



**PRICE PLAN RAISES LEGAL UNCERTAINTIES**  
There are many questions left unanswered over the latest incarnation of the proposal to raise non-resident delivery charges

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**PERPETRATORS ABSENT**  
A Malaysian court debated the absence of the suspects believed to have orchestrated Kim Jong Nam's murder

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**TRUMP PUNISHES CHINA ON TRADE**

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AD

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# Wynn sells 4m shares, fuels takeover rumors

▲ P2

RENATO MARQUES



## WORLD BRIEFS

**PHILIPPINE** police said yesterday they killed 13 drug suspects and arrested more than 100 suspected dealers and criminals in one day of raids in a province with a record of bloody crackdowns. [More on p12](#)

**CHINA** Li Yunfeng, former executive vice governor of Jiangsu Province, was sentenced to 12 years in prison yesterday for taking bribes of over 14 million yuan, Chinese state media reported.

**THAILAND** A chartered tour bus lost control on a downhill curve in Thailand's northeast and slid off the side of the road, killing at least 18 people and injuring dozens more, reports said. [More on p12](#)



AP PHOTO

**INDONESIA** Thirty people were treated for sulfur gas poisoning after Mount Ijen in eastern Java belched toxic fumes from its crater, Indonesia's disaster agency said.

[More on backpage](#)

## NO REGION FOR OLD MEN

# Gov't plans to build elderly homes in Hengqin

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## editorial

Paulo Coutinho



## THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE

**T**HE plot of the popular political thriller is well known: simply put, it delves into a conspiracy to install a puppet leader in a state in order to serve an external power. It was staged in the early Cold War years between the USA and the then-USSR.

We are witnessing our own version of the plot in Macau's shadowy works concerning the installation of the next Chief Executive.

Thus, Ho Iat Seng.

The highest-ranking Macau delegate to the National People's Congress (NPC) said in a fashion, that he will be running for CE (in 2019): "I won't deny it."

The local intelligentsia took it as nod from Beijing - or at least from the most conservative wing in the higher echelons of the one-party government that rules China when it comes to controlling Macau.

Moreover, Ho 'announced' it in Beijing on the sidelines of the 13th NPC session where he was elected for the respective standing committee, which provided an aura of gravitas to the putative candidacy.

In the shadows and silhouettes of power plays, Ho Iat Seng seems for the first time in years prepared (or empowered) to run for the job.

This week, he actually went the extra mile in the theatrics of politics: he spoke unusually vigorously against the visits of secretaries of the local executive to Beijing during the "two sessions" (NPC and CPPCC), considering them "inappropriate," according to media dispatches from Beijing.

"[The Macau secretaries] ended up visiting ministry and commission officials [in Beijing] merely for the sake of doing so." They achieved nothing, he said as a 'reprimand'. (The secretaries that travelled to Beijing were Lionel Leong, Alexis Tam and Wong Sio Chak, precisely the names that are being proffered as possible candidates; more so the first one.)

Hoje Macau newspaper interpreted Ho's words on a front page this week as "Chiefesque messages." And rightly so. In politics what matters is what it appears to be.

The question is what is Ho's mandate from Heaven (if he has one)?

The four years Ho Iat Seng presided over the Legislative Assembly (AL) went practically unnoticed. He was not a commanding voice in the president's seat and he was never a counterbalance to the executive like others before him. Under him, the AL was a pure rubber-stamp legislature.

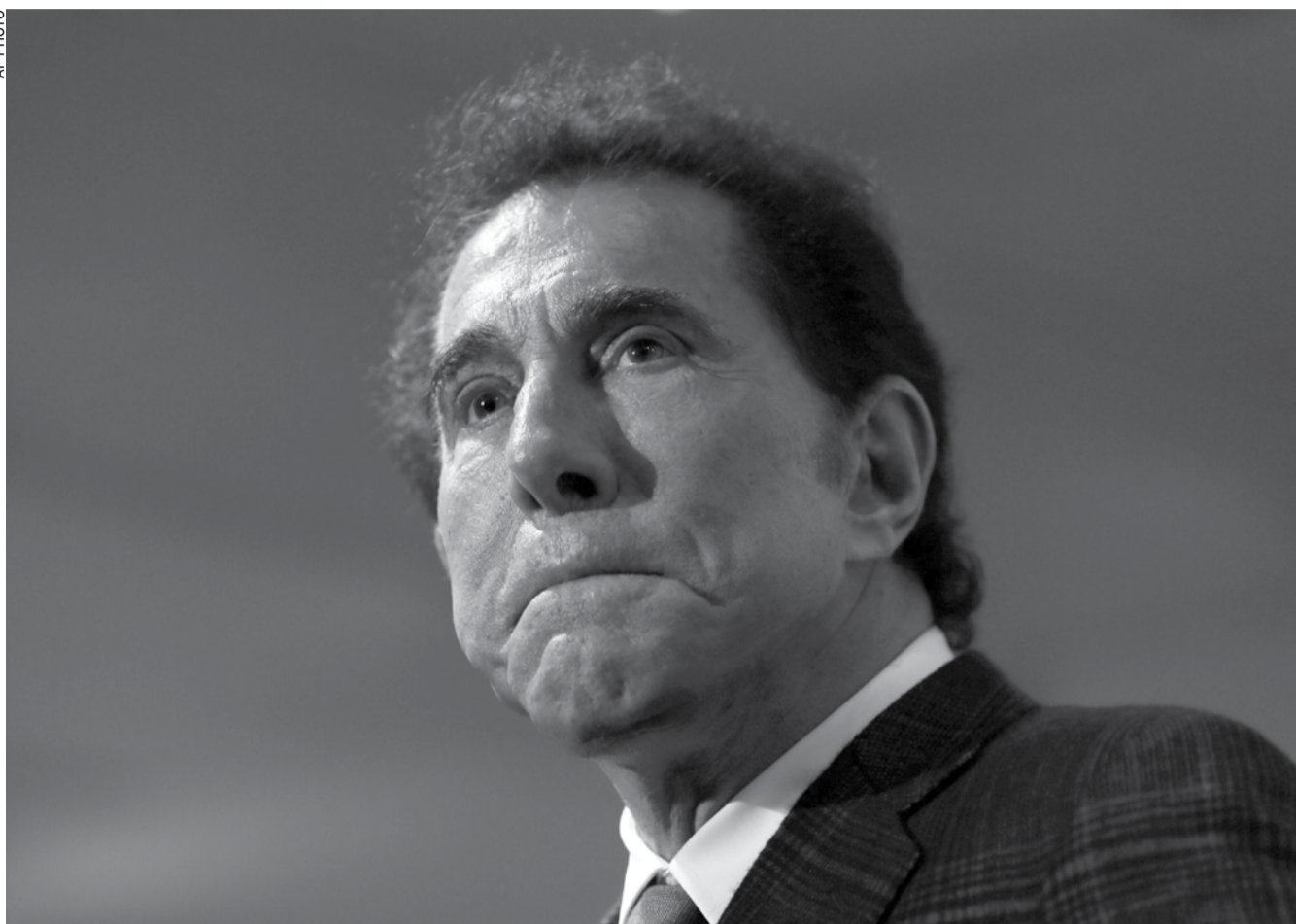
When faced with a real political issue (the suspension proposal of elected lawmaker Sulu Sou and the sad episodes that followed at the Nam Van Lakes house), he was involved in, or at least allowed, each of the controversial procedures that led to the unprecedented vote to suspend the young and promising legislator from the AL.

By doing so, Ho Iat Seng showed little respect for the rule of law in a position where he should have been its ultimate guardian.

His 'mandate' would be from those in Beijing who dread the autonomy of Macau and the freedoms of the current system, and dream of 2049 coming next year.

Who will he be serving, then?

# Steve Wynn parts with 4.1 million shares in first sale



AP PHOTO

**S**TEVE Wynn cut his stake in the USD18 billion casino company he founded after settling an acrimonious, six-year court fight with his ex-wife, a move that may move the company closer to becoming an acquisition target.

Wynn, 76, sold 4.1 million shares in Wynn Resorts Ltd. at \$180 a share, according to a regulatory filing yesterday. The sale brings his stake down to 7.8 percent from 12 percent, lower than his ex-wife's holding in the company.

The sale, along with the unwinding of a shareholder agreement that prevented Elaine Wynn from lowering her 9.3 percent stake, increases the possibility of a takeover of Las Vegas-based Wynn Resorts. The couple's court battle also raised concerns about the company's handling of harassment claims against Wynn that casino regulators are still investigating and could lead to him being found unfit to be the largest shareholder in a casino company.

Wynn Resorts fell 2.9 percent to \$178.92 yesterday in New York, and has gained 6.1 percent since the beginning of the year.

Though the buyer of the 4.1 million shares remains unknown, Bloomberg analysts speculate that Malaysia's Genting Bhd., which has long coveted a Macau license, might be interested.

Analyst Tara Lachapelle argued this week that Wynn's willingness to part with his 12 percent stake and the company's current valuation discount makes it an attractive takeover target.

But to others, like Ben Lee, managing partner of IGamiX Management & Consulting, the two companies are not compatible.

"Genting's DNA [culture] is very different; very much mass market. Where they have ventured out of this [mass market] area, it has not gone well," said Lee, citing the examples of previous investment into Norwegian Cruise Lines Holdings and London casino Maxims. "[Genting] only know one way of cor-

porate acquisition [... and] the results have been less-than-stellar."

In contrast, Wynn Resorts is known for its focus on the VIP market.

A subsequent Bloomberg report noted that "the businesses remain quite different. Genting targets a family audience in contrast to the gilded crowd favored by Wynn. Even in Singapore, where it takes as much of half its winnings from the same mostly Chinese, high-rolling VIP gamblers who throng Macau, licensing rules mean the junket operators who financially underpin the business in both cities are different."

Lee said that the reports on a potential Genting purchase were very speculative.

This is because there are several inherent risks with the company, including its failure to adequately invest in non-gaming amenities in Macau, the upcoming license expiry in 2022, and the fact it is still being investigated by several gaming boards for sexual misconduct allegations.

tions.

Certainly, Lee said, no Macau investor is going to want to double down on its risk ahead of the concession expiration dates between 2020 and 2022.

Wynn's decision to sell his stock comes after a quick fall from grace triggered by a series of sexual misconduct accusations that first surfaced in January.

He had sought to control as much stock as possible in the company bearing his name to avoid a repeat of the takeover he faced in 2000, when under pressure from investors, he sold Mirage Resorts, under which he built the Bellagio and other opulent casino-resorts that helped put Las Vegas back on the map.

Wynn's termination agreement restricts him to selling no more than one-third of his shares in a given quarter. Some analysts believe liquidation won't happen immediately and that Wynn Resorts has the resources to redeem his and his ex-wife's shares. **DB/Agencies**

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Times

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RENATO MARQUES



Alexis Tam

## ANALYSIS | BABY DELIVERY CHARGES

# Government price plan raises legal uncertainties

Daniel Beittler

**R**ESPONDING to an outcry over a ninefold hike in non-resident delivery charges, the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture may have been confident last week that his behind-closed-doors assurance to domestic helpers would quell the brewing discord over the issue.

Alexis Tam may have thought his concession, a threefold hike for some of the lowest earners in Macau, was the ideal compromise between dissatisfied migrant worker groups and a Health Bureau intent on raising the charges.

But his intervention has raised far more questions than it could possibly answer.

Under the proposal's latest incarnation, non-resident expectant mothers who face "financial difficulties" will be asked to pay a discounted rate for delivery services at the public hospital.

If implemented, the proposal would affect an unknown fraction of the approximately 200 non-resident mothers who give birth at the public hospital each year, according to official statistics. The 200 non-resident mothers account for just 8 percent of all pregnant women served by the hospital.

Migrant worker groups welcomed the partial exemption, without which their members would have faced charges equal to up to four months' salary, depending on the delivery procedure.

But for lawyer Sérgio de Al-

meida Correia, the move is still highly discriminatory and possibly unprecedented.

## A HOUSE DIVIDED

The public sector is also divided over the proposal as several entities have offered contradictory accounts of what it will entail and presented markedly different visions for its implementation.

It began with a statement from the Health Bureau in late February which revealed that non-resident expectant mothers would soon have to pay fees nine times higher than the current rate for giving birth at the public hospital.

This prompted an outcry from migrant worker groups who claimed that the move was discriminatory, "cruel" and would cause some women to opt for cheaper, unsafe deliveries.

Then Secretary Tam, meeting with several of the groups, advanced that the ninefold increase was never intended to be applied to domestic workers and promised that they would face a threefold hike instead.

But a statement released by the Secretary's Office earlier this week seemed to acknowledge that the decision to exempt some non-resident workers had come about in response to public opinion. It said that the Secretary, after consideration and consultation with local organizations, had decided to lower the increase in delivery charges – not just for domestic helpers, but for all low-income non-resident workers.

There are ever more questions to be answered at this critical juncture in the policy's formulation and ever fewer government representatives willing to answer them.

Replying to a Times enquiry, the Health Bureau said this week that it was unwilling to comment further on the proposal. The Office of the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture did not reply at all.

## PROMISED TOO MANY, TOO MUCH

At the center of the confusion is Secretary Tam. His promise to migrant workers initially caused several days of uncertainty as the media attempted to verify his comments with representatives of government departments who were themselves unsure of them.

"I wonder if there is any plan from Secretary Alexis Tam, because the image that comes out after everything that was written by the Health Bureau and said by the Secretary is that we are facing a movement of total indefiniteness [uncertainty]," Correia told the Times this week.

Correia's comments bring to mind a 2016 evaluation of the social affairs commentator Larry So, who said that Tam had "promised too much [...] and now can't live up to those promises."

"I sincerely hope that he thinks before he speaks [in future]," added So at the time. "In fact, he should think twice."

Speaking to the Times yesterday, So said that he still holds this view.

"To a certain extent, he [Tam] has promised quite a lot without much thought behind it. He is trying to make a sound bite, [but] behind the sound bite there needs to be more detail," he said. "Tam needs to be more transparent."

## UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

As to what constitutes low-income, the government has not disclosed the threshold level, nor specified whether it will be applied to income alone, or some combination of income and savings. It is also unclear whether the means testing will only reflect the mother's financial situation, or whether the income or capital of a spouse will also be taken into consideration.

What is known from the Secretary's comments is that non-resident workers with financial difficulties would have to apply to the Health Bureau and the Social Welfare Bureau in order to benefit from the lower rates. This means that the situation of applicants and their entitlement to reduced hospital charges is likely to be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

For Correia, the policy raises larger questions about the future of Macau's healthcare. He said the discriminatory approach threatened to affect more than pricing at the public hospital, and could even affect the availability of medicines and quality of medical care.

## HEALTHCARE FOR ALL, FREE OF CHARGE

It is also not known whether low-earning non-residents would actually be charged one-third of the cost borne by other non-residents, or whether they would be charged the full amount with the government covering the two-thirds balance.

There is an important difference. While the governments of many jurisdictions subsidize important services in health and education for those without the means to pay for them, charging different rates to people who hold the same legal status in Macau (all of whom are non-residents) constitutes discrimination.

This can be avoided only if all non-residents are charged the same amount, with the government stepping in to cover the financial difference between a default rate and a reduced rate for low-earners.

Unless this is the case, Tam's amendment to the Health Bureau's proposal may breach several international agreements.

For example, it may be in contravention of at least the 'spirit' of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to which the Macau SAR is a party. Article 2 of the Covenant states that parties should guarantee such rights "without discrimination of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status."

The article continues with a proviso that, "developing countries, with due regard to human rights and their national economy, may determine to what extent they would guarantee the economic rights recognized in the present Covenant to non-nationals" – but makes no mention of intra-group discrimination among non-nationals.

Further, a 2001 report submitted to the United Nations' International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination – by China, but based on information supplied by Macau – states that the MSAR will guarantee "universal and free health care for the entire population of Macau" as per Decree-Law 24/86/M.

It also specifies that health care should be free of charge for certain groups of people – including pregnant women – and that "emergency health care provided at the Conde S Januário Hospital (a public hospital) is completely free of charge."

Correia told the Times that in his opinion the "price should be the same for everybody and the government should pay the difference for those who cannot afford it."

Though "the principle should be [that] those who can [pay], pay according to their earnings," he continued, "in Macau, according to the reports sent by China to international organizations, access to health services [is] free to [the whole] population."

## Lending rates to be raised

The MSAR raised the Base Rate of the Discount Window by 25 basis points to 2.0 percent yesterday, the Monetary Authority of Macao said. As the pataca is linked to the Hong Kong dollar, the movements of policy rates in Hong Kong and Macau should be basically consistent in order to maintain the effective operation of the linked exchange rate system, it said in a statement. Therefore, Macau banks will adjust their deposit and lending rates at the retail level, according to market developments. Meanwhile, local banks should assess the impacts of interest-rate adjustments on their operating positions and properly manage the potential risk, the statement said.

## Arts Festival shows to have additional performances

Some shows included in the 29th Macau Arts Festival will have additional performances, the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) announced yesterday. According to the IC, additional performances will be offered for "the most sought-after shows," namely "Sunset at the Shipyards", "Migration", "Sponge" and "When All Was Green", which will be on sale from 10 a.m. on Sunday. The Arts Festival will be held from April 27 to May 31.

## Bidding opens for Customs office refurbishment

Bidding for a project to refurbish the office of the Customs Services' Maritime Inspection Department opened this week. The Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau received 24 bids for the project, which is expected to start in the third quarter of this year and last up to 300 working days. The office is a six-story building at Ilha Verde. The works will consist mainly of changing tiles and reinstalling some equipment and facilities.

## Greater protection sought for Lai Chi Vun shipyards

The Association of Synergy of Macao has delivered its opinion regarding the evaluation of the classification of Lai Chi Vun shipyards. The association is proposing that the government should list the mountain and water bodies near the Lai Chi Vun shipyards as a buffer area in order to protect these mountain and water areas and to protect the shipyard area as a whole. The association also recommends that the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau establish a maintenance and renovation plan together with the Cultural Affairs Bureau regarding cultural relics and architecture.

# New trade rules proposed for PSC food products

Julie Zhu

**T**HE Macau Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) hopes that a breakthrough can occur regarding goods' transactions from Portuguese-speaking countries to mainland China within this year, IPIM executive director Glória Batalha Ung said yesterday, on the sidelines of the celebration ceremony of the two-year anniversary of the Portuguese-speaking Countries Food Products Exhibition Centre.

According to Ung, many food products from Portuguese-speaking countries are already available for purchase in mainland China.

However, the Macau trade authority hopes to expand the number of avenues for traders of these products. In particular, the Macau government expects food products from these countries to directly reach mainland China's business operators online.

"There are no problems for these goods, which are in the tax-free warehouse in mainland China, to be used in e-commerce. We hope that there can be a breakthrough this year, in terms of B2C," said Ung, adding "we started negotiations last year."

Up until now, food products – including wine, chocolate



IPIM executive director Glória Batalha

cookies, and olive oil – from Portuguese-speaking countries have registered strong sales in mainland China, Ung revealed.

"We have been discussing a quarantine and inspection method," said Ung, indicating that the Macau government is expending efforts to make it possible for these goods to only go through the government authority's inspections and other administrative procedures.

Regarding the food exhibition center, so far, over 25,000 food products are included in the Portuguese-speaking countries' food products online system.

"Many of them are from Portugal and Brazil," Ung said, "36 per-

cent are products from Portugal."

Over 3,000 food products have been collected at the exhibition center, with over 1,200 products displayed daily.

In total, Macau has seven Portuguese-speaking countries' food products in exhibition centers; mainland China has 23.

"It is not just about the products themselves. There is also information and stories about the producers," Ung explained, adding that all these aspects are included in the food's descriptions.

This year, IPIM will launch a promotional program related to offline services concerning these products.

Promotional activities in local

communities will also be arranged in Macau. In the mainland, business-matching fairs have been planned, together with exhibitions.

Regarding these promotional activities in local communities, Ung noted that a number of activities, including cooking classes featuring Portuguese-speaking countries' styled cuisine, would be offered to local communities.

During the ceremony, three business agreements were signed among a number of business operators.

Sam Zhong, representative of Qiaqun Imported Commodity Street, one of the companies that signed business agreements yesterday, said that Macau, through its Portuguese-speaking countries' food products showrooms, can provide companies with the latest information about recent goods.

When talking about the mainland market, Zhong said that "in mainland China, the market share of wines from Portugal is growing year by year because its quality and prices are competitive."

The first Portuguese-speaking Countries' Food Products Exhibition Center opened on March 31 2016, in the Tap Seac Square business centre, occupying an area of 390 square meters.

KIM JONG NAM

## Police deny prejudice against Kim murder suspects

**A** Malaysian police investigator said yesterday the absence of four North Korean suspects believed to have orchestrated the killing of their leader's half brother didn't cause prejudice against the two women who are on trial.

Defense lawyers say Doan Thi Huong of Vietnam and Siti Aisyah of Indonesia are scapegoats in the death of Kim Jong Nam at Kuala Lumpur's airport on Feb. 13 last year. Prosecutors say four North Korean suspects recruited the women and provided them with the banned VX nerve agent used to kill Kim before fleeing the country on the same day.

Chief police investigator Wan Azirul Nizam Che Wan Aziz disagreed that the absence of the four North Koreans had cau-



Indonesian Siti Aisyah (second from right) is escorted by police as she arrives for a court hearing

sed prejudice. "Because in this case, the perpetrators who committed the killing are the two accused," he told the court.

He denied that police didn't take adequate measures to pursue the four men nor that his investigations were incomplete without the testimony of the North Koreans. He said Interpol had issued an alert for the four men to be arrested based on Malaysia's request.

The court has heard that the women thought they were playing a harmless prank for a hidden camera show but prosecutors contend the women knew they were handling poison. The two women were charged to have common intention with the four North Koreans to murder Kim.

They could face the death penalty if convicted, but not if they lacked intent to kill.

Defense lawyers, who are cross-examining Wan Azirul, sought to show that the police official was biased and sloppy in his investigations and failed to probe aspects that could bolster the women's defense that they had no intent to kill Kim.

They also challenged Wan Azirul's earlier testimony that Huong was "aggressive" when she smeared Kim's face with VX and that she had walked very quickly to the washroom after that, saying that he wasn't an expert in human behavior.

"The investigation was incomplete, biased and one-sided. The real culprits have left and efforts to bring them back or find them were zero. At the end of the day, my client is a scapegoat," Huong's lawyer Naran Singh told

The Associated Press.

Singh said the four men should be the ones in the dock, and the two women should be prosecution witnesses against them.

Salim Bashir, another lawyer for Huong, said the fact that security videos showed Huong appeared to be touching her hair briefly after approaching Kim and going to a toilet farther away to wash her hands showed an "innocent mind" and not the conduct of someone who knew she had poison on her hand.

The trial resumes April 2. Kim, the eldest son in the family that has ruled North Korea since its founding, had been living abroad for years after falling out of favor. It is thought he was assassinated because he was perceived to be a threat to the rule of his half brother, Kim Jong Un.

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

# Agnes Lam doubts government's supervision of land resources

**LAWMAKER** Agnes Lam has expressed doubts about the local government's supervision of state-owned lands, following the recent discovery of illegal engineering works and land occupation at the Hac Sa village.

The incident led to the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT) being accused of not taking the initiative to regularly inspect potential cases of illegal land occupation.

Lam pointed out that a similar illegal occupation and lake filling incident had already occurred back in 2009.

She noted that the government only suspends such illegal works after receiving reports from residents, by which time the works have already damaged local ecosystems.

Regarding the Hac Sa incident, Lam noted that the party responsible ignored DSSOPT's suspension notice, showing



Agnes Lam

DSSOPT's ineffectiveness in halting such projects.

Lam remarked that residents of the village became aware of the project half a year ago, but that DSSOPT only suspended the works in January 2018.

She asked whether DSSOPT and other departments had received any complaints or

followed up on the case during that period.

Lam questioned the mechanics of interdepartmental communication regarding land supervision, particularly for the Cartography and Cadastre Bureau, and asked whether the government plans to improve on the issue.

## FOOD & BEVERAGE

# Chefs to gather in Macau for 'Asia's 50 Best Restaurants'

**ASIA'S** top chefs and restaurateurs will gather in Macau between March 25 and 27 for the unveiling of "Asia's 50 Best Restaurants 2018", a gourmet awards ceremony set to be a highlight of Macau's "Year of Gastronomy."

The winners will be announced during a gala at Wynn Palace on March 27, the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) announced in a statement.

Ten special awards will be presented at the occasion, including Chefs' Choice, Sustainable Restaurant, Asia's Best Pastry Chef, One to Watch, Lifetime Achievement, and others.

A series of talks by top chefs, titled "50BestTalks", will be held on March 26 at Wynn Macau. With the theme of "Exploring Identity" in Asian cuisines, the session will consist of a culinary conference

and demonstration by chefs from Japan, Singapore and Taiwan, who will share their stories and their takes on industry trends.

Launched in 2013, "Asia's 50 Best Restaurants" is the regional version of the famous list of the world's "50 Best Restaurants", which has been published by William Reed Business Media since 2002.

The ceremony was previously held in Singapore and Bangkok for three years and two years, respectively.

Two Macau restaurants made the list last year, although only one local restaurant was listed for the first four years of the Asian edition.

Last November, MGTO and the organizers announced that Macau would be the host destination for the awards ceremony and related activities in 2018 and 2019.

AD

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FMCC Breakfast Meeting

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**Date:** Wednesday, 28 March 2018

**Time:** 9:00 - 10:30am (Reception: 8:45am)

**Venue:** Sofitel Macau at Ponte 16

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AL PLENARY

# Plan to build a 'neighborhood' for the elderly in Hengqin announced

Renato Marques

**T**HE government is planning to build not just a nursing home for elderly people on Hengqin island, as was revealed previously, but a "neighborhood" dedicated to the senior citizens.

The Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Alexis Tam, went yesterday to the Legislative Assembly (AL) for a meeting dominated by elderly-related issues. "We have an idea... maybe we can use Hengqin island to build a all area or a neighborhood for the elderly," Tam said. "We are still waiting for the master plan for the Greater Bay [area] but maybe we can even have more space in other [neighboring] re-

gions to do this job."

The focus is to work "in favor of a decent life" for the senior citizens, Tam explained. "In the future, and if that is the wish of the elderlies, they can live in mainland China, at one of the nine regions of the Greater Bay Area. People might consider this as an option," Tam said, noting that mainland life is cheaper and nursing homes have "great quality and are very well equipped."

The secretary presented statistical data on the current occupancy of the elderly homes existing in the region. "In Macau there are currently 21 homes and from those, 11 are subsidized by the government, presenting a total of 2015 beds in total," the secretary said. "There are currently 1,514

elderlies that are housed in those places, which means that the occupancy is currently at 71 percent. For private houses it [the occupancy rate] is 85 percent, so generally I would say that there is still space to house more people." Ho Ion Sang immediately queried the data. "Seventy percent occupancy? So why is it needed to wait for more than a year to be accepted in a home?" he asked, giving as an example the elderly home located in the Areia Preta district. In addition Ho said, "In the private [sector the homes] cost as much as MOP10,000 and these nursing homes do not provide a large number of the services [needed]. How are we going to solve this [problem]? Is the government going to give subsidies

to the families take care of their elderlies?" Ho asked.

Ella Lei was in agreement, noting that she has received many complaints from citizens about the long wait to access such facilities, "always over one year."

**In the future, and if that is the wish of the elderlies, they can live in mainland China.**

ALEXIS TAM

## 'Mainland is exception' for gov't contribution to pensions

**D**URING yesterday's session, lawmaker Ho Ion Sang questioned the government on the special exception granted to pensioners residing in mainland, who may still receive the government's contribution to the individual providence accounts of the residents.

The law states that in order to be eligible to receive such special granting from the government, residents of Macau need to be in the MSAR for a period of at least 183 days in a year. An exception was considered on such regulations to allow Macau permanent residents that are living in the mainland to continue to receive the payments even if they do not spend such time (or any time) in the territory.

According to Ho, who cited unhappy citizens that seek his help, other residents in the same

situation but currently residing in Hong Kong or Taiwan cannot benefit from such an exception, which is only granted to the mainland.

Ho urged the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture to explain why this special treatment is granted only to the mainland.

Tam replied by saying that over 40 percent of the population of Macau was born in the mainland, which "reflects the close bonds [between the two]. According to Chinese traditions noted in the quote, 'fallen leaves return to the roots,' it is natural that these people want to return to their birthplace after they retire." Ho was not pleased with the reply noting, "We must review this. We must include all of China. We are in a policy of full integration," he argued.

Agnes Lam recalled the "huge amount of money" that the government has been spending on "elderly activity centers," money that according to Lam could be put to better use in daycare centers that are "very different from activity centers" as well as in keeping the elderlies in their own homes.

According to Lam, "the gover-

ment can provide a range of services [to the elderly] through the daycare centers avoiding that the elderlies rush to queue up in the hospitals and healthcare centers," adding, "Neighborhood clinics also can provide these services."

Explaining the figures aired by Tam, the director of the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) Vong Yim Mui said that the "formalities take some time" but she guarantees that "everyday that are new vacancies opening."

"We are trying to make use of the facilities we have as much as possible," she added. "This year we will have another large size home opening that will feature [another] 300 bed spaces," additionally, "there will be two more until 2020 with another 300 beds in total."

The director of the IAS also noted that the government is doing all that is possible to find more places to install homes and recalled that in the neighboring region of Hong Kong, "the waiting period is of three years or more," noting that the IAS will continue to provide all support to the families and elderlies while they are waiting for their vacancy in a home.

### NEW SYSTEM TO 'EASE' F&B LICENSING ISSUES

**THE DIRECTOR** of the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau (SAFP), Kou Peng Kuan, said that in reviewing of the laws that regulate the licensing Food and Beverage (F&B)

establishments, the bureau is implementing a new system of temporary licenses that will allow establishments to start operating conditionally while the licensing process is ongoing.

REAL ESTATE MATTERS

Why are Properties in Macau so Expensive?

Sam Lee is a marketing manager and property consultant at JML Property. JML was established in 1994 and offers Investment Property & Homes. It specializes in managing properties for owners and investors, and providing attractive and comfortable homes for tenants.



SAM LEE

www.JMLProperty.com info@JMLProperty.com

We often find clients arriving from overseas are absolutely shocked at the property prices in Macau. A look of disbelief is often followed by a phrase like "I could buy a mansion back home with that money!" Although our Hong Kong cousin over the pond gets most of the limelight for ranking as the most expensive real estate market in the world for seven years in a row (by the Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey), Macau's property prices are still astronomical relative to most foreign markets. The question is - "Why?" The most obvious answer is pure supply and demand. Macau is a very small place filled with a lot of people. According to DSEC, Macau's population was around 653,000 at end-2017, all squeezed into an area of about 30.5 km2. To add to this, developable land is further limited by two major factors.

Firstly, large areas around the island of Coloane are protected by the government and cannot be developed, at least for the time being. Secondly, the government is making an effort to increase the stock of public housing, which further squeezes land space available to the private market and arguably puts more pressure on prices. The few parcels of land that are available for development are sold to developers usually on a tender at soaring prices, which is also reflected in the individual pre-sales unit prices down the line. Another factor that cannot be ignored is the amount of speculative money that has come into the market. To exemplify this phenomenon, on December 15, 2017 Chief Executive Fernando Chui Sai On announced that the government will introduce further cooling measures from tightening mortgages to possible new taxation

standards for empty flats and homeowners with multiple flats. The market's response to this in general has been to buy now, not later. The level of speculation is further spurred on by the expectation that the imminent opening of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge will further boost the market. Although an infrastructural project of that scale will no doubt have an impact on the market, investors should be cautioned against over-optimism as the long-term effects are yet to be determined. Although there are many more nuances and dimensions to the equation, Macau's astronomical property prices can be boiled down to these factors - limited land, dense population, tightly controlled land development plans and ongoing speculation. Plus of course, a healthy number of wealthy residents willing to pay these prices!

Advertisement for Macau Literary Festival (澳門文學節) from 10-25 March. Features an illustration of a person reading a large book with paper airplanes flying around it. Text includes 'rota das letras • 萬文不朽 • the script road' and 'thescriptroad.org'.



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# African nations sign largest free trade agreement since WTO

**A**FRICAN leaders signed what is being called the largest free trade agreement since the creation of the World Trade Organization.

The deal creates a continental market of 1.2 billion people, with a combined gross domestic product of more than USD3.4 trillion. A major goal is to boost intra-African trade and rely less on the volatility of commodity prices that affect many exports.

The aim is to have agreement, signed by 44 of the African Union's 55 member states, enter into force by the end of this year, said the chair of the AU Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat. States now must ratify the deal, but the number of countries needed to put the agreement into force has not yet been agreed upon.

"Our peoples, our business community and our youth in particular cannot wait any longer to see the lifting of the barriers that divide our continent, hinder its economic takeoff and perpetuate misery, even though Africa is abundantly endowed with wealth," Mahamat



Rwanda's President Paul Kagame, who is also the current chairman of the African Union, gestures after signing the agreement

said. He urged strong follow-up to "confound those who, outside Africa, continue to think, with barely concealed condescension, that our decisions will never materialize."

Concerns remain. The president of Nigeria, one of Africa's largest economies, skipped the summit amid trade unions' objections. "We will not agree to anything that will undermine local manufacturers and entrepreneurs, or that may lead to Nigeria becoming a dumping ground for finished goods," President Muhammadu Buhari said through his office.

And while Africa's largest econo-

mies are expected to benefit most from the deal that progressively eliminates tariffs and other trade barriers, some of them worry that more people from poorer countries will migrate their way.

But some of the continent's strongest and fastest-growing economies, including Ghana, Kenya and Ethiopia, signed the deal. South Africa's new president has expressed support but his signing was not announced during the event.

"Africa is stronger when we work together," said Niger's President Mahamadou Issoufou, who led the free trade effort. **AP**

# Fosun eyes second shot to buy Greek insurer if winning bid fails

**F**OSUN International Ltd came up short in its bid to buy National Bank of Greece SA's insurance unit, but the Chinese conglomerate is still willing to swoop in if the winning bid collapses, albeit at a different price this time.

Exin Financial Services Holding BV and Calamos Family Partners Inc won a tender to buy a 75 percent stake in the Greek lender's Ethniki Insurance unit in June after the venture's 718 million-euro (USD882 million) bid was the highest. Yet there could still be an opening for Fosun after an acrimonious split in the consortium. Calamos has filed legal action against Exin, which has until the end of the month to provide the financing to complete the transaction.

"Fosun has continuously been interested in becoming the controlling shareholder of Ethniki Insurance," Kang Lan, Fosun executive director and senior vice president, said in a written response to questions by Bloomberg. "Fosun's strategy and strong confidence in the company were well recognized by the seller. Therefore, we ex-

pect to be considered if Exin failed to complete the deal."

Still, Fosun will "need to re-evaluate the financials of the company before providing an updated offer," according to Kang, who is also chairwoman of Fosun's insurance group.

Shanghai-based Fosun has invested more than 200 million euros in Greece through its direct holding in Athens-based luxury goods retailer Folli Follie Group and indirectly through Thomas Cook Group Plc and Club Med SAS, according to the company. It's also participating in a joint venture led by Lamda Development SA that will turn Hellenikon, the former Athens airport site twice the size of New York's Central Park, into a luxury coastal resort.

Ethniki Insurance is Greece's biggest insurance company, with presence also in Romania, Bulgaria and Cyprus. National Bank was forced to sell the stake in the company under restructuring plans it agreed with the European Commission to sell non-core assets after receiving state aid. **Bloomberg**

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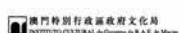
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# N. Korean sanctions evasions reveal Hong Kong's middleman role

Kelvin Chan, Hong Kong

**I**n the dead of night last month, two tanker ships pulled alongside each other in the East China Sea. One was a North Korean vessel, the other was the Belize-flagged Wan Heng 11.

Lights on both ships were blazing, arousing a Japanese spy plane's suspicion they were carrying out a "ship-to-ship" transfer banned under United Nations sanctions imposed over North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

Records for the Wan Heng and a number of other ships identified in recent U.N. and U.S. sanctions blacklists and Japanese surveillance reports reveal ties to Hong Kong through front companies based here. The findings underscore rising concern over the southern Chinese financial capital's role as a nexus for North Korea's underground business network, which has led the U.S. government to urge Hong Kong authorities to crack down.

The corporate registration agents that set up these front companies "present a key vulnerability in the implementation of financial sanctions," said a report by the United Nations Panel of Experts on North Korean sanctions released on March 16. Researchers say North Korea relies on front companies acting as middlemen to mask its overseas trading links, many of which involve China.

Successively tighter rounds of sanctions aim to deprive North Korea of key sources of revenue by choking off its ability to smuggle exports, including through oil transfers between ships on the high seas.

Hong Kong, an Asian business hub, is "staying highly vigilant about activities and suspected cases" of sanctions violations and is "looking into the cases" involving Hong Kong-registered companies, the government said in a statement.

The city often tops business and economic freedom rankings, based on criteria that include ease of setting up business. That can also facilitate illicit dealings.

The city hosts a vast industry of company formation experts who can register corporations quickly and with minimum information from their clients. Many operate out of anonymous, one-room offices with as little as a single employee. They promise to set up a firm within a day for clients who can apply online if they're not in Hong Kong.

Out of 11 companies based outside North Korea named in a U.S. Treasury sanctions list last month, two each were in China and Taiwan and one each in Singapore and Panama. The remaining five were in Hong Kong.

The U.N. report said separate in-



The Beaumont, a Hong Kong luxury residential complex where, according to shipping databases, the company that owns the Wan Heng 11 maintained an address

vestigations of a Singaporean company and Glocom, identified as North Korean military equipment supplier, found evasion tactics included the use of Hong Kong front companies.

Hong Kong has imposed new rules aimed at preventing money laundering that took effect this month that require licensing of corporate registration agents. Companies also must now identify and disclose their beneficial owners, but only to law enforcement authorities.

## ■ A review of HK company filings and shipping databases revealed a murky web of company names and employees working out of unlikely locations

It's not unusual in itself for a company to operate out of secretarial office, said David Webb, a Hong Kong corporate governance activist.

But he says lax corporate disclosure rules give "Hong Kong a sort of Monaco of the East image, as a funny place for shady people."

A review of Hong Kong company filings and shipping databases revealed a murky web of company names and employees working out of a variety of unlikely locations.

One U.S.-sanctioned company, Liberty Shipping Co., shared an address with its registration firm in Hong Kong's Wan Chai district. A woman at the office, which had yet another name on the door, said it had ceased doing business with Liberty Shipping and didn't have con-

tact information. She added that it dealt with the company through an intermediary she wouldn't name. Liberty Shipping's annual return showed that its director lived in Dalian in China's northeast but didn't provide a phone number.

In the Wan Heng's case, shipping databases give the rusty tanker's registered owner and commercial manager as Zhejiang Wanheng Shipping Co., with a care-of address for an apparently related company, Hong Kong Wanheng International Trading Ltd., at an apartment in The Beaumont, a suburban luxury apartment development. No one answered the apartment's buzzer on a recent visit.

Corporate registration records gave a second office address in Hong Kong's North Point neighborhood. A woman who answered the office door, which didn't have a sign, said Wanheng's director, Yip Kwok-man, was not in.

"He just uses the office as a nameplate. It's not convenient to give you any more information," she said, refusing to provide her name, adding that she and three other women in the office weren't his staff.

A woman listed as Wanheng's company secretary said she was recruited by a friend. But she said she didn't work for the company anymore because it was too much hassle, without being more specific.

Yip's home address in Wanheng's annual return turned out to be a modest one-bedroom unit in an aging public housing complex in the city's Tsing Yi suburb. No one was home when the AP visited and a neighbor said the resident there had a different surname.

A further search of records found a second address for Yip in an upscale waterfront apartment block in the Sai Wan Ho district. A man who answered the intercom didn't respond when asked in both Mandarin and Cantonese whether Yip Kwok-man was there. **AP**



XI ERA

## State media now with more Communist Party propaganda

**C**HINESE state media will be getting more propaganda now that the Communist Party has announced it will be in direct control of broadcasters and the regulators of everything from movies and TV to books and radio programs.

The move is part of a push by President Xi Jinping — emboldened by the removal of term limits on his time in office — to tighten party supervision over broad swaths of Chinese public life as he pushes for what he calls "unity in thought" among officials and citizens.

Analysts say having direct oversight of the media will help the party hammer home its message domestically and also work to improve its image internationally.

"It's one vast effort to get everybody thinking together," said David Zweig, director of the Center on China's Transnational Relations at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

Under the plan announced this week, China Radio International, China National Radio and China Central Television, along with its international broadcast arm, China Global Television Network, will be merged into a new body with a name that translates to "Voice of China."

The government's regulator of the press and print publications, radio, film and television will cease to exist and its responsibilities and resources will be transferred to the party's Central Propaganda Department, along with control over the film industry, including the import and export of movies.

The new body's chief responsibilities include "im-

plementing the party's propaganda guidelines and policies," the official Xinhua News Agency said.

The Communist Party newspaper Global Times quoted government expert Feng Yue of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences as saying the move will "concentrate the resources and authority to improve China's influence overseas and promote China's international image."

While Chinese media consumers have grown increasingly apolitical with an ever-expanding range of options, from foreign television shows to video games and online shopping, Xi has been steadily increasing the role of the party in the lives of many through new or newly invigorated branch committees in schools, offices and factories.

That could leave ordinary Chinese with "little choice" but to become active consumers of propaganda, Zweig said.

Writing on the website of the China Media Project at the University of Hong Kong, editor David Bandurski said the change gave the Propaganda Department — which formerly provided broad overall guidance of the media message — direct control over output.

"And that is largely the point that comes through here — the tighter, more centralized control of media and ideology," Bandurski said.

As its name suggests, the new media monolith appears modeled on outlets such as the U.S.'s Voice of America or Russia's Russia Today, now known simply as RT. **AP**

# Trump hits USD50 billion of China goods amid fears of trade war

Andrew Mayeda, Toluse Olorunnipa

**P**RESIDENT Donald Trump took his boldest step to level the economic playing field with China, ordering sweeping tariffs on Chinese goods in a move that could escalate already tense trade relations between the world's two biggest economies.

The president instructed U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer to levy tariffs on at least USD50 billion in Chinese imports. Trump signed an executive memo issuing the instructions today [Macau time] at the White House. Within 15 days, USTR will come up with a proposed list of products that will face higher tariffs.

"This has been long in the making," Trump said, adding that the tariffs could affect as much as \$60 billion in goods. "We have a tremendous intellectual property theft situation going on" with China affecting hundreds of billions of dollars in trade each year, he said. As he signed the tariffs order, Trump told reporters, "This is the first of many."

Trump also directed Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin to propose new investment restrictions on Chinese companies within 60 days to safeguard technologies the U.S. views as strategic, said senior White House economic adviser Eissenstat.

Policy makers across the world are warning of a brewing trade war that could undermine the broadest global recovery in years. U.S. stocks fell sharply yesterday amid worries that the U.S. action could provoke a stern response from China, with the S&P 500 down 1.1 percent at 12:30 p.m. New York time. Meanwhile, business groups representing companies ranging from Walmart Inc. to Amazon.

AP PHOTO



com Inc. are warning U.S. tariffs could raise prices for consumers and sideswipe stock prices.

Even central banks, which normally stay above the fray of trade spats, are weighing in. "A number of participants reported about their conversations with business leaders around the country and reported that trade policy has become a concern," Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell said this week, while cautioning that trade issues haven't changed the Fed's outlook. The Bank of England warned yesterday that increased protectionism could have a "significant negative impact" on global growth.

The Trump administration is framing the move as a major turning point in U.S.-China relations. It followed a seven-month investigation by USTR into allegations China violates U.S. intellectual property, under the seldom-used section 301 of the 1974 Trade Act. The U.S. concluded China engages in a range of violations, including policies that force American

companies to transfer technology and the accessing of trade secrets through hacking, said Eissenstat.

Trump tried to make it clear he wasn't trying to provoke China. "I view them as a friend. I have tremendous respect for President Xi," Trump said. But, the U.S.'s trade deficit with China is "the largest deficit in the history of our

world," he said.

The president's action brought rare praise from Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer, ordinarily a foe of the administration.

The president is "exactly right" to pursue the tariffs, Schumer said. "I want to give him a big pat on the back," the New York senator

added, "I'm very pleased that this administration is taking strong action to get a better deal on China."

Trump's actions represent a "seismic shift from an era dating back to Nixon and Kissinger, where we had as a government viewed China in terms of economic engagement," White House trade adviser Peter Navarro told reporters on Thursday. "That process has

**“We have a tremendous intellectual property theft situation going on.”**

DONALD TRUMP

failed."

"The problem is that with the Chinese in this case, talk is not cheap. It has been very expensive for America," said Navarro. "Finally the president decided that we needed to move forward."

Before the tariffs become final, there will be a 30-day comment period, the White House said. Trump also directed his officials to pursue a World Trade Organization complaint against China for discriminatory licensing practices. **Bloomberg**

## Beijing vows to defend its interests

**T**HE Chinese government vowed yesterday to take "all necessary measures" to defend the country's interests if President Donald Trump targets it for allegedly stealing American technology or pressuring U.S. companies to hand it over.

"China will not sit idly to see its legitimate rights damaged and must take all necessary measures to resolutely defend its legitimate rights," the Commerce Ministry in Beijing said in a statement on its website.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told reporters that Beijing hoped the U.S. would "refrain from taking actions that are detrimental to both sides."

Dozens of industry groups sent a letter last weekend to Trump warning that "the imposition of sweeping tariffs would trigger a chain reaction of negative consequences for the U.S. economy, provoking retaliation; stifling U.S. agriculture, goods, and services exports; and raising costs for businesses and consumers."

The announcement will mark the end of a seven-month U.S. investigation into the hardball tactics China has used to challenge U.S. supremacy in technology, including dispatching hackers to steal commercial secrets and demanding that U.S. companies hand over trade secrets in exchange for access to the Chinese market.

## Senior US diplomat, Taiwan leader speak at Taipei event

**A** senior U.S. diplomat said at an event in Taipei that the United States wishes to "bolster Taiwan's ability to defend its democracy" after President Donald Trump signed a new law promoting official exchanges between the two sides that has drawn protests from Beijing.

"We wish to strengthen our ties with the Taiwan people and to bolster Taiwan's ability to defend its democracy," said State

Department official Alex Wong. "Our commitment to these goals has never been stronger."

Speaking at a dinner with the American Chamber of Commerce, Wong was joined by Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen, who expressed gratitude for Trump's signing of the new Taiwan Travel Act and also noted the president's approval last year of a USD1.4 billion arms sale to the island.

"The announcement of a

major arms sale last year within the first five months of President Trump's administration showcased the United States' unwavering commitment to Taiwan's continued safety and security," Tsai said.

Taiwan's defense minister earlier announced that China's sole operating aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, had been spotted entering the Taiwan Strait separating the sides on Tuesday.

The defense minister, Yen Teh-fa, told a legisla-

tive hearing that Taiwan's armed forces were monitoring the situation but declined to give further details. The 60,000-ton craft commissioned in 2012 has been conducting military operations in the East China Sea in recent days, Yen said.

The Liaoning has previously transited the heavily trafficked 160 kilometer-wide Taiwan Strait.

Wong's visit to Taiwan drew new criticism on Wednesday from China,

AP PHOTO



Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen shakes hands with Alex Wong, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State

which claims the self-ruled island as its own and has sought to isolate it diplomatically.

China has already lodged a protest over the new Taiwan Travel Act, saying

it violates U.S. commitments not to restore formal exchanges severed when Washington switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1979. **AP**

THAILAND

# 18 dead as tour bus loses control, crashes off road

A chartered tour bus lost control on a downhill curve in Thailand's northeast and slid off the side of the road, killing at least 18 people and injuring dozens more, reports said.

In addition to the dead, another 33 passengers were hurt in Wednesday night's accident in Nakhon Ratchasima province, Thai PBS television reported.

The station cited a survivor as saying a youngster from the back of the bus had yelled that the brakes were broken as the vehicle began to swerve. The bus then crossed over the highway median into oncoming traffic before falling on its side and sweeping into several roadside stalls.

The report said the bus was badly mangled and many passengers were trapped inside.

Thailand has the second-highest rate of traffic fatalities in the world after Libya, according to World Health Organization statistics.

In a second accident before dawn yesterday, a bus carrying 50 people on a school trip in the central province of Ayutthaya skidded in the rain, flipped over and hit a roadside rest stop, Thai PBS reported. The accident injured 39 people. AP



AP PHOTO

PHILIPPINES

# Police kill 13 drug suspects in daylong raids

PHILIPPINE police said they killed 13 drug suspects and arrested more than 100 suspected dealers and criminals in 24 hours of raids in a province with a record of bloody crackdowns.

The suspects were killed in gunbattles with police in a city and eight towns in Bulacan province just north of Manila, said police Senior Superintendent Romeo Caramat Jr. More than 70 raids were launched in Bulacan on Wednesday, leading to the arrests of 109 people, including 92 suspected drug dealers and users, he said.

The latest violence raises the death toll in President Rodrigo Duterte's anti-drug crackdown to 4,239 since it was launched in July 2016, with more than 131,500 others arrested. Governments led by the United States and the EU have expressed alarm and called on

the Philippines to take steps to halt the bloodshed.

Human rights groups have cited much higher death tolls and called for an independent investigation, including by the United Nations.

Duterte has lashed out at critics and declared last week that the Philippines was backing out of the International Criminal Court, where he's facing a possible complaint for the thousands of killings.

In the raids, police seized more than 250 small packets of methamphetamine, marijuana and 19 firearms, including a rifle and a shotgun, police said. A similar crackdown in the province in August left 32 alleged drug offenders dead in the highest single-day toll in the nearly two years of the crackdown.

Last month, Bulacan police killed 10 drug suspects in a 24-hour sweep. AP

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# Cambodia rejects joint statement of human rights concern

**C**AMBODIA'S ambassador to the United Nations office in Geneva yesterday rejected a statement to the U.N. Human Rights Council endorsed by 45 nations that urges improvements in the Southeast Asia nation's rights situation ahead of a general election this July.

The joint statement, with signatories ranging from Albania to the United States, expressed "deep concern about the recent serious decline of civil and political rights in Cambodia."

"These backward steps include signs of escalating repression of the political opposition, civil society and media," it said.

The statement said it shared the concerns of U.N. officials about actions taken by the Cambodian government "that will undermine the conduct of credible, free and fair elections in July. For the Cambodian government to retain its legitimacy, any elections must be free, fair and credible."

In a statement, Cambodian Ambassador Ney Sam Ol dismissed the concerns as "politi-



A foreigner is escorted by prison guards to the Siem Reap court room in Cambodia

cally motivated."

He charged that the statement, which was delivered by New Zealand on behalf of the other signatories, was issued "because they want regime change, because they have their pre-selected candidates to

win," among other reasons, and showed that "they shamelessly interfere in this country's internal affairs."

Ney Sam Ol said the statement bears ill intent and, echoing a theme often expressed by Hun Sen, worked against the gover-

ment's efforts "in maintaining law and order, in fostering peace stability and development for its people."

The country's sole credible opposition party, the Cambodia National Rescue Party, was dissolved last November after

a court ruled that it was involved in trying to overthrow the government of long-serving Prime Minister Hun Sen. All its members were tossed out of parliament. Party leaders have been subject to legal harassment, with one founder in exile and the other in jail awaiting trial on a treason charge. The court system is considered politicized and normally rules in the government's favor.

## ■ Cambodia's court system is considered politicized and normally rules in the government's favor

These actions are generally seen as part of an intense push by Hun Sen's government and his Cambodian People's Party to neutralize political opponents and silence critics ahead of July's elections.

The government also intensified restrictions on civil society groups and independent media outlets, all but ensuring that Hun Sen will face no serious challenge at the polls. **AP**

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UK's Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson



Russia's ambassador Alexander V. Yakovenko

## RUSSIA-UK

# War of words over ex-spy's poisoning gets uglier

Vladimir Isachenkov & Jill Lawless, Moscow

**T**HE war of words between Russia and Britain over an ex-spy's poisoning got uglier the U.K. foreign secretary called it vomit-inducing that Russian President Vladimir Putin is rejoicing over hosting the World Cup. Russia shot back that Boris Johnson is "poisoned with venom of malice and hate."

The heated exchange came in the deepening diplomatic crisis over the March 4 poisoning of Russian ex-spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in the English city of Salisbury. Britain maintains Russia used a military-grade nerve agent known as Novichok in the attack, which left the father and daughter in critical condition. Moscow has fiercely denied involvement.

Johnson yesterday [Macau time] repeated Britain's position

that responsibility for the poisoning leads "back to the Russian state and those at the top." He added that the attack had prompted "a mountain of disgust globally," and that he had been pleasantly surprised "at the strength of the solidarity that there is with the U.K."

Johnson agreed with a Labour lawmaker who likened the World Cup hosted by Russia this summer to Adolf Hitler's use of the 1936 Olympics for political purposes.

"I think the comparison with 1936 is certainly right," he said. "I think it's an emetic prospect, frankly, to think of Putin glorying in this sporting event."

The Russian Foreign Ministry's spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, said Johnson is "poisoned with venom of malice and hate, unprofessionalism and boorishness," adding that "it's scary to remember that this person repre-

sents the political leadership of a nuclear power."

She said on Facebook that Johnson's comments reflected London's efforts to cast Russia as an enemy using the most absurd reasons in order to boycott the World Cup.

"But at what price?" she said. "At the price of provocations, setting nations and people against one another and undermining international peace and stability. Isn't the price too high?"

Zakharova noted that Johnson's comments about the 1936 Olympics and the World Cup words were an "unacceptable and unworthy" parallel toward Russia, a "nation that lost millions of lives in fighting Nazism."

Yesterday, the Russian President spokesman Dmitry Peskov described it as "the utterly disgusting statement which is unworthy of a foreign minister of any country." He called Johnson's words

"insulting and unacceptable."

Vladimir Yermakov, deputy head of the Russian Foreign Ministry's department for non-proliferation, scoffed at expressions of Western solidarity, saying they are meaningless in the absence of proof.

"Have they fallen under the spell of the 'Strike Back' television series?" Yermakov told a briefing with foreign diplomats, referring to the British-American action TV series featuring a plot involving Novichok.

Yermakov accused Britain of "hiding facts" and warned that key evidence might "disappear." Casting doubt on Britain's credibility, he said experts would agree that "the use of a military-grade nerve agent would lead to numerous fatalities right on the spot, but we have seen quite a different picture in Salisbury."

"Two versions are possible: Either the British government has

failed to ensure protection from such terror attack or have staged it themselves, directly or indirectly," he said.

British officials have previously dismissed such Russian allegations as "nonsense."

U.S. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said the United States and Britain were right not to send their ambassadors to the Russian briefing "to hear wild accusations and implausible denials."

"Russia was responsible for the nerve agent attack," she declared on Twitter.

Britain and Russia have expelled 23 of each other's diplomats in a tit-for-tat response to the attack, and Britain is seeking to rally allies for new sanctions against Moscow.

Yermakov urged Britain to "come forward and open all the data," and warned that Moscow would not recognize any probe if it doesn't see the evidence.

He added that Britain's use of the name Novichok — never used by the agent's Soviet designers — was part of efforts to put the blame on Russia.

He insisted that Russia "has nothing to do with [the poisoning] whatsoever" because it "does not benefit us in any way."

Russia previously claimed it had no motive to kill Skripal, who was convicted of spying for Britain but released in a 2010 spy swap. Moscow has also insisted that it had completed the destruction of its chemical arsenals last year under international oversight.

Meanwhile, a Russian scientist involved in designing Novichok said that lab tests can clearly determine its origin.

Vladimir Uglev told The Bell online news portal that the name Novichok common in the West wasn't used by its Soviet designers. He said in an interview posted earlier this week that numerous variants of such agents were developed by the Soviets in 1972-1988. **AP**

## USA

# Maryland school shooter apparently was lovesick teen

**T**UESDAY'S school shooting in southern Maryland that left the shooter dead and two students wounded increasingly appears to be the action of a lovesick teenager.

Authorities yesterday released a few additional details into the shooting at Great Mills High School in St. Mary's County.

Austin Rollins, 17, was killed after shooting a schoolmate, 16-year-old Jaelynn Willey. A school resource officer got there within a minute and fired a shot at Willey, but

it's not yet clear whether Rollins was killed by the officer's bullet or took his own life.

A 14-year-old boy who was shot in the thigh during the encounter was released from a hospital.

The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office said that Rollins and the girl had been in a relationship that recently ended. Authorities had previously only said that the two had had a relationship of some sorts.

"All indications suggest the shooting was not a

random act of violence," police said in a statement.

St. Mary's County Sheriff Tim Cameron said earlier that a precise determination of Rollins' motive may be impossible now that he is dead.

The girl, Jaelynn Willey, was still fighting for her life at the University of Maryland Prince George's Hospital Center. A fundraising page to help Willey's family has raised more than USD54,000.

Hospital spokesman Michael Schwartzberg said in an email later that she

remained in critical condition.

A day after the eruption of gun violence in one of the sleepy community's schools, the few residents who ventured out amid a snowstorm blanketing the East Coast praised the school resource officer who responded, Deputy First Class Blaine Gaskill.

"He did a very, very good job," said Sharon Eglinton, manager of a cafe in nearby Leonardtown.

Eglinton, herself a Great Mills alumna, noted that Rollins, was by all accoun-



Shot: 16-year-old Jaelynn Willey

ts a good student who had not shown any warning signs. She said she thinks the best way to prevent future school shootings is to install metal detectors at schools.

"I have no problem paying for it," she said. "If you can protect people ge-

ting on a plane with metal detectors, you can protect people in schools."

While investigators are still determining whether Rollins took his own life or was killed by the officer's bullet, Cameron credited Gaskill with preventing any more loss of life. **AP**

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## FRIDAY

13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
15:00	Miscellaneous
16:50	Miscellaneous
18:25	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	Documentary
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	Macau Documentary
22:30	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
16:30	Brainstorm
17:15	Got Talent Portugal
19:10	Macau Documentary (Repeated)
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	Non-daily Portuguese News
22:00	Documentary
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Miscellaneous
00:15	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
00:50	RTPi Live

## Offbeat

## SELENA GOMEZ RESPONDS AFTER BIKINI PICS SHOW SCAR

AP PHOTO



Selena Gomez took to Instagram after bikini photos of her in Australia showing a scar drew social media comments that she looked "thick."

The singer wrote that the beauty myth was "an obsession with physical perfection that traps modern woman in an endless cycle of hopelessness, self consciousness and self-hatred."

Gomez says she "chose to take care of myself" because she wants to and "not to prove anything to anyone."

The scar was the result of a complication from her 2017 kidney transplant.

The post included a video of Gomez with friends on a boat in Sydney Harbor.

## cinema



## CINETEATRO

22 - 26 MAR



## PSYCHIC KUSUO

ROOM 1

2:30, 6:00, 9:30pm

Director: Yuichi Fukuda

Starring: Kento Yamazaki, Kanna Hashimoto

Language: Cantonese (Chinese)



## MAZINGER Z: INFINITY

ROOM 1

04:15, 07:45pm

Director: Junji Shimizu

Starring: Shōtarō Morikubo, Ai Kayano, Sumire Uesaka

Language: Japanese (Chinese &amp; English)

Duration: 95min



## UNSAANE

ROOM 2

2:30, 4:30, 07:30, 9:30pm

Director: Steven Soderbergh

Starring: Claire Foy, Joshua Leonard, Jay Pharoah

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 97min



## WONDERSTRUCK

ROOM 3

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

Director: Todd Haynes

Starring: Oakes Fegley, Julianne Moore, Michelle Williams

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 116min



## TOMB RAIDER

ROOM 3

7:15pm

Director: Roar Uthaug

Starring: Alicia Vikander, Daniel Wu, Dominic West

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 118 min

## this day in history



## 1983 REAGAN LAUNCHES COLD WAR INTO SPACE

President Reagan has unveiled plans to combat nuclear war in space.

The Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) proposes a defensive shield, using laser or particle beam technology to "intercept and destroy" incoming missiles as they travel through the stars.

Defense analysts have described it as the first major attempt to move away from the 30 year-old Cold War strategy of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) - where the threat of nuclear attack acts as a deterrent.

In a televised address from the White House the US leader said: "We seek neither military superiority nor political advantage. Our only purpose - one all people share - is to search for ways to avert the danger of nuclear war."

Speaking just half an hour after the House of Representatives (HOR) had rejected the Republican Party's demands for 10% increases in defence spending, President Reagan attempted to justify his \$2 trillion, five-year military spending plans.

In the first major congressional revolt against Mr Reagan's economic policies the HoR have voted in Democrat proposals to reduce the Republican budget by more than half.

The President said: "They're the same kind that led the democracies to neglect their defences in the 1930s and invited the tragedy of World War II."

Senior White House aide Michael Deaver reported a positive reaction to Mr Reagan's scheme: "He has had the most favorable response to any speech since he was elected President."

Critics argue SDI contravenes the Soviet-American Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972.

Article V of the treaty states: "Each party undertakes not to develop, test or deploy anti-ballistic missile systems or components."

President Reagan has stressed SDI does not entail the actual development of a defensive shield, but is a programme for research and development.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Reagan's SDI became known as "Star Wars" - after the George Lucas film.

President Andropov of the USSR was highly critical of the plan, saying it violated the 1972 ABM Treaty and there was little difference between building up weapons for purportedly defensive or offensive purposes.

The Democrats in the US - and even some Republicans - claimed Reagan's initiative was an expensive and unfeasible diversion from his administration's domestic failures.

SDI signalled a new round in the Arms Race and a worsening of the relationship between the US and the USSR.

The increasing financial strain it placed the Soviet Union under contributed to the break up of the regime.

SDI was abandoned in 1993 and the department was renamed the Ballistic Missile Defence organisation.



**YOUR STARS**

**Aries**  
Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
Emotionally speaking, of course, family, true friends and loved ones will necessarily take the number one spot in your heart - and since you're prioritizing, spend some time with them and spoil them a bit.

**Taurus**  
April 20-May 20  
If any sign loves comfort - which certainly includes the constancy and ease of routine - it's most definitely yours. Your regular habits bring you close to the people you've come to know.

**Gemini**  
May 21-Jun. 21  
Impressing your superiors with your ability to take charge of any and all situations may get you where you think you want to be, but don't push too hard. You don't have to.

**Cancer**  
Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
Ready to take off? To actually leave 'home base' and venture outward? Sure you are. Well, the heavens have agreed: It's time for you to get away, so if you're ready to get away.

**Leo**  
Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
It's time to dig deep, to face each and every encounter with an eye toward getting to know new people on a personal level - because right about now, there's an awful lot you have to offer each other.

**Virgo**  
Aug. 23-Sept. 22  
Ready for some time off? For at least a couple of days away from everyone who expects you to talk, act or 'be' a certain way? Well, you're certainly due - and you won't be looking for any company, either.

**Libra**  
Sep.23-Oct. 22  
Keep that in mind when someone waltzes in late this afternoon with a huge pile of work or a really big job to be done - and that look on their face. Before you agree to give up your evening.

**Scorpio**  
Oct. 23 - Nov. 21  
It started a couple of days ago, but that doesn't mean you should stop now - not just yet, anyway. For a few more short hours, you're free to chase after any totally hedonistic quests and be ensured success.

**Sagittarius**  
Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
Occasionally, your skills at talking a family member in off the ledge are called upon, and this is one of those times. Remember, however, that if you stay calm, they will, too.

**Capricorn**  
Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
Over the past few days, you've done more in six hours than most folks do in six days - no, in six weeks. Yep, you've been busy, and you've done all your work well, too. So, are you due for some serious R and R or what?

**Aquarius**  
Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
You're usually the very soul of objectivity, but today, you're in an extremely unusual mood. You're feeling nostalgic and sentimental, which is totally unlike you.

**Pisces**  
Feb.19-Mar. 20  
If you see a problem - and you might today - you don't just stand there hoping it's going to go away. No, you react by acting. You want to do something about it, and chances are you'll succeed.

**THE BORN LOSER** by Chip Sansom



**SUDOKU**

**Easy**

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

**Easy+**

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

**Medium**

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

**Hard**

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

**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	4	18	cloudy
Harbin	-2	11	clear/cloudy
Tianjin	5	20	clear/cloudy
Urumqi	6	19	clear
Xi'an	7	21	clear/cloudy
Lhasa	2	15	cloudy
Chengdu	12	17	drizzle
Chongqing	14	21	cloudy/shower
Kunming	8	20	cloudy/shower
Nanjing	6	21	cloudy/clear
Shanghai	8	19	cloudy/clear
Wuhan	6	23	clear/cloudy
Hangzhou	8	22	cloudy/clear
Taipei	12	25	clear
Guangzhou	14	25	clear
Hong Kong	17	23	clear
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	-5	3	flurry/drizzle
Frankfurt	-3	8	flurry/drizzle
Paris	-1	10	sleet/drizzle
London	2	4	overcast/drizzle
New York	1	4	drizzle/overcast

**CROSSWORDS**

**ACROSS:** 1- Fish illegally; 6- \_\_\_ breve; 10- Drive away; 14- Pomme or manzana; 15- Chair; 16- Wine topper; 17- Pesto ingredient; 18- Ciao!; 19- Iowa State city; 20- As a companion; 21- Performs surgery; 23- Breach; 25- Title for Anthony Hopkins; 26- Charts; 29- Help in a heist; 32- Machine for lifting heavy loads; 37- Guadalajara gold; 38- Final Four org.; 39- Followed; 40- In spite of; 43- Bars legally; 44- Sea eagle; 45- Neckline shape; 46- Approvals; 47- Anthem starter; 48- Cong. meeting; 49- Suitable; 51- Penlight battery; 53- Produces milk; 58- Laziness; 62- Actress Merrill; 63- \_\_\_ precedent; 64- Capital of Yemen; 65- Classic cars; 66- Part of QED; 67- Build; 68- Done for; 69- Bone: Prefix; 70- They're green;

**DOWN:** 1- Sunscreen ingredient; 2- Milky gem; 3- Lhasa \_\_\_; 4- Holds on tightly; 5- HÅgar's comics wife; 6- Apropos of; 7- Spring; 8- Up-to-the-minute; 9- Video game pioneer; 10- Beat it!; 11- Household; 12- Mine finds; 13- Approves; 22- Obscure; 24- Covenants; 26- Medium of exchange; 27- Got up; 28- Annie of "Designing Women"; 30- Phooey!; 31- Relaxes; 33- Purge; 34- Not dead yet; 35- Hawaiian state birds; 36- Peripheries; 38- Tries to bite; 39- Country singer Tucker; 41- Heartache; 42- Singing syllable; 47- Furry swimmers; 48- Payment for regular work; 50- Stroll; 52- It's a good thing; 53- In \_\_\_ of (replacing); 54- Auth. unknown; 55- Barrel; 56- Coup d'\_\_\_; 57- Fill up; 59- Lulu; 60- \_\_\_ Bell; 61- Panama and bowler; 62- AMA members;



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- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IACM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
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### Rugby Academy

# 300 players, coaches and Bats fans in HK festival

Donald Shaw, Hong Kong  
Special to MDT

CLOSE to 300 players, coaches and supporters from the Macau Bats Rugby Club made the trip to Hong Kong last Sunday for the last Hong Kong rugby festival of the season, hosted this time by the Hong Kong Football Club at Happy Valley.

As usual the younger teams took to the field first and the U6 team continued their fine run of performances by delivering three victories against Hong Kong Football Club (4-2), South China Athletic (2-1) and Tuen Mun Sharks/ Hong Kong East (5-2).

The U7 team had an unlucky defeat against Hong Kong Football Club (4-6) in a game that they could have won but for some unfortunate ball grounding that ruled out a number of scoring opportunities. However, fortunes improved and the team recorded wins against both South China Athletic (6-2) and Tai-Po (4-2).

The U8s also had a very successful campaign, securing three wins against firstly Causeway Bay Monkeys (5-2), edging a thriller against Hong Kong Football Club (4-3) and finally a strong win against Tai-Po (10-5).

Both the U9 and U10s were playing in the first division of each of their age groups and came up against some strong teams. The U9s opened up with a very good 4-3 win against Sai Kung Stingrays and then lost 0-4 to Sandy Bay and 2-6 to Discovery Bay Pirates.

The U10s had a very difficult run, losing their three games against Hong Kong Football Club (1-6), Sai Kung Stingrays (0-6) and Valley Fort (0-7). Despite the losses it was, according to the Bats coach, "the best overall team display we have seen from them this season and the boys have learnt a great deal from playing the top teams."

The U12s were competing in the final round of the Richard Hawkes Cup and were drawn in a tough group against three division one teams and the top division two team. The Bats played well against a strong HKFC before losing 1-4. They then won 2-0 against Tuen Chung followed by two defeats at the hands of Sandy Bay (1-3) and Sai Kung Stingrays (0-5). This led to the Bats playing USRC Tigers in the plate semi-final. A great performance was given by the Bats and they were unlucky to lose 0-1, with the decisive try being scored in the final play. Saj Fernando, coach of the U12s commented "To be regarded as the seventh best team (out of 24) in their age group is a very good achievement, the team can be proud of their efforts today and the progress that they have made across the season".

Preparations are now underway for the 4th Annual Macau Bats Rugby Festival which will be held on the 14th April at the TIS playing field in Taipa. Approximately 50 teams have entered to play including clubs from Mainland China and Hong Kong.





Graham Rahal (15) races into turn two before finishing second in the IndyCar Firestone Grand Prix of St. Petersburg earlier this month

## AUTO RACING

# NBC lands Indy 500 and promises IndyCar increased exposure

Jenna Fryer, Charlotte (N.C.)

**T**HE Indianapolis 500, an American staple on ABC for 53 years, will have a new television home next season.

In fact, the entire IndyCar package is moving to NBC in 2019 in what could turn out to be an exceptional deal for the series because of promised increased exposure across multiple platforms.

That's secondary, though, to another network ending ABC's stranglehold on the "The Greatest Spectacle in Racing."

The Indy 500 on ABC is the second-longest partnership in television and sports events behind only the Masters, which has been on CBS since 1956. It's a jewel ABC did not particularly want to give up, and IndyCar wasn't unhappy with the network's production of its most important asset.

But IndyCar badly wanted its races on one network and made that clear in negotiations with both ABC and NBC. The networks have been sharing the series for several years, with ABC owning the Indy 500 and the broadcast rights. NBC got the leftovers and was allowed to air IndyCar only on cable.

IndyCar CEO Mark Miles worked out a three-year deal assigning all media rights to NBC.

The agreement announced yesterday comes with an increased number of races on broadcast (NBC) and a subscription-only channel for IndyCar's diehard fans.

"Mark Miles had a singlehanded focus in finding just one partner," Jon Miller, president of programming for NBC Sports Group, told The Associated Press. "The opportunity to have the entire series was very important to us. Of

course, to be able to do the crown jewel, the Indy 500 on NBC, really puts the icing on the cake for us."

NBC and ABC were in the bidding until the very end, with both networks interested in obtaining the whole package, Miles said. But negotiations apparently ended sometime late last week and ABC sent an internal memo to its stations notifying them the IndyCar package would end after this season. An employee at one of those stations revealed ABC's statement in a since-deleted tweet.

"We have had a wonderful and rewarding relationship with the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, the Indianapolis 500 and IndyCar, and it has been our distinct honor to be partners for so many years," said Burke Magnus, the executive vice president of programming and scheduling for ESPN, which like ABC Sports is part of Disney corporation. "We look forward to the rest of our events this season and wish them all the best in the future."

Both Miles and Miller were complimentary of ABC's job with IndyCar, especially with the 500 each May. ABC had such a stranglehold on the event that landing it was celebrated as a coup for NBC.

"This becomes one of the leading properties on our air," Miller said.

Under the new deal, eight IndyCar races will be broadcast on the network next season, up from five that ABC aired. The rest of the schedule will be on NBC Sports Network. The deal also puts IndyCar in the NBC Gold package, a direct-to-consumer product in which subscribers can purchase additional content that is not televised. **AP**

## FOOTBALL

# Egypt looking wobbly ahead of Portugal, Greece warmups

Hamza Hendawi, Cairo

**E**GYPT'S first World Cup warmup will be against Portugal, a match that could have two of the most prolific scorers in soccer going up against each other.

The Egyptians, who will play at the World Cup for the first time in 28 years, will be led by Mohamed Salah. The Liverpool forward scored four goals in the Premier League on Saturday.

On the other side is Cristiano Ronaldo, the world player of the year who scored four goals for Real Madrid on Sunday.

After facing Portugal today [Saturday, 3:45am] in Zurich, the Egyptians have another warm-up

match against Greece on Tuesday in the same Swiss city. At the World Cup, Egypt is in Group A along with host Russia, Uruguay and Saudi Arabia.

Here are some things to watch out for in the squad: **ATTACK** - With 36 goals in all competitions, Mohammed Salah remains the go-to man in a squad that has no one with a similar scoring touch. And it's a problem.

Manchester United midfielder Ashley Young marked Salah so closely in a recent Premier League game that he was unable to get a single shot on target. To prevent a repeat while playing for Egypt, Salah's likely partners in attack — Mahmoud Hassan and Mahmoud Abdel-

Monaim — need to raise their game.

Another attacking option is Stoke City midfielder Ramadan Sobhi, but the 21-year-old forward has not been playing much and has only two goals to his name after nine starts so far this season.

**DEFENSE** - West Bromwich Albion defender Ahmed Hegazi is the jewel of Egypt's defense.

Next to him might be club teammate Ali Gabr, who has been sitting on the bench since moving on loan to the English team from Egyptian club Zamalek about two months ago.

Al-Ahly defender Ramy Rabiah, a longtime fixture in the national squad, is injured, and club teammate Saad Sameer has yet to

gain match fitness after a long injury.

The predicament in defense could hand another Al-Ahly defender, Ayman Ashraf, his first taste of international soccer.

**GOALKEEPER** - At 45, Essam el-Hadary will be the oldest goalkeeper ever to play in a World Cup if he keeps his place in the squad.

El-Hadary was the starting goalkeeper in qualifying, but he has been leaking goals in Saudi Arabia recently, including five in one recent league match.

He remains capable of pulling off some match-saving saves, but he has also shown in recent years some lapses of judgment and occasional slow re-



Egypt's Mohamed Salah

flexes. His vast experience could serve him well, however, by putting him at the top of Egypt coach Hector Cuper's pecking order.

**MIDFIELD** - Al-Ahly playmaker Abdullah el-Said has been a key member of the squad in recent years, but has found himself in trouble with his team in recent days after secretly agreeing to join crosstown rival Zamalek

amid negotiations over a contract extension with his club.

El-Said decided to stay with his club, which in turn suspended him for the remainder of the season and put him up for a transfer.

El-Said is traveling with the squad to Switzerland for the Portugal and Greece friendlies, but is reportedly in a bad way psychologically. **AP**

opinion

**Bizcuits**  
Leanda Lee



**TOUGH EXPATRIATES**

Some girls grow up believing they can do it all. Class, status, values, economic standing and education all play their part to create a woman who believes in her own personal efficacy.

It would come as no surprise to female expatriates in Macau that they achieved their standing because of opportunity and the resources they have had access to, as well as their talent and effort. Often their individual resources have made up for hurdles placed in their way, whether they be recognised consciously, or not. Many of us just got on with it, believing that by performing well, merit would win out.

Part denial and part ignorance, feminism did not play a part for women of a certain age; there was no time for it. Gender differences were not on our agendas, we were too busy and perhaps too afraid to outwardly acknowledge difference. We played by the false premise of a gender-neutral game, hiding pregnancies under draped suits, and postponing meetings and arranging for substitute lecturers on mobile phones between contractions.

Even if she is a successful executive on home turf, values held about gender in other cultures play a big part in whether a female expatriate even gets the job. The problem is not necessarily with the host-country nationals but the beliefs held about the host culture.

I have experienced western businessmen denigrating women in front of Japanese suppliers in the mistaken belief that by doing so they raised their own standing. Then there was the time that an Australian resources company decided to put a male non-Japanese speaker in a liaison role in preference to the experienced Japanese-speaking female. Both times, the Japanese parties made a fuss, the first by refusing to do business with the oaf and the second by side-lining the less-experienced male. Untested western biases about gender and culture skew decisions.

Although the Japanese are not lauded for gender equality in the workplace, the fundamental error in these cases was the belief that the Japanese counterpart would view a western businesswoman as a woman first - out of place in the business environment - and thus less capable. In fact, what often occurs when cultures collide is that because of the perceived obstacles she has had to overcome, the impression is of the woman as more, not less, capable. She does not fit the role assigned to females in the host environment and considered observation of her abilities replaces stereotypical assumptions.

The fear of women having to deal with prejudice explains a great deal of why only an estimated 20% of the expatriate population is female. A recent study in the Journal of Global Management has looked at the prevalence of harassment in the workplace among female expatriates and whether the incidence is greater in countries with higher institutional-level discrimination.

An index developed by the OECD measures a country's violence against women, limits to social participation and access to education and other resources. These elements all determine the status of women in a country, known as institutional gender discrimination.

The study suggests that when gender discrimination is high, female expatriates will experience harassment in the work place. Indeed, this was found to be the case across the 25 countries studied - not surprising, as any woman in these environments is likely to experience harassing behaviours. What is important is whether this creates stress at work and influences performance. This is not necessarily so, and benefits of high visibility, easier access to clients and being perceived as highly capable more than make up for the downsides.

What is needed is for companies to stop underestimating the resilience of good staff, to put them forward as capable, demand appropriate behaviours in the workplace and stop reinforcing discriminatory ones by not hiring female expatriates.

THE SCHWARZENEGGER: CALIFORNIA  
BUZZ GOP IS LIKE TITANIC

Arnold Schwarzenegger is comparing the California Republican Party to the sinking Titanic and warning that the party needs to be more inclusive and embrace issues like climate change.

In an obvious dig at President Donald Trump, the former California governor says voters are looking for answers but the party is giving them Twitter fights.

His remarks came yesterday [Ma-

cau time] at a forum in Los Angeles for a political group called New Way California that wants to reshape the GOP. The state party has been shedding voters for years, and Democrats hold every statewide office.

The former governor was joined by Ohio Gov. John Kasich, another Republican centrist and Trump rival in 2016. He called Trump a "manifestation of where this country has been going."



Station	Air quality
Roadside	65-95 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	45-65 Good
Ambient	45-65 Good

WORLD BRIEFS

**CAMBODIA'S** ambassador to the United Nations office in Geneva yesterday rejected a statement to the U.N. Human Rights Council endorsed by 45 nations that urges improvements in the Southeast Asia nation's rights situation ahead of a general election this July. More on p13



**US-RUSSIA** Two American astronauts and a Russian cosmonaut are on their way to the International Space Station. A Soyuz rocket carrying the three men blasted from the Russia-leased Baikonur launch pad in Kazakhstan.

**AUSTRIA-ISRAEL** Austria's foreign minister has ordered an attache at the country's embassy in Israel to return home after a newspaper reported that he posted a picture of himself in a T-shirt sold by a far-right group.



**FRANCE** Trains, planes, schools and other public services across France were seriously disrupted yesterday as unions set up dozens of street protests across the country.

**MEXICO** Police in Mexico's Gulf coast state of Veracruz say a journalist who ran a local news website has been shot to death.



**PERU** With his offer of resignation, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski joins a long list of recent Peruvian presidents undone by scandals that have destroyed voters' trust in their elected officials.

Ax throwing gains in popularity as pastime, sport

LEAVE it to the hipsters of Brooklyn to combine craft beer and sharp objects.

Kick Axe Throwing is the first bar in New York City to pick up on a nationwide trend of ax throwing, a growing sport that some enthusiasts hope will take off the way bowling did in the last century.

"People are like, 'Sharp objects and beer? What a great idea that is.' But truthfully, after you have a couple drinks you start to actually throw a little bit better," said Alexander Stine, an "axepert" at Kick Axe. He honed his own skills growing up in Colorado throwing knives at carnivals and now trains newcomers on proper technique. "It's about believing in your ability to do something you didn't think you could do before."

Scoring is similar to darts. Players aim at a wooden board painted with a bull's-eye and rings corresponding to different point values.

Playing to the sport's origins at Canadian logging competitions, Kick Axe's decor is reminiscent of a ski lodge, complete with flannel chairs and calfskin



carpeting.

The perimeter of the venue is lined with cages for throwing. There's a bar serving wine and beer, but no hard liquor. Guests can take a break from throwing axes to play board games like "Candy Land" at tables in the center of the room.

While Kick Axe mainly caters to casual players, there are locations across the country where enthusiasts play the sport competitively.

There was no alcohol in sight during recent tournament play at Chicago's Bad Axe Throwing, a Canada-based chain of 18 venues.

Bad Axe's CEO, Mario Zelaya, founded the World Axe Throwing League a

year ago. He said it now has 2,500 members worldwide who compete at his own locations and other independent venues.

"It's bowling 2.0," said Zelaya. "What bowling maybe used to be in the 80's and 90's and this is what ax throwing is right now. It's fun. It's new. It's addictive. It's active entertainment."

The World Axe Throwing League held its first world championship tournament in December. Competitors played in their home courts and the games were broadcast remotely on Facebook Live. The winner took home a USD3,500 prize.

Zelaya says his ultimate goal is to make ax throwing an Olympic sport. AP

Global tourism predicted to slow after best year ever

THE travel and tourism sector is set for a modest slowdown in 2018 as a result of higher oil prices and airfares, a year after it experienced its best year on record, according to a leading global industry body.

In its annual Economic Impact Report, the World Travel and Tourism Council said yesterday that the sector was responsible for the creation of 7 million new jobs worldwide in 2017, or one in five new jobs.

That was due largely to the fact that the sector outperformed the global economy for the seventh year running, growing by 4.6 percent against 3 percent. The sector, according to the organization, outperformed all others.

"2017 was the best year on record for the travel & tourism sector," said Gloria Gue-

vara, president and CEO of the WTTC. "We have seen increased spending as a result of growing consumer confidence, both domestically and internationally, recovery in markets in North Africa and Europe previously impacted by terrorism and continued outbound growth from China and India."

Though the WTTC forecasts 2018 growth of 4 percent as a result of higher oil prices and airfares as well as expectations of rising interest rates in countries such as the U.S. and the U.K., it kept its long-term forecasts unchanged, with average annual growth of 3.8 percent over the next decade. By then, it expects the sector to support more than 400 million jobs globally, or one in nine of all jobs.