

CHARGED WITH CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

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Chinese tourists make up the vast majority of visitors to North Korea, where they often pay homage at sites related to China's participation in the war

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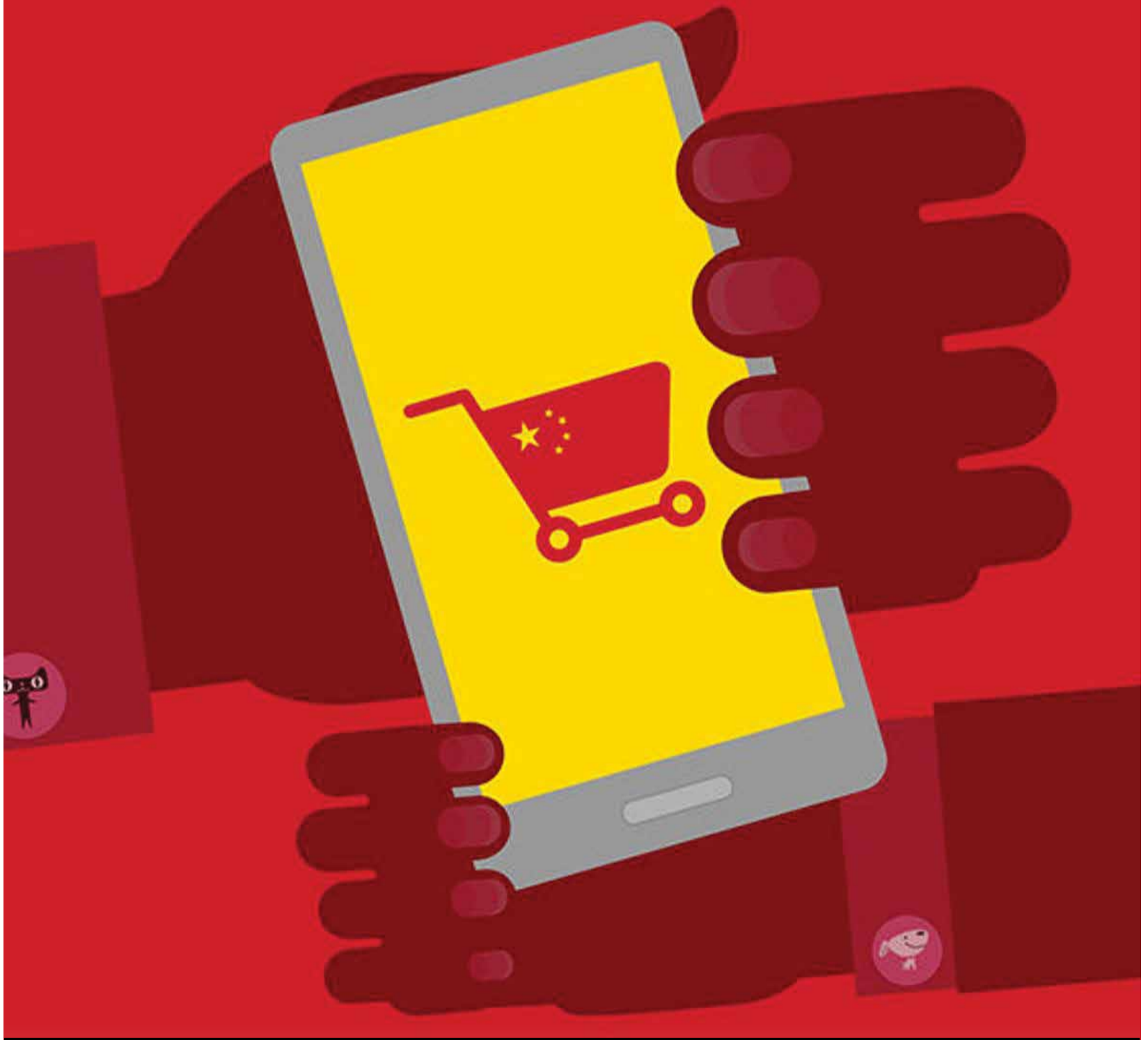
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AP ILLUSTRATION

Cat and dog war

P9,10 CHINA BUSINESS



WORLD BRIEFS

AP PHOTO



KOREA South Korea halted anti-North Korea propaganda broadcasts across their tense border yesterday as officials from the two Koreas met again to work out details of their leaders' upcoming talks, expected to focus on the North's nuclear program. [More on p12](#)

MALAYSIA Police yesterday released images of two suspects in the killing of a Palestinian engineer and said they appeared to be European or Middle Eastern, fueling suspicion that the slaying was an Israeli assassination. [More on p12](#)

PAKISTAN Police in Pakistan have arrested a Muslim man accused of burning a Christian woman to death for refusing his marriage offer, an official said yesterday.

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Inconsistent visitor statistics may produce distorted impressions

P7 MDT REPORT

Resident charged with corporal punishment

Renato Marques

A local man has been charged by authorities for beating and injuring his eight-year-old son with a bamboo stick and a plastic bar, the Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesperson announced during a press conference.

According to the PJ, the incident took place on April 19 in the family's house at Avenida da Concordia in Fai Chi Kei area. The boy's parents are separated and he currently lives alone with his father.

The father, a 34-year-old croupier, began beating the boy after hearing that the child had been in a fight with some classmates. He later confessed to the charges, claiming that the punishment was "common" in the "old days" when parents needed to "educate" their children more harshly.

The neighbors heard the sounds of the beating and the boy's cries, and called the police for help.

The boy sustained injuries to the buttocks, thighs and legs.

The PJ said the case had been transferred from the Public Security Police Force (PSP) for further investigation, and that the Social Welfare Bureau and the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau had been notified to carry out future proceedings.

The father has been presented to the Public Prosecutions Office where he was charged with the crime of simple offense to physical integrity. He will either pay a fine or be imprisoned for up to three years.

In a separate announcement at the same conference by the PSP, a 20-year-old local resident was found behind the wheel of a car despite a one-year suspension of his license following a drunk-driving incident.

The resident was stopped for speeding during a police operation at Rua do Almirante Sergio in Inner Harbour area in the early hours of Monday morning. He was initially unable to provide his license, but the police eventually unearthed his identification documents.

He will be charged for driving during a penalty period as well as aggravated disobedience.



Two illegal immigrants found over the weekend

THE police announced at a press conference yesterday that two illegal immigrants had been discovered over the weekend.

The first, a Vietnamese woman aged approximately 40 years old, was found by an officer on Rua 1 de Maio last Friday morning when she failed to provide documents upon the officer's request. She was later discovered to have entered Macau illegally, and claimed to have entered with the help of a Chinese man in Zhuhai to whom she paid RMB14,000.

She said she had come to Macau to find a job.

The second, a mainland woman in her sixties, presented herself to Police Station Number 3 in NAPE saying that she was illegally present in Macau and requesting that the police assist in her deportation to the mainland.

The woman also said she had illegally entered the MSAR with the help of an individual to whom she had paid RMB1,500.

She claimed she had come to Macau to

seek a person she believed to be in the territory.

Further investigation also revealed that the woman provided a false name when presenting herself to the police station, and that she had done the same thing in the mainland to obtain a travel document for entry to Macau. When this failed, she entered the territory illegally.

Both women are being charged with illegal entry in the region; the second woman is also being charged with providing a false identity to the police.

HERITAGE

'Taipa Anchorage' exhibition opens

THE exhibition "Taipa Anchorage: Names of the Past and the Present" was inaugurated last week at the Taipa Houses-Museum.

According to a statement issued by the Cultural Af-

fairs Bureau, the current Cotai District was once the location of the Taipa Anchorage, through which many foreign commercial vessels frequently passed. This exhibition, to be held in the former

Taipa Anchorage area, will introduce visitors to the piece of land, as well as the historical stories which took place there. The exhibition showcases various artefacts of historical significance, in-

cluding ancient maps of Macau such as the "Map of the Taipa Anchorage and of Macau in the 18th Century" and the "Map of Macao and the islands in its vicinity (1891)". It will also exhibit ancient books

like Hai Dao Tu Shuo (The China Sea Directory) and Guangdong Tongzhi (Guangdong Annals) of the Qing dynasty, along with the e-book version of Hai Dao Tu Shuo, available for visitors to get to

know its intriguing content.

Admission to the exhibition is free. The venue is open from 10a.m. to 7 p.m. (last admission at 6.30 p.m.) from Tuesdays to Sundays.

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF (DIRECTOR) Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com
MANAGING EDITOR Paulo Barbosa paulo.barbosa@macaudailytimes.com
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS Eric Sautedé, Leanda Lee, Severo Portela

NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Daniel Beitler, Emilie Tran, Grace Yu, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Joseph Cheung, Julie Zhu, Juliet Risdon, Lynzy Valles, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Rodrigo de Matos (cartoonist), Viviana Segui
DESIGNERS Eva Bucho, Miguel Bandeira | ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | NEWS AGENCIES Associated Press, Bloomberg, Financial Times, MacauHub, MacauNews, Xinhua | SECRETARY Yang Dongxiao army@macaudailytimes.com

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ADMINISTRATOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

SECRETARY Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com

ADDRESS Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C.

MACAU SAR Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84

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Title-sponsored by Wynn, the second 'Wynn Cup – Macau Primary School Student National Education Drawing Competition' attracted active participation from over 30 schools and over 10,000 Macau primary school students. Under the theme of 'My Chinese Dream', children were encouraged to paint the country and national landscape through their eyes, and express their passion for China, Macau and their lives.





East Timor Attorney General visits Macau

A delegation of the Attorney General of the Republic of East Timor – led by the Attorney General himself, José da Costa Ximenes – is paying an official visit to Macau, which began on Sunday and will end tomorrow. Macau's Public Prosecutions Office invited the delegation to discuss matters such as the powers and functions of both countries' prosecution services, staff welfare, crime-fighting, judicial cooperation mechanisms and more. The visit is intended to strengthen ties between both institutions. The delegation will then travel to the city of Shenzhen for a similar exchange, which will be facilitated by Macau representatives. The East Timor delegation has also scheduled several visits to local judicial institutions and departments during their stay in Macau.

CEM raises tariff for certain customers

CEM said in a statement that the Tariff Clause Adjustment during the second quarter of 2018 for Tariff Group A, B and C customers will be set at 37 cents per kWh. The change represents a marginal increase of 3 cents per kWh from the previous quarter and was justified by a rise in the RMB exchange rate. The power company said it would "strive to stabilize [the] electricity tariff through selecting the best energy mix, provide secure and reliable power supply to Macau, as well as to meet Macau citizens' energy needs for both business and everyday life activities."

Rodolfo Avila back to CTCC in 2018

Macau driver Rodolfo Avila will return to the China Touring Car Championship (CTCC) this year, after having achieved the second position overall in his debut year in the competition (2017). Avila will be racing with the SVW333 Racing team, the same team in which he debuted last season. Despite difficult circumstances, he was able to finish in the podium on four occasions throughout the season and score enough points to finish second overall. This time, Avila will be one of the five drivers of the official SAIC Volkswagen team to participate in the biggest Chinese motorsports championship. Former World Touring Car Championship winner and the most successful driver ever at Macau's Guia Circuit, Rob Huff, will be racing on the same team. As in the last edition, Avila will be at the wheel of one of the VW Lamando GTS cars. Avila has made several improvements from last year and is confident for a good season, which will begin at the first weekend of May with rounds 1 and 2, both at the Shanghai F1 circuit.

Vendors criticize IACM's proposal for rest days

A new regime for Macau's street markets has drawn criticism from local vendors who describe it as unfair.

The Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau (IACM) has proposed a rule banning street market stalls from closing for more than three consecutive days, or for more than a total of 30 days in a year.

One stall operator, surnamed Chan, declared that the implementation of said regulation "is impossible" and that no one would support it.

"It is not in accordance with the labor law. [...] Even civil servants are allowed to take two days off every week," said Chan.

He said that there are a handful of stalls that operate for a few days in a single year, and suggested that IACM target



that minority instead of all stalls.

Chan went on to describe IACM's mentality as "unbelievable" and said it would accelerate the downfall of street markets.

"[IACM] handed out a book

[on vendor operation instructions] for us to read. Only it [IACM] understands the articles it is talking about. It is not OK [if vendors] take a rest; it is also not OK [when we] write a poor [...] proposal. [Vendors

and stalls] will be eliminated sooner or later," stated Chan.

The 68-year-old local resident added that Macau government officials were more humane under Portuguese rule. **JZ**

GAMING

Suncity optimistic for Vietnam project

VIETNAM - like many other Asian jurisdictions - is on the verge of gambling liberalization, and among the international firms simmering with optimism is Macau's own junket operator Suncity Group Holdings Ltd.

The VIP facilitator, which owns a one-third stake in an upcoming, USD4-billion development named Hoiana (along with co-investors VinaCapital and Hong Kong-based VMS Investment Group), will bring its expertise in attracting high-roller Chinese gamblers to the project.

Compared with more mature gambling jurisdictions like Macau, Cambodia and the Philippines, Vietnam remains wholly underdeveloped. There are fewer than 10 casinos across the country and only foreign passport holders are permitted to patronize them.

That is about to change with two other projects under development - one in the northern province of Quang Ninh and the other on Phu Quoc island - which will trial a program allowing Vietnamese nationals to gamble for the first time.



Suncity founder and chairman Alvin Chau

As the program is not being piloted in the Hoiana resort, investors will be reliant on tourists - most of them Chinese and lured into the country by Suncity expertise.

Last year, Vietnam welcomed around 4 million Chinese visitors, marking an increase of almost 50 percent from 2016.

And according to Reuters, Suncity executives are optimistic about Hoiana. They told the news agency that government backing and large-scale infrastructure works across the country were both good news for the project.

Wealthy junkets who

rode the Macau gambling boom have been looking to expand their operations abroad since the industry-wide recession began in 2014. Macau's rigid concessionaire laws have proved a barrier to junkets opening their own casinos, leaving the firms as essential but somewhat sidelined market participants.

That may be about to change in the upcoming license negotiations between 2020 and 2022. Union Gaming's Grant Govertsen told Reuters that Suncity's one-third stake in Hoiana may position it as a viable license contender.

2,218 companies from SARs listed in Hengqin Free Trade Zone

A total of 2,218 companies from the Macau and Hong Kong SARs are already registered in the Hengqin Free Trade Zone, as disclosed last week by Yang Chuan, director of the Administrative Committee of Hengqin New District.

According to a report by TDM radio, the investment made by these SAR companies in Hengqin involve over RMB174.7 billion in capital.

Yang noted that 29 industrial investment projects in Hengqin originated in Macau, representing a land occupation of 5.01 square kilometers.

There are also 21 projects concerning the Macau and Guangdong cooperative industrial zone, which have obtained operation in the free trade zone.

Twenty Macau companies have been registered as partners in the research headquarters of Macau and Guangdong cooperative Chinese medicine science industrial garden, where 43 other companies are also registered.

Until March 31, 126 Hong Kong and Macau financial enterprises were registered in Hengqin, involving RMB61.529 billion in capital.

The Hengqin Free Trade Zone, which had its third anniversary last week, currently has more than 45,800 registered companies, associated to over RMB2,400 billion in capital.

The total amount of capital, which corresponds to the definite number of projects allocated in the zone, exceeds RMB500 billion.

Currently, a total of 113 new significant projects are being developed, according to Yang.

Moreover, recently the Administrative Committee of Hengqin's New District announced three reform measures for the zone's development, including introducing high-level property management service companies to be responsible for the operations carried out in Hengqin.

AFTER seeing an opportunity to kick off a business when Sands China Ltd. invested in its first integrated resort in the city – Sands Macao – in 2004, NCPK Company Ltd, owned by Nelson Chan was then established as a micro and young entrepreneur enterprise in the city in 2009.

Considered a modern retail store by the entrepreneur, the firm sells a series of hardware products to the construction industry.

The local firm kicked off its partnership with Sands China Ltd back in 2010, leading the company to provide a growing number of products to the gaming operator and local residents.

According to Chan, the investment by Sands China provided the city with a wake-up call to develop a higher standard of offerings and services.

“The dream to open a store actually started when Sands Macao opened in the region,” Nelson shared.

“I just started to think that Macau is not a small city anymore. More investors from all over the world came to invest here so we have the opportunity to think about new ways to operate a hardware business,” the entrepreneur added.

Nelson grew up in a family business that retails similar hardware products, yet decided to start his own with new brands, new products and innovative services.

“These are the new requirements in Macau because the casinos are here. It has changed the way people do business,” said Nelson.

“The standards have improved, whether in the protection of workers in the construction industry or standards of hygiene,” he added.

However, as working capital remains a challenge for local entrepreneurs who aim to start a business in Macau, Nelson has appreciated the series of SME programs provided by Sands China.

The ongoing efforts of the gaming operator have assisted hundreds of local SMEs, including Nelson’s company, as the programs have continued to drive procurement between Sands China and local SME suppliers.

Nelson recalled how Sands China offered substantial assistance to local suppliers following losses caused by Typhoon Hato back in August last year, noting that his store is located along Rua Ribeira do Patane, one of the areas most badly hit by the typhoon.

“Typhoon Hato brought with it serious damage to our business. In the last half year, we have been trying our



Local SME continues steadfast growth with Sands China

best to recover. We still need three to four years to recover the losses,” Nelson lamented.

He noted that they had to acquire new stock as the typhoon took up 30 to 40 percent of their products. He thanked Sands China for implementing swift payment procedures.

“Sands China had set up procedures to help us. One of the ways are through financial assistance, they set up a faster payment process,” shared Nelson.

“Since Macau lacked manpower and trucks to deliver goods during that time, Sands’ procurement team assisted in the swift collection and transportation of goods,” he recalled.

NCPK Company Ltd supplies goods and services to Sands China almost every day, earning about 30 percent of their total income from the gaming operator.

Nelson is confident that lo-

cal entrepreneurs will continue to grow with the assistance of the various SME programs that gaming operators provide, citing Sands China’s first-of-its-kind invitational matching sessions.

These invitational matching sessions provide a platform for local SMEs to present and demonstrate their products and services to potential users and buyers at Sands China’s properties.

“The dream to open a store actually started when Sands Macao opened in the region.”

NELSON CHAN
NCPK COMPANY LTD

The goal is to facilitate communication between vendors and users, and to improve procurement success rates.

“The SME programs for SME companies are good because young entrepreneurs can access more opportunities to start their business. The barrier is no longer that high to start a business compared to years ago,” said Nelson.

“I can see that Macau keeps changing. If entrepreneurs want to improve their businesses, they have to look for more people, solutions or equipment to avail themselves of these opportunities to grow,” the entrepreneur shared.

These SME programs look for ways to reach out to local SMEs, providing them with a platform to offer their products and services across different sectors.

Just last year, Sands China launched its new F.I.T. program for local SME suppliers,

which included the first in a series of unique invitational matching sessions for SME suppliers to demonstrate their goods and services to user departments inside Sands China.

This latest initiative is the first of its kind: the F.I.T. program aims to continue driving procurement between Sands China and local SMEs, targeted at both existing and new local suppliers to Sands China, thus increasing its spend with these SMEs.

In their on-going commitment to Macau’s local SMEs, Sands China continues to develop initiatives to provide different ways for SMEs to showcase their products, helping them gain experience and increase their capacity to work with large-scale international customers like Sands China.

This article was sponsored by
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TOURISM

Border Gate records busiest day

THE Border Gate saw its busiest day on record last Saturday (April 21), according to a statement from the Public Security Police Force (PSP), recording a total of 440,000 crossings.

The PSP said that additional immigration personnel and security officials were sent to the Border Gate to help facilitate the flow of human traffic and maintain order, but did not speculate on why last Saturday was abnormally busy.

Macau's border points collectively recorded a total of 570,000 crossings on Saturday, surpassing the 550,000 crossings recorded on the busiest day of this year's Chinese New Year.

Meanwhile, according to data newly released by the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC), over 2.73 million visitors arrivals were recorded in the MSAR in March 2018, up by 9.3 percent year-on-year, but down 11 percent from February.

Overnight visitors (1.45 million) and same-day visitors (1.28 million) saw respective increases of 8.6 percent and 10.1 percent year-on-year. Their average length of stay stood at about 1.2 days, similar to last year.

Visitors from mainland China increased by 9.8 percent year-on-year to 1.81 million in March, with slightly over 40 percent of them coming

from Guangdong Province.

Visitors from Hong Kong (538,000), Taiwan (90,000) and South Korea (70,000) increased by 9.3 percent, 6.9 percent and 7.9 percent, respectively. At the same time, visitors from the United States, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom all registered marginal increases.

DSEC said visitor arrivals exceeded 8.54 million in the first quarter of 2018, up by 8.6 percent year-on-year. The number of overnight visitors – accounting for approximately half of all visitors – increased by 10.2 percent year-on-year, while the number of same-day visitors rose 7 percent. **DB**



'Macau Street' launched in Seoul to attract more Korean visitors

THE Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) launched its annual promotional campaign yesterday in Seoul, South Korea, with a "Macau Street" showcasing the SAR's heritage, gastronomy and signature events to attract more Korean visitors.

The roadshow was held in Seoul yesterday and attracted around 130 Korean operators. The full-day event included presentations about several Macau tourism offers, along with a networking lunch. A similar event will be held in Busan tomorrow, which will be attended by around 50 professionals from Korea's travel industry.

Yesterday in Seoul, MGTO director Helena de



Senna Fernandes, presided over the opening ceremony of "Macau Street", joined by the chairman of the Korea Association of Travel Agents (KATA), Yang Moo Seung, among other guests.

"This year, our efforts to display the very best and the newest highlights of our city in a promotion

tailor-made [for] the Korean audience has brought us to this ultra-modern cinema complex [in] the heart of Seoul. Here at CGV Yeouido, entertainment meets gastronomy, cinema, shopping and more, offering us an ideal backdrop to set up this lively and festive Macau Street," Senna Fernandes

said.

Until April 29, visitors to the popular CGV Yeouido multi-entertainment cinema complex at Seoul's IFC Mall will be greeted by a "Macau Street" displaying the region's food and signature events, with Macau's heritage as the theme of the décor. The cinema is equipped with Screen-X, which provides moviegoers a 270-degree viewing experience by expanding the screen onto the sidewalls.

The "Macau Street" features a "Macau Screen Box" at the gate of one of CGV's Screen-X theaters, inviting moviegoers to experience Macau. In front, a "Macau Café" displays the region's major attractions and an information

desk. Other highlights of the "Macau Street" include an International Film Festival & Awards Macao image wall and photo-taking zone, as well as a mini Macau Grand Prix (MGP) with daily race simulators, awards and a podium for the winners, among other activities.

Local tourism operators – representing more than

20 of Macau's hotels, resorts, travel agencies, air and sea transportation companies, entertainment and event venues – are in Korea to attend the MGTO-organized travel marts in Seoul and Busan. The events are part of Macau's annual promotional campaign to foster closer business ties with South Korea.

SOUTH KOREA IS TOP INTERNATIONAL VISITOR SOURCE MARKET

SOUTH KOREA is Macau's top international visitor source market, with the number of visitors from the country steadily increasing over the last few years. It became the first international visitor source market to surpass half a million visitors in 2014. According to the numbers provided by MGTO, the number of South Korean visitors marked double-digit growth in the last couple

of years, increasing by 19.5 percent to 662,000 visitors in 2016 and another 32 percent to 874,000 visitors in 2017. In the first quarter of the year, the number of visitors continued to increase by 4.6 percent. Five air carriers – Air Macau, Jin Air, Jeju Air, T'way Air and Air Busan – operate regular flights between Macau, Seoul and Busan, providing around twenty direct links a week.

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ANALYSIS

Complications in CNY visitor arrivals make data unreliable

Daniel Beitler

THERE are two sets of figures thrown about for the number of visitors during the Chinese New Year week, one of the two most lucrative holidays in the Macau calendar.

First, there are the actual figures for the first week of the Chinese New Year, starting with the first day of the lunar month and ending on the seventh day, based on data collected by Macau immigration authorities and published approximately a month after the festive holiday.

Then there are preliminary figures provided by the Public Security Police Force (PSP) to the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) for the so-called 'golden week', which extends usually – but not always – from the day before Chinese New Year until the sixth day of the New Year. These figures are published just as the golden week concludes.

The two sets of figures are somewhat in consensus, in that they agree that between 800,000 and 1 million tourists visit the city every Chinese New Year. But a significant discrepancy exists nonetheless, amounting to several percentage points.

In this context, recent government statements boasting a 6.3 percent year-on-year rise in tourist arrivals should be read carefully.

URGENCY VS TRANSPARENCY

These figures are problematic for several reasons, but mostly because they lack transparency and produce distorted impressions of Macau's tourism market. Given that revisions to the preliminary figures are rarely – if ever – published, the public is left with inaccurate and outdated information, even several months later.

Furthermore, this inaccuracy is in one way or another carried forward to the following year when the revised figure is used as a point of comparison instead of the preliminary figures published earlier.

To justify its publication of the preliminary figures instead of waiting several weeks for the revised data, MGTO emphasizes the urgency of the matter given the importance of the tourism sector to the overall health of Macau's economy.

"The reason why MGTO releases provisional figures [on] exceptional occasions like the Chinese New Year golden week, on a daily basis at its website and



[in] a final press release, is because the Office knows that the public wants to know the numbers at an earlier stage," the government bureau told the Times last month.

However, this justification is contradicted by the fact that public revisions to the preliminary data are a very rare occurrence in Macau.

Why the preliminary figures even exist remains a mystery.

In email correspondence with the Times, three Macau government departments were unable to explain why the preliminary figures differ from the final figures released some weeks later.

All figures are provided by the PSP to the relevant government departments and presumably collected electronically by a system that is able to distinguish tourists from non-resident workers, if it is able to do so just several weeks later.

Both MGTO and the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) referred the Times to the PSP. The PSP suggested the Times should contact MGTO.

To their credit, MGTO has somewhat improved the transparency of their reporting. Last year, the bureau began to align its reporting with international standards set out by the World Tourism Organization; for the first time, it did not include non-resident workers and foreign students in the Macau SAR in the official tourist arrival figures.

According to the tourism authority, this was made possible after a 2016 enhancement of immigration systems that gran-

ted the PSP the ability to distinguish tourists from other so-called 'visitors'.

SOFTEN THE BLOW

The difference between the preliminary and actual figures sometimes amounts to several percentage points. From 2014 to 2018, the preliminary figure was higher than that of the actual figure every year, with the margin of error ranging from 0.5 percent in 2018 to 4.1 percent in 2015.

Accordingly, the Times concluded in an article last month that at least one government department was deliberately inflating the 'preliminary' figures, both exaggerating the increase and softening the blow of lower-than-expected growth.

Each year, the inflated estimate is compared with the previous year's revised number, which is always lower than the previous year's estimate. This gives the impression of exaggerated growth.

In a recent note to the Times, MGTO protested that the figures were "neither 'estimations', 'forecasts' nor 'predictions'. [...]"

The data released by MGTO are 'preliminary' or 'provisional' figures [... and therefore] not 'overstated' or 'inflated'."

But the public remains unaware of the misinformation – deliberate or otherwise – because, again, the figures are not consistently revised or even stated as revised in the following year's statement. Each year refers only to "the corresponding occasion last year."

In last month's report, the Times predicted that the actual growth in visitors during the 2018 Chinese New Year period was likely to fall below the advertised 6.3 percent.

It did fall below the 6.3 percent estimate, but not by much. According to the final data provided by the PSP, the 2018 Chinese New Year period (counted as per MGTO's date range) welcomed 958,545 visitors, or an actual growth of about 5.9 percent over "the corresponding occasion last year."

In 2017, the discrepancy between the growth in the published preliminary figures (9.9 percent) and the unpublished revised figures (6.3 percent)

was more problematic. The same was true in 2015, when the preliminary data showed an optimistic 2.4 percent contraction instead of the actual 6.5 percent contraction.

No revision of the 2018 data has yet been published on the government news portal despite the final figures having been available since March 23.

■ **The public remains unaware of the misinformation – deliberate or otherwise – because the figures are not consistently revised**

BAD NEWS IS NO NEWS

Public departments sometimes refrain from publishing official statements when there is disappointing growth to report, especially when the number of visitors for a given period declines. No publicity is good publicity when things aren't going all that well.

One recent example was the Easter holiday at the start of April, for which the PSP attached a file to the government news portal without an accompanying statement.

For the four-day period from March 30 to April 2, the number of visitors to the Macau SAR dropped 4.72 percent to 402,846 compared to the same period in the previous year.

Again, there is some uncertainty in the data as it is unclear whether the point of comparison from last year is the period of March 30 to April 2 or the actual four-day Easter holiday, which fell between April 14 and 17 in 2017.

According to the PSP's official data last year, Macau registered 427,254 tourist arrivals in the 2017 Easter period. That would represent an actual decline of 5.71 percent and not 4.72 percent.

Interestingly, according to the PSP's official data, tourists accounted for just 40 percent of the 1 million-plus "arrivals" recorded at Macau's border checkpoints during Easter this year.

VARIOUS OFFICIAL AND PRELIMINARY FIGURES FOR CNY VISITORS

Year	Preliminary*	MGTO revised		PSP revised	
		Period	Visitors	Period	Visitors
2014	1.054m †	Jan 31 – Feb 6	874,316	Jan 31 – Feb 6	874,316
2015	1.028m †	Feb 18 – 24	817,619	Feb 19 – 25	861,006
2016	1.076m †	Feb 7 – 13	850,784	Feb 8 – 14	887,651
2017	935,266	Jan 27 – Feb 2	904,367	Jan 28 – Feb 3	957,394
2018	963,285	Feb 15 – 21	958,545	Feb 16 – Feb 22	1.002m

* Figures published via MGTO statement as the first week of CNY ended

† Figures include non-residents and foreign students in Macau



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GAMING

Stars Group builds sports-betting muscle with USD4.7b deal

Sandrine Rastello

STARS Group Inc.'s USD4.7-billion purchase of Sky Betting & Gaming turns the online poker giant into a major sports-betting player that could use its strong foothold in Europe to cross the Atlantic if the U.S. market fully opens.

The Toronto-based operator of PokerStars, which announced the cash-and-stock deal with CVC Capital Partners and Sky Plc on Saturday, is set to win a significant foothold in the U.K. - the largest regulated gaming market. Sky Betting & Gaming, or SBG, is growing rapidly in online casino games and sports at home and recently expanded to Italy and Germany.

If an upcoming Supreme Court decision in the U.S. allows sports betting in more states, it would be the "icing on the cake" for the combined companies, according to Simon Holliday, founder of the research firm H2 Gambling Capital.

"The US sportsbetting Supreme Court case is obviously a big part of the potential upside, with Star's old database, SBG's strengths and their track record solely in the U.K.," Holliday wrote in an email. "Even without the U.S., SBG is just starting to launch in other regulated markets."

Betting on sports in some form is legal in four U.S. states. That could change as the Supreme Court weighs New Jersey's attempt to have a 1992 law banning sports betting beyond those states



struck down as unconstitutional. If the court agrees, it could trigger a wave of states legalizing betting on football, basketball and other competitions.

The acquisition, which follows a failed attempt to take control of Sky-rival William Hill Plc in 2016, helps accelerate Chief Executive Officer Rafi Ashkenazi's strategy to decrease reliance on the unstable and stagnant poker business, which accounted for two-thirds of its revenue last year.

Of \$49.8 billion in gross winnings from interactive gambling last year, \$25 billion came from betting on sports and racing, \$13 billion from casinos and \$3 billion from poker, according to H2.

The deal also provides Stars Group with a trove of potential new customers for its own online casino and poker offerings. SBG's stren-

gths include technology and marketing, according to H2's Holliday, who says the company went from the seventh or eighth-largest operator in the U.K. in 2011 to the third largest last year.

"The strategic fit is very good, the valuation is reasonable for a fast-growing company," said Simon Davies, an analyst at Canaccord Genuity in London.

The agreement calls on Stars Group to pay \$3.6 billion and approximately 37.9 million newly issued common shares based on the closing price of its common stock on April 20. Stars Group said it has obtained debt financing of approximately \$6.9 billion, including \$5.1 billion of first lien term loans, \$1.4 billion of senior unsecured notes and a \$400 million revolving credit facility.

Proceeds will be used for the cash portion of the deal,

as well as to refinance the company's existing first lien term loan and repay SBG's outstanding debt, it said.

Private equity firm CVC agreed to acquire a controlling stake in Sky Betting from Rupert Murdoch's Sky in 2014. Canaccord's Davies says the betting company, which gets more than 80 percent of its revenue from mobile devices, "has performed spectacularly" despite concerns of a tighter regulatory environment in the U.K.

The deal will also bring Sky a cash infusion while it is being targeted for takeover by both 21st Century Fox Inc. and Comcast Corp. While Fox awaits a U.K. regulatory decision on its bid, Comcast is preparing to formalize its own offer after making a preliminary one at a premium to Fox's, setting the stage for a bidding war.

The agreement follows a move last month by Stars Group to take a bigger slice of Australia's CrownBet Holdings Ltd., which subsequently bought the Australian unit of William Hill.

Ashkenazi signaled last year that he'd be on the hunt for targets after focusing on paying down debt from the 2014, \$4.9 billion acquisition of PokerStars that made the company, then called Amaya, the world's largest online poker business. Ashkenazi took over the top job from founder David Baazov - who resigned in August 2016 to fight insider-trading charges - and built up a new management team.

"Sky Betting & Gaming's premier sports betting product is the ideal complement to our industry-leading poker platform," Ashkenazi said, calling the agreement "a landmark moment" for Stars Group.

Morgan Stanley and PJT Partners Inc. acted as financial advisers to Stars Group, while Deutsche Bank AG, Goldman Sachs Group Inc., Macquarie Group Ltd. and Morgan Stanley provided the committed debt financing. **Bloomberg**

Lenovo Group may lose Hang Seng Index status

LENOVO Group Ltd. is increasingly at risk of being dropped from Hong Kong's benchmark equity index as its shares tumble more than any other technology company in the world.

The Chinese computer maker has fallen 56 percent since being added to the Hang Seng Index in March 2013, wiping out USD5.8 billion in value. Companies removed from the gauge in the past decade had seen their value fall a median of 48 percent before being excluded, according to Bloomberg calculations.

Lenovo sank to its lowest since October 2009 yesterday as a U.S. ban on ZTE Corp. and a global selloff by hardware manufacturers added to jitters about China's technology sector. The stock is one of the most shorted on the Hang Seng Index: 13.8 percent of its shares available for trade on loan to short-sellers, according to IHS Markit Ltd. Removal from the gauge could spur more outflows from Lenovo, as at least \$107 billion worth of passive funds track the Hang Seng Index, data compiled by Bloomberg show.

"Risks that Lenovo will lose its seat are on the rise," said Kenny Wen, a strategist at Everbright Sun Hung Kai Co. in Hong Kong. "Lenovo is having trouble in all key areas, from issuing cool smartphone models to keeping market share in computer businesses. The short-sellers may have picked the right target this time."

Lenovo was previously dropped from the Hang Seng Index in 2006, six years after first joining. Its decline since it was added back in 2013 is the biggest on the 171-member Bloomberg World Technology Index.

Lenovo said in an email that it doesn't comment on its share price or speculation. The company's chief executive Yang Yuanqing is maintaining a bullish stance, saying in a WeChat post last week that Lenovo was back on track for growth. The Beijing-based firm posted a loss in the December quarter after it was hit with a U.S. tax charge and as its mobile business continued to struggle having rapidly surrendering market share. **Bloomberg**

corporate bits

SANDS CHINA INCREASES CNG-POWERED BUSES

Sands China Ltd. announced in a statement that it has been increasing the number of its guest shuttle buses fuelled by clean energy, with 25 percent of its fleet already running on compressed natural gas (CNG) technology.

According to a press release, the gaming operator became Macau's first integrated resort developer to use CNG-powered buses in September 2016 when it rolled out 30 clean energy guest shuttles for the opening of The Parisian Macao, whose entire fleet runs on clean energy.

The Venetian Macao added eight

more clean energy guest shuttles to its fleet this month, bringing Sands China's total number of clean energy-powered buses to 38.

"Sands China is very pleased to support the sustainability initiatives of the Macau SAR government," said Mark McWhinnie, the company's senior vice president of resort operations and development.

"Sustainable operations are at the core of our business philosophy, and utilising clean energy vehicles is one of the many ways we work to decrease our carbon footprint and lessen our environmental impact," he added.

'WYNN CUP' AWARD CEREMONY CELEBRATES WINNERS

The award ceremony for the second edition of the "Wynn Cup - Macau Primary School Student National Education Drawing Competition" was held at Wynn Palace yesterday.

The ceremony brought together over 500 teachers and students from more than 30 schools, along with representatives from all sectors of the community.

This year's event, which featured the theme "My Chinese Dream", was sponsored by Wynn and organized

by the National Conditions Education (Macau) Association.

Wynn said in a press release yesterday that it hopes to strengthen local primary school students' knowledge and understanding of national education; as well as enhancing cultural and educational exchanges between Macau and the mainland.

Linda Chen, Vice Chairman and Executive Director of Wynn Macau, Limited said in her speech, "It is encoura-



ging to see that the competition attracted participation from more than 30 schools and over 10,000 Macau primary school students, achieving outstanding re-

sults. It is the most popular primary school drawing competition in Macau, with the number of schools taking part up 30 percent compared to last year."

TRADE WAR

US brands suffer collateral damage in Chinese corporate struggle

Erika Kinetz, Shanghai

THE rivalry is so notorious it's been called the "great cat-and-dog war." On one side towers Alibaba Group Holding Ltd., China's e-commerce market leader, embodied by the black cat mascot of its Tmall platform. On the other is JD.com Inc., a fast-growing upstart represented by its white dog logo.

Brands now caught in the crossfire say they were punished by Alibaba after refusing exclusive deals as the e-commerce giant tried to muscle out the competition — a charge Alibaba denies. Executives from five major consumer brands told The Associated Press that after rebuffing Alibaba, traffic to their Tmall storefronts fell, hurting sales. Three are American companies with billions in annual revenue that rely on China for growth. All spoke only on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals.

"Many brands complained about this to us," said Wang Hongbo, a consultant who helps Chinese brands sell online. "Because they didn't fall in line, they faced restrictions on Tmall."

Alibaba called the charges of coercion "completely false" and said pursuing exclusivity is a common industry practice.

As the Trump administration pushes China to play by fair trade rules, companies in China are caught in a no less crucial struggle for rules-based access to a USD610 billion online marketplace.

The platforms that control access to Chinese consumers online wield such enormous power that even multibillion-dollar foreign brands can have trouble fighting back, the AP found in interviews with more than 30 industry players. The AP also reviewed two Alibaba contracts that contain previously unreported exclusivity clauses.

The trials of the affected companies offer a rare window onto a bruising business culture forged in China that could spread as Alibaba takes its aggressive, innovative and hugely profitable model of e-commerce global. To the extent that the products in question are manufactured in the United States — and some are — constricting China sales can also deepen the imbalance of trade between China and the U.S., a gap that has been a top concern for the Trump administration.

In a statement, Alibaba acknowledged that it offers benefits to companies that sign exclusivity contracts, in line with Chinese law, but said merchants are free to work with whatever e-commerce

AP PHOTO



mercer companies they choose.

"Like many e-commerce platforms, we have exclusive partnerships with some of the merchants on Tmall," Alibaba said. "The merchant decides to choose such an arrangement because of the attractive services and value Tmall brings to them."

■ The platforms that control access to Chinese consumers online wield such power that even multibillion dollar foreign brands can have trouble fighting back

Imagine a company twice as profitable as Amazon that each year serves more people than live in all of North America. That's Alibaba. It claims to be the marketplace for nearly \$550 billion a year in sales — more than is sold online in the entire U.S. economy. That's just the

start of Alibaba founder Jack Ma's ambition. He aims to serve 2 billion consumers by 2036, roughly one in four people currently on the planet.

Alibaba's aggressive recruitment of foreign brands has paid off. The company said it signed up 60,000 international brands for its massive Singles Day sale in November, up from 5,000 in 2015. Tmall, which serves as a gateway to China for large foreign brands, controlled six of every 10 dollars spent overall for business-to-consumer sales online in China during the second half of last year — and even more in sectors like apparel.

The American Apparel & Footwear Association, a Washington-based industry group, said its members had complained about Alibaba's unfair competitive tactics. "We urge the authorities to quickly investigate and take steps to ensure such practices are eliminated from the growing Chinese marketplace," said Stephen Lamar, the group's executive vice-president.

JD.com is a member and sponsor of the association.

JD.com also does exclusive deals, but maintains that it doesn't strategically push merchants for exclusivity. It doesn't have the market share in most categories to do much strong-arming anyway.

"We support fair and open competition because greater choice is always better for

brands and users," JD.com said in a statement.

JD.com chief financial officer Sidney Huang said last month the company was still trying to win back over 100 Chinese brands that defected last year under pressure.

Chinese fashion company Peacebird, which left JD.com last year, said Alibaba had not coerced them and their decision to focus entirely on Tmall was strategic.

"We will centralize and develop the limited resources of our company on Tmall," said Weng Jianghong, the company's general manager of e-commerce.

Alibaba said its business practices comply with Chinese law. It is not clear whether the evidence of coercion brands have managed to collect would hold up in court.

Under China's anti-monopoly laws, companies with a dominant market position cannot demand exclusivity without justification. A 2015 regulation also bars e-commerce companies from restricting participation in promotions on competing platforms.

The contracts AP reviewed offered a suite of benefits designed to drive sales, in exchange for exclusivity. One specified that brands must not operate storefronts on other platforms without Tmall's permission. The other barred brands from sales promotions on rival platforms

without Tmall's permission.

Executives offered different reasons for refusing such arrangements. Some said they worried cutting off JD.com would limit access to customers and hurt business. Others feared the agreement might be illegal, or felt that on principle it just wasn't the right thing to do.

Then came the stick: Executives said that after they rebuffed Alibaba, their brand's banners vanished from prominent spots in Tmall sales showrooms and products stopped appearing in top search results.

"Based on our sales record, we should have been in a prominent position, but we were at the bottom of the page," said the e-commerce director of a multibillion-dollar publicly traded company. "That's a clear punishment."

Two companies told AP they granted concessions to Alibaba, including exclusive product launches, raising prices on JD.com or removing ads promoting JD.com sales. Traffic to their Tmall shops rebounded. One company said it ultimately closed its JD.com flagship to salvage Tmall sales.

"This is certainly a problem for the development of retail sales channels," said Zhuo Saijun, who until 2015 was a general manager of research at Analysys Ltd., a Beijing-based consultancy. "It is a business ethics problem, and this is how monopolies develop." **AP**

GENDER ISSUES

HRW says 'Men only' job ads show ongoing discrimination

ONE job ad for Chinese high-speed train conductors called for candidates who were "fashionable and beautiful." Another ad targeting men for a job in a Chinese internet company included photos of a female employee pole-dancing.

Gender discrimination is widespread in the Chinese workforce, a human rights group said yesterday, with many hiring advertisements openly calling only for male applicants and using the attractiveness of female co-workers as a draw.

Human Rights Watch released its report, "Only Men Need Apply: Gender Discrimination in Job Advertisements in China" after looking at more than 36,000 job advertisements posted between 2013 and 2018 from recruiters, companies and the government.

"Sexist job ads pander to the antiquated stereotypes that persist within Chinese companies," Sophie Richardson, Human Rights Watch's China director, said in a statement. "These companies pride themselves on being forces of modernity and progress, yet they fall back on such [old-fashioned] recruitment strategies."

China bans discrimination in both hiring and job advertising, but enforcement is weak. Government departments are among the offenders, according to the report, with 55 percent of jobs advertised by the Ministry of Public Security last year specifying "men only." The ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Discriminatory hiring practices



further widen gaps in both female work participation and pay levels, according to official data, with urban female workers making just 67 percent of what men made in 2010, down from 78 percent in 1990 — a time when the government was loosening control over the economy.

It's also a reflection of "deeply discriminatory views about women," the report said, including that they are less capable than men, or that they are not fully committed to their jobs because some will eventually leave their positions to have a family.

In examining the tech sector, the report pointed to numerous cases where the attractiveness and availability of female workers is used as an inducement for men to apply for jobs.

In one case, online shopping

giant Alibaba ran an ad on its official microblog in 2013 enumerating the attributes of its female workers, accompanied by photos of female employees "in sexualized poses, including one engaged in pole dancing," the report said.

Alibaba did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

An October 2016 article on the official microblog recruitment account of tech company Tencent was even blunter, quoting a male employee as saying, "The reason I joined Tencent originated from a primal impulse. It was mainly because the ladies at human resources and that interviewed me were very pretty."

Tencent apologized, saying the company values diverse backgrounds and recruits staff based on talent and ability. "These incidents clearly do not reflect our

values," the tech giant said in an email. "We have investigated these incidents and are making immediate changes. We are sorry they occurred and we will take swift action to ensure they do not happen again."

Despite laws against it, demands are frequently made for physical attributes that have nothing to do with the requirements of the job, another form of sexual objectification. Those can include minimums and maximums for height and weight, "normal facial features" and particular sounding voices.

One notable ad in northern China even called for "fashionable and beautiful high-speed train conductors," the report said.

The report also cited a 2014 study by the official All-China Women's Federation in which 87 percent of female college graduates said they

had faced at least one form of gender discrimination when applying for jobs.

The sexism ranged from job ads stating "men only or men preferred," "rejecting or refusing to review female applicants' resumes" and "having higher requirements for educational attainment from female applicants," according to the federation's data.

In some instances, preference is shown for men in the civil service and among kindergarten and elementary school teachers to offset the large percentage of women in those fields, the report said.

It quoted one unidentified kindergarten principal as saying, "The lack of males makes children prone to look at and solve problems according to the way women think and behave."

Beyond overcoming such attitudes, change is impeded by a lack of determination and enforcement mechanisms, along with obstacles linked to China's authoritarian politics, the report said.

"Instead of harassing and jailing women's rights activists, the Chinese government should engage them as allies in combating gender discrimination in the job market — and beyond," Richardson said.

Gender discrimination is also reflected in the overwhelmingly masculine nature of China's political bodies, said Li Yinhe, a sociologist at the official Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Among the diplomatic corps, women can be excluded because duty in certain countries could be considered too dangerous for women, she said.

"There is no small number of Chinese women entrepreneurs who are among the world's richest, but it's far worse in the political field," Li said. "I think it's because women are latecomers, so the political resources are in the hands of men and it's a male-dominated society." AP

36 dead, mostly Chinese, in North Korea traffic accident

A traffic accident in North Korea has killed 32 Chinese tourists and four North Koreans, Chinese officials said yesterday.

Two other Chinese tourists were badly injured and were in "acutely serious condition," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. It said China had dispatched a medical team accompanied by diplomats to assist the North Korean side.

The accident occurred Sunday night in North Hwanghae province, south of Pyongyang, North Korea's capital, ministry spokesman Lu Kang said at a regularly scheduled news conference.

Footage on Chinese state broadcaster CCTV showed the mangled wreckage of a bus in the dark with rain falling. Rescue vehicles were on the scene, and the injured were shown being treated in a hospital.

China and North Korea share a lengthy border and a traditional friendship dating back to China's military intervention on the side of the North in the 1950-53 Korean War. China remains Pyongyang's largest trading partner, although commerce has dropped off by about 90 percent under United Nations sanctions.

The ministry described the four North Koreans

killed as "workers." North Korea requires that all visitors be accompanied by minders.

Other details on the backgrounds of those killed and injured and the circumstances of the accident were not immediately disclosed.

Chinese tourists make up the vast majority of visitors to North Korea, where they often pay homage at sites related to China's participation in the war.

Only about 5,000 Westerners visit the isolated, hard-line communist state each year. Americans have been banned from traveling to North Korea without special permission from the U.S.



In this image taken from video footage, a bus which carries Chinese and North Koreans is seen overturn after an accident in North Hwanghae province

State Department since September amid concerns about the fate of those detained there in the past.

North Korean roads are

often bumpy and poorly maintained. There is usually no lighting other than headlights at night, even on major roads outside of the cities. Drivers

tend to travel at whatever speed they feel is safe, making the roads even more dangerous, particularly when the weather is bad. AP

KOREAS

South halts propaganda broadcasts before summit with North

Hyung-Jin Kim, Seoul

SOUTH Korea halted anti-North Korea propaganda broadcasts across their tense border yesterday as officials from the two Koreas met again to work out details of their leaders' upcoming talks, expected to focus on the North's nuclear program.

Seoul had been blasting propaganda messages and K-pop songs from border loudspeakers since the North's fourth nuclear test in early 2016. The North quickly matched the South's action with its own border broadcasts and launches of balloons carrying anti-South Korea leaflets across the border.

South Korea turned off its broadcasts to ease military tensions and establish an environment for peaceful talks, Seoul's Defense Ministry said in a statement. It said Seoul hopes the decision will lead to both sides stopping slander and propaganda activities.

Yonhap news agency, citing an unidentified government source, said that North Korea was believed to have turned off many of its propaganda broadcasts. Yonhap earlier reported that some North Korean broadcasts were sporadically heard in the South yesterday morning. South Korean defense officials said they couldn't immediately confirm the status of the North's broadcasts.



AP PHOTO

The move comes amid a recent thaw in animosities, with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un trying to reach out to Seoul and Washington after conducting his country's sixth and most powerful nuclear test and three long-range missile test launches last year.

Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae-in are to meet at the Korean border village of Panmunjom on Friday in the countries' third-ever summit talks. Kim is to hold separate

talks with U.S. President Donald Trump in May or early June in what would be the first North Korea-U.S. summit.

Yesterday, the two Koreas held a third round of working-level talks at Panmunjom and agreed to conduct a joint rehearsal Wednesday of the summit, Moon's office said in a statement. It said the two sides agreed that Friday's summit will include a welcoming ceremony and a banquet dinner as well as a formal meeting between Moon and Kim.

The Koreas agreed last week to allow live television broadcasts for key parts of the summit. Monday's statement said North Korea also agreed on live broadcasts by South Korean media of unspecified events at the northern side of Panmunjom.

The Korean summit is to take place at a South Korean building on the southern side of Panmunjom. This means that Kim must cross the border into South Korea in what would be the first such act by a North Korean

leader since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War.

Kim has said he is willing to place his nuclear program up for negotiation. But it is unclear what disarmament steps he will offer during the two sets of summit talks. U.S. officials have said they want the North to complete full nuclear disarmament.

North Korea said Saturday it will close its nuclear testing facility and suspend nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile tests. But it stopped short of suggesting it will give up its nuclear weapons or scale back its production of missiles and their related components.

■ **The move comes amid a thaw in animosities, with Kim Jong Un trying to reach out to Seoul and Washington**

Trump nonetheless tweeted Sunday that the North has "agreed to denuclearization (so great for World), site closure, & no more testing!"

Trump's pick to be the next secretary of state, CIA Director Mike Pompeo, traveled to North Korea on Easter weekend to lay the groundwork for the summit meeting. Pompeo's trip was a clear indication that preparations for the North-U.S. summit are under way, though many U.S. and other foreign experts have had doubts.

MALAYSIA

Police release images of suspects in Palestinian killing

MALAYSIAN police yesterday released images of two suspects in the killing of a Palestinian engineer and said they appeared to be European or Middle Eastern, fueling suspicion that the slaying was an Israeli assassination.

Gaza's ruling Hamas militant group has accused Israel of being behind Saturday's shooting of Fadi al-Batsh, an important member of Hamas. Israel has neither confirmed nor denied involvement.

Malaysian national police chief Mohamad Fuzi Harun said the composite images were based on eyewitness descriptions.

He said the suspects, clad in black jackets, were fair-skinned, well-built and had beards, and were likely European or Middle Eastern.

Fuzi said the images have been displayed at all exit points in the country but said it was unclear if the men had fled Malaysia.

Police said al-Batsh, 34, was hit with 14 bullets by the two assailants, who shot from a motorbike as he was heading to a mosque for dawn prayers in a suburb near Kuala Lumpur. Police said security video showed the suspects had waited for him for almost 20 minutes.

Hamas initially stopped short of blaming Israel, saying only that he had been "assassinated by the hand of treachery." But later its top leader accused Israel's Mossad intelligence agency of killing al-Batsh and threatened retaliation.

A string of Israeli officials have neither confirmed nor denied whether Israel had a hand in the death. Several noted, however, that Israel is routinely blamed for such assassinations even when it is not involved.

Several Israeli Cabinet ministers welcomed the killing, regardless of who was responsible. Defense

Minister Avigdor Lieberman suggested in radio interviews Sunday that al-Batsh may have been killed as part of a rivalry between Palestinian militants.

Israel has a long history of being accused of targeting wanted Palestinian militants in daring overseas operations and has been linked to other assassinations as well, though it has rarely publicly acknowledged them.

Al-Batsh was believed to have been working on Hamas' unmanned aerial vehicle program and was working on improving the accuracy of its rockets.

His brother, Rami, told



Relatives of killed Palestinian Fadi al-Batsh walk out of a hospital's morgue in Selayang yesterday

Malaysian media in Kuala Lumpur that he hopes to take the body back tomorrow.

Police say al-Batsh had lived in Malaysia for more than seven years and had permanent residency status. He had a degree in electrical engineering and lectured at a local univer-

sity, but police couldn't confirm reports that he was an expert in rocket making.

Al-Batsh traveled locally and abroad to speak on Palestinian issues and was scheduled to fly to Turkey for a conference when he was killed, police said. **AP**

CAMBODIA

Census finds increase in Mekong River's Irrawaddy dolphins

Sopheng Cheang, Phnom Penh

THE number of critically endangered Irrawaddy dolphins along a stretch of the Mekong River has increased for the first time in 20 years but the animals still face serious threats, Cambodia's government and a major conservation group said yesterday.

A joint statement issued by the World Wide Fund for Nature and Cambodia's Fisheries Administration said a 2017 census pegged the population of the freshwater dolphins along a 190-kilometer stretch of river from Kratie in Cambodia to the Khone Falls in Laos at 92, a 15 percent increase over an estimate of 80 made in 2015.

"The Mekong dolphin is considered our country's living national treasure and the results of this census reflect our many years of continuous efforts to protect this species," said Eng Cheasan, the director-general of the Fisheries Administration. "We will continue our conservation efforts to rebuild

AP PHOTO



its population by eliminating all threats to the survival of this species."

In addition to the Mekong, the dolphins can be found in only two other freshwater rivers: Myanmar's Irrawaddy and Indonesia's Mahakam, on the island of Borneo.

Despite the increase during the latest count, the number of dolphins in the Mekong is still less than half of the 200 counted during the first official census in 1997. Surveys are carried out every two to three years.

Seng Teak, the country director of WWF-Cambodia, warned at a

news conference in the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh, that the dolphins still face many threats to their existence, including illegal fishing methods, increasing boat traffic and ongoing dam projects.

The biggest threat to the dolphins has been getting caught up

in gillnets, massive nets held in place vertically through the use of floats and weights, that trap marine life in their netting.

Seng Teak said several thousand meters of illegal fishing net has been confiscated and dozens of fishermen arrested, some being released after being taught the error of their ways, and others sent to court.

The survey found encouraging signs for the dolphins' long-term survival: an improvement in the survival rate of dolphins into adulthood, an increase in the number of calves and a drop in overall deaths. Two dolphins died in 2017 compared with nine in 2015, while nine new calves brought the number of dolphins born in the past three years to 32.

"After years of hard work, we finally have reason to believe that these iconic dolphins can be protected against extinction — thanks to the combined efforts of the government, WWF, the tourism industry and local communities," said Seng Teak. **AP**

AD

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ANALYSIS

Denuclearization successes around the world

WILL North Korea give up the bomb?

The answer may start becoming clear when South Korean President Moon Jae-in meets North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Friday.

While North Korea declared over the weekend that it would stop nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile tests and shut down its nuclear test site, it did not indicate that it will give up its nuclear arsenal or halt its production of missiles. Moon and President Donald Trump, who is expected to meet with Kim in May or June, are still likely to find it very difficult to persuade Kim to dismantle his entire arsenal, which includes purported thermonuclear weapons and developmental ICBMs.

But other countries that developed or tried to develop nuclear weapons have agreed to abandon them in exchange for sanctions relief and compensation. None of these cases are directly applicable to North Korea, which advanced further and with greater zeal than any of the others.

A look at the past cases as Washington and its allies map out a denuclearization strategy for Pyongyang:

LIBYA

Shortly before he became Trump's national security adviser, John Bolton told Radio Free Asia that nuclear negotiations with North Korea should be similar to past discussions with Libya, which dismantled its rudimentary nuclear program in the 2000s.

Western nations lifted punitive measures and removed Libya's name from the U.S. state sponsors of terrorism after former Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi fulfilled his promise to turn over his nuclear materials, weapons components and bomb designs obtained on the black market.

"We should insist that if this meeting is going to take place, it will be similar to discussions we had with Libya 13 or 14 years ago — how to pack up their nuclear weapons program and take it to Oak Ridge, Tennessee, which is where the Libyan nuclear program [is]," Bolton said. "If it's anything other than a conversation about how to do that, then I think it shows it's just camouflage for North Korea to continue working toward its long-sought objective of deliverable nuclear weapons."

But some analysts say bringing up Libya would risk derailing any progress in nego-



tiations with the North. Kim Jong Un took power weeks after Gadhafi's gruesome death at the hands of rebel forces amid a popular uprising in October 2011. The North has frequently used Gadhafi's death to justify its own nuclear development in the face of perceived U.S. threats.

"The Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq and the Gadhafi regime in Libya could not escape the fate of destruction after being deprived of their foundations for nuclear development and giving up nuclear programs of their own accord, yielding to the pressure of the U.S. and the West keen on their regime changes," the North's official Korean Central News Agency said after the country's fourth nuclear test, in January 2016.

IRAN

Some experts see Iran's case as the best available scenario for denuclearizing North Korea. Under a 2015 deal struck with six foreign powers — the United States, Britain, Russia, France, Germany and China — Iran agreed to curb its nuclear program, long suspected of being aimed at developing weapons, in return for billions of dollars in sanctions relief.

Accepting a 10-year restriction on uranium enrichment, Iran shut down thousands of centrifuges and exported almost its entire stockpile of bomb-making material. It disabled a heavy water plant seen as potentially capable of producing plutonium usable in weapons. The country also approved a stringent monitoring regime that allows Inter-

national Atomic Energy Agency inspectors to access any site suspected of nuclear weapons-related activities, including military facilities.

Aside from economic benefits, the deal allowed Tehran to save face by granting it the right to continue its atomic program for peaceful purposes, which some see as a potential selling point for Pyongyang.

Skeptics say North Korea's weapons program is too advanced to realistically expect a similar cut to near zero. While it was obvious that oil-rich Iran would gain significantly from the removal of sanctions alone, Kim, who guides a broken economy that lacks real industry, may demand bigger rewards for restraining his nuclear program.

UKRAINE AND OTHERS

Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus inherited thousands of nuclear weapons after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, but were persuaded by the United States to transfer the devices to Russia in return for economic support and security guarantees.

Analysts say the countries didn't have clear security reasons to keep the weapons and that memories of the Chernobyl disaster also influenced Ukraine's decision to abandon the nukes.

South Africa, which has large uranium reserves, had built about a half-dozen nuclear warheads but voluntary gave them up and dismantled its weapons program after the end of apartheid starting in 1991. AP



In this courtroom sketch the lawyers of the accused [from left] Isa Gultaslar, Laura Severin, Romain Delcoigne and Sven Mary attend a trial at the Brussels Justice Palace yesterday

BELGIUM

Paris attacks suspect Abdeslam gets 20 years in related case

A Belgian court on yesterday found 2015 Paris attacks suspect Salah Abdeslam and an accomplice guilty of attempted murder over shots fired at police as they sought to avoid arrest in Brussels.

The court handed both Abdeslam, Europe's most wanted fugitive at the time, and Sofiane Ayari the maximum 20-year sentence.

It said the "terror character" was clearly established in the March 2016 shooting, four months after the Paris attacks that killed 130. Abdeslam was close to being arrested in a hideout when he and Ayari fled while another man sprayed gunfire at police and was killed. Three officers were wounded.

His lawyer Sven Mary said it remains to be seen whether Abdeslam will seek to appeal his sentence. He has 30 days to decide. Mary insisted it is unclear whether Abdeslam himself had fired shots at officers trying to break into the hideout.

"If there is doubt, he should have been let go, it's that simple," Mary said.

Abdeslam attended the opening day of the trial in February but has refused to cooperate since. He is being held in a French prison. Ayari was also absent.

It is unclear when Abdeslam will face trial over the Paris attacks but it is expected to take several years.

The conclusion of the case at

Brussels' ornate palace of justice took place amid tight security set up by the armed forces and police.

"As all our demands have been met we can be satisfied, said Maryse Alie, a lawyer for the police. "The judgment says that firing at policemen on duty is a very serious crime."

Ayari is a Tunisian who fought with the Islamic State group for a year before heading to Europe. By the time he and Abdeslam began hiding in the upstairs apartment in central Brussels, police had raided more than a dozen locations in Belgium with little to show for it.

On the afternoon of March 15, 2016, they battered down yet another door. This time, it was to the staccato of an assault rifle. An IS fighter opened fire on the officers, who had only service weapons, while Abdeslam and Ayari darted onto a rooftop, broke into a neighboring apartment and escaped, authorities said.

The fugitives left behind a Kalashnikov, ammunition clips, a cellphone and a tunic — their DNA was everywhere, according to court testimony.

Three days after the shooting spree, Abdeslam was captured in Brussels. Four days after that, extremists struck in the Belgian capital, killing 32 people in bomb attacks at the airport and on the subway system. AP



Town Crier Tony Appleton announces that the Duchess of Cambridge has given birth to a baby boy outside the Lindo wing at St Mary's Hospital in London

ROYAL BABY

It's a boy for Kate on England's national day

Jill Lawless, London

FOR Kate, the wait is over. The Duchess of Cambridge gave birth yesterday to a

healthy baby boy — a third child for Kate and Prince William and fifth in line to the British throne.

The couple's Kensington Palace office announced

news of the birth around lunchtime, about five hours after the 36-year-old duchess and her husband traveled by car from their Kensington Palace home to the

private Lindo Wing of St. Mary's Hospital in central London.

The palace said the baby prince was born at 11:01 a.m. (1001 GMT) and weighed in at eight pounds, 3.8 kilograms. Prince William was in attendance, and the palace said mother and child were both doing well.

"The queen, the Duke of Edinburgh, the Prince of Wales, the Duchess of Cornwall, Prince Harry and members of both families have been informed and are delighted with the news," the palace said in a statement.

Mixing tradition and modernity, the news was announced by the palace on Twitter and also proclaimed in the forecourt of Buckingham Palace through a framed notice perched on a golden easel.

Tony Appleton, a town crier from southeast England, showed up in full regalia to declare the newborn prince's birth outside the hospital. The words "It's a boy" flashed in lights around the top of London's BT Tower, which can be seen for miles around.

More ceremonial celebration is to come, including the pealing of bells at West-

minster Abbey and a gun salute in London's Hyde Park.

The baby is a younger brother to 4-year-old Prince George and Princess Charlotte, who turns 3 next week. Both were born at the same hospital, as were William and his younger brother, Prince Harry.

The infant's name, which has been subject to a flurry of bets, hasn't been announced. Arthur and James are among bookmakers' favorites for the new prince, whose full title will be His Royal Highness, Prince (Name) of Cambridge.

Monday is St. George's Day, England's national day, but the baby is unlikely to be given the name since his older brother already has it.

The new arrival is Queen Elizabeth II's sixth great-grandchild and bumps Prince Harry to sixth place in the line of succession. The baby is fifth in line, after grandfather Prince Charles, father Prince William and his two siblings.

Charlotte is the first royal daughter to stay ahead of a younger brother in the line of succession. Before the rules were changed in 2012, male heirs took precedence. **AP**

AD

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what's ON



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TIME: 8pm (Tuesdays to Fridays)
2pm & 8pm (Saturdays)
2pm & 5pm (Sundays)

UNTIL: June 17, 2018

VENUE: Parisian Theatre, Parisian Macau
ADMISSION: MOP188, MOP388, MOP488
ENQUIRIES: (853) 2882 8818 / 2855 5555

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THE WEIGHT OF CONTEXT – WORKS BY LEONG FEI IN

TIME: 11am-7pm (Closed on Mondays and
mandatory holidays)

UNTIL: May 13, 2018

VENUE: 1st Floor, Macau Art Garden, No. 265, Av.

Dr. Rodrigo Rodrigues

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2836 6064

“MY CHINESE ZODIAC” – EXHIBITION BY RAQUEL GRALHEIRO

TIME: 3pm-8pm (Mondays)

12pm-8pm (Tuesdays to Sundays)

UNTIL: May 13, 2018

VENUE: A2 Gallery, Albergue SCM

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2852 2550

Offbeat

MICHIGAN COUPLE GIVES 14TH SON
CREATIVE MIDDLE NAME

A Michigan couple had a little bit of fun naming their 14th son.

Kateri and Jay Schwandt welcomed the birth of their son on Wednesday. Jay Schwandt said they've decided to name him Finley Sheboygan Schwandt.

The name doesn't appear to have any ties with the Wisconsin city. It's inspired by a tale his father-in-law told them about a Native American chief who was the father of many boys, Jay Schwandt said. The chief believed his last child would be a girl. When the baby was a boy, the chief named him Sheboygan for "she is a boy again."

There's "no chance" the couple will have another child, Jay Schwandt said, though he's made similar statements before. "This realistically is the end of the road as far as making babies," he said.

Kateri Schwandt has said she's used to large families, as one of 14 children herself.

"Each little one that has entered our family has brought something special to the entire makeup of the family and without anyone of them it wouldn't feel right," she said.

The couple lives in Rockford, north of Grand Rapids. They have no daughters. The couple's oldest son is in his 20s.

A documentary about the family is set to be released by the Lifetime Network in June.

TV canal macau



13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
15:00	Miscellaneous
15:40	Zig Zag
16:10	NOS League: Estoril x Sporting (Repeated)
17:50	Brazilian Soap Opera (Repeated)
18:40	TDM Sports (Repeated)
19:50	Portuguese Serie Sr.1
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:00	TDM Interview
21:30	Miscellaneous
22:10	Brazilian Soap Opera
23:00	TDM News
23:30	Miscellaneous
00:15	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
00:50	RTPi Live

cinema



CINETEATRO

19 - 24 APR



RAMPAGE

ROOM 1

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

Director: Brad Peyton

Starring: Dwayne Johnson, Naomie Harris, Malin Akerman

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 107min

COLOR ME TRUE

ROOM 2

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

Director: Takeuchi Hideki

Starring: Ayase Haruka, Sakaguchi Kentarou

Language: Japanese (Chinese & English)

Duration: 107min



SECRET SUPERSTAR

ROOM 2

07:00pm

Director: Advait Chandan

Starring: Aamir Khan, Zaira Wasim

Language: Hindi (English & Chinese)

Duration: 150min



ISLE OF DOGS

ROOM 3

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

Director: Wes Anderson

Starring: Bryan Cranston, Koyu Rankin, Edward Norton

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 101min

TOMORROW IS ANOTHER DAY

ROOM 3

7:30pm

Director: Nick Park

Starring: Eddie Redmayne, Tom Hiddleston

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 91min

this day in history

1990 HUBBLE TELESCOPE
TAKES OFF FOR SPACE

The American space agency Nasa has successfully launched the space shuttle Discovery from Cape Canaveral in Florida on its historic mission to carry the Hubble space telescope into orbit 380 miles (611.5 km) above the Earth.

The telescope will operate from high above the atmosphere, thus avoiding the interference which limits ground-based telescopes.

It will be able to see up to the edge of the known universe, taking images of objects and events which happened up to 14 billion years ago.

The telescope, the size of a railway carriage, has taken 20 years to build, at a cost of \$1.55 billion.

It has been dogged by technical hitches, huge budget over-runs and other delays.

Its launch is seven years overdue, held up by problems in the space shuttle program, including the explosion of the Challenger shuttle in 1986.

The problems continued even once it was safely in space, as the British-made solar panel arrays which provide power for the six separate instruments on board malfunctioned.

However, scientists said they were expecting it to be difficult.

"Deploying the solar panels is technically more challenging than the launch of a shuttle one more time," said Nasa scientist Stephen Maran.

The fault was resolved, and now the telescope faces six months of testing before becoming fully operational.

Nasa hopes to release the first test image - of an open star cluster known as NGC 3532 - in about a week.

Hubble's main instrument is a finely-polished mirror 94 inches (240 cm) across.

There are also two cameras - one which can achieve image resolutions 10 times greater than that of even the largest Earth-based telescope, and a second which can detect an object 50 times fainter than anything visible from Earth.

"We are going to have the ability to observe the most distant objects, among the earliest in the universe, and thus probe the secrets of creation," said Nasa's chief scientist, Leonard Fisk.

The telescope will be controlled by the specially-created Space Telescope Science Institute at Baltimore.

It's thought Hubble's images will provoke a drastic revision of the shapes, sizes and content of galaxies already identified by ground-based telescopes.

It is also likely to find new stars and phenomena, and astronomers suggest the telescope provides the best chance yet of working out the true age of the universe.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

When the first pictures from Hubble came through, in May 1990, scientists were horrified. The images were blurred - no better than would have been produced by a telescope on Earth.

Hubble's mirror had been made flatter than it should be by just one-fiftieth of the width of a human hair.

In December 1993, Hubble was repaired in orbit, in one of the landmarks of manned space flight.

A series of corrective mirrors were fixed to the telescope in an unprecedented series of five spacewalks in a single space shuttle flight.

Since the repair, Hubble has sent back a series of stunning photographs of deep space, and revolutionised thinking about the universe.

Among its most memorable images were startling pictures of Jupiter following the impact of Comet Shoemaker Levy 9 in 1994.

Between 2003 and 2004, instruments on Hubble were directed to a single spot in the sky to obtain the deepest-ever view of the universe.

The Hubble Ultra Deep Field, as it was called, showed the first stars beginning to shine, shortly after the moment when the universe was created 13.7 billion years ago.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Just when you thought things absolutely couldn't get any more startling - well, here it is. One more situation you have no choice but to become totally and completely involved with on an emotional level.

Taurus April 20-May 20

Several of your sign's most famous qualities will be called on now, and while many others don't have what it takes, you most certainly do. You'll need to be silent while others are babbling about absolutely nothing.

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21

Lighthearted banter is what you enjoy most, after all - okay, that and getting involved in a conversation that's full of (usually) good-natured arguing including, but certainly not limited to.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22

In your mind, secrets are good for only one thing: Uncovering. You enjoy uncovering them most especially if the truth you bring to the surface by that revelation brings about a big, positive change.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Ready for a day that's perfect for no other reason than that you're happy to be you? Well, good. We're all entitled to one of those, and you of all people should be set to enjoy it.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22

You're not prone to making decisions without carefully thinking them through, especially when it comes to career matters. Still, something that's been offered to you recently sounds just too good to pass up.

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22

The way you two met was magical. They know it and you know it. Just about everything that's happened since also seems to have carried that lovely, magical tone, too.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21

You're not ordinarily famous for your love of lighthearted conversation. In fact, when it comes to conversation, you tend to use one word for every three other folks blurt out without even thinking about it.

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21

As you well know, life is a series of extended vacations that we're fortunate enough (hopefully) to take alongside a number of carefully chosen, well-suited travel companions.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Someone who either stood you up or outright left you in the lurch has decided to pop back into your life, asking for a second shot at the title. You may be a bit tongue-tied, which is odd, but don't worry about it.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Whether or not you believe in reincarnation doesn't matter. We've all had the experience of feeling like we've known someone forever, even though it's only been a few months. Or weeks. Or even moments.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20

Get out your checkbook, credit cards and ATM cards - and all the accompanying statements. Do that before you decide to wreak any more havoc on them - even if it is because the one who got away has called.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy

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

Easy+

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

Medium

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

Hard

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

WEATHER

Table with columns: MIN, MAX, CONDITION. Rows for CHINA (Beijing, Harbin, Tianjin, Urumqi, Xi'an, Lhasa, Chengdu, Chongqing, Kunming, Nanjing, Shanghai, Wuhan, Hangzhou, Taipei, Guangzhou, Hong Kong) and WORLD (Moscow, Frankfurt, Paris, London, New York).

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Stadium cheers; 5- At the apex of; 9- Syrian president; 14- Zeno of ...; 15- Asian cuisine; 16- Hard candy; 17- Jai ...; 18- Actress Helgenberger; 19- Nonsense; 20- By the day; 22- Despised; 23- Family car; 24- Wipe away; 28- An organization; 34- Eighth part of a circle; 38- Summer on the Seine; 39- ... account (never); 40- Gloss; 41- Jackfish; 43- Shrinking Asian sea; 44- Satisfied sound; 47- Mother of Calcutta; 48- Probable; 51- Make ... for oneself; 52- Bucky Beaver's toothpaste; 57- Sturdy; 61- Warned; 63- Copycats; 64- Start of something small?; 66- "Othello" villain; 67- Satisfies; 68- Ed and Mel of baseball; 69- Heavy stick; 70- Ragu competitor; 71- Greek portico; 72- Last word in a threat;

DOWN: 1- Harvests; 2- Tree-lined walk; 3- Got wind of; 4- You ... mouthful!; 5- Look ...; I'm Sandra Dee; 6- English river; 7- Sculler's need; 8- Hog; 9- Gibson of tennis; 10- Marsh bird; 11- Narrow cut; 12- Mont Blanc, par exemple; 13- Colored; 21- Senseless; 25- Shad delicacy; 26- Perform in a play; 27- Midday nap; 29- Make taut; 30- Travel from place to place; 31- "Splendor in the Grass" screenwriter; 32- Change for a five; 33- Asta's mistress; 34- Norwegian king; 35- Remedy; 36- Nicholas II was the last Russian one; 37- King of the Huns; 42- Hawk's home; 45- Doc bloc; 46- God, biblically; 49- States as fact; 50- Simple shed; 53- Cost; 54- In any way; 55- Old Ethiopian emperor; 56- Sun-dried brick; 57- Clasp for a door; 58- On ... with: equal to; 59- Nerve network; 60- Remnant; 62- Actress Bonet; 64- Cal. pages; 65- Addams Family cousin;

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

Large crossword puzzle grid with numbers 1-72.

Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999
Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
Fire department 28 572 222
Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993
Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333
Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944
S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
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FOOTBALL

Wenger quit Arsenal after 'hurtful' fan protests

ARSENE Wenger said he wasn't tired of managing Arsenal but quit after finding fan protests calling for his departure "hurtful" and damaging to the club's image.

The 68-year-old Frenchman was initially reticent yesterday [Macau time] to discuss the precise reason for his decision after 22 years in charge.

But facing the media for the first time since Friday's shock announcement, Wenger relented and gave an insight into what precipitated his departure when he had another season remaining on his contract.

"I was not tired," Wenger said after Arsenal's 4-1 victory over West Ham in the Premier League. "Personally I believe this club is respected all over the world, much more than in England [...] our fans did not give the image of unity that I want in the club all over the world, and that was hurtful. I feel the club is respected. Overall the image we gave of our club is not what it is and not what I like."

"Wenger Out" banners have been displayed by some fans at games — and at events unconnected to football — as disillusionment grew at Arsenal's failure to win the Premier League since 2004.

"I do not want to make stupid headlines. I am not resentful with the fans," Wenger said. "I just feel that if my personality is in the way of what I think our



club is, for me that is more important than me. That's what I say. It has nothing to do with the fans. Our fans were not happy. I can understand that.

"I travel a lot and this club is respected all over the world, and that's down to work. It's down to the way we play football, the way we behave and the way we treat people. So I want that to go on and be respected and give the image that I think is right. Even though there's a lot of money in the game [...] more than the results is the way a club is perceived. And the example the club gives all over the world."

Wenger was hired by Arsenal in 1996 on the back of successes at Monaco and a stint in charge of Japanese club Grampus Eight. Only the second manager from outside Britain or Ireland to take charge of a top-flight English club, Wenger helped to

revolutionize English football by introducing new sports science practices.

Wenger's methods delivered on the pitch — with Arsenal winning the Premier League in 1998, 2002 and the 2004 unbeaten "Invincibles" season — and helped to attract a global fan base.

"I feel that this club has a fantastic image and for me that is absolutely vital," Wenger said. "Sport is as well about something bigger than just winning or losing and for me that was always a worry, how the club is perceived worldwide for kids who play in Africa, in China, in America. And the dream that it can create for young children who want to play football."

Wenger has enjoyed glowing tributes about his contribution to the Premier League since Friday's decision. It marks a chan-

ge from the protests that have mounted as Arsenal has slipped to sixth in the standings and faces its lowest finish during Wenger's reign.

I had the feeling a little bit of my funeral because other people speak about you and how you were. So I don't need to die anymore.

ARSENE WENGER

"After that I had the feeling a little bit [...] of my funeral because other people speak about you and how you were," Wenger said. "So it was a little bit interesting on that front. So I don't need to die anymore."

But there wasn't an outpouring of support for Wenger during Sunday's game against West Ham, with only a few renditions of "There's only one Arsene Wenger" in the Emirates Stadium.

"I am happy when our fans are happy, and I'm even ready to suffer to make them happy,"

Wenger said. "If sometimes they make me happy as well, I take it. But I feel every single decision I made in my 22 years is for the good and the sake of Arsenal. Even when it was the wrong decision it was always with one priority and to do well with the club."

"I tried to influence a club on the structural side, on the development of individual players and of course the style of play and the results. To combine the three is not always easy. I believe that I will leave a club that is in a very strong position on all fronts and my target was always to do that. And to give an opportunity to the guy that comes in after me to do even better in the next 20 years. That's my wish."

Arsenal's priority is now the Europa League, with the semifinal first leg against Atletico Madrid on Thursday. With Arsenal out of the top four in the league, winning the Europa League is the only realistic path into the Champions League and the final in Lyon can provide Wenger with the perfect send-off.

"I will always be attached [to the club] but it's difficult," Wenger said. "You do not give 22 years of your life like that — and I gave the best years of my life to this club. I arrived at 46 years old and I worked seven days a week, not six, not six and a half, seven, for 22 years."

"So you cannot just walk away and say, 'Thank you very much, bye bye.' You cannot be on one side completely committed and then walk away like nothing happened. It's impossible. I know that I will face that challenge, that it will be difficult for me. But I had other difficulties in my life and I hope I will get through this one as well."

Wenger is yet to say if he will manage another team. **AP**

BOXING

Broner, Vargas fight to 12-round majority draw

ADRIEN Broner and Jessie Vargas spent 12 rounds trading punches. A few moments later, they exchanged angry words and opposite views of what transpired.

The one thing the two fighters agreed upon? A rematch should be in the offing.

"We can do it again. I'm ready to fight right now," Vargas said after he and Broner fought to a 12-round majority draw in a welterweight fight over the weekend at the Barclays Center. "We can run it back."

Judge Julie Lederman scored the fight 115-113 for Broner, and Eric Marliniski and Kevin Morgan had it 114-114.

According to the scorecards, Lederman and Marliniski had Broner winning 105-104 heading into the 12th round, while Morgan had Vargas ahead, 105-05. Lederman and Morgan scored the 12th for Broner, 10-9, while Marliniski had Vargas winning the round, 10-9.

After the ruling was announced, Broner (33-3-1) and Vargas (28-2-1) exchanged words in the ring in front of Showtime ring-side reporter Jim Gray.

"It was a good fight but at the end of the day, I can't dispute the decision," Vargas said. "I felt like I won the fight and I was up two rounds. I'm relying on the judges to make the right decision."



Following the first round in which the fighters appeared to be feeling each other out, Vargas was the aggressor in the early rounds and landed more punches (203-194) and threw more punches (839-507). Still neither

fighter knocked the other down, although Broner slipped to the canvas late in the fifth round. Broner did open a cut over Vargas' left eye.

"The cut," Vargas said, "bothered me." Starting in the sixth,

Broner began pressuring Vargas, landing heavy blows.

"I beat him," Broner said. "Point blank, period."

The two ended the ninth and 10th rounds by exchanging heavy punches, and they finished the fight swinging wildly at each other.

"I was connecting with my right hands," Broner said. "I got warmed up in the early portion of the fight before taking over."

So now, the question becomes where do Broner and Vargas go from here?

During Thursday's final press conference, both Broner and Stephen Espinoza, Showtime's president of sports and event programming, stressed

the significance of the fight for the 28-year old from Cincinnati's future career trajectory.

Broner had switched trainers from Mike Stafford to Kevin Cunningham after the unanimous decision loss to Mikey Garcia on July 29, 2017. Prior to the switch, Broner had won three out of his last five fights, and seven of 10 overall.

Even though Vargas entered the fight having won three out of his last five, and eight of his last 10 bouts, Broner noted the Las Vegas native had lost to Tim Bradley Jr. and Manny Pacquiao.

The Broner-Vargas bout headlined the 14-fight card, which drew 13,964. **AP**

opinion

Our Desk

Lynzy Valles



ON THE LACK OF QUALITY DRIVERS

The SAR finally implemented its planned increase in public bus fares on Saturday after a series of controversies regarding "positive discrimination", which would affect non-residents as it requires them to pay more for public transportation.

Initially, the proposal was for non-locals to pay different fares from locals when using Macau Pass. The idea was to reduce the share of the government's subsidy, as bus fares have not been updated for a decade.

It was previously announced that the government subsidies for three bus operators exceeded MOP1 billion last year, hence the need to increase fares and reduce the expenditure by MOP200 million or MOP300 million.

Nevertheless, the final decision on bus fares requires passengers to pay MOP6 for all routes, while Macau Pass holders will still benefit from discounts.

However, given that the SAR is cutting subsidies for these bus operators, the public is still in need of a quality public transportation system.

Just this month, an elderly man was involved in a fatal traffic accident when a bus hit him at a pedestrian crossing.

Back in January, another bus driver "mistakenly stepped on the accelerator instead of the brake" and killed an elderly woman, also while using a pedestrian crossing.

That same month, the Transport Bureau (DSAT) declared that it would reduce the number of bus accidents by 10 percent, and informed the press that it is conducting a "comprehensive review of training and management" with the three bus companies.

Although DSAT had requested bus companies to review existing safety management and systems, as well as submit improvement plans, the public has yet to be updated on the progress of these measures.

Just last year, government data recorded eight fatalities related to traffic accidents.

These incidents should not be occurring in the city, but Macau has a number of poorly trained drivers who fall short of safety standards.

Whether it's speaking rudely to tourists who are a bit confused about bus fares or shouting and embarrassing passengers who missed one pataca on their fares, we need drivers who can be a bit more compassionate to passengers – in order to give a better impression of a so-called "world center of tourism and leisure."

What's more, they step on the accelerator for a sudden burst of speed while an elderly woman is still trying to find her way to the red priority seats, or while a mother with two children is figuring out where to sit.

Some buses even stop over a hundred meters away from the designated stop – particularly during peak hours – and expect passengers to make a run for it.

As insignificant as it seems, the need for public bus drivers who are professionally trained – or someone who is brave enough to show a bit of kindness to everyday commuters – should not be understated.

The SAR already lacks public bus drivers, let alone good drivers.

Urban mobility isn't much of a problem given the ease of getting from one place to another in the city, so taking a public bus – for some – is just a last resort.

With the nearly 50 percent hike in bus fares, I hope this somehow raises operators' standards for their drivers and ensures the safety of commuters.

The issue lies more with the improvement of public transportation in the city, rather than the hike in transportation fares.

Residents have already had plenty of harsh experiences in taxis, and facing the same issue with public transportation is too much to bear.

THE EUROZONE INTEREST RATES COULD STAY FROZEN WELL INTO 2019

Weaker signals from the economy and worries about a possible trade war between the United States and China have left the top monetary authority for the 19 countries that use the euro in no hurry to start withdrawing its monetary stimulus.

And that means the central bank's short-term interest rate benchmark will almost certainly stay at zero well into next year, ensuring low borrowing costs for businesses but miserly returns for savers.

Analysts think ECB President Mario Draghi will try to say as little as possible Thursday about when the bank might phase out its 30 billion euros per month in bond purchases, currently slated to run at least through September. The ECB would only start considering raising rates once the bond-buying is over.

The bank's 25-member rate-setting council meets at the bank's skyscraper headquarters in Frankfurt, Germany.

Shanghai gets automated bank with VR, robots, face scanning



MISSED paying dues on your Communist Party membership? There's a bank for that – and it's fully automated.

A state-owned Chinese bank has opened an automated branch equipped with facial-scanning software, a virtual reality room, a hologram machine, talking robots and touchscreens for paying utility bills and Communist Party fees, among other functions.

The branch opened last week in central Shanghai's Huangpu district and is being hyped as China's first "unmanned bank."

Beijing-based China Construction Bank says the high-tech branch is meant to make banking more convenient, personalized, and efficient. It also reflects growing competition from cashless payment systems that are giving the banks a run for their money.

A robot greets customers at the entrance and answers questions using voice recognition software. Clients can swipe their national identification cards to enter the bank – or scan their faces using the bank's facial recognition device. Machines inside allow visitors to buy gold, change currency, or scout real estate investments using virtual reality goggles.

The bank isn't totally unstaffed. Guards still stand sentry, and a room equipped with teleconference software allows VIP clients to request help from human employees based elsewhere.

News of the newfangled bank spread rapidly on-

line, drawing throngs of curious observers. Tian Ting, a finance worker, said she was impressed after touring the branch one Friday morning.

"These days, people are less and less likely to be inclined to want other people to come and bother them," Tian said. "We hope to come to a bank where we can interact with machines."

The branch opened last week in Shanghai and is being hyped as China's first 'unmanned bank'

State-owned China Construction Bank, founded in 1954 to fund large scale infrastructure projects, is the second largest bank worldwide as measured by assets, and seems an unlikely tech pioneer.

Analysts say the bank is responding to pressure from internet giants like Alibaba and Tencent, which are transforming Chinese consumer finance with mobile applications that enable people to transfer money and pay for goods using their smartphones.

"These days, everyone is talking about banking or financial innovation," said You Tianyu, vice president of research at Yiyou, a technology think tank. "This

is kind of an experiment, a shot in the dark, trying to prove that traditional banks, too, can innovate."

The trend toward automation is not new. Retailers in China and elsewhere have been tinkering with automated supermarkets and convenience stores, and Bank of America last year piloted three automated banks in the U.S., calling them "advanced centers." It now has 14 such branches, featuring ATMs and videoconferencing capabilities.

Still, the China Construction Bank branch takes technology a step further, with You and others citing its face-scanning abilities as a breakthrough.

"Through the use of facial recognition, even without a human in the loop, the system can ensure uniqueness of the individual at the time of enrollment and can verify each time the person conducts a transaction that they are who they claim to be," said Joseph Atick, a biometrics expert and chairman of Identity International.

Industry analysts question whether the other gadgets add much value, saying that existing ATMs and online banking sites have already automated most banking tasks.

"If you go to a bank, you want a person, right? If you're in the office and you're like, I don't want to go a bank, you'll just go online," says Chris DeAngelis, manager of Beijing-based technology consultancy Alliance Development Group. "There's nothing that changes the world here." AP

Station	Air quality
Roadside	25-45 Good
High Density Residential Area	25-45 Good
Ambient	25-45 Good

WORLD BRIEFS



SYRIA Government forces used warplanes, helicopters and artillery to pound districts of the capital held by the Islamic State group, in a bid to enforce an evacuation deal reached with the militants earlier in the week.

EGYPT-ETHIOPIA Egypt's parliament has passed a law banning the cultivation of crops that require a large amount of water, amid fears that a massive Ethiopian dam being built upstream could cut into the country's share of the Nile.



NIGER On the scorching edge of the Sahara Desert, the U.S. Air Force is building a base for armed drones, the newest front in America's battle against the growing extremist threat in Africa's vast Sahel region.



ARMENIA Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan resigned unexpectedly yesterday to quell massive anti-government protests over what critics feared was his effort to seize power for life.

FRANCE Striking French train workers have occupied a building in a surprise protest against President Emmanuel Macron's changes to the state-run rail company.



PARAGUAY The son of a former dictator's top aide has won the presidential election in Paraguay, helped by a booming economy under his party.

PERU A 41-year-old Canadian who traveled to Peru to study hallucinogenic medicine was killed by a mob in a remote corner of the Amazon rain forest after people blamed him for the slaying of an elderly shaman.