

BORDER ZONE UNDER LOCAL CONTROL



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The government wants the entire fleet of casino shuttle buses to run on clean energy



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ADAPTATION OF BOSCH'S SURREAL ART

A circus adaptation of the surreal works of pioneer painter Hieronymus Bosch is to be staged Sunday



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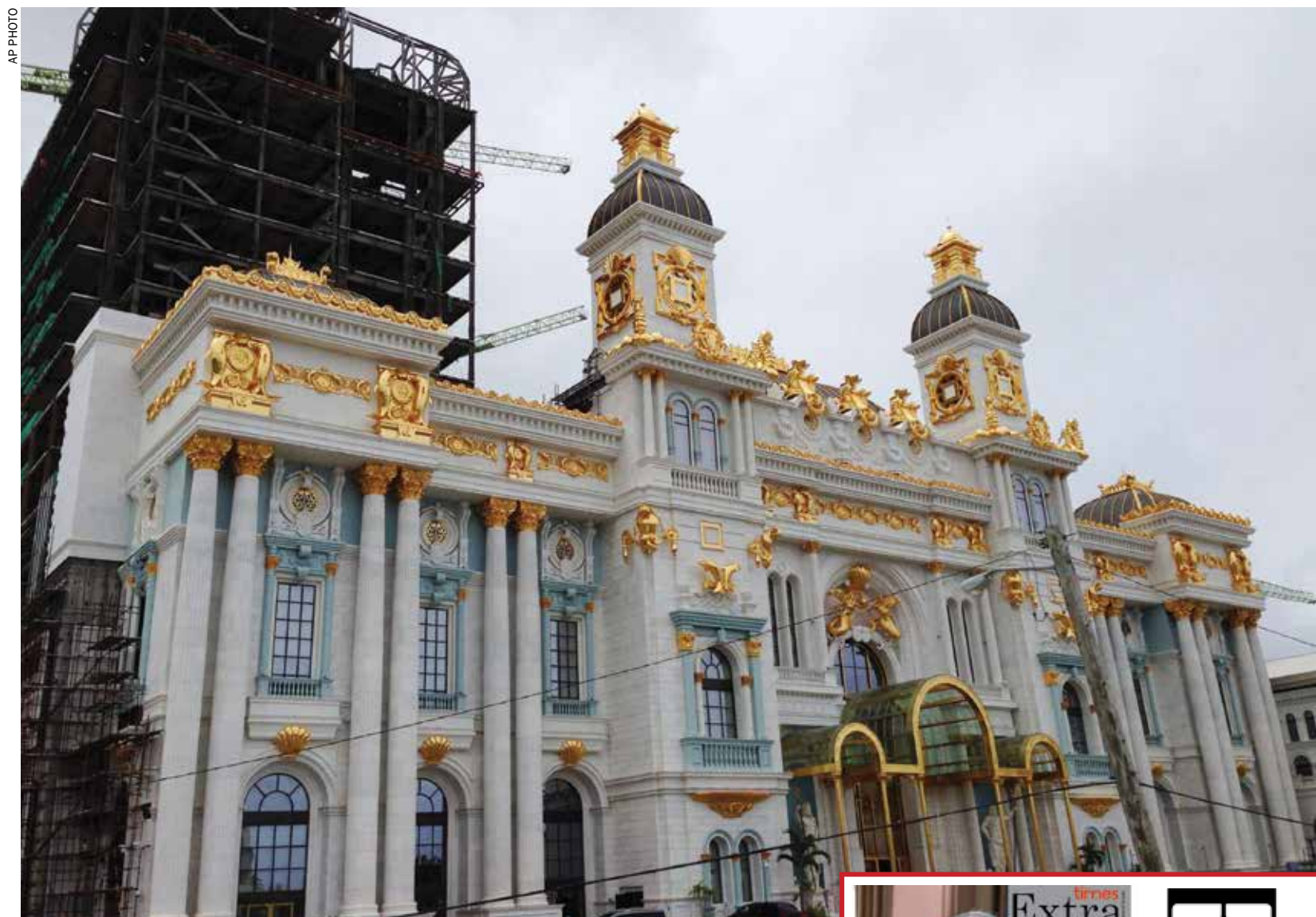
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WORLD BRIEFS

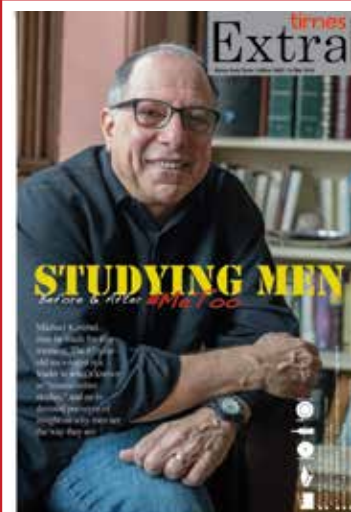
CHINA Members of the Uighur Muslim ethnic group held demonstrations in cities around the world yesterday to protest a sweeping Chinese surveillance and security campaign that has sent thousands of their people into detention and political indoctrination centers.



INDONESIA Critics say a new Indonesian law that took effect yesterday could protect legislators from investigations by the powerful anti-graft commission, triggering anger at what many regard as a grave setback for the world's third largest democracy.

THAILAND's slow move from military to civilian governance has attracted dozens of new political parties to register in barely two weeks, including one by an internet-famous billionaire who says he embraces democracy and wants to challenge the country's traditional powers.

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INSIDE

Chan Meng Kam not running for CE

The city's former lawmaker Chan Meng Kam said that he has no intention of running in the next chief executive (CE) election, according to a report by Macao Daily News. The election for the next CE will be carried out next year. Chan Meng Kam, while attending the Chinese People's Political Consultative Congress said that he "will not consider" running for the position. In Chan's opinion, the most important characteristic of a CE is having a 'world vision'. Chan mentioned that he is now a volunteer in Macau.

IACM head says transfer will cause no harm to civil rights

The President of the Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau (IACM), José Tavares, indicated that the rights of demonstration of Macau residents will not be affected by the transfer of the authorization process from IACM to the Public Security Police Force. José Tavares noted that "it is a matter of notification. [It is about] whether it [the notification] is handed to us [IACM] or to the police. I think there is no big problem, maybe [you] misunderstood this aspect." He believes that the police force will still approve demonstrations that occur within the law.

Student blackmailed for MOP2,000 to retrieve phone

The Public Security Police Force has forwarded a 38-year-old mainland man to the prosecution authority after he blackmailed a 20-year-old student from the Macau University of Science and Technology. On Monday, the student lost his phone, which is worth MOP8,000, on a bus. At a later point the suspect picked it up and kept it in his possession. Instead of reporting the case to the police or simply returning the phone to the owner, the mainland man, who holds a blue card, asked the owner to give him MOP2,000 for the safe return of the phone.

Border zone from HKZM Bridge under Macau administration

THE Macau border zone of the world's longest sea bridge connecting Hong Kong, Zhuhai and Macau has been officially handed over to the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR), the office of the government spokesperson said in a statement.

The State Council formally authorized the handover of the artificial island at 12 a.m. yesterday in a ceremony, where authorities from Macau and Guangdong Province were present. The island comprises several facilities and hosts a number of services related to the administration, maintenance and security of the bridge.

In the ceremony, which took place at the Macau border-cross checkpoint building, a representative from the Guangdong Provincial government handed a to-scale model of the artificial island of the HKZM Bridge to local representatives, symbolizing that the defense duties of the territory had been delivered to the MSAR.

After the ceremony, officials from the Customs Service, the Public Security Police Force, the Fire Services, the Judiciary Police, the Health Bureau and the Transport Bureau were im-



After midnight on March 15, local security authorities were stationed at the Macau boundary crossing area

mediately stationed in the administration area to begin their duties administering cross-border and security services. The respective authorities began work immediately, installing the necessary equipment and making adjustments to the border check-point as well as building the vehicle crossing to prepare for the opening of the bridge and the passage of vehicles.

The Chief Executive (CE), Chui Sai On, visited the administration yesterday morning together with Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak, the Secretary for Transport and Pu-

blic Works, Raimundo do Rosário, as well as the Commander-General of the Unitary Police Services, Ma Io Kun, and the Director-General of Customs Services, Alex Vong.

The visit was an opportunity for Ma and Vong to present the new area under Macau's administration to the CE and introduce works being done to prepare the new border checkpoint.

Chui took the opportunity to instruct Wong and Rosário, and urged the government departments responsible for the HKZM Bridge and the Macau

Border Administration Zone to make good use of the time before the opening of the facility to install and test equipment in the building, reinforcing the need to ensure maximum precision and constant improvement. The CE also stressed the importance of cooperation between departments as well as the importance of making appropriate adjustments to human resources as necessary to carry out inspection work with increased efficiency, especially by accelerating processes for border control for the benefit of local citizens and tourists alike. **RM**

ENVIRONMENT

Christiana Figueres to deliver keynote speech at MIECF



Christiana Figueres

Christiana Figueres, an expert on global climate change, will be the keynote speaker of the "Green Forum" at the 2018 Macao International Environmental Co-operation Forum and Exhibition (2018MIECF). The event, organized by the government, will be held from April 12 to 14, with the theme "Shaping of Eco-Cities for Inclusive Green Economy".

Figueres is the current Vice-Chair of the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy and was the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) from 2010 to 2016.

She has also served as Director of Renewable Energy in the Americas (REIA), and in 1995 founded the non-profit Center for Sustainable Development in the Americas (CSDA), which she directed for eight years.

Figueres' keynote speech will direct the discussion towards the concept of cities being the key for the future development of the earth. According to a statement issued yesterday, there were two main reasons for the topic choice: in her view, three-quarters of the global population will be living in urban areas over the next 20 years, and cities are the ma-

major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions in various regions of the world.

Figueres will also share her insight into the challenges related to global climate change, highlighting the fact that if the environmental impact of urban growth is ignored, cities will be the source of approximately 80 percent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions in the future. Cities face numerous challenges including continuous population growth, higher carbon footprint, air pollution, insufficient transportation and infrastructure, and food safety risk. Despite these challenges, Figueres believes the opportunities for change could lead to great improvements. In her speech, she will argue that about 60 percent of urban infrastructure is yet to be built, which indicates an opportunity to make cities more sustainable, liveable and economical.

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ENVIRONMENT

DSAT: All casino shuttle buses to go clean by 2023

Julie Zhu

THE government intends that Macau's entire fleet of casino shuttle buses will run on clean energy by 2023, the Director of the Transport Bureau (DSAT), Lam Hin San, announced yesterday.

"By May 1, we hope that 15 percent of the more than 430 casino shuttle buses in Macau will have changed to new-energy powered [vehicles], such as gasoline powered and electricity powered shuttle buses," said Lam, who believes this proportion of sustainably-powered vehicles is ideal.

"Around 2023, all shuttle buses should have already been changed [into new energy powered vehicles]," said Lam. "Currently, we have the support of six gaming operators."

According to the DSAT director, several improvements



ts in the number of vehicles, passenger loading rate, and other casino shuttle operations were recorded in 2017.

However, the DSAT director also noted that there was a registered increase in the number of car accidents with public buses as the main culprit.

In January and February of this year, there were two more traffic accidents (144) than in the same period of last year (142).

"Cases where responsibility [for the accident] was attributed to public buses grew from 67 to 88," said Lam, while

promising that DSAT will continue to investigate bus companies to enhance safety.

In order to improve bus safety, the three Macau bus companies will gradually roll out monitoring systems to vehicles.

According to Lam, these systems will monitor the vehicle's speed and issue alerts to the driver in situations where the vehicle suddenly increases speed or the driver is using a mobile device.

"Gradually, the three bus companies will install bus speed monitoring systems, as

well as monitoring systems to oversee the driver's driving," said Lam, adding that "sometimes, drivers will be tired or they might make a phone call. In these situations, the monitoring system will issue an alert and will report to the corresponding bus company."

The monitoring system can also detect sudden acceleration, and also whether the vehicle is too close to pedestrians.

In 2017, DSAT examined more than 100,000 cars, with the approval rate exceeding 94 percent, according to Lam.

The DSAT director also revealed that his department has discussed whether there is room for stricter car emission standards with the environment protection authority.

"We think there is room for adjustment," said Lam, hinting at the possibility of stricter car emission requirements for the city.

Edmund Ho re-elected vice-chairman

Former Macau Chief Executive, Edmund Ho, was re-elected as vice-chairman of the 13th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in Beijing on Wednesday. A total of 24 people were elected vice-chairpersons at a plenary meeting. Born in March 1955, Ho was vice-chairman of the 11th and 12th CPPCC national committees. Four other Macau members - Liu Chak Wan, Ma Iao Lai, Leong Wa, and Xu Jiankang - were elected for the Standing Committee of the top advisory body.



Over 100 Macau postcards exhibited in Lisbon

The exhibition "Memories of Moments - Macau and Lusophone African and Asian Regions in Photograph Postcards", organized by the Archives of Macau, was recently inaugurated at the Office of Economic and Commercial Delegation of Macau in Lisbon. The exhibition features over 100 photograph postcards selected from this particular period to present a big picture of the history and art, urban-architecture, ethnography, economic development, natural environment and other aspects of life in Macau and Angola, Cape Verde, the former Portuguese India, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe and East Timor since the first decades of the 20th century.

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Times



Cecilia Ho (center)

Photo Macau aims to strengthen city's cultural role

Lynzy Valles

PHOTO Macau is set to hold its first exhibition of digital art – focusing on moving image and print – between March 24 and 26. The exhibition will also feature symposiums and exclusive showcases.

The debut of Photo Macau, which was three years in the making, will bring together 56 original works by artists around the world.

The preview of the exhibition will present local, regional and international galleries and institutions including Germany's Anita Beckers, Culturegathery Gallery (also known as Galerie d'Art et Culture) from Taiwan, DNA Macau, Korea's The Reference and Osage Gallery from Hong Kong.

At a press conference this week, the exhibition's executive director Cecilia Ho unveiled the upcoming programs, which will feature

exhibitions by photographers and new media artists including Mike Steiner, a Horst P. Horst photo-selling exhibition, and a video installation by Jeffrey Shaw accompanied by a presentation on March 24.

Photo Macau's exhibition by German-born Horst P. Horst will include more than 60 photographic prints showcasing a variety of styles and subjects from women and fashion to still lifes

It is high time that we do something and make Macau an art city.

CECILIA HO
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE
EXHIBITION

and portraits.

Speaking to the press, Ho expressed her aim to make the region into an art city specializing in photography and moving images, with the government's support.

"I want to do [the exhibition] to make Macau ... [the] home of photography in digital arts, image, video and new media," said Ho.

Photo Macau's exhibition will be held concurrently with Art Central Hong Kong, which will be held from March 27.

Ho hoped that art enthusiasts could also visit Macau before attending the event in Hong Kong.

"The southern part of China is going to be very developed and Macau is the center of this Great Bay area, and Macau has a government that is supporting art, so it is high time that we do something and make Macau an art city," Ho stressed.

On March 25, a symposium will be presented by cura-

tors, scholars, artists and collectors, providing a platform for visitors to expand their knowledge about new media.

The symposium that day will include "The Revenge of the Photographic Archive" and "Digital Art – Past, Present & Future."

Later that day, a collection by Mario Von Kelterborn will be opened to the public.

Tickets for Photo Macau are priced at MOP100. However, Ho confirmed that 90 percent of the tickets will be given for free. Ho added that they have printed some 20,000 tickets.

"We look forward to welcoming art, photography and cultural enthusiasts during this time where works by regional and international galleries will be supported by three fascinating exhibitions," the executive director said.

Photo Macau will hold its first exhibition at Cotai Expo Hall A.

Disability employment pension deemed unattractive

LOCAL residents with disabilities have shown little interest in the government's Employment Incentive Program for Disability Pension Beneficiaries.

A total of seven people participated in the program in the first month of its implementation, according to the latest information released by the Social Security Fund.

According to a report by Jornal Va Kio, Chau Wai I, vice-president of a subsidiary association of the Women's General Association of Macau, noted that there are approximately 11,000 citizens in Macau living with some form of disability.

Chau remarked that many of these citizens have disabilities that prevent them from working, and that the government needs to review its policies to encourage the employment of the disabled. Chau pointed out that they, as well as their caretakers, worry about the inclusion of disabled citizens in the job market.

The government's Employment Incentive Program for Disability Pension Beneficiaries provides disabled residents a 90-day trial placement period.

According to Chau, several reasons affect the willingness of the disabled to participate in the government program. For instance, they find it rather difficult to change jobs once they realize that their old jobs are unsuitable for them.

Furthermore, once the disabled residents become publicly employed, they no longer receive the government's pensions or subsidies.

Chau suggested that the government should remedy the scheme on two fronts; by establishing friendlier employment policies for the disabled and by conducting research on additional tax relief policies that could benefit the small-to-medium enterprises that are involved so that they could provide more opportunities to the disabled. **JZ**

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Circus adaptation of Bosch's surreal art to show Sunday

Daniel Beitler

A circus adaptation of the surreal works of pioneer painter Hieronymus Bosch is to be staged Sunday at the Macau Cultural Center, combining impressive feats of physical movement with animated slides of the Dutch artist's most famous works.

One of the most notable of the early Dutch painters, Bosch painted during the late-15th century and the early 16th, at the dawn of Europe's Renaissance period.

Though his work retains much of the style and artistic arrangement used throughout the Middle Ages, Bosch was perhaps one of the earliest known artists to bring a touch of surrealism and humor to art. His experimentation is said to have influenced several contemporary movements, including surrealism itself, as well as psychedelic rock music and aspects of comedy.

To commemorate the 500th



anniversary of the painter's death, The Bosch Foundation in Holland granted permission in 2013 for a partnership of Canadian troupe The 7 Fingers and Copenhagen-based Theatre Republique to create an original production, Bosch Dreams.

In Bosch Dreams, circus performers move gracefully on 'living' screens made by Ange Potier, a French-Argentine video artist, who has managed to resurrect Bosch's paintings into

the world of animation.

In a media interview yesterday, two performers from the show described the productions as – expectedly – surreal. Mathias Reymond and Sunniva Byvard also said that circus was a fitting medium for an original adaptation of Bosch's works because of the art form's inherent nature.

"I think that circus is a very good channel to portray this artist because in circus we have very obscure [body movemen-

ts] and I think that connects with his paintings," said Byvard. "When you look at it [Bosch's work], people are flying all around and doing obscure things with their bodies... and this really relates to our craft. I think this is the perfect way to make a tribute to his work."

We will always have good and evil, and that's what Bosch depicted.

MATHIAS REYMOND
PERFORMER

The two performers agreed that Bosch's influence can be detected in contemporary expression beyond the aging movements of surrealism and psychedelic rock.

"He still has an impact on the

world today," Reymond said. "It comes down to the general questions of good and evil; the struggle every person goes through throughout eternity. We will always have good and evil, and that's what Bosch depicted."

"He shows a lot of sensuality and fear and death [in his work], and these things will always be [relevant] to our times," added Byvard.

Bosch's work is both complicated and detailed.

His magnum opus, "The Garden of Earthly Delights" – featured prominently in the production – is a large triptych, 13 feet wide and 7 feet high depicting heaven, earth and hell on its three panes, and including dozens of people, animals, objects and monsters.

Asked whether bringing the works to a circus adaptation might be overwhelming for audiences, Reymond said, "I think that the work that went into this project before we actually started putting it on stage was so extensive that... I was not ever worried [about that]."

"It's important for this type of show not to dumb down [reduce] what he [Bosch] actually created, but instead really support it," added his colleague, Byvard. "We emphasize all of the strange things you can already see [in his works]."

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New Macau says heritage protection consultation lacks in detail

Renato Marques

THE New Macau Association (ANM) presented its opinion about the on-going public consultation of the Safeguard and Management Plan of the Historic Center of Macau yesterday during a press conference. The plan "lacks clarity and detail," said Sulu Sou, the association's elected lawmaker, in response to the Times.

According to Sou, "the main point [when drafting such plan] is that the government has the responsibility to protect the relationship with the citizens and with the historical environment, but we cannot find very clear or detailed information on the consultation document."

"So we urge the government to make this plan more clear and to say [how] strict they intend to be regarding restrictions as well as the visual corridors and angles," Sou said. These are all topics that the lawmaker claimed were very important for the government to "[promote] improvements [on the plan] after this consultation."

Sou said that even former Chief Executive Edmund Ho "issued a dispatch (83/2008) with [guidelines] that [were considered] quite strict in terms of control of the height of the buildings in the surroundings of Guia Lighthouse, but that is not enough to protect the lighthouse and the sur-



Paul Chan (left) and Sulu Sou (center)

We cannot find very clear or detailed information on the consultation document.

SULU SOU

roundings and there were many conflicts in these [last] 10 years." He urged the government to do more.

Another of the issues encountered by ANM regarding the consultation plan was that the protection of the Penha Hill area was ignored. Sou warned, "If the government does not set a visual corridor from Penha Hill to Nam Van Lake and to the new reclamation [land] zone B it will damage the view from Penha Hill."

The lawmaker also noted that the association has been following cases regarding heritage protection for the past two years and has issued several reports as a non-governmental organization (NGO) to UNESCO, with the last one being delivered last week. Sou informed he has yet to receive feedback from the organization but expressed hope that he will. "Based on our [previous] experience we know that UNESCO pays great attention to NGO reports and it will follow up on our remarks as it did the last time in 2015," Sou said.

Questioned as to whether ANM will share the content of such a report with the government, Sou said they are still considering whether to provide advanced access to the content, noting that it is the duty of UNESCO to hear all submissions on the case. Nevertheless, he claims, "the report is no secret anyway; we believe the government already has an idea about what is there."

EDUCATION

80pct of MUST graduates choose employment over further education

Julie Zhu

EIGHTY percent of the graduating students from the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) choose employment instead of pursuing further education degrees, MUST's president Liu Liang revealed during this week's MUST Career Day.

Ninety-nine percent of the MUST local graduates stayed in Macau for work. Approximately 37 percent of the local graduates were given a starting salary of MOP17,000, while 45 percent were offered a job paying between MOP11,000 and MOP17,000.

"The employment situation of MUST graduates is ideal," said Liu, adding that most of the graduates are employed in the sectors of "trade, retail, tourism, catering, hospitality, gaming, banking, finance, insurance, public administration, medical services, and social services."

According to MUST's longitudinal survey, 50 percent of MUST's non-local students pursued further studies, and 43 percent of non-local students who decided to venture into the job market chose to work in the Greater Bay Area.

"This [the Greater Bay Area] represents an excellent career development opportunity," said Liu, adding "I believe it will grow very fast [the number of MUST graduates working in the Greater Bay Area]."

The MUST president further believes that the Greater Bay Area development plan is a state level plan



that will involve the whole world, and not just the Greater Bay Area itself.

"The prospects of employment and entrepreneurship endeavors in the Greater Bay Area are very optimistic," said Liu.

Jin Ge, an MUST student from mainland China, says that the MUST Career Day is providing her with "quite a lot" of opportunities. She intends to get a job in the education sector. Jin expressed no specific desire to work in Macau, and she has not yet thought about the salaries.

Joyce Jiang, a Masters student majoring in accounting, said "I wish to get a job related to my major. However, right now I feel that there are rather few vacancies available."

"Definitely, my first choice goes to big companies but, since this is just the beginning, I will try all kinds of companies," said Jiang, adding "I have not decided yet [about exactly where she wants to work]."

In total, 165 companies are attending the two days of the MUST Career Day, offering over 4,000 job vacancies.

A new record has been set in terms of numbers of companies from overseas, Hong Kong and mainland China.

Gov't hints at national security law amendment

THE Office of the Secretary for Security has declared that the Macau's national security law needs amendment to bring it in line with the latest developments around the world, as expressed in a statement released yesterday.

"In the current law of protection of the state security, there is a dearth of rules in terms of jurisdiction for investigation, means of gathering evidence and requirements of prosecution procedures, [and it] only applies the general criminal procedural regime. Thus, resulting in an incomplete formulation of the exclusive enforcement

mechanism for the defense of the state security," the statement reads. "Inevitably, it gives people a one-sided [feeling] that the law is prepared but will not be used, [and] that [the law] only maintains dissuasive effects."

Macau's national security law came into effect nine years ago. The statement reads that "the world has developed rapidly and the state security of the motherland has expanded from traditional areas, such as political and military matters, into non-traditional areas, such as the economic, cultural, social sciences, technology, in-

formation and ecology sectors, thus forming an integrated state security."

"Therefore, the national security law indeed needs to keep pace with the rapid development of the society, and the corresponding amendments [should] be made" the statement concludes.

In particular, the articles of the law which require urgent amendment, according to the statement, include those governing the procedures for collecting evidence within criminal investigations, and the special rules for coercive measures in evidence collection.

Youth optimistic about mainland prospects

THE latest survey conducted by the Macao Youth Federation on the opinions of Macau youth shows that nearly 70 percent of interviewees consider the mainland's employment prospects to be good.

The survey interviewed local residents aged between 18 and 45 years old, and collected 629 valid responses.

More than 80 percent of the respondents believed that the mainland's prospects are better than Macau's.

Eighteen- to 24-year-olds are even more optimistic about mainland

China's employment market than other age groups.

They feel that the mainland offers a larger market, lower entrepreneurship costs, and more opportunities to access new technologies.

The top four mainland cities in which the local youth wish to work are Shanghai, Guangzhou, Beijing and Shenzhen.

Some 56 percent of the interviewees say that in the event they go to mainland China as aspiring entrepreneurs or for other forms of employment, they would leave the mainland after three years.

Only 12 percent of the respondents said they would live in the mainland. Furthermore, only 20 percent of interviewees indicated a willingness to work there and only 31 percent said they would take part in an entrepreneurship program. These low rates are likely a consequence of differences in culture and lifestyles, as well as social connections and family.

Some 21 percent and 30 percent of the interviewees were not familiar with the content of the central government's Belt and Road initiative and the Greater Bay Area development plan, respectively. **JZ**

Some migrants birthing charges to increase 3 times, not 9

THE raise in baby delivery fees for non-resident domestic workers at the public hospital will be hiked three times and not nine times as previously considered, Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Alexis Tam said during two meetings yesterday with migrant worker groups, though it remains unclear whether he indeed meant domestic workers or non-residents at large. He also said that non-resident workers who find it difficult to pay childbirth fees might benefit from financial assistance provided by the Social Welfare Bureau.

According to Tam, the latest proposal from the government will see natural births for some non-resident women at the public hospital raised from MOP975 to MOP2,925, while caesarean sections will increase from MOP1,950 to MOP5,850.

Migrant worker groups in the territory hailed the new proposal as an improvement.

Yosa Wariyanti of the Indonesian Migrant Workers'



Union, who had been vocal in opposing the hikes, said yesterday the revised policy was "good news because the increase is not as high as the previous one."

At another meeting, Benedicta Palcon of the Greens

Macao Migrant Workers' Association affirmed that the Secretary's announcement is "better than the original one."

"This is fairer because the Secretary said the government is planning another mechanism for the other non

-resident workers, who cannot afford the fee," she told the Times.

It is not clear what price hike will be applied to non-resident women who are not domestic helpers.

Palcon and Wariyanti both

said that the government did not consult with their associations before announcing it would hike birthing fees late last month.

"I think he [Alexis Tam] should have consulted with groups like us before deciding [the increase]," said Palcon.

I think he [Alexis Tam] should have consulted with groups like us before

BENEDICTA PALCON
GREENS MACAO MIGRANT WORKERS

Last month the government said it had sought approval from other local organizations, including the Macau Federation of Trade Unions, the Macau General Union of the Neighborhood Associations, and the Women's General Association of Macau.

Meanwhile, birthing fees for tourists at the public hospital are still expected to rise ninefold to as much as MOP17,550 for natural deliveries and MOP35,100 for caesarean sections. **DB**

AD



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Toys R Us demise to have impact from toy makers to landlords

Anne D'innocenzio, New York

THE demise of Toys R Us will have a ripple effect on everything from toy makers to consumers to landlords.

The 70-year-old retailer is headed toward shuttering its U.S. operations, jeopardizing the jobs of some 30,000 employees while spelling the end for a chain known to generations of children and parents for its sprawling stores and Geoffrey the giraffe mascot.

The closing of the company's 740 U.S. stores over the coming months will finalize the downfall of the chain that succumbed to heavy debt and relentless trends that undercut its business, from online shopping to mobile games.

And it will force toy makers and landlords who depended on the chain to scramble for alternatives.

CEO David Brandon told employees Wednesday the company's plan is to liquidate all of its U.S. stores, according to an audio recording of the meeting obtained by The Associated Press.

Brandon said Toys R Us will try to bundle its Canadian business, with about 200 stores, and find a buyer. The company's U.S. online store would still be running for the next couple of weeks in case there's a buyer for it.

It's likely to also liquidate its businesses in Australia, France, Poland, Portugal and Spain, according to the recording. It's already shuttering its business in the United Kingdom. That would leave it with stores in Canada, central Europe and Asia, where it could find buyers for those assets.

Toys R Us Asia Ltd. has more than 400 retail outlets in Brunei, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand. It is a Hong Kong-based joint venture with the Fung Group, which owns a 15 percent stake. It also

AP PHOTO



controls Asian sourcing giant Li & Fung, a major supplier to Western retailers like Wal-Mart.

A Fung spokesperson did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

When Toys R Us initially announced it was filing for bankruptcy protection last year, the Asian venture said it was not affected and operated as a separate legal entity independent of other Toys R Us businesses around the world.

In Hong Kong, where Toys R Us has 15 stores, parents said there were few other choices in a retail market dominated by a few big players.

"If you want something like a mainstream toy shop, then Toys R Us is the only place you can go," said Ching-yng Choi, whose home and office are both within walking distance of Toys R Us shops.

"Basically either it's Toys R Us or you go to specialized and very expensive toy shops that sell, for example, wooden toys that come from very far away countries like in Europe," she said.

Toys R Us had about 60,000 full-time and part-time employees worldwide last year.

Brandon said on the recording that the company would be filing liquidation papers and there would be a bankruptcy court hearing today [Macau time]. "We worked as hard and as long as we could to turn over every rock," Brandon told employees.

When the chain filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection last fall, saddled with USD5 billion in debt that hurt its attempts to compete as shoppers moved to Amazon and huge chains like Walmart, it pledged to stay open.

But Brandon told employees its sales performance during the holiday season was "devastating," as nervous customers and vendors shied away. That made its lenders more skittish about investing in the company. In January, it announced plans to close about 180 stores over the next couple of months, leaving it with a little more than 700 stores.

The company's troubles have affected toy makers Mattel and Hasbro, which are big suppliers to the chain. But the likely liquidation will have a bigger impact on smaller toy makers that rely more on the chain for sales. Many have been trying to diver-

sify in recent months as they fretted about the chain's survival.

Toys R Us has been hurt by the shift to mobile devices taking up more play time. But steep sales declines over the holidays and thereafter were the deciding factor, said Jim Silver, who is editor-in-chief of toy review site TTPM.com.

The company didn't do enough to emphasize that it was reorganizing but not going out of business, Silver said. That misperception led customers to its stores because they didn't think they would be able to return gifts.

Now, the \$11 billion in sales still happening at Toys R Us each year will disperse to other retailers like Amazon and discounters, analysts say. Other chains, seeing that Toys R Us was vulnerable, got more aggressive. J.C. Penney opened toy sections last fall in all 875 stores. Target and Walmart have been expanding their toy selections. Even Party City is building up its toy offerings.

"Amazon may pick up the dollars, but won't deliver the experience needed for a toy retailer to survive and thrive in today's

market," said Marc Rosenberg, a toy marketing executive.

Toys R Us had dominated the toy store business in the 1980s and early 1990s, when it was one of the first of the "category killers"—a store totally devoted to one thing. Its scale gave it leverage with toy sellers and it disrupted general merchandise stores and mom-and-pop shops. Children sang along with commercials about "the biggest toy store there is."

But the company lost ground to discounters like Target and Walmart, and then to Amazon, as even nostalgic parents sought deals elsewhere. GlobalData Retail estimates that nearly 14 percent of toy sales were made online in 2016, more than double the level five years ago. Toys R Us still has hundreds of stores, and analysts estimate it still sells about 20 percent of the toys bought in the United States.

It wasn't able to compete with a growing Amazon: The toy seller said in bankruptcy filings that Amazon's low prices were hard to match. And it said its Babies R Us chain lost customers to the online retailer's convenient subscription service, which let parents receive diapers and baby formula at their doorstep automatically. Toys R Us blamed its "old technology" for not offering its own subscriptions.

But the company's biggest albatross was that it struggled with massive debt since private-equity firms Bain Capital, KKR & Co. and Vornado Realty Trust took it private in a \$6.6 billion leveraged buyout in 2005. Weak sales prevented them from taking the company public again. With such debt levels, Toys R Us did not have the financial flexibility to invest in its business. The company closed its flagship store in Manhattan's Times Square, a huge tourist destination that featured its own Ferris wheel, about two years ago.

In filing for bankruptcy protection last fall, Toys R Us pledged to make its stores more interactive. It added demonstrators for the holiday season to show people how toys work, and began opening Play Labs at 42 stores, areas where children can play with different items. **AP**

corporate bits

'LA PARISIENNE' CABARET PERFORMANCE KICKS OFF TONIGHT



The Parisian Macao will bring "La Parisienne" Cabaret Français to its theater tonight, a show that features a variety of performances blending illusion, dance, acrobatics and comedy.

A cast of 38 stunt performers, illusionists, skaters, models and dancers will perform in the 65-minute show that will run from tonight until June 17.

Enhanced by state-of-the-art audio and visual technology, classic acts such as the can-can and burlesque dances will be performed alongside high octane performances such as basketball acrobatics and "Globe of Death"

motorcycle racing.

In a 30-minute media preview yesterday, the performers demonstrated the highlights of the show, including its synchronized mapping, "face team basketball," and ice skating routine featuring Aleksandr Popov and Elena Efaeva, a Junior World Champion title, amongst others.

Other acts include an illusion routine, and a finale filled with "glamour and glitz."

Meanwhile, The Parisian Macao will offer a "Watch & Taste" dining discount at the Brasserie restaurant. Audiences of the show will receive a discount of MOP100

when spending MOP500 or more, contingent upon the presentation of their "La Parisienne" Cabaret Français ticket.

"A big team of artists is working hard to prepare such performances. [...] The cast is rich with a big variety of talented artists and athletes," said Paul Sivry, Acosta Artists and Production PR manager.

"Our performance is a mosaic of different forms of shapes and arts secured with a lot of hard work."

The show is presented by Acosta Artist Co. in collaboration with Royal Palace International Music Hall of France. **LV**

GAMING

Saipan casino operator raided by US federal agents

Matthew Campbell and K. Oanh Ha

U.S. federal agents raided a Saipan office of Imperial Pacific International Holdings Ltd. last week, according to people familiar with the matter.

The investigators took documents from the office, said the people, who were granted anonymity to discuss a non-public matter. The Federal Bureau of Investigation participated in the raid, one of the people said.

Imperial Pacific, which is based in Hong Kong, said on Tuesday that it had "not heard" of any official visit to its offices. It has denied any wrongdoing related to its Saipan operations. In a statement to the Hong Kong stock exchange yesterday, Imperial Pacific said "there was no raid by U.S. agents on any of its offices, its casino, or buildings."

Imperial Pacific has attracted broad attention in the gaming industry for the volumes being recorded at its Saipan casino, which are far larger on a per-table basis than those at the grandest resorts

BLOOMBERG



The Best Sunshine Live casino operated by Imperial Pacific International Holdings Ltd. stands in Saipan

in Macau.

Since arriving on Saipan in 2014, the company has become the dominant force on the island, a U.S. territory with a population of about 50,000. It has made millions of dollars in payments to Governor Ralph Torres's extended family, including long-term

land lease transactions and hiring his brothers' law firm for its Saipan legal affairs. The governor and his relatives have said they have not acted improperly.

"As a matter of legal policy, the FBI does not regularly comment on criminal investigations, to include confirming or denying

cases, their status as ongoing or not," the agency said in a written statement.

"However," it went on, "public corruption is the FBI's top criminal investigative priority. Elected or appointed officials are entrusted and expected to protect the interests of the people with inte-

grity. When that trust is betrayed, the security and stability of our government is put at risk. Anyone with information about a potential violation of federal law is asked to contact the FBI."

It's not clear what the aim of last week's raid was, but it was at least the second time that U.S. law-enforcement officials have made inquiries related to Imperial Pacific's casino project in Saipan.

Imperial Pacific has attracted broad attention in the gaming industry for the volumes being recorded at its Saipan casino

FBI agents visited an office leased by the company in March 2017. U.S. prosecutors later charged several employees of Imperial Pacific construction contractors with offenses related to using undocumented labor. Some pleaded guilty. Imperial Pacific said at the time that it had no knowledge of workers being employed illegally.

Bloomberg

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Chinese laborers at the Imperial Pacific Casino gather in front of their living quarters before a protest in Saipan, last summer

Chinese workers tricked into illegal work on Saipan

Sophia Yan, Honolulu

ZHOU Qingjiang was toiling in a factory in China's rust belt when he decided to pack his bags for America. A recruiter guaranteed a job that paid USD3,000 a month — more than triple the average wage in China — as long as Zhou forked over thousands of dollars for his help. The offer was too good to pass up.

Ten days later, Zhou found himself on the tiny Pacific island of Saipan, a U.S. Commonwealth, working 14-hour days with few breaks on a casino construction site. He bunked with eight men in dilapidated housing and took home less than half the promised wages. This was not the American dream he pictured.

"All those agents tricked us," said Zhou, 46. "When I arrived and saw hundreds of other Chinese workers, I realized we were all here illegally."

U.S. officials have been investigating and announced settlements last week with four Chinese construction firms to pay \$14 million in back wages and damages to 2,400 affected workers. The companies, contracted by Hong Kong's Imperial Pacific International, brought workers on tourist visas, paid them less than required by law and failed to secure proper work authorization by exploiting a visa waiver program that allows Chinese citizens to travel to the Northern Mariana Islands.

The Associated Press interviewed six workers, all of whom recounted experiences similar to Zhou's. One recalled working 19-hour shifts, another said his passport was confiscated, and all said recruiters assured them they would enter the U.S. legally.

The case comes as Trump cracks down on visa fraud and illegal immigration

Job placement fees were as high as \$17,000, and one worker remembers ponying up an additional \$1,000 to enter the construction site.

What's playing out on Saipan, nearly 6,440 kilometers west of Hawaii, highlights challenges for both the United States and China.

For the U.S., the case comes as President Donald Trump cracks down on visa fraud and illegal immigration. Global projects, like the Saipan casino hotel, form the cornerstone of President Xi Jinping's plan to boost China's clout by splashing \$1 trillion in construction and infrastructure around the world. But the initiative, dubbed "One Belt,

One Road," is suffering setbacks — projects are delayed, governments are pulling out, and now, U.S. officials have linked illegal migrant labor.

After a Chinese worker in Saipan died on the job last year, the FBI raided the site and discovered illegal workers, along with hundreds of their passports locked in cabinets, and spreadsheets that listed employees as "heigong," the Chinese word for illegal laborer, according to court documents.

Construction halted, leaving workers stranded. Employees protested and demanded reparations — many suffered injuries while working. Eventually, many returned to China or took jobs in other countries, even if they hadn't recouped all funds due. A few have stayed in Saipan. Hundreds of workers remain confused about what they're owed, how they'll be paid and when they'll get the money.

"I've been waiting a year to be paid," said Xu Longcai, 51, a farmer from northeast China. "I borrowed so much money to come here. But I don't have a single cent — how can I go home? I can't pay what I owe."

The U.S. Labor Department and Saipan authorities didn't respond to requests for comment about how it would ensure money would be paid to workers. Imperial Pacific said in a statement last week it is pleased a settlement was reached.

Construction is the second most common industry for forced labor, according to the International Labour Organization in Geneva. The group estimates nearly 25 million people were victims of forced labor in 2016, with roughly 60 percent working in private sectors.

"This is a pretty classic trafficking and forced labor scenario," said Agnieszka Fryszman, partner and chair of the human rights practice at law firm Cohen Milstein in Washington, D.C. "You have people with these debts. They're in the middle of the ocean. The isolation of the location is ripe for exploitation."

But even with help from the authorities, "can you ever enforce the judgment, and how would you do that?" Fryszman said. "You'd have to get their assets here."

The U.S., for instance, could require Imperial Pacific and its contractors to buy wage bonds, which ensures money is available if violations are found, said Aaron Halegua, a lawyer and research fellow at New York University, who is following the Saipan case.

"In New York state, any nail salon employing even just two individuals is required to purchase a wage bond," he said. "The need is even more compelling in the case of foreign companies, which often hold all their assets in the home coun-

try and simply establish a corporate shell entity in the United States."

Without that, it can be nearly impossible to collect money, which often forces the U.S. to settle workers' claims for much less than owed. Imperial Pacific could also be mandated to hire a reputable third party to train workers about their labor rights and workplace safety, he said, especially as some of these workers, like farmer Xu, have no prior construction experience.

None of the four contractors — state-owned MCC International, Beilida New Materials System Engineering, Gold Mantis Construction and Sino Great Wall International Engineering — responded to requests for comment.

A person who answered a phone number for the agent Zhou dealt with said he was no longer dealing with Saipan, and promptly hung up.

Zhou said he received some money but claims he's still due over a month's pay, and possibly damages. He's not sure how to calculate what's due.

Despite his Saipan ordeal — his first time out of his hometown province — he decided to go back abroad and just started working as a dishwasher in Singapore to support his family.

"I'm a little old to do this kind of work overseas," he said. "But I don't have a choice. I need to make a living." AP

China tells Vatican it's fighting illegal organ transplants

CHINESE health authorities told a Vatican trafficking conference that Beijing's efforts to crack down on illegal "underground" organ transplants have resulted in 220 arrests and 100 victims being rescued over the past 10 years.

Dr. Haibo Wang, deputy chief of China's organ donation and transplant foundation, provided the data as part of China's yearslong effort to convince the international medical community that it no longer harvests organs from executed prisoners.

At a news conference yesterday [Macau time], he reaffirmed that the organ harvesting practice officially stopped in 2015 and that China is now working to prevent illegal transplant activity. He said the underground trade, mostly in kidneys, isn't conducted in hospitals but in remote civilian, non-medical facilities.

"This kind of underground activity — they're getting smarter, so it's difficult to identify," he said.

To combat it, Wang said the health ministry and police recently began surveillance of transplant candidates' contacts with potential organ brokers via their communications and social media.

He also said China had proposed information-sharing agreements so countries could identify whether patients on a waiting list in one nation travel to another potentially seeking an illegal transplant. He acknowledged medical privacy and ethical concerns surrounding the proposal.

The Vatican conference was closed to the news media. Last year, at a similar conference, Wang and the head of China's program, Dr. Dr Huang Jie-fu, engaged in spirited debate with trafficking experts who pressed China to allow independent inspections to ensure China's program meets international standards.

China has rejected independent inspections, but it has proposed a World Health Organization task force to coordinate anti-trafficking initiatives.

China's participation in another Vatican conference was the latest evidence of increased cultural and scientific exchanges, and comes amid indications from the Vatican that an agreement is near over the thorny issue of Chinese bishop appointments. AP

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An OPod tube home created by architect James Law, in the industrial area of Kwun Tong

HONG KONG

Pipe dream? Architect proposes low-cost tube homes

HONG Kong's notoriously expensive housing makes owning an affordable home a pipe dream for many residents.

A local architect has proposed a novel idea to help alleviate that problem: building stylish micro-apartments inside giant concrete drainage pipes.

James Law's OPod Tube Housing is still just at the conceptual stage, but it's attracted attention as an innovative though untested way to deal with housing shortages.

At 9.3 square meters the tube houses are not that much smaller than Hong Kong's infamous "cubicle homes" — older apartments subdivided into cramped and squalid living spaces. They're roomier than other types of tenement housing, such as so-called "coffin" and "cage" homes.

The idea came to Law when he spotted some leftover storm sewer drain pipes at a construction site.

They might be converted into "really cute micro-living architecture," he said.

Law has only built a prototype to test public interest but has already received inquiries from around the world.

There's a lot crammed into the OPod. It consists of two sections of 2.5-meter (about 8 foot) diameter pipes fitted with glass doors on both ends. A living area inside includes a bench that converts into a bed, opposite shelves on the facing, curving wall. Another shelf fits a bar fridge and a microwave next to a galley sink

beneath an air conditioner. A tiled bathroom at the end includes a combined shower and toilet.

The OPod cost USD15,000 to build. Law said he envisions renting them out for less than \$400 a month to recent graduates on low incomes trying to get a foot on the housing ladder. That's a fraction of the market rate.

At 9.3 sqm the tube houses are not that much smaller than HK's infamous 'cubicle homes'

"My dream is the OPods will be a new kind of living for young people just starting out in life," Law said.

It's less a long-term solution to Hong Kong's housing crisis than a novel way to make use of leftover spaces where conventional housing doesn't fit. The pipe homes could be stacked into gaps between buildings, under highway overpasses or on the roofs of existing buildings.

"This kind of house is really portable. We [can] actually make it in a construction site and then we lift it onto a truck and we can deliver it anywhere," Law said. "So it represents a new, affordable architecture." AP

PHILIPPINES

Duterte can't evade accountability by quitting court

PHILIPPINE President Rodrigo Duterte and government officials can still face investigation by the International Criminal Court for thousands of killings under his anti-drug war until his decision to withdraw from the tribunal takes effect after a year, rights groups said yesterday.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque Jr. said Duterte did not decide to withdraw from the Rome Statute, which established the international tribunal, to escape accountability but to protest an ICC prosecutor's decision to start examining a complaint against Duterte while Philippine courts continue to operate.

The court, which was established in 2002 in The Hague, can only intervene when a state is unable or unwilling to carry out an investigation and prosecute perpetrators of heinous crimes like crimes against humanity, genocide, aggression and war atrocities.

"It's very, very clear that our

AP PHOTO



courts are working and nobody can escape from accountability, including a president," Roque told a news conference. "The ICC is only a court of last resort. The court of primary jurisdiction should be the domestic courts."

While Philippine presidents,

including Duterte, are immune from domestic lawsuits while in office, two Filipino heads of state have been prosecuted and detained immediately after they stepped down, Roque said to demonstrate that officials could be held to account in the Philippines.

Last month, ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda announced she was opening a preliminary examination into a complaint by a Filipino lawyer of suspected extrajudicial killings under Duterte's anti-drug campaign which could amount to crimes against humanity. In 2016, Bensouda said she was deeply concerned about the reported violence and that statements by "high officials" in the Philippines "seem to condone such killings."

Roque said at the time that Duterte welcomed the development because it would give him a chance to clear his name. "He wants to be in court and put the prosecutor on the stand, to ask who prodded you to proceed to preliminary examination," Roque said then.

Duterte, however, announced Wednesday that he was withdrawing the Philippine ratification of the Rome Statute "effective immediately," citing "a concerted effort" by Bensouda and U.N. human rights officials

"to paint me as a ruthless and heartless violator of human rights."

Human Rights Watch said the ICC could still prosecute heinous crimes in the Philippines until a withdrawal takes effect a year after Duterte notifies the U.N. secretary-general.

A nongovernment group, Tindig Pilipinas, said that despite Duterte's tough talk, his move was a clear sign of his "supreme cowardice" to face an independent court that he could not influence over the drug killings.

"For all the braggadocio that President Duterte has displayed throughout this ICC affair, one stands out: he is deathly afraid of the long arm of the ICC," the group said.

More than 4,000 mostly poor drug suspects have been killed under Duterte's drug crackdown, according to the national police, although human rights groups have reported larger death tolls. Duterte argued Wednesday 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. **AP**

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PAKISTAN

School dance, anyone? Punjabi lawmakers seek ban

PAKISTANI lawmakers in a provincial assembly have voted in favor of a ban on dance parties at schools and other educational institutions, saying they promote Western culture.

Shaikh Ijaz, a lawmaker from the ruling Pakistan Muslim League party in Punjab, said yesterday that the dance-ban resolution passed overwhelmingly in the Punjab Assembly the previous day without any opposition from secular, moderate or Islamic parties.

The resolution, however, is not binding but considered a recommendation to the government, which is being asked to "stop the vulgarity" in the province.

Ijaz says the motion followed parents' complaints that some schools organized mix-gender gatherings, which are prohibited in Islam.

The motion was criticized by many students who say a ban would deprive them of a right to participate in cultural events.

NEPAL

Authorities struggle to identify plane crash survivors

Binaj Gurubacharya,
Kathmandu

AUTHORITIES in Nepal are struggling to identify the survivors of a deadly plane crash earlier this week, with many of the injured badly burned, in critical condition and unable to speak, officials said yesterday.

Extensive burns, in both the living and the dead, have made identifications far more difficult, said police spokesman Manoj Neupane. The flight from Bangladesh, which was carrying 67 passengers and four crew members, slammed into a field beside the Kathmandu airport runway on Monday, bursting into flames. Neupane said at least 11 of the sur-

AP PHOTO



vivors have been identified but did not have an exact total. The crash left 49 people dead.

Of the 22 survivors, 19 are still being treated in Ka-

thmandu hospitals, he said, and another has been flown to Singapore for more medical care. Two surviving passengers, both of them Nepalese, have been discharged

and gone home.

Doctors at the city's morgue have performed autopsies on only about half of those killed so far, and are struggling to identify many of the bodies, said police official Bijay Bhandari.

Authorities hope to release the first bodies to their families over the weekend, he said.

The US-Bangla Airways flight was carrying 32 passengers from Bangladesh, 33 from Nepal and one each from China and the Maldives. It did not provide the nationalities of the four crew members.

Also on Thursday, a team of Bangladeshi doctors left for Nepal to help the injured and help with identifications.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina ordered national flags be flown at half-staff at all government buildings at home and at embassies across the world, while special prayers are planned for Friday at mosques across the country during weekly prayers.

Dhaka-based US-Bangla operates Boeing 737-800 and smaller Bombardier Dash 8 planes, including the Q400, the model that crashed. **AP**



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USA | GUN CONTROL

Today's debate has echoes of 1934

Allen G. Breed & Sharon Cohen,
Chicago

IT was 1934. Mobsters armed with fully automatic "Tommy guns" had left a trail of bloodstained sidewalks and pockmarked walls across the country, and the new president had narrowly escaped assassination the year before. It was time for action on gun control. And the National Rifle Association seemingly agreed.

"I do not believe in the general promiscuous toting of guns," then-NRA President Karl T. Frederick told members of the House Ways and Means Committee. "I think it should be sharply restricted and only under licenses."

The resulting National Firearms Act — passed five years after the infamous St. Valentine's Day Massacre in Chicago — taxed, rather than banned, machine guns. But it was a pivotal moment in America's history, marking the first comprehensive federal gun-control law.

It was also a big moment for the NRA, founded in 1871 by two Civil War veterans. The group had managed to get a seat at the table — helping to gut most of the bill's original provisions and establishing itself as a key player in Washington, D.C.

Now the survivors of a modern-day Valentine's Day massacre — last month's rampage in Parkland, Florida — are demanding that members of Congress sever their ties with the NRA and do something about assault rifles like the legally

AP PHOTO



John Dillinger's arsenal is seen, April 24, 1934, after federal agents tried to capture him and his gang

purchased AR-15 Nikolas Cruz allegedly used.

As it was in 1934, the debate

over gun control is essentially the same — whether civilians should have access to certain kinds of firearms.

"Americans then believed you had a right to have a gun in your house for personal protection," says Adam Winkler, a professor at the UCLA School of Law and author of "Gunfight: The Battle over the Right to Bear Arms in America." "What they didn't believe was that you had a right to have the most deadly forms of weapons."

Introduced too late for World War I, the Thompson submachine gun was marketed as the perfect self-defense weapon — "ideal [...] for the protection of large estates, ranches, plantations, etc.," read one 1920s advertisement from its manufacturer. "Full automatic, fired from the hip, 1,500 shots per minute."

Despite assurances the weapon would only be sold "to responsible parties after a thorough investigation," many found their way into the hands of bootleggers and bank robbers. Gangsters Al Capone, John Dillinger and George "Machine Gun" Kelly began terrorizing

the nation, and forensics tied two Tommy guns to the Feb. 14, 1929, incident in which seven men associated with mobster George "Bugs" Moran were gunned down by Capone men dressed as police.

Then in February 1933, during a visit to Miami, President-elect Roosevelt emerged miraculously unscathed from a barrage of five bullets from a .32-caliber pawnshop revolver. Hearings on the National Firearms Act began in April 1934.

The original bill proposed registration and steep taxation on all firearms. There were also provisions for taking fingerprints and tracking future gun transfers.

Then-Assistant Attorney General Joseph B. Keenan readily acknowledged that criminals would ignore the law. But by requiring taxes and registration, he said, "we do hope to make it a simple matter ... to put them behind the bars when they violate these regulations."

The NRA had been pushing a measure in state legislatures to regulate machine guns, but worried Congress was trying to go too far. During hearings,

the Second Amendment was not mentioned by name, but its spirit was certainly invoked.

NRA Executive Vice President Milton Reckord accused the government of seeking to regulate firearms "under the subterfuge of a tax bill" and warned against legislating "15 million sportsmen into criminals." A pistol or revolver is "only dangerous in the hands of the crook," he said. "It is not dangerous in the hands of the honest citizen."

The final law imposed a USD200 tax on the making and sale of machine guns, silencers, and shotguns and rifles with barrels of less than 18 inches. Handguns and "sporting arms" were exempted, as the NRA wished.

Despite the general aura of collegiality and collaboration in 1934, historian Patrick Charles says the NRA was doing then what it does now — fighting to thwart any significant restrictions on guns.

"The whole time the NRA is saying, 'We support reasonable firearms laws, and we're just trying to help you.' Basically, what they did is they got their hands in the cookie jar to write the law for Congress, and they commandeered the whole law and made it the way they wanted to," says Charles, author of "Armed in America: A History of Gun Rights from Colonial Militias to Concealed Carry."

Over the ensuing eight decades, mob killings, assassinations, crime waves and politics have dictated federal gun laws. The NFA was followed by the Federal Firearms Act of 1938, the Gun Control Act of 1968, the "Brady Law" of 1993 and the Federal Assault Weapons Ban of 1994. That last expired in 2004. Numerous attempts to renew it have failed.

Like many, Charles thought the 2012 slaughter of 26 students and teachers in Newtown, Connecticut, was another of those moments in "the shooting cycle" that would spur new federal gun control. It wasn't.

Survivors of the Parkland shooting are vowing that this time will be different. They want an outright ban on assault-style rifles, which Stoneman Douglas senior Samuel Zeif, in a White House meeting with President Donald Trump, called "a weapon of war."

But Alan Gottlieb, founder of the Second Amendment Foundation, says this is not 1934, and there's no equivalency between assault rifles and machine guns. While the Parkland students make "some very sympathetic messengers," he doesn't foresee anything changing.

"No gun rights group is going to support a ban," he says. "A gun doesn't have a finger to pull its own trigger or a brain to hate with. There's where our problem is." AP

AP PHOTO



Chicago gangster Al Capone has his photo taken while in custody in Philadelphia, May 18, 1929

Collin Binkley

USA | GUN CONTROL

Students stage huge walkout against firearms violence

THEY bowed their heads in honor of the dead. They carried signs with messages like “Never again” and “Am I next?” They railed against the National Rifle Association and the politicians who support it.

And over and over, they repeated the message: Enough is enough.

In a wave of protests one historian called the largest of its kind in American history, tens of thousands of students walked out of their classrooms yesterday [Macau time] to demand action on gun violence and school safety.

The demonstrations extended from Maine to Hawaii as students joined the youth-led surge of activism set off by the Feb. 14 massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

“We’re sick of it,” said Maxwell Nardi, a senior at Douglas S. Freeman High School in Henrico, Virginia, just outside Richmond. “We’re going to keep fighting, and we’re not going to stop until Congress finally makes resolute changes.”

Students around the nation left class at 10 a.m. local time for at least 17 minutes — one minute for each of the dead in the Florida shooting. Some led marches or rallied on football fields, while others gathered in school gyms or took a knee in the hallway.

At some schools, hundreds of students poured out. At others, just one or two walked out in defiance of administrators.

They lamented that too many young people have died and that they’re tired of going to school afraid they will be killed.

“Enough is enough. People are done with being shot,” said Iris Fosse-Ober, 18, a senior at Washburn High School in Minneapolis.

Some issued specific demands for lawmakers, including mandatory background checks for all gun sales and a ban on assault weapons like the one used in the Florida bloodbath.

While administrators and teachers at some schools applauded students for

AP PHOTO



taking a stand — and some joined them — others threatened punishment for missing class.

As the demonstrations unfolded, the NRA responded by posting a photo on Twitter of a black rifle emblazoned with an American flag. The caption: “I’ll control my own guns, thank you.”

The protests took place at schools from the elementary level through college, including some that have witnessed their own mass shootings: About 300 students gathered on a soccer field at Colorado’s Columbine High, while students who survived the Sandy Hook Elementary School attack in 2012 marched out of Newtown High School in Connecticut.

In the nation’s capital, more than 2,000 high-school age protesters observed 17 minutes of silence while sitting on the ground with their backs turned to the White House.

President Donald Trump was out of town.

The students carried signs with messages such as “Our Blood/Your Hands” and “Never Again” and chanted slogans against the NRA.

In New York City, they chanted, “Enough is enough!” In Salt Lake City, the signs read, “Protect kids not guns,” “Fear has no place in school” and “Am I next?”

■ In a wave of protests - the largest of kind in American history - tens of thousands of students walked out of their classrooms

At Eagle Rock High in Los Angeles, teenagers took a moment of silence as they gathered around a circle of 17 chairs labeled with the names of the Florida victims.

Stoneman Douglas High senior David Hogg, who has emerged as one of the leading student activists, live-streamed the walkout at the tragedy-stricken school on his YouTube channel. He said students couldn’t be expected to stay in class while there was work to do to prevent gun violence.

“Every one of these individuals could have died that day. I could have died that day,” he said.

In joining the protests, the students followed the example set by many of the survivors of the Florida shooting, who have become gun-control activists, leading rallies, lobbying legislators and giving TV interviews. Their efforts helped spur passage last

week of a Florida law curbing access to assault rifles by young people.

Another protest against gun violence is scheduled in Washington on March 24, with organizers saying it is expected to draw hundreds of thousands.

But whether the students can make a difference on Capitol Hill remains to be seen.

Congress has shown little inclination to defy the powerful NRA and tighten gun laws, and Trump backed away from his initial support for raising the minimum age for buying an assault rifle to 21.

A spokeswoman for Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, newly appointed head of a federal panel on school safety, said DeVos “gives a lot credit to the students who are raising their voices and demanding change,” and “their input will be valuable.”

David Farber, a history professor at the University of Kansas who has studied social change movements, said it is too soon to know what effect the protests will have. But he said the walkouts were without a doubt the largest protest led by high school students in the history of the U.S.

“Young people are that social media generation, and it’s easy to mobilize them in a way that it probably hadn’t been even 10 years ago,” Farber said.

Yesterday’s coordinated protests were organized by Empower, the youth wing of the Women’s March, which brought thousands to Washington last year.

At Aztec High School in a rural, gun-friendly part of New Mexico where many enjoy hunting and shooting, students avoided gun politics and opted for a ceremony honoring students killed in shootings — including two who died in a December attack at Aztec. **AP**

AP PHOTO



TV canal macau



FRIDAY

13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
15:00	Miscellaneous
16:15	European League: Plzen x Sporting (Repeated)
18:00	Miscellaneous
18:55	Brazilian Soap Opera (Repeated)
19:45	Non-daily Portuguese News (Repeated)
19:50	Portuguese Serie
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:15	Portuguese Documentary
22:10	Brazilian Soap Opera
23:00	TDM News
23:30	European League Highlights
01:25	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
02:15	RTPi Live

SATURDAY

10:30	Comedy
11:35	Miscellaneous
12:30	Miscellaneous
13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast (PT)
15:00	Miscellaneous
16:55	Miscellaneous
17:50	Miscellaneous
18:35	Miscellaneous
18:35	Miscellaneous
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (PT)
21:00	Portuguese Around the World - Sr. 2
22:20	Miscellaneous
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Miscellaneous
00:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
01:05	RTPi Live

SUNDAY

10:25	Kids Serie
11:00	Sunday Mass (Live)
12:00	Miscellaneous
13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
15:00	Miscellaneous
16:55	Brainstorm
17:40	Got Talent Portugal
19:35	Portuguese Serie Sr 3
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	Non-daily Portuguese News
22:00	Documentary
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Miscellaneous
00:25	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
01:05	RTPi Live

Offbeat

SNOW CAUSES 81-VEHICLE HIGHWAY PILEUP; NO SERIOUS INJURIES



Authorities say a blinding, late-afternoon snow squall caused an 81-vehicle pileup on a major highway in central Ohio, but no one was seriously hurt.

The crashes left vehicles crunched, tipped over and scattered at odd angles across lanes of Interstate 71 this week. The mess blocked the highway for hours in Morrow County, roughly 64 kilometers northeast of Columbus.

The State Highway Patrol says the traffic involved included 11 commercial vehicles. At least one tractor-trailer ended up on its side.

State troopers didn't immediately provide a full count of how many people were hurt, but said none of those injuries was considered life-threatening.

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



2001 TEENAGE WOMAN GUILTY OF RAPE

An 18-year-old woman has been convicted of rape after she pinned down a victim during a horrific gang sex attack.

Claire Marsh is thought to be the youngest woman in Britain to be convicted of rape after she also punched the 37-year-old victim in the face and ripped off her top as she was gang-raped on a canal towpath.

A 15-year-old boy, who is too young to be named, forced the woman to have sex, while others in the 14-strong group - including a boy aged 12 - shouted encouragement as the brutal attack unfolded shortly after midnight on 22 July last year.

Marvin Edwards, 18, Brentford, west London, also raped the woman, after she had been thrown into the Grand Union Canal in Ladbroke Grove, west London and dragged out.

Two boys aged 15 and 16 were cleared of the same charge at Blackfriars Crown Court in London.

Judge Timothy Pontius told Marsh's barrister: "She will know that, given that this was a particularly vile and horrific offence of sexual brutality, a substantial custodial sentence is inevitable."

At the start of the two-and-a-half-week trial Richard Whittam, for the prosecution, told the jury Marsh, from Margate, Kent, as female could be convicted of rape because she encouraged it.

The woman's ordeal began when she set off home by the canal after a "lovely summer's evening" with friends.

A young couple approached her to share a cannabis "spliff" but suddenly she was surrounded and robbed before being thrown into the canal.

As she got out they grabbed her and she was raped.

She briefly escaped but was caught by the gang, kicked and punched repeatedly and dragged naked along a gravel path, lacerating her bare skin.

Eventually she fled naked to her home more than a mile away.

Gang members were arrested after a tip-off and DNA evidence proved Edwards' guilt.

Marsh admitted hitting the woman but denied taking part in the sex attack.

She was remanded in custody for reports and will be sentenced at a later date along with the 15-year-old, who admitted rape, and Edwards.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Claire Marsh was given a seven year custodial sentence in a young offenders' institute for her part in the vicious attack . Her two co-accused, aged 15 and 18, were sentenced to five years.

Police said it was the gang's need to boast about the crimes which allowed officers to piece together evidence overheard by the public.

Marsh, described by officers as intelligent, is rumoured to have become involved in the gang because of a relationship with one of them and may have been trying to "show off".

Home Office figures show between 1995 and 1999, 18 women were convicted of rape or aiding and abetting it, but most of those were against children.

YOUR STARS

Aries
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Hop back into the action and roll up your sleeves - you will need to pitch in and help everyone get things going. Being a team player is admirable - even if you're not thrilled to set aside your personal goals today.

Taurus
April 20-May 20
Positive reinforcement is headed your way in the form of laughter and applause - you are a star in someone's life right now, whether you know it or not. In an unusual social situation, you should step out onto the center.

Gemini
May 21-Jun. 21
You're still in a passive mode today, even if things have heated up in your life. Let everything take its natural course, because the more you interfere, the more you're going to worry.

Cancer
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
A special delivery is headed your way today. It may not arrive in the most attractive package (or any package at all), but it's something you've been waiting for - for a long time. Want a few hints?

Leo
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Whoa there! You have been working at an exceptionally fast pace lately - either physically, socially or mentally (probably all three to some extent). Now it's time to slow the heck down.

Virgo
Aug. 23-Sept. 22
Just when you think you've got everything under control today, a huge surprise will land in your life and take you out of the action. The good news is that this wonderful surprise proves someone is thinking about you.

Libra
Sep.23-Oct. 22
Grown up, you are independent and you don't need too much of a hand today - you're off on your own, on a path that is definitely feeling comfortable. No one else you know can totally understand your reality.

Scorpio
Oct. 23 - Nov. 21
When it comes right down to it, life is pretty much all about negotiations. You give a little, they give a little, and together you come to an agreement that is mutually beneficial (in theory).

Sagittarius
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
A dead-end vibe at work will give way to a new plan and a new sense of excitement today. Share your good news with friends over a celebratory dinner - the more energy you can get behind your new focus.

Capricorn
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Green lights, warm smiles, and a wide-open road greet you today, now that a decision has been made. Things are clearer, and it's no surprise that with all this weight taken off your mind.

Aquarius
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Prickly encounters are part of life, so if someone gives you some attitude today, don't sweat it. Instead, focus your attention on building new relationships and maintaining a high level of honesty in current ones.

Pisces
Feb.19-Mar. 20
A fear of commitment falls upon you today when you're forced to make a sudden decision - it's ok to succumb to pressure and tell them what you think they want to hear because you can always change your mind later.



SUDOKU

Easy

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

Easy+

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

Medium

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

Hard

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	8							
	7						8	2
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				2				

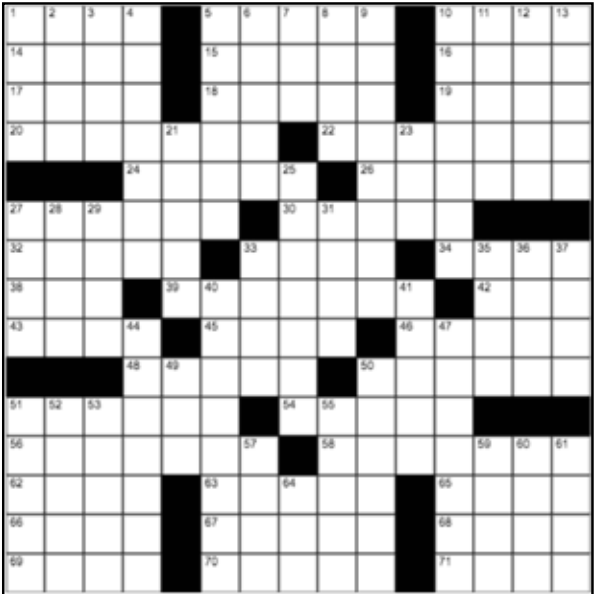
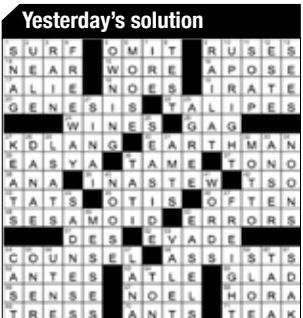
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-1	10	clear/cloudy
Harbin	-17	1	clear
Tianjin	-1	8	clear
Urumqi	1	8	cloudy
Xi'an	9	17	cloudy/shower
Lhasa	0	12	overcast/cloudy
Chengdu	16	22	shower/drizzle
Chongqing	14	23	cloudy
Kunming	8	23	cloudy
Nanjing	7	11	thundershower/overcast
Shanghai	9	16	drizzle/cloudy
Wuhan	8	17	drizzle/overcast
Hangzhou	9	17	moderate rain/drizzle
Taipei	19	25	drizzle
Guangzhou	19	27	cloudy
Hong Kong	21	26	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	-7	-5	flurry
Frankfurt	1	8	drizzle
Paris	6	13	drizzle
London	3	7	drizzle
New York	0	2	drizzle/clear

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Driving aids; 5- Writers of verse; 10- On ___ with; 14- Heavenly strings; 15- Cookwear; 16- Alley; 17- Meat-grading org.; 18- Earth; 19- Tolstoy and Gorcey; 20- Letter opener; 22- Pacify; 24- Related to the kidneys; 26- Sigil; 27- Lady of Spain; 30- Doorkeeper; 32- Conductor Seiji; 33- Butter substitute; 34- Is in the red; 38- AMA members; 39- Quarantine; 42- Malt beverage; 43- Swedish import; 45- Collections of anecdotes; 46- Physician to Marcus Aurelius; 48- Take ___ at (try); 50- Period of five years; 51- Capital of the Bahamas; 54- Brewer's need; 56- Art of public speaking; 58- Not set in stone; 62- Singer Braxton; 63- Author of fables; 65- Dove sounds; 66- This, in Tijuana; 67- Govt. security; 68- 401(k) cousins; 69- Penn name; 70- Perfume compound; 71- Florida's Miami-___ County;

DOWN: 1- Dull sound; 2- Facilitate; 3- Mother of the Valkyries; 4- Songbird; 5- Film on copper; 6- Musical drama; 7- Blunder; 8- When said three times, a 1970 war movie; 9- Photograph; 10- Rapid in tempo; 11- Song of joy; 12- Win by ___; 13- Bowler's button; 21- Caravansary; 23- Filled pastry crust; 25- Cradlesong; 27- Lays down the lawn; 28- Poet Pound; 29- American space agency; 31- Mariners can sail on seven of these; 33- A Chaplin; 35- Mickey's creator; 36- Zeno of ___; 37- Transmit; 40- Soak; 41- Discharge; 44- Fortified place; 47- Tums, e.g.; 49- ___ Paulo; 50- Very poor person; 51- Short letters; 52- "___ by any other name"; 53- Vixen's master; 55- Chew the scenery; 57- Longings; 59- Repeated, an island of French Polynesia; 60- Mutual fund fee; 61- Latin being; 64- Boozehound;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

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PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone – Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity – Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944	
S. J. Hospital 28 313 731	
Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333	
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Ref: 17120652

1st Floor Car Park, The Manhattan
Taipa
sq ft / HKD 1.30M
HKD 00sq ft
1st floor car park space
Ref: 17115538

Coronation Court, Hellene Gardens, Unit A
Coloane
3 Bedrooms Apartment
Lovely Green Open View
HKD 17,500 / 1,883 sq ft
Ref: 17115551

Apartment B, Daffodil Court
Coloane
1,663 sq ft / HKD 8.3M
HKD 4,590sq ft
Large Kitchen
Ref: 17115536

Apartment C, Nam Long
Taipa
1 Bedroom Apartment
Stunning Sun Terrace
HKD 8,800 / 420 sq ft
Ref: 17110660

Voi Fat
Taipa
636sq ft / HKD 4.25M
HKD 6.651sq ft
Well Maintained
Ref: 17055520

Apartment C, Voi Fat
Taipa
1 Bedroom Apartment
Modern Fitted Kitchen
HKD 12,800 / 800 sq ft
Ref: 17110655



Sports stars line up behind Putin, though some disagree

MOST, but not all, of Russia's top sports stars are backing Vladimir Putin in this weekend's presidential election.

Ahead of Sunday's vote, a host of Olympic gold medalists and NHL player Alex Ovechkin have thrown their support behind Putin. Ovechkin even launched a "Putin Team" campaign on social media.

On the other side, there's Yevgeny Kafelnikov.

The former No. 1-ranked tennis player is the only major Russian athlete to back opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who has been barred from taking part in the election.

With Putin poised to win as much as 70 percent of the vote, according to state pollsters, Kafelnikov told The Associated Press he won't vote. Navalny has called on his supporters to boycott what he sees as an unfair election.

"You don't need to be a rocket scientist to understand [that Pu-

AP PHOTO



Putin (left) speaks during a presidential candidate rally at the Luzhniki stadium in Moscow

tin will win]," said the 44-year-old Kafelnikov, who stopped playing professionally in 2003. "My choice, who I was willing to give my voice to at the election, he was not allowed to run for the presidency."

Sports stars have long been a fixture in Russian political

campaigns, while boxer Nikolai Valuev and tennis player Marat Safin are among a host of athletes who have represented the United Russia party in parliament. Kafelnikov said he, too, was approached in 2003 to take a parliamentary seat for the party, but declined because he felt

he wouldn't be allowed to express his real views.

"After two days thinking, I thought something is a bit dodgy and I don't want to be involved," he said. "My voice isn't going to be counted as whatever I think. So I said I don't want to be there just for pressing the button [to vote]."

Athletes are being increasingly exploited as symbols of prestige for those in power, Kafelnikov said.

"I always thought sports and politics should not collide together on the same path, should be completely separate. Unfortunately as of late [...] someone's using the professional athletes for their own benefit," he said. "I've been always open-minded and people obviously know that Yevgeny Kafelnikov is not for sale. There is no chance that I could sell myself for something like this."

"I'm sure other athletes who are supporting so-called Putin's team, they do have a choice but they've chosen the path which

they're comfortable with. I'm not going to judge each one, why they did this."

Kafelnikov's 24,000 followers on Twitter are treated to a mix of political commentary, occasional banter between him and Navalny, and copious chat about Kafelnikov's beloved Spartak Moscow soccer team.

It's a contrast to Ovechkin's Instagram, where the Washington Capitals forward launched his Putin Team in November. It started as a loose affiliation of athletes and other celebrities sharing a hashtag, but has since become a formal campaign organization which held a rally Sunday in central Moscow's Gorky Park.

Ovechkin said in November he had "a good relationship" with Putin, who gave Ovechkin and his wife a tea set when they married last July.

"I just support my country, you know? That's where I'm from, my parents live there, all my friends," Ovechkin said. "Like every human from different countries, they support their president."

Golos, a non-governmental organization which monitors possible election violations, flagged up Sunday's Putin Team rally. Promises of free gifts for attendees could be seen as bribery, the watchdog said. **AP**

AD

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opinion

Kapok
Eric Sautédé



EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

Instances of censorship are pretty straightforward and rather easy to comprehend. This is the realm of "black and white," and for some, more normatively, "good and evil." There was a time when censorship had actually a pretty neutral connotation, as the etymology is derived from the work carried out by Roman censors, whose job was to do head counts.

Today, the word itself is overly pejorative, as it has come to mean gross and heavy-handed state encroachment over freedom of speech and more generally freedom of opinion. It is commonly associated with authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, within which there can be only one opinion, the dominant and abusive one uttered by the despot for the former and the absolute and compelling one of the enlightened leader and his party in the latter.

Let's not venture into characterizing Beijing's regime today: even though we are rightly entitled to worry about an ever-increasing concentration of power in President Xi's hands — now for an indeterminate length of time — Chairman Xi is no Chairman Mao, whose historical record, as far as mass-murdering one's own population is concerned, places him in the first row in a league of dictators that includes Hitler and Stalin.

Yet, we know that censorship is everywhere in China, and not only targeting separatist advocates but also broader liberal considerations — does Document No. 9 ring a bell? Even the recording of an expressive contemptuous eye-roll exhibited during a press conference held on the sidelines of the National People's Congress can be wiped clean in a matter of hours from the Chinese internet and cost the offending journalist her job.

In Macao we are supposed to enjoy the benefit of a different system, and this up to 2049: this is true for the economy — although sometimes one really wonders about the actual meaning of non-commend economy in the SARs — and even more so for the political landscape. Without going into the details of the Macao Basic Law (58 articles out of 145 deal with the political structure proper to the SAR), let's just remember that according to article 5, "the socialist system and policies shall not be practiced in the Macao Special Administrative Region, and the previous capitalist system and way of life shall remain unchanged for 50 years."

Why then the Script Road, Macao's main literary festival, had to cancel the coming of three participants, namely Jung Chang, James Church and Suki Kim? The former, we presume, because of the very critical biography she co-authored about Mao. And the latter two, because of their writing, fiction and non-fiction, about North Korea.

First, we were told, "the authorities" — no particulars given — had deemed the presence of the three authors "inopportune," and thus had warned that they could be refused entrance at the border by Macao's immigration services. The co-director of the festival, who is to be lauded for unravelling the story also announced that he would be resigning from his position right after the end of the 2018 edition, a fine balance between being principled and displaying respect towards invited parties and organizing staff.

Then, the local relevant authorities — the secretary for culture and social affairs as well as the secretary for security — denied any implication. Ultimately, the main director of the festival admitted that the sagacious advice had come from the Liaison Office! Now we are talking of cancelling altogether the festival next year.

I was myself confronted to this kind of advice supposedly coming from the Liaison Office: in one instance, a rector refused to cave in, and in a second instance, another rector tried to force my hand to cancel the event. But then, the director of the Liaison Office lost his job over corruption charges two years later and the second rector is still awaiting a generous intake of mainland students.

I say it loud and clear: there are enough gatekeepers supposedly representing Macao and presently sitting in the two assemblies in Beijing, and the Liaison Office — which department there? — does not necessarily reflect Beijing's actual stance. Regarding things of the mind, losing your dignity means that you lose everything.

THE BUZZ UN GETS USD100M IN NEW FUNDS FOR PALESTINIAN AID AFTER US CUTS

The United Nations received pledges of nearly USD100 million in new funding for the U.N. relief agency for Palestinians after the U.S. slashed its aid, but it is still facing a nearly \$350 million shortfall this year.

U.N. officials said the countries providing the new financing included Qatar, Canada, Switzerland, Turkey, New Zealand, Norway, Korea, Mexico, Slovakia, India and France.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said "an important first step was reached" at an emergency donor conference in Rome with the new pledges. But he said "a long way is in front of us" to fully fund the agency, which went into the conference facing a \$446 million gap in financing this year — the worst funding crisis in its 68-year history.

The agency provides health care, education and social services to an estimated 5 million Palestinians.

COLD WAR

Russian minister says it will 'certainly' expel UK diplomats



Soldiers wearing protective clothing prepare to lift a tow truck in Hyde Road, Gillingham, Dorset, England as the investigation into the suspected nerve agent attack on Russian double agent Sergei Skripal

RUSSIA will "certainly" expel British diplomats in a tit-for-tat response to Britain's decision to send 23 Russians home over the poisoning of a former spy, the foreign minister said yesterday.

Sergey Lavrov, speaking in remarks carried by the RIA Novosti news agency, said the move would come "soon," but added Moscow would inform London via official channels before publicly announcing its countermeasures. Lavrov said British accusations of Moscow's involvement in the poisoning are intended to distract public attention from Britain's troubled exit from the European Union.

Amid escalating tensions with the Kremlin, British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said yesterday that Russia targeted former spy Sergei Kripal and his daughter with a military-grade nerve agent to make it clear that those who defy the Russian state deserve to "choke on their own 30 pieces of silver."

Johnson told the BBC there was a message in the "smug, sarcastic response" from Moscow after Britain demanded an explanation for how a nerve agent developed by the Soviet Union's Novichok program was used on the Skripals in the English city of Salisbury. Johnson said the Russian government wants "simultaneously to deny it and yet at the same time to glory in it."

"The reason they've chosen this nerve agent is to show that it's Russia, and to show people in their agencies who might think of defecting or of supporting another way of life, of believing in an alternative set of values, that Russia will take revenge," Johnson said.

Relations between Britain and Russia have fallen to levels not seen since the Cold War after Prime Minister Theresa May earlier yesterday [Macao time] expelled 23 diplomats, severed high-level contacts and vowed both open and covert action following the attack.

Russia said it would respond soon. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov wouldn't reveal how Russia will retaliate, but said the decision will come from President Vladimir Putin, "and there is no doubt that he will choose the option that best reflects Russian interests."

"We are worried by this situation" and will work patiently to express Russia's position on the international stage, Peskov said.

May announced the sanctions against Russia in a speech to the House of Commons after Moscow ignored a deadline to explain its links to the attack on Skripal, an ex-Russian agent convicted of spying for Britain, and his daughter, Yulia. They remain in critical condition in a hospital in Salisbury,

southwestern England, after being found unconscious March 4.

As a result of the suspension of high-level contacts with Russia, Britain cancelled an invitation for Lavrov to visit the country. British ministers and royals won't attend the soccer World Cup this summer in Russia, May said.

May also said Britain would clamp down on murky Russian money and strengthen the government's ability to impose sanctions on those who abuse human rights, though she gave few details.

Britain is also trying to build international consensus for a unified Western response, saying the attack in Salisbury is just the latest example of Russia's disregard for international norms on the rule of law. U.S. President Donald Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron are among the world leaders who have expressed solidarity with Britain.

Britain has kept France closely informed of the evidence gathered by British investigators and "elements proving Russia's responsibility in the attack," Macron said.

"France's solidarity [with Britain] is unambiguous," his office said. "The president condemned the attack as unacceptable and assured May of France's full solidarity with the United Kingdom." AP

Station	Air quality	
Roadside	35-55 Good	
High Density Residential Area	40-60 Good	
Ambient	35-55 Good	

SOURCE: DSMG

WORLD BRIEFS



NEPAL Authorities in Nepal are struggling to identify the survivors of a deadly plane crash earlier this week, with many of the injured badly burned, in critical condition and unable to speak, officials said yesterday.

More on p13

INDIA-PAKISTAN

Pakistan's foreign ministry says it has called its top diplomat in India back home for consultations after allegations of harassment of Pakistani diplomatic staff in New Delhi.

SYRIA A senior Kurdish official who played a key role with the United States in implementing its post-Islamic State group policy in northern Syria has been found dead in his apartment, Kurdish officials said yesterday.

ISRAEL's government watchdog agency has criticized the military's so-called "Hannibal" directive that allowed troops to use heavy force when one of their own was abducted — even at the risk of killing the soldier.

GREECE Police say they have arrested 11 people on suspicion of running a smuggling ring transporting hundreds of refugees and migrants from the Greek-Turkish land border to the cities of Athens and Thessaloniki over the past year.



BRAZIL Rio de Janeiro police said city council member Marielle Franco was killed after receiving four shots to her head. No suspects have been arrested so far.



US President Donald Trump confirmed yesterday that he has picked CNBC contributor Larry Kudlow as his top economic adviser and said the country is in line for a long run of upbeat financial news.