoon, Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said Britain's ambassador to Iraq was being recalled and all visits to the country have been suspended.

But Mr Hurd stopped short of cutting off diplomatic relations with Iraq. He said it was important to keep dialogue alive with the Iraqis for the sake of the 2,000 Britons living in Iraq, including Mr Bazoft's alleged accomplice, British nurse Daphne Parish.

Mr Bazoft and Mrs Parish were arrested last September after visiting a top secret military installation south of Baghdad.

The Observer journalist was investigating reports of an explosion at the plant, which had reportedly left hundreds dead. He asked Mrs Parish to give him a lift in her car.

He was convicted of spying and sentenced to death by a revolutionary court. Mrs Parish was jailed for 15 years.

The British Consul General in Baghdad, Robin Kealy, was Mr Bazoft's last visitor before his execution.

He said: "He was looking hollow-eyed and subdued, not surprisingly. He passed on a last written message and a number of oral messages to friends and colleagues... He repeated that he had been a journalist going after a scoop."

The Iraqi ambassador in France said British appeals for clemency fell on deaf ears because officials used "threatening terms and blackmail".

Prayers for Mr Bazoft were said today at the offices of The Observer in London. Later staff gathered outside the Iraqi embassy to register their silent protest.

The daughter of Mrs Parish, Michelle de Vries, has supported the government's decision to keep diplomatic channels open. She hopes to be able to secure the early release of her mother.

She said: "It is far too early to know what implications today's events will have on my mother. All I can do is hope and pray she receives the clemency not afforded to poor Mr Bazoft."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Mrs Thatcher called the execution of Mr Bazoft "an act of barbarism".

The European Parliament also condemned the execution but stopped short of cutting diplomatic and trade relations. The UN Secretary General expressed his deep regret.

But Britain was not prepared to cut diplomatic ties and trade between Britain and Iraq continued.

Many British firms were benefiting from the reconstruction work taking place in Iraq following the war with Iran.

Daphne Parish was released on 16 July 1990.

On 2 August 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait, starting the Gulf War.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Today you take the reins. Maybe you're on a carousel riding your favorite lilac horse next to your partner...

Taurus April 20-May 20 You've got quite an overview today of what all is going down. This is as true of your work situation as it is of your personal life.

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 You're super-organized in your communications today. So why are your friends complaining? Strange as it may seem...

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Have you been thinking about redecorating? Sometimes it's a good way to externalize some of the changes you've been going through internally.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Get connected. Forget connected, get super-connected. Or even super-duper-connected. Why? Because, if you don't let people know that you've got a bright light.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 There is almost nobody most folks who know would rather have in charge than you. Whether it's drawing up the architectural plans for a steel-and-glass skyscraper or arranging everything just so for a picnic.

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 If there's a big, complicated, even messy, perhaps convoluted and halfway-botched project that nobody wants to touch with a ten-foot pole, well, you're just the right person to take over.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 Management isn't just a ten-letter word that you can look up in any English language dictionary (and a handful of foreign language dictionaries, as well). No, it's a key to your success.

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 Habits are habits because you're used to doing them. Whether it's drinking one cup of coffee too many or leaving the house a little too late...

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 Something is definitely getting started right now. Is it the very beginning hints of a love affair? Or the rekindling of an existing love that's been smoldering quietly and is ready, now, to burst into flames?

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 Have you been itching for a little real, heart-to-heart, mind-to-mind connection lately? Well, sometimes you have to take things into your own hands. Compatibility doesn't just fall out of the sky, you know.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 It's a long road, this life, and it's full of big questions. But go ahead and try to work out solutions to the immediate problems. Taking a practical approach might be just the ticket.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Sudoku puzzles categorized as Easy, Easy+, Medium, and Hard. Each category contains a 9x9 grid with some numbers pre-filled.

WEATHER

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

CROSSWORDS

Crossword puzzle clues and solutions. Includes 'ACROSS' and 'DOWN' clues, and a 'Yesterday's solution' grid with filled-in words.

A crossword puzzle grid with some numbers and letters pre-filled, ready for solving.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

List of useful telephone numbers including Emergency calls, Fire department, PJ (Open line), PJ (Picket), PSP, Customs, S. J. Hospital, Kiang Wu Hospital, Commission Against Corruption (CCAC), IACM, Tourism, and Airport.

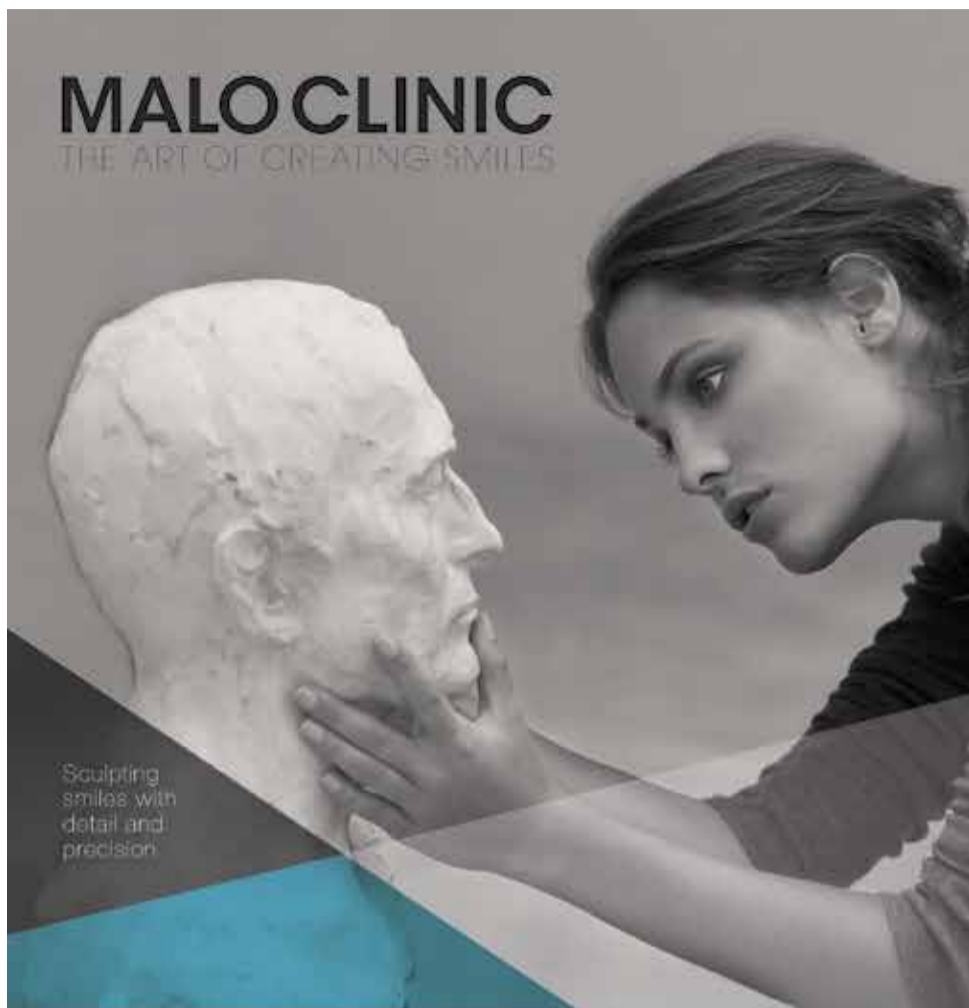


Real estate advertisement for 'FOR SALE' and 'FOR RENT' with contact information for JML Property.

Real estate advertisement listing various properties for sale and rent, including Grande Plaza, 1st Floor Car Park, Apartment B, Va Fat, Kinqlight, Carnation Court, Apartment C, and Apartment C, Vai Fat.

Logo for 'jml property' with the Chinese characters '卓雅物業' and 'since 1994'.

AD



Dear patients and friends of Taivex Malo Hospital Dental Clinic/Macau MALO CLINIC,

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

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

We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Office phone: 8862 2206 / 8862 2206 Cellphone: 69353-6826 9099 Wechat: MALODENTAL853 Email: service.maloc@maloclinics.com.cn Website: http://www.maloclinic.com.cn
(Can be contacted at any time)

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

Thank you all for your understanding and support.

We hope to find solutions for everyone's cases as soon as possible so that we may keep providing quality dental service to you all.

Yours Sincerely,

WORLDWIDE

Guimarães | Oporto | Gaia | Aveiro | Coimbra | Sintra | Cascais
Lisbon | Almada | Portimão | Faro | Funchal | Windsor | Verona
München/Gladbach | Glatz | Warsaw | Gdansk | Athens | Ioannina
New York | Rutherford | Jersey City | Elizabeth | Miami | Portland | Toronto
Montreal | Trois-Rivières | Brossard | Bogotá | Melbourne | Sydney | Perth
Brisbane | Hobart | Gold Coast | Luanda | Tel Aviv | Ramat-Hasharon
Dubai | Karachi | Chennai | Macao | Hong Kong | Beijing | Shanghai
Guangzhou | Shenzhen | Taiyuan | Zhengzhou | Chengde | Qingdao
Halkou | Shenyang | Fuzhou | Hangzhou | Tokyo | Saporo | Bangkok
Phuket | Singapore



+ INFO



FOLLOW US



Roma's Edin Dzeko tries to dribble past Shakhtar goalkeeper Andriy Pyatov

FOOTBALL | CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Roma reaches quarterfinals, United's out

ROMA overcame a poor first-half performance to beat Shakhtar Donetsk 1-0 yesterday [Macau time] and reach the quarterfinals of the Champions League on the away goals rule after a 2-2 aggregate score.

Edin Dzeko scored the only goal of the match early in the second half as Roma became the second Italian side to progress to the final eight after Juventus beat Tottenham last week.

Shakhtar led 2-1 from the first leg and would have advanced with a draw, but its hopes of an equalizer diminished 11 minutes from time when defender Ivan Ordets was sent off for hauling down Dzeko.

It is the first time in 11 years that two Italian teams are in the quarterfinals, with the draw taking place Friday.

"Going through and being among the strongest teams has to be a source of great pride," Dzeko said. "I don't have a preferred opponent: they are all strong

teams, but we will play to win against anyone. We are among the eight strongest teams in Europe, it means we are strong too."

In the night's other match, Sevilla knocked out Manchester United with a 2-1 win at Old Trafford to go through with the same score on aggregate. Substitute Wissam Ben Yedder scored twice after coming on in the second half, with Romelu Lukaku pulling a goal back for United.

Roma hadn't conceded in its three Champions League matches at the Stadio Olimpico this season but nearly netted an own goal when Alessandro Florenzi tried to head clear a free kick but sent the ball flashing across the face of goal.

Shakhtar dominated possession early and Taison almost scored but his effort flew narrowly over the crossbar.

But Roma broke the deadlock seven minutes after the break as Dzeko latched on to

Kevin Strootman's ball over the top and slotted it into the bottom right corner.

That gave Roma confidence and it almost doubled its lead 10 minutes later but Dzeko fired narrowly wide.

"What I liked best is that we played like men and that's the most important thing if we want to aspire to certain goals and dreams," said Roma coach Eusebio Di Francesco, in his first ever Champions League campaign.

"I want to continue to dream with this team [...] the only adversary I want to avoid is fear. We should never have that, we should be conscious of our means. The team is growing a lot."

A small scuffle between players broke out 10 minutes before full time after Facundo Ferreyra pushed a ball-boy over the advertising boards when trying to retrieve the ball from him. Ferreyra was shown a yellow card.

Dzeko was given a standing ovation when he was substituted in the final minute.

"The standing ovation has to be for the whole team, not just for me. Everyone gave their all and we are deservedly in the quarterfinals," Dzeko said. "I didn't want to leave [in January] precisely because of matches like these, you play all season for matches like these." **AP**

Doug Ferguson, Orlando (Flo.)

GOLF

Woods, Els named captains of Presidents Cup in Australia

ERNIE Els was always the logical choice to be the International team's next captain in the Presidents Cup.

Tiger Woods at first thought it might be soon for him.

That changed a couple of months ago when Woods asked PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan about the U.S. captain for next year's matches in Australia, and the usual suspects were mentioned. Monahan asked if anyone had been left out, and Woods added another name to the short list.

"Me."

Woods and Els, who both played eight times in the Presidents Cup and were involved in a high-stakes playoff that ended in a tie, were introduced as captains yesterday [Macau time]. The 2019 matches will be Dec. 12-15 at Royal Melbourne, the latest the event has been held.

Woods was an assistant captain when the American won for the seventh straight time, 19-11, last year at Liberty National. In early discussions about the next one, Woods said he was more comfortable serving as an assistant.

"But then after a little bit of thought I said, 'You know what? That sounds like something I really want to do,'" Woods said. "I called Jay up and said, 'Might you be interested in me possibly being the captain in 2019?' Silence. And he said, 'Yeah, we might be able to work that out.' So here I am."

Still to be determined is whether Woods plays.

Coming off his fourth back surgery, Woods took a big step in his comeback last week when he finished one shot behind at the Valspar Championship.

"I would like to get to a point where I would have to make that decision, get to where I'm playing well enough whe-



Tiger Woods and Ernie Els



re I could make the team on points," Woods said. "But I wouldn't want to have the conversation and go, 'Self.' And so let's just see how it progresses."

Hale Irwin was the only player-captain in the Presidents Cup in 1994, the first event, and he had Paul Azinger handle the captaincy when Irwin was playing.

Woods and Els are forever linked in the Presidents Cup. The matches ended 17-all in 2003 in South Africa, and the rules then required captains Jack Nicklaus and Gary Player

to put one name in an envelope for a sudden-death playoff in case of a tie.

Both made par on the 18th hole in the playoff. Els had to make a 12-footer to stay alive on the second hole. As darkness fell, Woods had to make a double-breaking putt from 15 feet for par. Els followed with a 6-foot par putt. Nicklaus and Player agreed the cup should end in a tie.

"We couldn't believe the amount of pressure we felt, and we both had won major championships," Woods said. "But nothing felt like that."

The International team has won only one time, in 1998 at Royal Melbourne, when the matches were played Dec. 10-13. The American team had most of their fun in the casinos or Christmas shopping online. The second time at Royal Melbourne was Nov. 17-20 in 2011, and Woods holed the clinching putt in a 19-15 victory.

Next year's matches will present a few changes in qualifying and format.

Both teams will get four captain's picks instead of two, and qualifying will end after the Tour Championship, which is

expected to be early September. The picks will be closer to the matches. Also, teams must use players at least once (previously it was twice) before the singles matches.

Woods also was an assistant captain at the Ryder Cup in 2016, and he will be an assistant for this year's Ryder Cup in France.

"It was just a natural progression to one day become a captain," Woods said.

He will be 43 when the matches are played, making him the youngest captain in Presidents Cup history. **AP**

SAILING

America's Cup skipper Spithill joins Italy's Luna Rossa



Oracle Team USA skipper and helmsman Jimmy Spithill stands alongside the America's Cup trophy, known as the "Auld Mug"

AMERICA'S Cup star Jimmy Spithill is headed to the Italian syndicate Luna Rossa, leaving the future of Oracle Team USA in doubt.

Luna Rossa, backed by the Prada fashion house, announced that Spithill, an Australian, has rejoined the syndicate after 11 years away. He was helmsman in the 2007 challenger trials, when Luna Rossa reached the finals before losing to Emirates Team New Zealand.

Spithill's signing with Luna Rossa, which is the Challenger of Record for the 2021 America's Cup, raises questions about whether Oracle Team USA's owner, tech billionaire Larry Ellison, is finished with the America's Cup.

Spithill skippered Oracle Team USA to consecutive landmark America's Cup victories.

As a 30-year-old in 2010, Spithill became the youngest skipper to win the

America's Cup when he steered Oracle Team USA to victory over a Swiss crew in a one-off showdown that was the result of a bitter court fight.

In 2013, he led Oracle Team USA to one of the biggest comebacks in sports. After Oracle fell behind 8-1, he steered the American-based boat to eight straight victories against Emirates Team New Zealand on San Francisco Bay to retain the Auld Mug. His third go-round with

Oracle ended with a lopsided loss to the Kiwis in June in Bermuda.

Spithill wasn't available for comment yesterday, and representatives of Oracle Team USA didn't return emails seeking comment.

Ellison reportedly is interested in putting together a series that will be contested in the 50-foot catamarans used in the 2017 America's Cup. The 2021 America's Cup will be sailed in radical foiling monohulls. **AP**

opinion

Girl About Globe

Linda Kennedy



NEVER ORDER BEETROOT ON A DATE

Hail beetroot. The purple reign is here, with beetroot featuring on menus in gastropubs and restaurants. From fritters to burgers, flatbread to even beetroot curry, it is vanquishing legacy vegetables, such as cauliflower or broccoli, neither of which can lift up their large flowering heads on a fashionable plate. Beetroot is in Marks and Spencer's salads. Another major British supermarket, Iceland, has announced vegan burgers with beetroot extract and paprika. In comparison, butternut squash is tosh. Kale pales. Beetroot is the new It Vegetable.

London was, in temperature, like Iceland when I was there two weeks ago. Inside a hipster gastropub, beetroot appeared twice on the short specials menu. And right there, the quandaries presented by beetroot to women made themselves known.

First, though, a consideration of beetroot's rise. It used to be pickled in vinegar, packaged in a jar, and brought out just for Christmas. What happened? Health, that's what.

Here's the deets on beets: beetroot can help to combat Alzheimer's. It's also low in calories – around 40 kcal per 100g. Its high folate content - who knows, just eat them – counters depression and low moods. It contains iron. It gives you more energy in the gym - if you're beat, eat beets. And, as root vegetables go, it's a purplish-pink colour instead of brown or garish orange. A cute root!

Beetroot, though, has many perils for the lady diner. As I headed to the Dames – hipster for female toilet - the mirror revealed I had beetroot lips and teeth. It was like a 1940's purple lipstick. Beetroot, I realised, is the new red wine. It stains. It is the root of all evil.

I returned, mouth raw from rubbing, adding to the peeling already inflicted by the Beast from the East outside. I anticipated questions. 'What happened? Was it arctic in the Dames?' No, I was just trying to erase the beetroot juice.'

From then on, transit of remaining beetroot fritters to my mouth was conducted with lavish care. The slightest drip, and I would lose my outfit to an indelible splotch. My smile had already gone.

You now how menus have the letters 'vg' or a leaf next to some dishes, indicating that particular choice is safe for vegetarians or low in calorie? How about additional consideration for women? A menu, where dishes relying heavily on beetroot are marked with the caution 'nsfro'? 'Not Suitable for Romantic Occasions.'

Until such annotation is standard, beetroot is ruling itself out as a date food. That's quite a market sector these days. Perhaps, though, it will have another role: as a relationship marker. 'Have you met his mother?' 'No, but I did eat beetroot in his company.'

As for beetroot's capacity to stimulate the brain, here's how it got me going. Was, I began to think, beetroot actually feminist? It's pinkish-purple - yet, to my mind, does not appeal to women because of the staining danger. Finally, something pink that subverts the packaging narrative of what's attractive to the female market? Hail beetroot indeed.

Given its impending dominant vegetable status, beetroot had better get ready for the big time. Kale has been used in recent years as the shorthand for exaggerated health awareness, the food of the politically correct and therefore the butt of veg jokes. Hitherto, any suggested Trump assassination by liberals, for example, would have been pinned on a serving of poisoned kale, the likeliest weapon to hand. Now slipping him a poisoned beetroot burger might do it.

To which end, perhaps McDonalds could follow Iceland's lead. A menu addition - the Big Mac with Beet not Meat?

THE EU'S TRADE CHIEF QUESTIONS RATIONALE OF TRUMP STEEL MEASURES

The European Union's trade chief is questioning the rationale of U.S. President Donald Trump in threatening to impose tariffs on EU exports of steel and aluminum, and says his move is undermining longstanding trans-Atlantic ties.

Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom told the EU legislature yesterday that while the 28-nation EU would continue to seek exemption from the

measure that could kick in next week, it will prepare countermeasures to equally hit U.S. exports.

Trump has said that the import tariffs are necessary on national security grounds, but Malmstrom insisted this is a ruse and said that "we suspect that the U.S. move is effectively not based on security considerations but an economic safeguard measure in disguise."

Angela Merkel elected for fourth term as German chancellor



Geir Moulson, Berlin

GERMANY'S parliament elected Angela Merkel for her fourth term as chancellor yesterday, putting an end to nearly six months of political drift in Europe's biggest economy.

Lawmakers voted 364-315 to re-elect Merkel, Germany's leader since 2005, who ran unopposed. The coalition of Merkel's conservative Christian Democratic Union, its Bavaria-only sister party, the Christian Social Union and the center-left Social Democrats has 399 of the 709 seats in parliament.

Merkel will head a much-changed new Cabinet, with the governing parties – which are traditional rivals – keen to send signals of renewal after a September election in which all lost significant ground. There are new faces in the most important posts, the fi-

nance, foreign, economy and interior ministries.

The same parties have governed for the past four years but putting together the new administration has been unprecedentedly hard work.

Yesterday's parliamentary vote came 171 days after the election, nearly double the previous record. The Social Democrats initially planned to go into opposition after crashing to their worst result since World War II, but Germany's president nudged them into a reluctant about-turn after Merkel's talks with two smaller parties collapsed in November.

Merkel was able to take office only after two-thirds of the Social Democrats' members approved in a ballot the coalition deal clinched last month. At least 35 coalition lawmakers didn't support her yesterday, though that was in line with results at the be-

ginning of her two previous "grand coalitions" of Germany's biggest parties.

She will have to hold together what is potentially her most fragile coalition yet in what is widely expected to be her last term, while also addressing challenges such as a potential Europe-U.S. trade war and seeking agreement with France and others on the future of a fractious European Union.

Thorsten Faas, a political science professor at Berlin's Free University, said the coalition is likely to last until 2021 as scheduled and noted that the governing parties have demonstrated that they can work together.

"A firm foundation, and I think this government has one, is important to be able to work in uncertain times," Faas told ZDF television. "So I think there is some reason for optimism." AP

Nepal plane crash survivors say it's a miracle they're alive

SURVIVORS of a plane crash at Nepal's main airport this week say it's a miracle they survived an accident that killed 49 of the 71 people on board.

Shorna Huggain of Bangladesh, who was a passenger on the US-Bangla Airlines flight when it crashed Monday while attempting to land at Kathmandu's airport, said from her hospital bed Wednesday that she thought she was going to die.

Another passenger, Nepalese travel entrepreneur



Keshav Pandey, said it was a miracle that he survived with only injuries.

Both recalled the flight being mostly smooth all the way from Bangladesh's ca-

pital, Dhaka, to Kathmandu, but said that before the crash, the aircraft violently shook, tilting toward the left and hitting the ground with a huge sound.

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

SOURCE: D5M/G

WORLD BRIEFS

IRAN-PAKISTAN Iran's foreign minister has wrapped up a trip to Pakistan in which he made a surprise offer to let Islamabad take part in a major port project partly funded by Pakistan's archrival India.



SYRIA For the first time since its meteoric rise in 2012 amid the chaos of war, al-Qaida's branch in Syria is in retreat, battling rival militant groups in the north and fighting for survival in a key foothold near the capital, Damascus.

ETHIOPIA's state-affiliated broadcaster says that a bus plunged into a ditch, killing 38 people in the country's northern Amhara region.



VATICAN Pope Francis marked his fifth anniversary as pope by receiving votes of confidence from his predecessor and current Vatican No. 2, even as surveys showed his reform-minded papacy was turning off some of the most faithful, church-going Catholics.

BRITAIN announced yesterday it will expel almost two dozen Russian diplomats, sever high-level bilateral contacts with Moscow and take both open and covert action against Kremlin meddling after the poisoning of a former spy.



VENEZUELA Police arrested Hugo Chavez's powerful former spy chief, on accusations of sowing unrest as he leads a movement of disgruntled leftists seeking to replace President Nicolas Maduro.

CARIBBEAN A Caribbean seismic research center says an underwater volcano just north of Grenada may be about to erupt but does not pose a tsunami threat to the region.