



OLDER PARTS OF TOWN 'CAN'T WAIT'
Architect Rui Leão says there is a need for detailed plans in Macau, particularly for the old part of the city

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WOMEN SHOT WITH AIRSOFT GUN

Two elderly women have been slightly injured after being allegedly shot with an airsoft gun



P7 CRIME



MACAO ORCHESTRA PERFORMS IN MYANMAR

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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'"

Casinos post 22pct revenue gain in March

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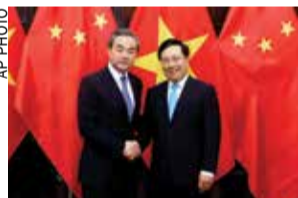
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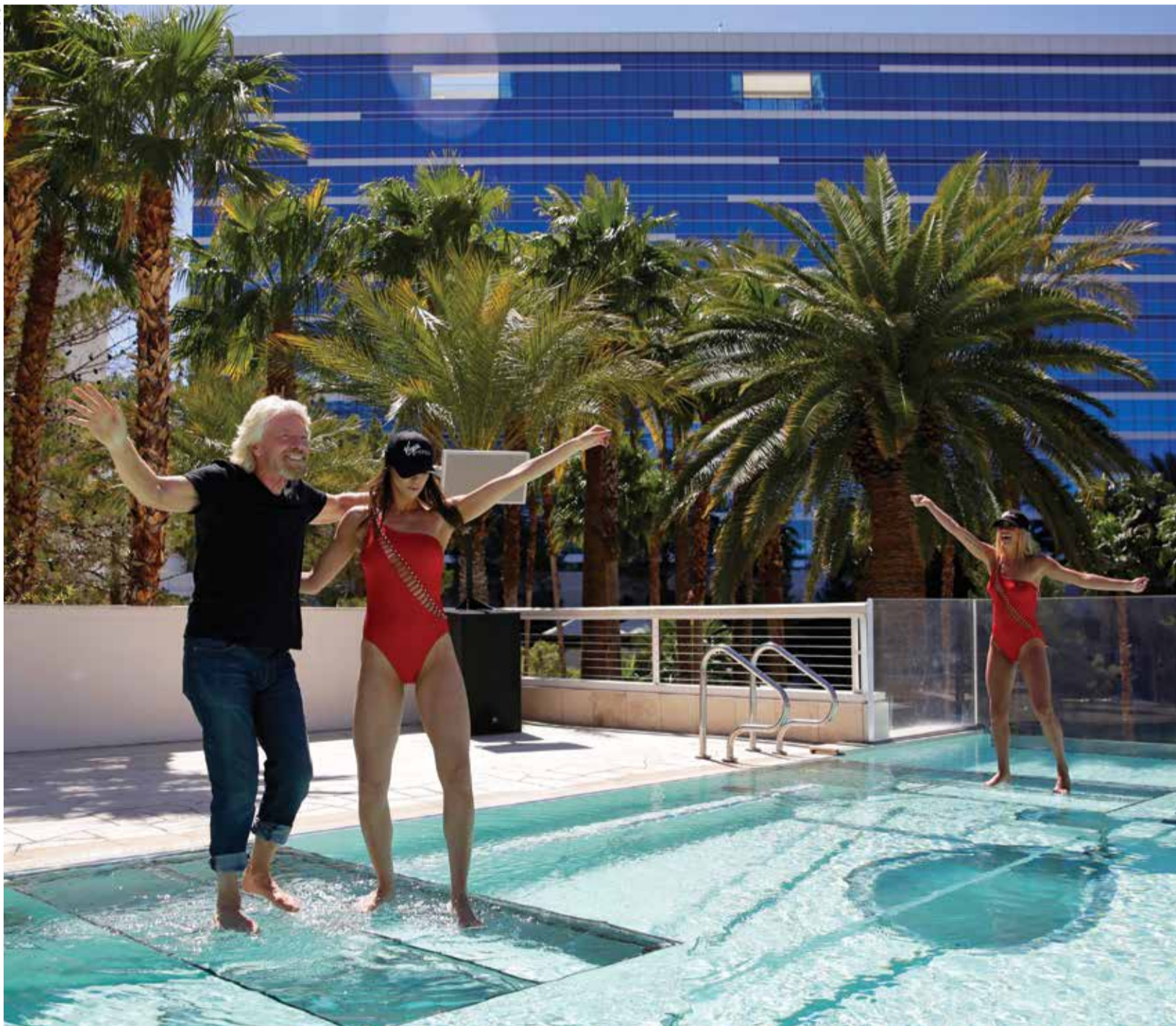
CHINA-VIETNAM
Vietnam and China have called for restraint in resolving disputes in the South China Sea, adding that the two countries should manage the disputes and not expand them.

INDONESIA's military said yesterday that one soldier has been killed in an ongoing clash between security forces and Papuan independence fighters near the U.S.-owned Grasberg copper mine in the country's east.



MALAYSIA Authorities said yesterday that they have stepped up patrols to intercept a boat thought to be carrying dozens of people from Myanmar's beleaguered Rohingya Muslim minority seeking refuge in the country.

More on backpage



Richard Branson buys Hard Rock casino-hotel in Las Vegas

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Renato Marques

THE need for an urban Master Plan for Macau was the topic of the working lunch the British Business Association of Macao (BBAM) held last week at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel. Rui Leão, architect and president of International Council of Architects of the Portuguese Speaking Countries, was invited to speak on several aspects related to Macau's urban development and organization.

The architect, who is also member of the Macau Urban Planning Committee, noted that there were major differences between the old city and newer areas in terms of scale.

"At the time that the planning law was drafted it was generally based on the Portuguese law [which states that there is a need for a Master Plan before the Detailed Plans]. So at the time, my contribution, which was ultimately unsuccessful, was to try to convince the government to invert that," said Leão. "We need to have detailed plans in Macau, especially for the old [part] of the city, before we have the Master plan, because we know that the master plan is something that takes [a] very long [time] to be implemented and the Inner Harbor [area] and the older parts of town couldn't wait."

According to Leão, what occurred in the late 20th century and early 21st century was an "opportunistic interpretation of an historic city [center] and it created an interesting usurpation of the historic texture of the city."

In the past, several of the small plots that used to constitute the city center were joined together to allow the creation of high-rise buildings in the center, twisting the original purpose of the spaces and paving the way for large scale investments. The organization left the hands of small property owners and signified a "big game changer" for Macau's economy.

In this context, the architect questioned how it was possible to reconcile modern Macau with the historical city. His answer to this question includes the creation of a master plan.

"We need to be two [different] people in order to be able to do this master plan. [On one hand] we need to understand the economics and

Architect says historic texture of the city being usurped



Rui Leão

[on the other] we need to understand the humanity and informality of the old city."

Addressing questions on the protection of heritage sites, Leão compared Macau to Venice, where the tourists agglomerate around the heritage hotspots. But, inversely to what happens in the Italian city, it is the casinos and resorts that hold and attract the attention of tourists in Macau.

He remarked that one of the most important factors regarding the protection of buildings is "visibility," noting that the best example of that is Senado Square, which "gained a lot from the cleaning of advertising and signage as well as the stopping of the circulation of vehicles in the area – it only survived because of this."

In order to protect the city center, Leão proposes expanding the pedestrian area from Senado Square in two directions, toward the Inner Harbor and in the axis from Senado Square to Lilau Square. "If this happens I think half of the problems [regarding heritage protection] are solved."

The speaker noted that what

concerns him the most regarding Macau heritage protection has to do with the fact that "everything that is not a monument is not protected and is not listed." He noted that building clusters in many parts of the city are as much or of more historical relevance than some monuments. Macau's heritage also includes green areas and Coloane, in Leão's opinion.

Leão also addressed the organization of the new areas of reclaimed land, where he expressed concerns, saying, "there is no [clear] policy, only hints."

The architect thinks that now is the right time for the government to address a topic that "was a taboo for over 450 years," that being the use of the Macau waters, which he claims were never granted before to Macau territory, especially during the Portuguese administration.

The current status is that Macau has the right and duty to manage its maritime areas, and Leão says, "it is time to give the waterfronts back to [the] Macau people."

Replying to questions regarding the lack of new architectural works of great relevance in Macau, Leão believed this was related to the "new way" of attributing projects.

Leão proposes the expansion of the pedestrian area from the Senado Square into two directions

"Before we had the commissioning of big projects to architects and we had important and relevant works done. Now this has stopped and I'm afraid to say that I see that the best projects now rarely or never win." He added that more importance is given to other factors that are not related to design and architectural relevance.

Three other Urban Planning Committee members were also present at the talk - namely

Paul Tse, Wu Chou Kit (also a lawmaker) and Noris Au, vice president of Macau Urban Planning Association.

Au questioned Leão on the possibility of replacing some protected areas – particularly zones C and D – due to the new developments of territorial land and the possibility of expansion. Alternatively, he raised the possibility of relocating the new landfills to other places.

Leão replied, "I never really thought about that. In fact, when we decided [on] these areas there was no other option so we saw them as [our fate]."

Still, he remarked, "these zones are being planned with incredibly good accessibility and due to the fact that they are islands in between the city and exit infrastructures, they are prime locations."

Leão affirmed that the best option at the moment is to give the matter some time, as the major needs will be supplied by the infrastructure being built in the near future at zones A and E, which could function as reserve plots.

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Lei Chin Ion to lead SSM until 2020

The director of the Health Bureau, Lei Chin Ion, has been reappointed for a new service commission for two years until 2020. Official notice was given of Lei's reappointment in the government's Official Gazette, signed by the Chief Executive. The notice cites Lei's "adequate management capabilities and professional experience to carry out the duties" of the post, which will be the same as his current duties.

LRT trains start dynamic tests

The Transportation Infrastructure Office (GIT) has announced that the first phase of dynamic testing on the Light Rail Transit (LRT) trains has begun on the Taipa Line track. GIT said testing began late last week, with the first test carried out between Ocean Station and Pai Kok Station. These dynamic tests will continue until the track becomes active, following static tests that were conducted after the manufacturer's delivery of the first trains in the third quarter of last year. The dynamic tests will be able to test equipment and operational elements including the brakes, doors, lighting and alarm systems.

DSEC launches Greater Bay website

The Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) has announced the launch of a website for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area to reflect the cultural and economic development of its constituent cities. The website brings together principal statistical indicators of the Greater Bay Area cities and data about cultural and economic exchanges between Macao and the other Greater Bay Area cities for public reference. DSEC indicated that the website is still in its early infancy and they will continue to explore different ways and channels for the collection, compilation and presentation of statistical data. The Greater Bay Area is a city cluster formed by nine cities in the Guangdong province and the Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macau.

Gaming revenue growth better than expected in March

THE gaming revenue in March has posted a 22 percent year-on-year gain, according to figures issued by the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau. Revenue rose by 22.2 percent to MOP25.950 billion, a figure that far surpasses analysts' expectations, which ranged between 13 and 18 percent.

Similarly, the accumulated gross revenue for the first three months of 2018 year-on-year registered a growth of 20.5 percent to MOP76.5 billion.

On the results, Union Gaming analyst Grant Govertsen said, "Even though Chinese New Year was in mid-February this year, the traditional post-CNY slowdown felt notably longer than usual this year and seemingly extended into first two weeks of March."



Govertsen added that there was some level of concern that Macau's casinos would experience a slowdown in March due to the National People's Congress (NPC).

"We therefore think Gross Gaming Revenue (GGR) sharply accelerated after the meetings

were concluded, leading to a very strong last week of March," he told website CalvinAyre.com. According to Govertsen, it was the VIP segment that led to the revenue spike in the second half of March. He added that he expects the positive momentum of Macau casino

revenues to continue into April. Commenting on the year's accumulated results, the Union Gaming analyst also expects that they are "likely to maintain a 20 percent and above GGR average" in the second quarter of 2018, with the VIP segment expected to remain the key driver of performance.

With last month's results, March has become the 20th consecutive month in which the gaming industry has reported gains, cementing the recovery after revenues plunged to five-year lows due to slowing economic growth and a widespread crackdown on corruption starting in 2014.

Still, despite the consistent gains reported, the current figures are still far from the peak levels, hovering around the monthly revenues seen in 2012. **RM**

Radio Taxi still fails to respond to over 60 percent of requests

MACAU Radio Taxi Ltd admitted it has failed to respond to over 60 percent of customers requesting to use its services, blaming the lack of vehicles and professional drivers.

Speaking to local broadcaster TDM, Ken U, the general manager of Macau's only legal ride-hailing company, said the company is only capable of meeting the requests of some 35 percent of its passengers, despite being in operation for nearly a year.

The firm commenced operations in April 2017 and states that its ultimate goal is to meet 80 or 90 percent of customer requests in order to better serve residents. It hopes to acquire more vehicles.

"100 percent is the best, but things can't be this perfect. We [would be] satisfied with 80 or 90 percent, but it has yet to be attained. The lack of vehicles is a headache for us," U added.

In July 2017, the company admitted that it had failed to answer some 70 percent of passengers requesting to use its services.

Although it had received



a total of 320,000 calls in its first three months of operation, it only managed to respond to an average of 1,000 passengers per day.

The number of app users increased by 65 percent in the last quarter of 2017, with the firm saying it is working to improve its services, including its mobile app.

"To further enhance our efficiency, we're also working out how we can immediately respond to nearby requests for rides upon dropping off passengers in a bid to cut costs," he said.

U claimed that the pick-up rate would hit 90 percent if 200 more

special taxi licenses were added.

Prior to the launch of Radio Taxi, which has an eight-year license, the government stated that they will monitor various aspects of the service in accordance with the concession contract. These include the number of vehicles in operation and the phone call pick-up ratio. Should the service not be up to standard, it will be subject to fines and penalties that can lead to the concession's termination.

The Transport Bureau had previously announced that the 100 new available licenses for taxi services would be limited to electric vehicles.

Gov't wants to promote national strategies through local media

THE government spokesperson and director of the Government Information Bureau (GCS), Victor Chan, said late last week that the government plans to work more closely with Macau's media to promote the central government's national strategies, including the city's role in the Belt and Road Initiative and the Greater Bay Area.

Speaking on the sidelines of a media event, Chan said that the government would dedicate more resources to promoting such policies via multimedia platforms and the government news portal.

He added that the establishment of the government spokesperson system had facilitated better and closer relations between the government, the media and the public.

According to the GCS chief, the government wants to implement three policies in order to enhance information output to the media and public.

The first was to improve the government spokesperson system by enhancing internal communication between different public departments, as well as other potential measures. Ground-level representatives of government bureaus would also be supported in communicating government policies to local



Victor Chan

media platforms.

Secondly, GCS plans to promote more news about Macau's participation in, and contribution to, the development of national strategies. For example, it will communicate more detailed information about the development of the Belt and Road Initiative and regional cooperation to that end.

Thirdly, the government wants to "maintain close communication with the media in order to provide greater support for their work."

Chan also shared his insights regarding the development of new media and how the government has begun to embrace it.

Recent efforts included the launch in March 2017 of a Facebook page for the purposes of sharing government news, events and policies. In the past year, GCS also produced more video news clips, photographic essays, infographics and video features.



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Taipa Village ShopHouse, Taipa

(Ref: 16100620)
1,400 sq.ft. HKD 50,000

Located in the pedestrian shopping area of Taipa village, this is a unique opportunity to rent a great space. Recently upgraded by the owner the property had two toilets, one on each level. With little investment this property could be turned into a commercial enterprise or a home.



Apartment B, Sakura Court, Ocean Garden

(Ref: 10020165)
3,700 sq.ft. HKD 35,000

Mid - floor, 4 bedroom apartment located in Taipa. Nice apartment for family. Unfurnished, but all appliances built-in. Large and bright living room with balcony with amazing seaview. Carpark included. Clubhouse facilities can be available gymnasium, outdoor pool, mini theatre, function rooms etc.



Cheoc Van House, Coloane

(Ref: 17060651)
6,222 sq.ft. HKD 79,800

Combining dazzling sea views, stylish interiors and cavernous comfort, this multi-storey property is a rare find in Macao. There are 3 bedrooms on the second floor for family and guests, and the top floor is reserved for a personal studio with a full-size closet and en suite bathroom.

FOR SALE



Jubilee Court, Macau

(Ref: 18030672)
2,200 sq.ft. HKD 15.98M
Rate: HKD 7,263

Great size four bedroom apartment in downtown Macau, across the road from Star World and next to the Landmark this apartment is well located. Two double bedrooms have built wardrobes and walk in shower rooms. The other two bedrooms share a bathroom. Plenty of bespoke storage throughout the property.



Panorama Penthouse Apartment

(Ref: 18015542)
4,851 sq.ft. HKD 28M
Rate: HKD 5,772

Lower level comprising open plan lounge and dining area. This level also includes an indoor pool, 4 bedrooms & 4 bathrooms. The upper mezzanine level has a room ideal for use as a study, this area also provides access to the roof area dedicated to this apartment. Asking price includes use of one parking onsite parking space.



Bauhinia Court, Hellene Gardens

(Ref: 18015543)
1,663 sq.ft. HKD 7.98M
Rate: HKD 4,798

Stunning 3 bedroom top floor apartment with twin-carpark that accommodates 3 cars. The master bedroom has green views over the mountains and has a large fitted wardrobe the length of one wall, with modern en suite bathroom. The other two guest rooms are a good size sharing the charcoal / white modern shower room. All rooms fully air conditioned including the kitchen.



Grande Plaza, Taipa

(Ref: 17115537)
980 sq.ft. HKD 7.9M
Rate: HKD 8,061

Superb bright & quiet three bedroom apartment in Taipa just off the main road. Renovated a few years ago the apartment is ready to occupy. Three good size bedrooms with two shower rooms, one en suite off the master bedroom. Fantastic location right next to the escalator on the main road in Taipa, easy public transportation, shopping, schools etc.



Calçada da Surpresa, 12, Ching Fai Court, Macau

(Ref: 18035547)
2,000 sq.ft. HKD 11.5M
Rate: HKD 5,750

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The Buckingham, Unit C, Taipa

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1,186 sq.ft. HKD 9.48M
Rate: HKD 7,993

Great two bedroom apartment in Central Taipa. Open plan kitchen with fitted appliance. Two double bedrooms sharing one walk in shower room. Good size living area with balcony.



Violet Court, Hellene Gardens, Coloane

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2,530 sq.ft. HKD 20M
Rate: HKD 7,905

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Elaine Wynn says casino downplayed sex misconduct allegation

Edvard Pettersson, Valerie Miller

ELAINE Wynn said a Wynn Resorts Ltd. in-house lawyer who was told in 2009 about an "alleged rape" of an employee by her former husband, Steve Wynn, called it a "personal" matter.

The ex-wife of the company's founder testified last week for the first time in open court about the allegations of sexual misconduct that led Steve Wynn to step down as chairman and chief executive officer of his casino empire last month.

She said at a hearing in Las Vegas that she told Wynn's general counsel, Kim Sinatra, nine years ago about the alleged rape from four years earlier.

Sinatra responded that "it was not a company matter but a personal matter, and as far as she was concerned, it was handled," according to Elaine Wynn's testimony.

In a statement issued after the hearing, Sinatra said that Elaine Wynn never told her there was an allegation of rape against Steve Wynn.

"In the relevant conversation in which she promised to destroy Steve Wynn and said she didn't care if that reduced the company's stock price to zero in the process, Elaine Wynn made an oblique reference to a settlement, and nothing more," Sinatra said.

A Nevada state judge is deciding what evidence of Steve Wynn's alleged misconduct can be brought at a jury trial scheduled for next month. Elaine Wynn claims she lost her seat on the Wynn Resorts board of directors in 2015 because she had raised questions about her ex-husband's "reckless behavior."

Todd Bice, a lawyer for Wynn Resorts, said the company fundamentally disputed that Elaine

Wynn reported the 2005 incident as a corporate governance issue.

"She was seeking and sharing information from Mrs. Sinatra to use in her divorce," Bice said at the hearing. Elaine Wynn used information about the 2005 incident to get another \$4 million from her ex-husband in their divorce settlement, according to Bice.

Elaine Wynn has argued that a private, multi-million-dollar settlement her ex-husband made with the employee in 2005, without telling the board of directors, was evidence of his irresponsible management of the company.

The Wall Street Journal reported in January that the payment involved allegations that the executive had forced himself upon a company manicurist and that the incident fit a pattern of Steve Wynn pressuring employees to have sex with him. **Bloomberg**



Elaine Wynn, ex-wife of Steve Wynn, listens during a hearing last week

WYNN OFFICIALS WEIGH RENAMING BOSTON-AREA CASINO

WYNN RESORTS is "absolutely" considering renaming its planned Boston-area casino as founder Steve Wynn faces allegations of sexual misconduct. The Boston Herald reports Wynn Boston Harbor President Robert DeSalvo said last week a rebranding of the USD2.4 billion project in Everett, Massa-

chusetts, is "under active consideration." He says an announcement will come later. Republican Gov. Charlie Baker, Democratic state Attorney General Maura Healey and other state leaders have said a name change should be considered, but company officials had previously pushed back on the notion.

AD



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CRIME

Women shot by air gun for singing 'red songs'



TWO middle-aged women sustained injuries yesterday after they were shot by an unknown person using an airsoft gun, the Public Security Police Force (PSP) reported.

The incident took place at the Iao Hon Park yesterday morning around 9 a.m.

The two victims were aged 58 and 60 years old. One of them was injured in the left shoulder while the other's right foot was wounded.

PSP later found two airsoft

pellets near the performance stage inside Iao Hon Park.

The Times contacted PSP for further details regarding the case but was told that there will be no additional information about the case for now.

According to a report by TDM, a witness said that the two victims were singing with a number of other people.

"No more than ten minutes afterwards, the second bullet was shot [in her] foot [...] with blood coming out when the

bullet was removed," said the witness, who noted that this is the

second time that such weapons have been used to shoot people who sing in the park. Previously an assailant jumped onto the stage and fired pellets to halt the singing.

"The [shooter in the first case] has already been arrested. Between ten and 20 days have passed, [and another shooter has come] again today. But we don't have evidence today," said the witness.

The witness alleged that the shooter had targeted the middle-aged singers because they were singing "red songs," a term which refers mainly to politically charged songs that praise mainland China's communist party).

"Last time, [the shooter] jumped straight onto the stage [and opened fire...the shooter] does not want to allow us to sing red songs," the witness said. **JZ**



Theater Terra stages Easter musical

Theater Terra presented the last session of "Guess How Much I Love You" at the Macau Cultural Centre on Easter Sunday, having staged five shows in total over the weekend. Adapted from the popular book penned by Sam McBratney and illustrated by Anita Jeram, the musical took the audience on a journey through the seasons with two life-size puppet rabbits that performed to classic and cinematic tunes. The play tells the story of a father and a son who try to measure their love for each other. Theater Terra also conducted two family-oriented puppetry workshops on Saturday.

Architecture with local features to be exhibited in Venice

THE exhibition of "Unintended Architecture - Exhibits from Macau, China" is ready to be showcased at the 16th International Architecture Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia. The works that constitute the Macau exhibition were sent to Venice in early March and the exhibition team will start setting up exhibits on-site in mid-May. The international exhibition will start on May 26 in Venice, closing on November 25.

This is the third time that the Cultural Affairs Bureau has arranged for the participation of local architects in the event. Recently, the Macau Arts Museum (MAM) held a session to introduce the works of the exhibition.

To address the theme of the Biennale ("Freespace"), the team probed into spaces with local flavor and explored elements of interaction between people and daily spaces: from the open air market at Rua da Emenda, the pathways of Lou Lim Ieoc Garden, the densely populated high-rise buildings, to the stairway of the Ruins of St. Paul's.

The exhibition used acrylic and metal pla-



The exhibition team shows Macau's free space through combinations of "playing cards" of different materials

tes to build the "playing cards" which symbolize the SAR's economic development.

Through different sizes, shapes, textures and arrangements, the playing cards transform and leave blanks in complex spaces, simplifying them into elements that symbolize the region and creating four exhibition spaces with four different themes.

The blanks allow viewers to project their own feelings, memories and imaginings onto the exhibits, thus allowing them to ex-

perience the "Unintended Architecture". This refers to the interactive perception of spatial elements and the process of reflecting on the harmonious relationship established between people and space, the IC noted.

The director of MAM, Chan Kai Chon, believes that the "free space" in imagination reflected in the works shows the world the team's cultural confidence and their latest perception of society, and also offers future possibilities for ideas.



MUSIC

Macao Orchestra performs in Myanmar

THE Macao Orchestra held its first ever concert in Myanmar, performing at the Strand Hotel in Yangon on Friday night. The performance was a joint initiative between the Chinese Embassy and the MSAR Secretariat for Social Affairs and Culture.

The show represents an important cultural exchange between Macau and Myanmar, which will expand the dimension of China-Myanmar relations, Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar Hong Liang said in a message.

The orchestra's visit will also deepen the bonds between the people of China and Myanmar, he added.

Macau Secretary for Social Affairs and Cul-

ture, Alexis Tam, also expressed his belief that the concert could bring the people of the two countries closer. He hoped that Macau and Myanmar could have more such cultural exchange and cooperation in the future.

The orchestra, led by music director and principal conductor Lu Jia, performed well-known masterpieces by Mozart.

Established in 1983, the Macao Orchestra is well known in Asia for its performances of Chinese and Western classics.

The orchestra has performed in at least 30 cities across China as well as Austria, Switzerland, Hungary, Portugal, Spain, the United States and others. **MDT/Xinhua**

Demonstration law revision to be voted on today

The government has proposed an amendment to the city's demonstration law, with the bill expected to be voted on during the Legislative Assembly's plenary meeting today. According to lawmaker Ng Kuok Cheong, the proposal means that the principal officials believe that normal human rights activities threaten the city's security. Ng believes that conflicts within society will worsen should the government continue pursuing its current strategy. He noted that the Chinese central government endorses such changes.

Fire breaks out at construction waste landfill

Last Saturday, a fire took place in the vicinity of a waste landfill of construction materials near the airport in Taipa. The fire covered an area of 20 meters by five square meters. The Fire Services Bureau deployed 11 emergency vehicles, 40 firefighters and seven pipes. The fire broke out about a kilometer from the entrance of the landfill. According to the authorities, no one was injured or killed.

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Singapore home prices jump the most in almost eight years

Andrea Tan

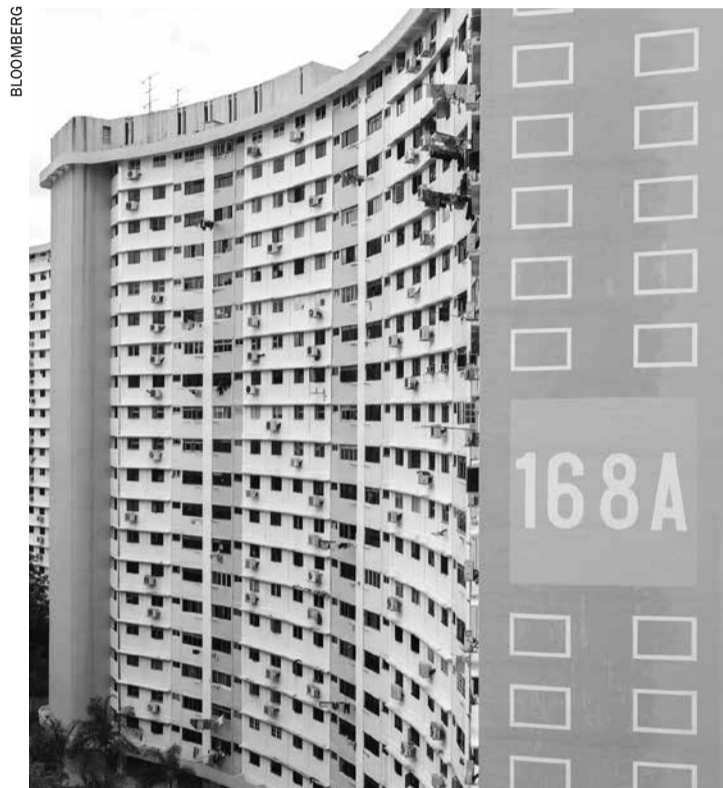
SINGAPORE private home prices surged the most since 2010 as the property market staged a recovery from a four-year slump.

An index tracking private residential prices jumped 3.1 percent in the three months ended March 31, according to a flash estimate from the Urban Redevelopment Authority, building on a 0.8 percent gain the previous quarter. That's the biggest quarter-on-quarter gain since the three months ended June 2010.

Home prices have rebounded in the past three quarters, prompting aggressive land bids from developers as the property market shrugged off cooling measures ranging from additional taxes to limits on loans. The government in February raised taxes on home purchases exceeding SGD1 million (USD764,000) as the collective apartment sales market reached levels described as exuberant by the central bank.

"There's no denial we're entering an escalating market in light of higher land prices," said Desmond Sim, head of research for Singapore and Southeast Asia at CBRE, who had forecast a 5 percent to 6 percent increase in home prices for 2018.

Share prices of the city's largest real estate developers led gains on the benchmark Straits Times Index. City Developments Ltd., controlled by billionaire Kwek Leng Beng, climbed 1.5 percent to SGD13.20, the highest in



There's no denial we're entering an escalating market in light of higher land prices.

DESMOND SIM

more than a week. CapitaLand Ltd., Southeast Asia's biggest developer, rose 1.4 percent to SGD3.62, the most since March 6.

Singapore's so-called core central region drove the price increase, where housing values climbed 5 percent in

the area that includes prime residential districts. That's pushed by a handful of developments such as GuocoLand Ltd.'s Martin Modern, according to CBRE.

With 90 percent of new residential properties sold in 2017 at below SGD2 million, that means home buyers may opt for smaller units to keep to their budgets as home values rise, Sim said. If the majority of transactions move up to SGD2.5 million, demand could ease, he added.

Foreign buyers from mainland China, Hong Kong, Korea and Taiwan accounted for the bulk of demand in the core central region, according to real estate consultancy Edmund Tie & Co. **Bloomberg**



Branson sprays champagne at a news conference in Las Vegas

Richard Branson buys Hard Rock casino-hotel in Las Vegas

Regina Garcia Cano, Las Vegas

THE Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas will be overhauled over the next several months following its purchase Friday by billionaire Richard Branson.

The property with about 1,500 rooms and suites off the Las Vegas Strip and eventually become Virgin Hotels Las Vegas. It will continue to operate under the Hard Rock brand through the end of 2019, when the renovations are expected to be completed.

"Virgin is all about fun, entertainment, not taking ourselves too seriously," Branson said. "Virgin Atlantic has had a lot of fun flying tons of people to Las Vegas from Britain for many years. Virgin America has done the same, and we wouldn't have just come to Las Vegas unless we could've found the property that was very Virgin, and I think that's what we've achieved."

The 23-year-old property will remain open during renovations, which will take place in multiple phases. The company said it will invest "hundreds of millions of dollars" to transform the property, but it was not immediately clear whether the hotel-casino will keep its current entertainment venues, including a popular nightclub.

The property will retain its casino floor, which will be managed by a partner. Some of the large rock memorabilia that the Hard Rock casino-hotel owns may go to storage.

"The guitar may not survive," Branson said referring to a massive gui-

tar outside the hotel. "But we have a giant 'v', which is sort of guitar-shaped, which may take over."

Virgin Hotels purchased the property with a group of partners, including Los Angeles-based investment firm Juniper Capital Partners. The terms of the purchase from Brookfield Asset Management were not disclosed.

Branson, who has previously rappelled down a casino-hotel and got on a jet ski on the fountains outside the Bellagio casino-resort to promote his businesses, promised an "equally fun" event for the hotel's official launch.

The leader of the Culinary Union, which represents more than 50,000 casino-hotel workers in Las Vegas, said Brookfield and Virgin Hotels have agreed to a process that will ensure management remains neutral as employees choose whether to unionize "without management interference, harassment, surveillance, bullying, or litigation."

"This is a new era of positive labor-management cooperation at the Hard Rock Las Vegas," Geoconda Argüello-Kline, the union's secretary-treasurer said in a statement.

The only Virgin Hotel opened so far is in Chicago. Others are planned for New York, Dallas, New Orleans, Nashville, Washington D.C., San Francisco, Silicon Valley, Palm Springs, California, and Edinburgh, Scotland.

Branson has run a number of businesses under the Virgin brand, including records, airlines, wireless carrier and a commercial space venture. **AP**

corporate bits

SANDS CONDUCTS CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVES FOR TEAM MEMBERS



Sands China Ltd. recently conducted two environmental sustainability and climate change initiatives, including its participation in Earth Hour 2018 and the hosting of an in-house Climate Week at Sands China properties.

The integrated resort operator joined businesses and individuals around the world in observing Earth Hour on Saturday, March 24, marking ten straight years of turning off the lights at its properties.

The gaming operator's observance of Earth Hour was complemented by its own in-house Climate Week, which was held between March 20 and 27 at the employee back-of-house areas of Sands China properties.

Climate Week encouraged team members to take action to address climate change. The highlight of the week was an Energy Saving Roadshow, said the gaming operator in a statement.

The roadshow encouraged team members to replace their homes' incandescent and compact fluorescent bulbs with ultra energy-efficient LEDs to save energy.

More than 4,000 energy-saving lighting products were sold during Climate Week.

GALAXY INTRODUCES ELECTRIC BUSES



Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) has introduced electric passenger buses in Macau and expects to introduce more such buses in

future, the gaming operator announced in a statement.

GEG introduced its electric buses in late 2017 after several months of performance

assessment and trial operations. The gaming operator's electric buses have already begun conveying visitors along its Border Gate route.

Compared to diesel-powered buses, GEG's electric buses are propelled solely by energy-efficient electric motors, which produce zero emissions and little noise.

GEG's flagship properties Galaxy Macau and StarWorld Hotel have obtained ISO14001 Environmental Management System Certification.

Additionally, GEG has established an Environmental Committee and an Energy Management Committee to promote energy conservation and environment protection among its team members.



Chinese Catholics chat after attending a morning service at the Hepo underground Catholic church in Jiexi county, Guangdong



Bishop Zhuang Jianjian gestures as he tries to avoid the journalists' questions at the Hepo underground Catholic church

As China, Vatican talk, bishop's fate shows party's power

Yanan Wang, Saiqi, China

THE twin-spired church in this southern Chinese village was packed with more than a thousand Catholics observing Good Friday, but the bishop who tends to the congregation was not among them. Just a day earlier, government agents had taken him away.

Bishop Guo Xijin is at the center of talks between the Vatican and the atheist Communist Party that will likely yield a deal on who appoints bishops in China. The move would be historic, uniting the country's Catholics for the first time since Beijing and the Holy See severed relations nearly seven decades ago.

At a pre-dawn Mass on Thursday, Guo had urged congregants at the Saiqi church to be brave and keep the faith. "Full of comfort and hope, we are inspired to more bravely face struggles and offer our love to God," he told them.

Not long after, government agents arrived and for the second time during Holy Week took Guo away for what they described as a "vacation" — a euphemistic term in China for an enforced disappearance.

For years, China's Catholics have been split between those who follow state-authorized churches outside the Vatican's authority and those who attend underground churches that swear fealty to the pope. Guo is the head of one such underground diocese.

Under the deal being discussed, the Vatican is expected to recognize seven Beijing-appointed bishops not chosen by the pope, and Guo and one other

underground bishop would step aside.

Supporters say the deal would help the Holy See achieve its years-long goal of bringing all of China's 12 million Catholics ostensibly under the pope's wing.

Others, including a prominent Hong Kong cardinal, have accused the Vatican of selling out its followers to an authoritarian regime.

The essence of faith, after all, is that it exists in light. If a faith is opaque and has its doors closed, that is darkness.

REV. XU JIHUA

Guo's exile serves as a stark reminder of the power of a state that has been seeking to center the people's devotion on the ruling party.

It also highlights how high-level deliberations in the marble-columned splendor of the Vatican City and in Beijing's walled leadership compound could have reverberations in places like rural Saiqi for generations to come.

Guo's church sits atop a sloping hill overlooking meandering streets of small barber-shops and noodle joints. Parishioners say they don't know what to expect from a deal they

discuss mostly in whispered conversations between morning and evening services.

For decades, they say, they've been able to peacefully practice their religion despite being under the watchful eye of the state. But it wasn't always that way.

The story of the Catholic Church's dark period in China during Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution has been told and retold to the young people at Guo's parish. They've heard the tales of elderly relatives having their Bibles torn up, being paraded down the streets during public shaming sessions or sent away to labor camps.

"That generation had to go through so much," said Huang Weiping, 37, who manages a shop selling rosary beads and portraits of Joseph and Mary.

He said his relative was Guo's predecessor, Bishop Huang Shoucheng, who spent many years in prison.

Lin Qigua, a 55-year-old parishioner, said bridging the divide between the official and underground church would be difficult.

"Our parents always told us that the Catholic Church comes from Rome, and then suddenly the Communist Party comes out with its own church," Lin said. "There's a conflict here, isn't there? Our ancestors sacrificed so much — was their blood shed for nothing?"

The state-backed Chinese church at recent conferences has stressed the need to remain independent of the Vatican and to "Sinicize" itself — code for accepting party leadership and rejecting foreign links.

A Vatican official who spoke

on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to reveal the content of the talks with China acknowledged there were downsides to the potential deal. The official said it would limit the Holy See's activities in China and cede power to Beijing to nominate bishops, with the pope only able to exercise what amounts to a papal veto.

China's State Administration of Religious Affairs declined to be interviewed. The underground Churches have had regular communications with Chinese authorities since the 1990s, and officials even ask the church for help with local disputes, said Rev. Peng Zhenkang, a priest in Guo's parish. "Villagers here will listen to clergy," Peng said.

He said Guo is often taken away during "sensitive" periods and that the bishop doesn't resist. This time, Peng said, his exile was surely linked to the Vatican talks.

Reached by phone on Thursday, a priest who had been asked by authorities to leave Saiqi along with Guo said they were just getting off a train in Xiamen, a city more than 255 kilometers away. "It's inconvenient for the bishop to talk right now. I'm sorry," Rev. Xu Wenming said before hanging up.

The Vatican official said that under the proposed deal with China, Guo would become an auxiliary bishop to the official, state-recognized Bishop Zhan Silu, but would remain in charge of the churchgoers he had been leading. The official said Guo has agreed to that arrangement.

The other Vatican-appointed leader who would be affected by

the deal is 88-year-old Bishop Zhuang Jianjian, the head of a rural parish in Guangdong province housed in a weathered stucco church built more than a hundred years ago.

Zhuang is described as a pillar of the Catholic communities in the villages clustered in Jiexi county. For decades, he has nurtured generations of Catholics and frequently administers blessings over newborns or newlyweds, the dead or dying, his parishioners say.

The bishop declined to speak to reporters outside his church. "Please forgive me," Zhuang said, bowing in apology.

While several of Zhuang's parishioners expressed admiration for the bishop's generosity and dedication, none were certain they would oppose his departure if the Vatican ordered it.

"We will all stick to the church no matter how the negotiations go," said Huang Q. L., a descendant of three generations of Catholics whose hand-painted Biblical depictions adorn the church nave. "We have all experienced the faith deeply."

Zhuang's proposed replacement is Bishop Huang Bingzhang, who Beijing ordained "illicitly" in 2011 without Vatican approval. Zhuang declined to be interviewed.

One of his priests, Rev. Xu Jihua, said he expected Huang to be ordained by the Vatican. He said ending the divisions between the Vatican and Beijing will be good for Catholics across China.

"No one hopes to live a life of faith under these abnormal conditions," Xu said.

Then, repeating a belief expressed by underground and state-sanctioned churchgoers alike, the priest remarked: "The essence of faith, after all, is that it exists in light. If a faith is opaque and has its doors closed, that is darkness." **AP**



Tariffs on US pork, fruit raised in trade dispute

Joe McDonald, Beijing

CHINA raised import duties on a USD3 billion list of U.S. pork, apples and other products yesterday in an escalating dispute with Washington over trade and industrial policy.

The government of President Xi Jinping said it was responding to a U.S. tariff hike on steel and aluminum. But that is just one facet of sprawling tensions with Washington, Europe and Japan over a state-led economic model they complain hampers market access, protects Chinese companies and subsidizes exports in violation of Beijing's free-trade commitments.

Already, companies are looking ahead to a bigger fight over U.S. President Donald Trump's approval of higher duties on up to \$50 billion of Chinese goods in response to complaints that Beijing steals or pressures foreign companies to hand over technology.

Forecasters say the impact of yesterday's move should be li-

imited, but investors worry the global recovery might be set back if other governments respond by raising import barriers.

Yesterday, the main stock market indexes in Tokyo and Shanghai ended the day down.

The tariffs "signal a most unwelcome development, which is that countries are becoming protectionist," said economist Taimur Baig of DBS Group. But in commercial terms, they are "not very substantial" compared with China's \$150 billion in annual imports of U.S. goods, he said.

Yesterday's tariff increase will hit American farm states, many of which voted for Trump in 2016.

Beijing is imposing a 25 percent tariff on U.S. pork and aluminum scrap and 15 percent on sparkling wine, steel pipe used by oil and gas companies, and an array of fruits and nuts including apples, walnuts and grapes.

American farm exports to China in 2017 totaled nearly \$20 billion, including \$1.1 billion of pork products.

There was no indication whether Beijing might exempt Chinese-owned American suppliers such as Smithfield Foods, the biggest U.S. pork producer, which is ramping up exports to China.

The U.S. tariff hike has "has seriously damaged our interests," the Finance Ministry said in a statement.

"Our country advocates and supports the multilateral trading system," it said. China's tariff increase "is a proper measure adopted by our country using World Trade Organization rules to protect our interests," the statement said.

The White House didn't respond to a message from The Associated Press on Sunday seeking comment. The United States buys little Chinese steel and aluminum, but analysts said Beijing was certain to retaliate, partly to show its toughness ahead of possible bigger disputes. Chinese officials have said Beijing is willing to negotiate, but in a confrontation will "fight to the end."

"China has already prepared for the worst," said Liu Yuan-chun, executive dean of the National Academy of Development Strategy at Renmin University in Beijing. "The two sides, therefore, should sit down and negotiate."

The dispute reflects the clash between Trump's promise to narrow the U.S. trade surplus with China — a record \$375.2 billion last year — and Beijing's ambitious plans to develop Chinese industry and technology.

Last July, U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin complained the Chinese government's dominant role in China's economy was to blame for its yawning trade surplus.

State-owned companies dominate Chinese industries including oil and gas, telecoms, banking, coal mining, utilities and airlines. They benefit from monopolies and low-cost access to energy, land and bank loans.

The ruling Communist Party promised in 2013 to give market forces the "decisive role" in allocating resources. But at the same time, Xi has affirmed plans to build up state industries the party says are the central pillar of the economy.

China has already prepared for the worst.

LIU YUANCHUN

"The thing that is going to be more challenging for Beijing is if the U.S., European Union and Japan get together and start taking measures on state-owned enterprises," said Baig. "That for me would be an escalation, whereas product-by-product back and forth, amounting to a few billion dollars here or there, is not a major substantive concern."

Foreign governments also accuse Beijing of violating free trade by requiring automakers and other foreign companies to work through state-owned Chinese partners. That requires them to give technology to potential competitors.

Last month, a U.S. official cited as "hugely problematic" Beijing's sweeping plan to create Chinese competitors in electric cars, robots, advanced manufacturing and other fields over the next decade. Business groups complain that strategy, dubbed "Made in China 2025," will limit or outright block access to those industries.

The country's top economic official, Premier Li Keqiang, promised at a news conference on March 20 there will be "no mandatory requirement for technology transfers." However, Chinese officials already deny foreign companies are required to hand over technology, leaving it unclear how policy might change.

Trump ordered U.S. trade officials on March 22 to bring a WTO case challenging Chinese technology licensing. It proposed 25 percent tariffs on Chinese products including aerospace, communications technology and machinery and said Washington will step up restrictions on Chinese investment in key U.S. technology sectors. Beijing has yet to say how it might respond.

Trump administration officials have identified as potential targets 1,300 product lines worth about \$48 billion. That list will be open to a 30-day comment period for businesses.

The volleys of threats are "a process of game-playing to test each other's bottom lines," said Tu Xinquan, a trade expert at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing.

"We are curious about what the U.S. side really wants," said Tu, "and wonder whether the United States can tolerate the consequences." AP

Beijing pleased with Hong Kong's condemnation of Benny Tai

MAINLAND authorities have voiced their support for Hong Kong's handling of Benny Tai's controversial remarks in Taiwan.

At a seminar last week in the Taiwanese capital, Tai implied that Hong Kong — along with a number of other minority-ethnic areas of China — might one day become independent or part of a federation, should China become a democratic state.

Hong Kong and mainland officials were outraged by the comments and

denounced Tai for what they described as subversion of the central government and a plot to divide China.

A spokesperson from the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office of the State Council on Saturday expressed resolute support for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government's handling of "Hong Kong independence" activities.

The spokesperson said that "we have taken note of University of Hong Kong associate professor

Benny Tai Yiu Ting recently participating in a meeting of a 'Taiwan independence' organization in Taiwan and blatantly preaching 'Hong Kong independence'," and "we also noticed that the HKSAR government expressed strong condemnation over the event."

"A handful of people in Hong Kong have colluded with outside separatist forces, blatantly preaching 'Hong Kong independence,'" the spokesperson continued.

"This has exposed their

attempt to split our country and has severely violated the Constitution of China, the Basic Law of the HKSAR and relevant laws in Hong Kong."

"We will not turn a deaf ear to or tolerate such kind of activities."

In response, activist and academic Tai warned that Beijing and Hong Kong authorities were seeking to make an example of him to deter other dissenters.

Tai also said he feared new legislation currently being proposed by the



In this 2014 file photo, Benny Tai Yiu-ting, co-founder of activist group Occupy Central With Love and Peace (OCLP), and pro-democracy activists hit drums during a rally

HKSAR would seek to limit freedom of expression, including that protected by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

A demonstration led by democratic lawmakers from the Civic Party and People Power was held in Hong Kong yesterday to rally support for Tai. MDT/Xinhua

Malala ends her first Pakistan visit since shooting

Munir Ahmed, Islamabad

NOBEL Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai left Pakistan yesterday, ending a surprise visit to the country, her first since being shot in 2012 by Taliban militants who tried to kill her for promoting girls' education.

A smiling Yousafzai was seen with her parents at Benazir Bhutto International Airport before they boarded a plane to return to London after the four-day visit.

Amid tight security, Yousafzai earlier in the day left her hotel in Islamabad, where she had stayed for four days, and in a convoy of vehicles headed to the airport. Touching scenes were witnessed when the now-20-year-old university student left the hotel, thanking Pakistani officials for giving her an army helicopter over the weekend to fly to the Swat Valley, once virtually under the control of militants, and see her home in the northwest town of Mingora.

After visiting Mingora on Saturday, Yousafzai in a tweet said it was "the most beautiful place on earth" for her.



Malala Yousafzai (center) poses for a photograph with her family members at her native home during a visit to Mingora

"So much joy seeing my family home, visiting friends and putting my feet on this soil again," said, as she posted a picture of her, showing her standing at her home's lawn with her father, mother and brothers.

Yousafzai also said in her hometown that she had waited for the moment for more than five years and said she often looked at Pakistan on the map, hoping to return.

She said she plans to perma-

nently return to Pakistan after completing her studies in Britain.

Yesterday, Yousafzai's uncle Mahmoodul Hassan told The Associated Press that "she is leaving Pakistan with good and memorable memories, but is going back to England because she wants to complete her education there."

During her visit, Yousafzai also met with Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi. She attended a reception at Abbasi's office and made an emotional speech in

which she said it was one of the happiest days of her life to be back in her country.

Most Pakistanis warmly welcomed Yousafzai's visit but some launched a campaign on social media against her and she also faced tough questions from journalists, asking about the campaign. She said she failed to understand why she was being subjected to this kind of criticism by educated people.

"We want to work for the educa-

tion of children and make it possible that every girl in Pakistan receives a high-level education and she can fulfil her dreams and become a part of society," she told Pakistan's ARY news channel.

Her hometown of Mingora is not far away from the village of Mullah Fazlullah, the head of Pakistani Taliban who dispatched attackers in 2012 to kill Yousafzai, at the time already a known teen activist for girls' education, but she miraculously survived a bullet wound to the head. Fazlullah had taken over Swat in 2007, marking the height of the militant's strength there.

We want to make it possible that every girl in Pakistan receives a high-level education.

MALALA

The Pakistani military later mostly evicted the militants from the valley and now Fazlullah is believed to be hiding in Afghanistan.

Since her attack and recovery, Yousafzai has led the Malala Fund, which helps students in Swat and elsewhere. **AP**

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Kim Jong Un (right) talks to members of the South Korean artistic group



South Korean girl band Red Velvet is seen after their performance in Pyongyang

Kim watches performance by South Korean pop stars

Hyung-Jin Kim, Seoul

NORTH Korean dictator Kim Jong Un clapped his hands and said he was “deeply moved” as he, along with his wife and hundreds of other citizens, watched a rare performance by South Korean pop stars visiting Pyongyang. The concert highlights the thawing ties between the rivals after years of friction over the North’s nuclear program.

During Sunday’s performance at the packed 1,500-seat East Pyongyang Grand Theater, North Korean concertgoers — most of the men in dark suits but some women in colorful traditional “hanbok” dresses — waved their hands from their seats when the South Korean stars joined together to sing a popular Korean song, “Our wish is unification.” After the two-hour performance ended, the North Koreans gave a thundering standing ovation.

A South Korean artistic group, including some pop legends and the popular girl band Red Velvet, flew to Pyongyang over the

weekend for two performances in the North Korean capital, one on Sunday and the other today. How North Koreans would react to Red Velvet was a focus of keen media attention in South Korea.

Kim, wearing a dark Mao-style suit, made a surprise visit to the performance with his wife Ri Sol Ju, sister Kim Yo Jong and other senior North Korean officials, including nominal head of state Kim Yong Nam. Kim Jong Un applauded during the event and shook hands with the South Korean performers. He also took a group photo with them after their performance, according to North Korea’s state news agency and South Korean media pool reports from Pyongyang.

Kim “said that he was deeply moved to see our people sincerely acclaiming the performance, deepening the understanding of the popular art of the South side,” the North’s Korean Central News Agency said.

Short South Korean media pool footage showed Kim clapping from the second-floor VIP stand as South Korean Culture Minis-

ter Do Jong-hwan bowed and greeted North Korean spectators looking on from the first floor.

“We should hold culture and art performances frequently,” Kim told South Korean performers. Mentioning the performance’s title, “Spring comes,” Kim also asked the performers to tell South Korean President Moon Jae-in that the two Koreas should hold a similar event in Seoul in the autumn, according to South Korean media pool reports.

Kim also talked about Red Velvet. “There had been interest in whether I would come and see Red Velvet. I had initially planned to attend a performance the day after tomorrow but I came here today after adjusting my schedule,” Kim was quoted as saying. “I thank you for this kind of gift to Pyongyang’s citizens.”

It was the first time for a North Korean leader to attend such a South Korean performance in the North. During a past period of detente, South Korea occasionally sent pop singers to North Korea, but that stopped in 2005.

The 26-second South Korean

video clip showed a quiet audience when members of Red Velvet, wearing clothes less revealing than their normal stage costumes, danced and sang their popular hit song “Red Flavor.”

It was the first time for a DPRK leader to attend such a South Korean performance in the North

Full video of their and other South Korean singers’ performances wasn’t immediately available. But Red Velvet said in a post-concert interview that the North Koreans gave them a big hand.

Band member Seulgi said she cried when North and South Koreans sang together the song, “Our Wish is Unification.” Another member Yeri said she was “very” nervous when she exchan-

ged handshakes with Kim Jong Un, but she said it was still “really, really an honor” to do so. The South Korean group includes prominent singers such as Cho Yong-pil, Lee Sunhee and Cho Jin Hee, who all previously performed in Pyongyang.

The ongoing cooperation steps between the rivals began after North Korea took part in February’s Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea. During the games, a North Korean art troupe performed in South Korea, and Moon and his wife watched it with visiting senior North Korean officials including Kim Yo Jong, who became the first member of the North’s ruling Kim family to visit the South since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War.

Some experts suspect Kim Jong Un may be attempting to use his outreach to Seoul and Washington as a way to weaken international sanctions and buy time to further advance his nuclear bomb program.

Kim is to meet Moon at a border village on April 27 and President Donald Trump in May in separate summit talks.

Today, the South Korean K-pop stars plan to hold a joint performance with North Koreans. Meanwhile, a South Korean taekwondo demonstration team also held a performance in Pyongyang on Sunday. **AP**

Bodies of 38 workers killed in Iraq arrive back in India

A special plane carrying the bodies of 38 Indian construction workers killed by the Islamic State group in Iraq arrived in the northern Indian city of Amritsar yesterday.

Indian Junior Defense Minister V.K. Singh flew back with the bodies. The Islamic State group abducted and killed the workers shortly after seizing the northern Iraqi city of Mosul in the summer of 2014. Iraqi authorities discovered the remains in a mass grave last year after retaking

Mosul, and identified the bodies last month.

Forty workers were initially abducted. One escaped and the presumed remains of another have yet to be positively identified. Authorities are awaiting DNA samples from a close relative.

The workers were mostly from northern India’s Punjab state and had been employed by a construction company operating near Mosul. Around 10,000 Indians lived and worked in Iraq at the time. The vic-

tims may have been killed because of their Hindu or Sikh faith.

The Islamic State group swept across northern and central Iraq in 2014, eventually seizing a third of the country. Iraqi forces backed by a U.S.-led coalition eventually drove the militants from all the territory under their control in a grueling three-year campaign. The militants are still carrying out insurgent-style attacks.

Dozens of mass graves have been found in areas held by the extre-

mist group, which boasted about massacring its enemies and posted videos and photos of many of the mass killings online. Iraq has only managed to excavate a few of the sites due to a lack of funding and specialized staff.

“We are thankful to the authorities in Iraq for the help to locate the victims and exhume the mortal remains. The government of India did its best to know about the missing Indians,” Singh told reporters in Amritsar. **AP**



Pradeep Singh Rajpurohit (right), India’s Ambassador to Iraq, watches while a casket is loaded on a truck to be transported from Baghdad’s main morgue to the airport

Turkey, Russia deepen ties amid troubled relations with West

Suzan Fraser, Ayse Wieting

TIES between Russia and Turkey are growing closer than ever, as Russia runs into widespread diplomatic fallout from the poisoned spy scandal and Turkey's relations with its Western allies worsens over human rights issues and its military operations against Kurdish militia in Syria.

Russian President Vladimir Putin heads back to Turkey today, joining Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at a symbolic ground-breaking ceremony for a Russian-made nuclear power plant being built on Turkey's Mediterranean coast at Akkuyu. On Wednesday, Putin, Erdogan and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani are expected to hold a summit in the Turkish capital of Ankara to discuss Syria's future.

Turkey and Russia have put aside their traditional rivalries and differences on regional issues to forge strong economic ties. In December, they finalized an agreement for Turkey to purchase Russia's long-range S-400 missile defense system, a deal that raised eyebrows



Erdogan, in full military combat uniform (right) receives a national flag as he visits Turkish troops at the Oglupinar border gate with Syria

among some of Turkey's NATO allies. Aside from the power plant, the two countries are also building the "Turkstream" pipeline to transport Russian gas to Turkey.

"Turkish-Russian relations are in a better mood compared with two years before. Both parties are working together," said Mitat Celikpala, a professor of international relations at Istanbul's Kadir Has University.

"They managed to compartmentalize issues," Celikpala said, citing Turkish and Russian divisions, including over the divided island of Cyprus and Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea. "If you set aside all those issues, they are good partners for the resolution of immediate interests."

Their warming relations come as ties between European Union nations and Turkey have become increasingly testy.

Turkey's EU membership talks have stalled and many EU countries have voiced concerns over the Turkish government's growing authoritarian turn and its crackdown on rights and freedoms, especially following an attempted coup in 2016 that Turkey blames on a U.S.-based Islamic cleric.

Turkey in turn, accuses EU countries of supporting Kurdish rebels as well as the alleged perpetrators of the 2016 failed coup.

Turkey's relations with the United States have fared even worse, with Turkey accusing Washington of harboring the cleric, Fethullah Gulen, and backing Syrian Kurdish militia that Turkey considers to be terrorists.

Last week, Turkey announced it would not be following NATO and EU allies in ousting Russian diplomats in response to the poisoning in Britain of a former Russian spy. Britain has accused Russia of being behind the nerve agent attack on former double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter, prompting nearly two dozen nations to expel over 150 Russian diplomats. Russia has responded by expelling a si-

milar number of envoys.

Turkey condemned the nerve agent attack on British soil without naming Russia, adding that it enjoyed "positive" relations with Moscow.

"Just because some countries took a step based on an allegation, we don't have to take the same step," Erdogan said.

Putin and Erdogan have met several times in the past year and regularly speak on the phone.


Russia and Turkey — along with Iran — are also working together to create "de-escalation zones" to reduce the fighting in Syria and bring the sides of the conflict together to negotiate Syria's future.

The cooperation comes despite their positions on opposing sides in the Syrian conflict — with Moscow siding with Syrian President Bashar Assad and Turkey supporting his foes since the start of the Syrian war seven years ago.

The conflicting interests led to the downing of a Russian warplane by a Turkish jet at the Syrian border in November 2015, which put the two nations on the verge of a direct military conflict.

Russia responded by barring packaged tourist tours to Turkey and halting the imports of agricultural products. The two reconciled after Erdogan issued an apology. **AP**

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Trump calls for border legislation using 'nuclear option'

Darlene Superville, Catherine Lucey

PRESIDENT Donald Trump continued to rage over immigration yesterday, calling on Congress to pass border legislation using the "Nuclear Option if necessary."

Trump tweeted that the U.S. must build a border wall, but argued that "Democrats want No Borders, hence drugs and crime!" He also said that a deal to help "Dreamer" immigrants is "dead because the Democrats didn't care or act."

Trump has previously called for the "nuclear option" — changing Senate rules to end the filibuster. But Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has dismissed that option in the past, saying Republicans will welcome the filibuster when they return to being the Senate minority.

The White House did not immediately answer questions about Trump's tweets. The \$1.3 trillion funding package Congress passed earlier this month included \$1.6 billion in border wall spending. But much of that money can only be used to repair existing segments, not build new sections. Congress also put restrictions on the types of barriers that can be built.

Trump began tweeting over the weekend on immigration from Florida, threatening to pull out of a free trade agreement with Mexico unless it does more



Trump and first lady Melania Trump arrive for Easter services at Episcopal Church of Bethesda-by-the-Sea

to stop people from crossing into the U.S. He claimed they're coming to take advantage of protections granted certain immigrants.

He said Mexico must "stop the big drug and people flows, or I will stop their cash cow, NAFTA. NEED WALL!" The U.S., Canada and Mexico are participating in tense negotiations over the North American Free Trade Agreement at Trump's insistence. Trump says NAFTA is bad for the U.S.

"Mexico has got to help us at the border," Trump, holding his wife's hand, told reporters be-

fore the couple attended Easter services at an Episcopal church near his Palm Beach, Florida home.

Former President Barack Obama created the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program to provide temporary protection and work permits to hundreds of thousands of immigrants who are living in the U.S. illegally after being brought here as children. Trump ended the program last year, but gave Congress six months to pass legislation enshrining it. A deal has so far proved elusive and Trump has blamed Democrats.

It was not immediately clear what Trump was referring to when he said people are coming to take advantage of the program.

The Department of Homeland Security is not issuing new permits, though existing ones can be renewed. The Obama administration allowed signups during a set period of time, and the program is closed to new entrants.

Proposed DACA deals crafted by lawmakers and rejected by Trump also were not open to new participants.

Trump did not explain what he meant when questioned by reporters as he entered the Church of Bethesda-by-the-Sea with the first lady and his daughter Tiffany. The White House did not immediately respond to a request for clarification.

Trump, when addressing reporters briefly before entering the church, again blamed Democrats for failing to protect the "Dreamers."

"They had a great chance. The Democrats blew it. They had a great, great chance, but we'll have to take a look because Mexico has got to help us at the border. They flow right through Mexico. They send them into the United States. It can't happen that way anymore."

Trump promised during the 2016 presidential campaign to build a Southern border wall to stop illegal immigration and

drugs from Mexico, but Congress has frustrated him by not moving as quickly as he wants to provide money for construction.

The president also complained on Twitter that border patrol agents can't do their jobs properly because of "ridiculous liberal [Democrat] laws" that allow people caught for being in the country illegally to be released while they await a hearing before a federal immigration judge.

Trump tweeted that the situation is "Getting more dangerous" and "Caravans" are coming.

The president's tweets came after Fox News' "Fox & Friends" reported early Sunday on what it said is a group of 1,200 immigrants, mostly from Honduras, headed to the U.S. The segment was a follow-up to a report by BuzzFeed News on hundreds of Central Americans making their way through Mexico in hopes that American authorities will grant them asylum or be absent when they attempt to cross the border.

The Fox headline was "Caravan of illegal immigrants headed to U.S." The president is known to watch the cable TV program in the morning.

Brandon Judd, leader of the union representing border patrol agents, predicted on "Fox & Friends" that those in the caravan would create havoc and chaos in the U.S. as they wait for what he described as immigration reform. Judd also said Congress needs to pass tougher laws, an idea Trump appeared to echo, and create more bed space for immigration authorities to house people. **AP**

SYRIA

Largest rebel group starts leaving Damascus enclave

Philip Issa, Beirut

THE most powerful Syrian rebel faction on the fringes of Damascus began abandoning its stronghold in the once rebel-held enclave of eastern Ghouta today, opening the way for government forces to secure full control of the area, after seven years of revolt.

The first fighters from the Army of Islam left the town of Douma around midday as part of an evacuation deal that will hand the town to the Syrian government, reported the state SANA news agency.

The rebels were headed to Jarablus, a town in northern Syria where control of the territory is shared between Syrian rebels and Turkish forces.

The Syrian government

dispatched more than 50 buses to Douma to take the rebels out, SANA reported. By mid-afternoon, eight buses had departed, with 448 people aboard — rebel fighters and their family members.

There was no immediate comment from the Army of Islam. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which monitors the civil war through a network of activists on the ground, also reported the evacuation.

Rami Abdurrahman, the Observatory's director, said some factions within the Army of Islam oppose evacuating and surrendering Douma to the government of President Bashar Assad.

The deal over Douma would mark the end of a weeks-long push by As-



Syrian government forces overseeing the evacuation

sad's forces to consolidate their control over eastern Ghouta, just outside the capital.

Douma was one of the earliest centers of the anti-government demonstrations that swept through the country in March 2011. Syrian government forces responded by putting the town and other suburbs around Damascus under siege, bombing

hospitals and residential areas, and blocking the entry of food and medical relief.

Local activists have said that over 100,000 civilians are trapped inside Douma, which has suffered devastating damage.

The most recent Syrian air and ground offensive on eastern Ghouta, supported Russia's military, killed at least 1,600

people, according to the Observatory. More than 120,000 others fled their homes and sought safety with the government, according to Russia's military operation in Syria.

Russia is a key backer of Assad.

Over the past weeks, as Syrian forces reclaimed towns and villages in eastern Ghouta, they gave rebels and men of fighting age the choice of accepting amnesty and serving in the Syrian military conscription, or relocating to rebel-held areas in northern Syria. More than 40,000 rebels and their family members chose to relocate, according to the Russian military.

Turkey, with support from rebels, is running its own military operations against a U.S.-backed

Kurdish militia in northern Syria, which controls territory along the frontier.

On Sunday, the Syrian government-linked Central Military Media outlet said that once the evacuations were completed, a local council for Douma would be formed with the approval of the central government.

Syria's seven-year bloodletting has left around 450,000 killed. More than 11 million people — about half the country's prewar population — have been displaced from their homes, including over 5 million who are living as refugees outside Syria, according to the United Nations. The U.N. has estimated the material cost of the war damage at close to \$250 billion. **AP**

what's ON



"PUNACOTHECA" - PAINTINGS AND ILLUSTRATIONS BY RODRIGO DE MATOS
 TIME: 2pm-7pm (Mondays to Saturdays)
 UNTIL: April 21, 2018
 ADMISSION: Free
 VENUE: Center for Creative Industries, G/F Macau Cultural Centre Building, Xian Xing Hai
 ENQUIRIES: (853) 2875 3282

WOMEN ARTISTS 1ST INTERNATIONAL BIENNIAL OF MACAU
 TIME: 10am-7pm (last admission 6:30pm; closed on Mondays)
 UNTIL: May 13, 2018
 VENUE: Macau Museum of Art
 ADMISSION: Free
 ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

DIN DONG X TAIPA VILLAGE CREATIVE ART EXHIBITION
 TIME: 12pm - 8pm (closed on Monday)
 UNTIL: April 13, 2018
 VENUE: Taipa Village Art Space
 ADMISSION: Free
 ENQUIRIES: (853) 2857 6118

THE DINOSAUR HUNT
 TIME: Round the clock ("Dino Escape" green-screen experience only available from 12pm-8pm)
 UNTIL: April 15, 2018
 VENUE: Studio City Macau
 ADMISSION: Free
 ENQUIRIES: (853) 8868 6767

Offbeat

IOWA MAN WINS LAWSUIT OVER CALLING HIS HOMETOWN STINKY



An Iowa man threatened by city officials with legal action for saying on a website that his hometown smelled like "rancid dog food" won a free-speech lawsuit Thursday when a federal judge prohibited the city from further threats and awarded him damages.

Josh Harms, represented by the American Civil Liberties Union of Iowa, filed suit in U.S. District Court earlier this month asking a judge to block Sibley officials from suing him.

City officials said they'd sue if he didn't stop criticizing the town's odor problem from Iowa Drying and Processing, which makes a high-protein animal food supplement from pig blood.

The company moved to a vacant building in Sibley in 2013 and Harms began publishing his protest website in 2015. In December, the city's attorney Daniel DeKoter sent Harms a letter saying Harms was hurting the community with his website and threatened a lawsuit if he didn't stop.

Judge Leonard Strand approved on Thursday a permanent injunction agreed to by the city and Harms.

The injunction prohibits the city from making further threats. It allows Harms to talk to reporters and continue to publish websites critical of the city odor issue.

The city also agreed to pay Harms \$6,500 in damages and \$20,000 in legal fees, issue a written apology and hold First Amendment training for city staff.

"Personally disagreeing with something that's been written is understandable, but threatening the writer with a lawsuit while representing the government is censorship. It violates the First Amendment and our freedom of speech," Harms said.

TV canal macau



13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
14:50	RTPi Live
17:10	Revenge Sr 2
17:50	Now Generation (Repeated)
18:40	Non-Daily Portuguese News (Repeated)
19:40	Soap Opera
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	TDM Sports
22:10	Now Generation
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Champions League Highlights
00:05	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
00:40	RTPi Live

cinema



CINETEATRO

29 MAR - 04 APR



READY PLAYER ONE

ROOM 1

2:30, 7:00, 9:30pm

Director: Steven Spielberg

Starring: Tye Sheridan, Olivia Cooke, Ben Mendelsohn

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 140min

YO-KAI WATCH THE MOVIE: A WHALE OF TWO WORDS

ROOM 1

05:00pm

Director: Shinji Ushiro

Starring: Shōtarō Morikubo, Ai Kayano, Sumire Uesaka

Language: Cantonese



PACIFIC RIM: UPRISING

ROOM 2

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

Director: Steven S. DeKnight

Starring: John Boyega, Scott Fastwood, Rinko Kikuchi

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 111min

PETER RABBIT

ROOM 3

2:00, 3:45pm

Language: Cantonese

7:45pm

Language: English (Chinese)

Director: Will Gluck

Starring: Domhnall Gleeson, Rose Byrne

Duration: 95min



MARY MAGDALENE

ROOM 3

5:30, 9:30pm

Director: Garth Davis

Starring: Rooney Mara, Joaquin Phoenix, Chiwetel Ejiofor

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 120min

this day in history

1996 'UNABOMBER'
SUSPECT ARRESTED

Police in the United States have arrested a man they believe to be the notorious "Unabomber" who has killed three people and maimed 23 others.

The suspect, named as Theodore Kaczynski, was arrested in Montana on Wednesday.

Attacks attributed to the Unabomber stretch back 18 years and span the US.

The first parcel bomb was sent in May 1978 and the last - which killed California Forestry Association president Gilbert Murray - was in April last year.

Theodore Kaczynski, 53, formerly taught mathematics at the University of California at Berkeley.

He is a graduate of Harvard University and received a doctorate from the University of Michigan.

Federal agents had long thought the Unabomber would have an academic background.

The Unabomber tag came from a combination of the first letters of many of the targets - universities and airlines.

He was thought to be motivated by hatred of the capitalist system and technological advances.

Mr Kaczynski gave up his promising academic career in the early 1970s and moved to a tiny, primitive shack in a remote area on the edge of the Lolo National Forest in Montana.

A neighbour, Dick Lundberg, said he was considered to be a recluse.

"He kept to himself, never bothered anyone. He never did say anything bad about anybody. We thought he was all right," Mr Lundberg said.

A tip-off from members of Theodore Kaczynski's own family is said to have led to his arrest.

At the family home in Chicago they discovered notes by Mr Kaczynski which were strikingly similar to the Unabomber's "manifesto" published by the Washington Post and New York Times newspapers last year.

The family members - believed to be Mr Kaczynski's mother and brother - handed the notes over to the FBI.

They also allowed their house to be searched during which more evidence is said to have been found.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

In May 1998 Theodore Kaczynski was sentenced to life imprisonment without parole.

During his trial Kaczynski said the government's case against him was "political" and admitted no guilt or remorse.

Despite a diagnosis of mental illness, he initially resisted using it in his defence.

Kaczynski avoided the death penalty after a plea bargain deal but later tried to commit suicide.

His younger brother David, who had first contacted the police, received a \$1m reward.

He said he would use the money to help the Unabomber's victims.

YOUR STARS

Aries
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
You can do this the hard way or the easy way -- it depends on what you want the experience to be. If you want to be a big ol' drama queen and make everyone around you roll their eyes, then definitely take the hard way.

Taurus
April 20-May 20
Happy-go-lucky types like yourself can always be counted on for a good time. Party animal is practically your job description right now, but make sure that you don't go overboard.

Gemini
May 21-Jun. 21
The outcome of your plans and efforts all depends on your attitude toward your efforts and the way you deal with others. After all, what's the point of achieving success if you alienate your loved ones.

Cancer
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
You're fit as a fiddle and simply humming with energy. Not only are you ready to tackle all of the tasks on your schedule, but you're ready to solve all the world's problems, too.

Leo
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Mixed messages can be unsettling to digest, especially if you spend your time analyzing and interpreting what it was you really think the deliverer meant. Stop trying to read into their intentions.

Virgo
Aug. 23-Sept. 22
A casual interest develops into something else entirely when you see it in a whole new light. If this happens to be a person, a lighthearted relationship could take a turn and become far more intense.

Libra
Sep.23-Oct. 22
Go your own way. There comes a time when you have to decide what it is you believe and separate that from what you think you should believe or what others tell you to think.

Scorpio
Oct. 23 - Nov. 21
Band together to help someone out. Your organizational skills are needed, but your friends, family and loved ones have a whole assortment of skills that could really kick this charitable effort into high gear.

Sagittarius
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Life's big picture is looking brighter and brighter, if you can only take off those gloom-colored glasses you insist on wearing. The stars expand your career horizon right now.

Capricorn
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
It's the little things that matter the most, especially when it comes to partnerships. Remember how quickly impressions can change before you lose your temper.

Aquarius
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Others can't detect it, but you know -- you're not satisfied with a relationship. While your emotional patterns may seem permanent, that's far from the case. Before you try to change them, work to understand them.

Pisces
Feb.19-Mar. 20
There have been times in the past when you stayed stuck because you were afraid to move. Don't let this be one of those times. Make that decision, and the universe will fling open hitherto sealed doors of opportunity.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy

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

Easy+

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

Medium

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

Hard

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

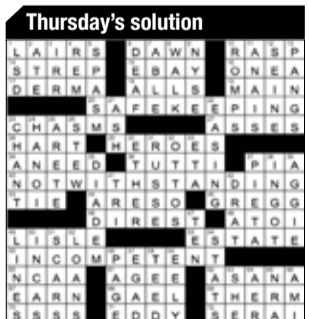
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	11	14	cloudy
Harbin	-3	7	clear
Tianjin	12	15	cloudy/overcast
Urumqi	-2	8	cloudy
Xi'an	13	31	clear
Lhasa	0	16	clear
Chengdu	16	30	clear
Chongqing	16	29	clear
Kunming	10	24	cloudy
Nanjing	18	27	overcast/thundershower
Shanghai	17	24	shower
Wuhan	17	29	clear/thundershower
Hangzhou	18	26	shower
Taipei	21	28	clear/cloudy
Guangzhou	21	30	cloudy
Hong Kong	22	28	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	4	8	drizzle
Frankfurt	0	16	sleet/drizzle
Paris	6	16	drizzle
London	3	5	drizzle
New York	2	11	moderate rain/cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Mami's predecessor; 5- Singer's syllable; 8- First man; 12- Contest, ethnicity; 13- Scenes; 15- Strike out; 16- Volunteer's words; 17- Corbeled bay window; 18- Baking chamber; 19- The Christian world; 22- Hosp. section; 23- ___ roll; 24- Sunset direction; 26- Pulsates; 29- Honest; 31- Source of iron; 32- Sanctify; 34- Tennis's Monica; 36- Half of zwei; 38- Creepy; 40- New Zealander; 41- Furnishings; 43- Sonata movement; 45- Meditative sect; 46- Discharges from the RAF; 48- Having special ability; 50- Burkina ___; 51- Spanish aunt; 52- ___-pitch softball; 54- Quick; 61- Tombstone name; 63- Refrain in a children's song; 64- ___ majesty; 65- Meter maid of song; 66- Babbled; 67- Draft classification; 68- Bounce back; 69- Island of Denmark; 70- Curtain holders;

DOWN: 1- ___-a-brac; 2- Apiece; 3- Skin marking, often due to injury; 4- Elder; 5- Make weary; 6- Equestrian's control; 7- Impressed; 8- Hoopla; 9- Weaken; 10- Actor Baldwin; 11- Diner's card; 13- Subject to a vote; 14- Reduces speed; 20- Highbrow; 21- Sounds like a kitten; 25- Look for; 26- Took a shot at; 27- From now on; 28- Crystal ball users; 29- Of Thee ___; 30- Marry again; 31- Brit. lexicon; 33- B'way hit sign; 35- Sloth, e.g.; 37- Body of an organism; 39- Version; 42- "Titanic" heroine; 44- Think nothing ___; 47- Prizefighter; 49- Fit with clothes; 52- Shrivelled, without moisture; 53- Not of the cloth; 55- "La Vie en Rose" singer; 56- Start of a counting rhyme; 57- "My Heart Will Go On" singer; 58- Vintner's prefix; 59- Previously owned; 60- Mariners can sail on seven of these; 62- Kung ___ chicken;



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- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IACM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
- Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
- Telephone - Report 1000
- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



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<p>FOR SALE www.JMLProperty.com</p> <p>FOR RENT More info, please contact us Info@JMLproperty.com (853) 2835 2699 Office</p>	<p>Chun Hung Garden L Unit Taipa 840 sq ft / HKD 6.49M HKD 7,726sq ft Three Bedroom Apartment Ref: 17075526</p> <p>Riveria Tower 2, Unit N Macau 3 Bedrooms Apartment Available From - June 2018 HKD 15,500 / 1,173 sq ft Ref: 18030671</p>	<p>Caçada da Surpresa, 12, Ching Fai Court Macau 2,000 sq ft / HKD11.5M HKD 5,750sq ft Fabulous Designer Kitchen Ref: 18035547</p> <p>Taipa Village ShopHouse Taipa Pedestrian Shopping Area Recently Upgraded HKD 40,000 / 1,400 sq ft Ref: 16100620</p>	<p>The Buckingham, Unit C Taipa 1,186 sq ft / HKD 9.48M HKD 7,993sq ft Two Double Bedrooms Ref: 18025544</p> <p>Coloane, 4 Storey Commercial Building Coloane Licensed Commercial Space Located In a Wonderful Area HKD 168,000 / 4,003 sq ft Ref: 17040646</p>	<p>Violet Court, Hellene Gardens Coloane 2,530sq ft / HKD 20M HKD 7,905sq ft Beautifully Designed Apartment Ref: 18035546</p> <p>Car Park, Manhattan Taipa Single Car Park Available For Rent HKD 1,800 / sq ft Ref: 17075528</p>	<p>卓雅物業 since 1994 JML property</p>
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FOOTBALL

Premier League pay gap is bigger than HSBC, Goldman

David Hellier

FOOTBALL players' multi-million-pound salaries have made the male-female pay gap at England's Premier League clubs the biggest in the U.K., even larger than the disparity at banks HSBC Holdings Plc and Goldman Sachs Group Inc.

Manchester City, the runaway leader on the field, said women earn 88 percent less than men on an hourly basis. That's one of the biggest differences yet disclosed under new U.K. regulations requiring large employers to publish the gap between male and female pay. Other clubs, including Arsenal, Liverpool and Everton, posted similarly large disparities.

Manchester City, in a move copied by other teams, said that if the first-team players and senior coaching staff are excluded, the gap comes down to 16 percent, which is below the national average of 17.4 percent.

"Manchester City is reviewing its gender pay gap to provide the club with an improved un-



AP PHOTO

derstanding and insight into the various factors which contribute to this complex issue," Chief Executive Officer Ferran Soriano said.

Until Thursday's reports, the biggest U.K. pay discrepancy was retailer Phase Eight's 65 percent, with banks HSBC and

Goldman Sachs just behind. The Premier League teams, which have spent much of the past year at odds with each other over their share of 1 billion pounds (USD1.4 billion) of broadcast revenue, appeared to bond over the gender-pay issue. Instead of reporting their figures

piecemeal, most major clubs were expected to disclose them just ahead of the April 4 deadline, thereby reducing individual scrutiny.

WOMEN'S TEAMS

The Premier League's male players earn an average of 2.64

million pounds a year, according to researcher Sporting Intelligence. While some clubs also field women's teams, members are paid considerably less. And many of the back-office workers are female.

"It should be noted that our senior leadership team within football operations, including the first-team manager, are all male, which significantly contributes to the club's gender pay data," Liverpool CEO Peter Moore said. The club reported a wage gap of 78 percent, but said that dropped to 35 percent when players were excluded.

Although the popularity of women's football is growing, attendance averages around 1,000 for the top female league, compared with more than 75,000 at Manchester United's Old Trafford stadium last season.

Last July, a lower-tier professional club, Lewes, decided to pay its women's team the same as its men's team as part of a campaign to raise awareness about gender inequality.

"The publication of this data will lead to a debate about the role of female footballers, and questions will be asked about whether there's a bunch of men deciding that men's sport is more commercially viable than the women's game," said Charles Cotton of the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development. **Bloomberg**

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FOOTBALL | CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Dominant at home, Europe where Bayern & City measure success

THREE of the teams in the Champions League quarterfinals are in a luxurious position, and running away with their domestic competitions allows them to concentrate on European glory.

Manchester City and Bayern Munich could even secure trophies between the first and second legs in Europe over the next week or so.

City, which travels to Liverpool in an all-northwest England quarterfinal on Thursday [Macau time], has a 16-point lead in the Premier League.

Bayern, which is a point better off at the Bundesliga summit, visits on Tuesday a Sevilla side that is in the European Cup quarterfinals for the first time in 60 years.

Barcelona has a nine-point lead at home as it prepares to host Roma on Thursday [Macau time], with defending champion Real Madrid trailing by 13 points in third place.

Madrid, though, is a European force. Champions League winners in three of the last four seasons, Zinedine Zidane's side visits Serie A leader Juventus on Wednesday [Macau time].

A closer look at the quarterfinal match-ups:

JUVENTUS-REAL MADRID

Has Gareth Bale done enough to retain his place in Madrid's starting lineup?

Either side of the recent international break, Bale scored three goals in two matches.

But he wasn't entrusted with a starting place in the round of 16 against Paris Saint-Germain — reflecting the uncertainty surrounding the Wales forward's status in the squad.

"I'm pleased with his performance," Madrid coach Zidane said after Bale scored twice in a 3-0 win at relegation-threatened Las Palmas on Saturday. "You'll have to wait and see if he plays on Tuesday."

Lucas Vazquez could drop out if Zidane restores the "BBC" front-line of Cristiano Ronaldo, Karim Benzema and Bale.

Bale, though, could miss out again if Madrid decide to add an extra midfielder for the first leg in Turin by including Marco Asensio or Francisco "Isco" Alarcon.

Madrid and Juventus are meeting for the first time since last season's final when the Spanish capital club swept to a 12th European title.

The only Champions League final Madrid has failed to reach in the last four seasons was in 2014-15 — when it lost to Juventus in the semifinals.

Juventus must raise its game after struggling in Serie A recently. After a 0-0 draw at lowly Spal, the team was outplayed by AC Milan for much of Saturday's match before Juan Cuadrado came off the bench to turn things

around.

On his first appearance after more than three months out with a groin injury, Cuadrado grabbed the crucial second goal in a 3-1 win.

"He's come back well and has astounded me," Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri said, "because often in the past he hasn't done well coming off the bench."

Juventus is once again in the hunt for a treble, leading Serie A by four points and through to the Italian Cup final.

BARCELONA-ROMA

Barcelona can count on Lionel Messi again but how fit is he?

After missing recent Argentina games with a muscular problem, he made a scoring return from the bench on Saturday against Sevilla to preserve Barcelona's unbeaten La Liga record this season.

Coach Ernesto Valverde, however, said Messi is still bothered by pain heading into the game against Roma.

The Italian capital club is awaiting a prognosis on Radja Nainggolan's thigh injury. The Belgium international, who has started all of Roma's Champions League matches, limped off 16 minutes into Saturday's 1-1 draw at Bologna.

Roma coach Eusebio Di Francesco is doubtful Nainggolan will recover in time.

"He is the 'Ninja,'" Di Francesco said. "He told me to wait and tried to run it off, but if he had to give up and leave the pitch that means there's really something wrong and the problem is serious."

With Roma prioritizing the game against Barcelona, the lack of depth was evident on Saturday when Edin Dzeko had to come off the bench to salvage a draw.

LIVERPOOL-MAN CITY

City makes a return trip to the only stadium where it has lost during an otherwise unbeaten Premier League campaign.

With Mohamed Salah, Roberto Firmino and Sadio Mane boasting 75 goals between them this season, Liverpool has an impressive attacking armory to take on Pep Guardiola's side.

"They are almost unstoppable," Guardiola said. "The way Liverpool play is so complicated for us. We know that. They are so quick, they are so good."

The 4-3 loss at Anfield in January was a blip in City's progression to the Premier League title that can be sealed with a win against Manchester United on Saturday.

With the European first leg on



Real Madrid's Gareth Bale prepares to shoot on goal



Manchester City's Leroy Sane celebrates after scoring a goal

Wednesday and the return at the Etihad Stadium next Tuesday, Guardiola's predicament will be whether to rest players for the Manchester derby and potentially miss out on winning the Premier League in perhaps the sweetest way.

Guardiola is hoping to welcome Sergio Aguero back from a knee injury that has kept the striker out of action for a month.

While Liverpool is England's most successful side with five European Cups, City has never won the competition. Guardiol

la, though, led Barcelona to two Champions League titles.

SEVILLA-BAYERN MUNICH

Bayern's players must be dreading the sight of Sevilla: Spanish teams have eliminated them in the past four seasons.

Before then, Bayern lifted the European Cup in the all-German 2013 final against Borussia Dortmund when Jupp Heynckes completed a treble before stepping down.

The 72-year-old coach was brought out of retirement to

return in October when Carlo Ancelotti was fired after losing to PSG. Heynckes has overseen a remarkable turnaround, with Bayern on course to repeat the 2013 treble.

Sevilla, though, keeps on upsetting more illustrious sides. Not only was Jose Mourinho's Manchester United stunned in the round of 16 but Barcelona was held to a draw on Saturday.

Sevilla, which won the Europa League in 2014, 2015 and 2016, is contesting its first European Cup quarterfinal since 1958. AP

opinion

Our Desk
Daniel Beitler



RISING INTEREST RATES COULD SPELL TROUBLE

Macau interest rates are expected to rise significantly in the next few years, as local authorities pay close attention to the monetary situation in both Hong Kong and the United States.

Held artificially low for years in the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis, base rates around the world are rising as monetary authorities fear inflation is beginning to set in.

Earlier this year, the World Bank issued a warning that investors and regulators were not taking seriously enough the possibility of a sharp increase in interest rates should inflation appear to be taking hold more rapidly than previously thought.

The monetary authority of Macau – and to a lesser extent it's counterpart in Hong Kong – finds itself in an unusual situation.

On the one hand, the economic reality of the two SARs is one heavily dependent on China, given the scale of imports from the mainland, not least in tourism. But on the other, the monetary situation is largely dependent on the U.S. and its central banking system, the Federal Reserve.

The Macau pataca is fixed to the Hong Kong Dollar, which is in turn pegged to the U.S. dollar. Accordingly, Macau tends to follow Hong Kong when deciding its monetary policy, and Hong Kong follows the United States.

The U.S. Federal Reserve has hiked interest rates six times since December 2015, ending a seven-year freeze at a record low of 0.25 percent. The base rate now stands in the window of 1.5 percent to 1.75 percent, and Federal Reserve officials project a steeper path of hikes in 2019 and 2020 as the economic outlook continues to improve.

Interest rates in Hong Kong and Macau must eventually increase at more or less the same rate. The base rate of the discount window in Macau now stands at 2 percent – slightly higher than in the U.S. – having been elevated most recently on March 22.

The Monetary Authority of Macau says that “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,” meaning that it will rely on U.S. and Hong Kong policymakers to continue determining interest rates.

The most pronounced effect of rising interest rates on the general population in Macau will concern property owners who, depending on the terms of their mortgage, may soon face an increase in monthly repayments.

That hasn't happened yet as Macau mortgage lenders have thus far kept their rates the same even as the de-facto central banking authority ramps up the pressure. But equally, that can't last forever.

The Monetary Authority of Macau has acknowledged that local banks will adjust their deposit and lending rates for retail customers according to their own discretion and to market developments.

Indirectly-elected lawmaker and chairman of the Macau Association of Banks, Ip Sio Kai, warned in February that property owners who acquired their assets in the last decade or so may soon find it “tough” when the rates suddenly increase. The government separately warned residents to be wary of the increases and “prudently assess their repayment ability.”

But another danger lurks in the near future for the two SARs.

As Hong Kong and Macau continue to follow U.S. Federal Reserve decisions, their economies may begin to feel the stress of adopting economic policies designed with not them in mind, but the world number one.

The weakness of the Hong Kong dollar – which last month touched its lowest point in more than three decades – “suggests an imminent risk of capital flight,” according to Francis Chan, a Bloomberg Intelligence analyst.

Moreover, Hong Kong's private debt-service ratio now stands at 28 percent, the highest in the world. As borrowing costs begin to rise, the ever-resilient Hong Kong banking system may be stretched so much that the snap is felt even in Macau.

THE SPACE LAB MOSTLY BURNS UP ON RE-ENTRY IN SOUTH PACIFIC

China's defunct Tiangong 1 space station mostly burned up on re-entry into the atmosphere yesterday over the central South Pacific, Chinese space authorities said. The experimental space laboratory re-entered around 8:15 a.m. Beijing time, the China Manned Space Engineering Office said.

Scientists monitoring the craft's disintegrating orbit had forecast the craft would mostly burn up and would pose only the slightest of risks to people. Analysis from the Beijing Aerospace Control Center showed it had mostly burned up.

Brad Tucker, an astrophysicist at Australian National University, said that Tiangong 1's re-entry was “mostly successful” and that it would have been better if the space station had not been spinning toward Earth.

“It could have been better, obviously, if it wasn't tumbling, but it landed in the Southern Pacific Ocean, and that's kind of where you hope it would land,” Tucker said.

Prosecutors want six years in Ng Lap Seng sentencing

PROSECUTORS in the case of Macau billionaire Ng Lap Seng are pressing for a U.S. District Court in Manhattan to sentence the convicted real estate mogul to more than six years in prison after he was found guilty of bribing United Nations officials to build a conference center in Macau.

Ng was convicted in July last year on several charges including bribery, corruption and money laundering.

Now prosecutors have called for a specific punishment in their most recent filing with the District Court, as well as a USD2 million fine that Ng could be made to pay.

The call comes just a month after defence lawyers asked the court to sentence Ng just to the time he had already served – from arrest to the upcoming sentencing – and allow the nearly 70-year-old real estate developer to return home to China.

Ng was found guilty of several crimes in July last year and now faces a maximum of 65 years in prison.

Throughout the case, prosecutors presented evidence that Ng from 2010 to 2015 bribed two



U.N. ambassadors, including former U.N. General Assembly president John Ashe, paying one \$50,000 monthly at the scheme's peak to create a center to serve struggling Southern Hemisphere nations.

Defense lawyers contended the payments were ordinary.

Ashe, who was arrested in the case but was not charged with bribery, died last year in an accident at his home.

The United Nations said it “cooperated extensively to facilitate the proper administration of justice in this case, by disclosing thousands of documents and waiving the immunity of officials to allow them to testify at trial.”

The verdict was seen as a triumph for prosecutors who navigated thorny legal issues surrounding immunity given to U.N. diplomats before winning the cooperation of suspended Dominican Republic Ambassador Francis Lorenzo, who pleaded guilty to charges and testified against Ng.

Lorenzo said Ng initially paid him \$20,000 a month as president of a media organization before boosting that by \$30,000 a month with instructions to get Ng's construction company named on official U.N. documents as the company that would build the Macau center.

Ng's sentencing is scheduled for May 11. MDT/AP

THE DECISIVE MOMENT



A couple to be takes advantage of the low tide in Coloane village and of Easter Sunday's good weather to take some scenic pictures.

Station	Air quality
Roadside	55-75 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	30-50 Good
Ambient	55-75 Moderate

WORLD BRIEFS

INDIA A special plane carrying the bodies of 38 Indian construction workers killed by the Islamic State group in Iraq arrived in the northern Indian city of Amritsar yesterday. More on p13



TURKEY-RUSSIA Ties between Russia and Turkey are growing closer than ever, as Russia runs into widespread diplomatic fallout from the poisoned spy scandal and Turkey's relations with its Western allies worsens over human rights issues and its military operations against Kurdish militia in Syria. More on p15

ISRAEL said yesterday it has reached an agreement with the United Nations to scrap its contested plans to deport African asylum seekers and will resettle many of them in Western countries instead.



SOUTH AFRICA Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, prominent anti-apartheid activist and the ex-wife of Nelson Mandela, died in a hospital yesterday after a long illness, her family said. She was 81.

FRANCE's national train company is warning that a workers' strike will disrupt train service within France and elsewhere in Europe today and tomorrow.



COSTA RICA Voters gave a resounding no to an evangelical pastor who rose to political prominence by campaigning against same-sex marriage, allowing Costa Rica's governing party to win an easy presidential victory.

BOLIVIA A powerful 6.8-magnitude earthquake struck deep beneath Bolivia yesterday, but there were no reports of injuries or damage.