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Macau, Moscow linked with regular flights

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WORLD BRIEFS

INDONESIA Dozens of Islamic militant prisoners who took over a police detention center near Indonesia's capital and killed five officers yesterday, the country's top security minister said.
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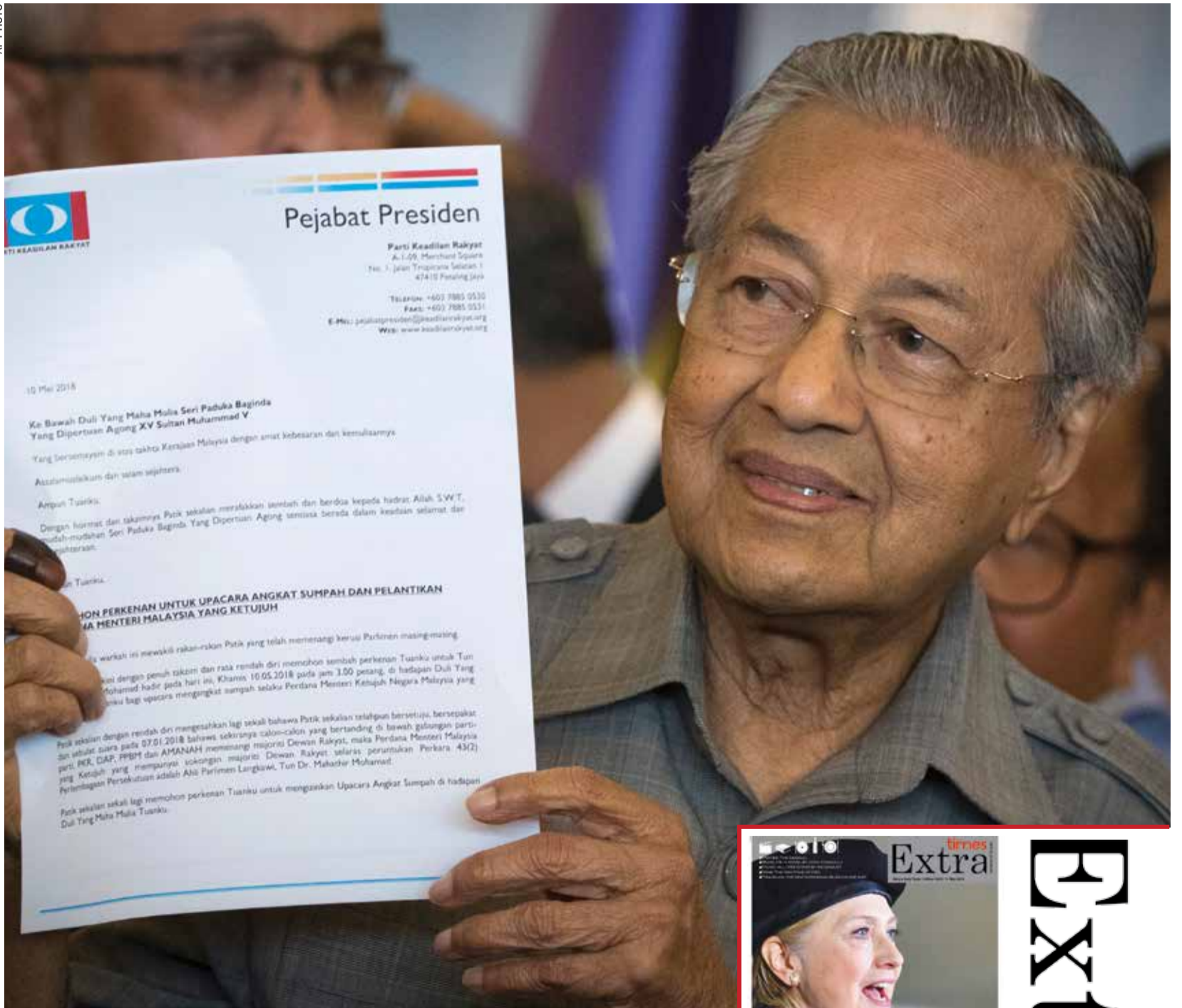


TRUMP-KIM President Donald Trump will meet with North Korea's Kim Jong Un in Singapore on June 12, Trump announced yesterday, hours after suggesting that the release of three Americans held in the North heralded a potential breakthrough toward denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula.

PHILIPPINES The navy will deploy its first-ever missile-firing assault vessels in about three months, likely for territorial defense, anti-insurgency strikes and deterrence, but it remains "centuries" behind the naval might of Asian countries such as China, the navy chief said yesterday.

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FILM

Max Bessmertny's works explore themes of sin and misfortune

Daniel Beitler

LOCAL filmmaker Maxim Bessmertny is showing a selection of shorts and commercials from the last seven years of his career in his first ever solo exhibition at the Taipa Village Art Space.

Titled "Degustation", the exhibition comprises four short films and three commercials, bound in common by the theme of sin. Best known among them is the 2014 short "Tricycle Thief", which had its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival. The film is set in modern Macau, depicting the tale of a desperate tricycle driver in search of money after being served with an eviction notice.

From a thematic and genre approach, the young filmmaker's work is diverse. Themes of misfortune, desperation and sin are common across Bessmertny's portfolio, but viewers can also find the qualities of endurance and resilience in his memorable characters.

"I think that there are certain character elements that I am searching for and trying to discover," the Russia-born filmmaker told the Times in an interview this week. "I am always trying to tackle the seven sins. [...] There are elements of greed and elements of displacement. There is a desire to survive and live in a better world."

Perhaps there are few better locations to explore the role of sin than in Asia's own 'Sin City';



a city that for hundreds of years sheltered and entertained pirates, triads and casinos.

But Bessmertny's commercials and shorts also involve a touch of humor, as well as social satire and commentary.

For example, in *The Great Debt*, the circulation of a single MOP1,000 bank note satisfies a number of personal debts before it returns to its original owner in a timely manner. The story reminds the viewer that although we mostly think of ourselves as autonomous economic actors, we are more interdependent than we might like to admit; bound together by promissory notes that turn the world.

For the curator of the Taipa Village Art Space, João Ó, Bess-

mertny's exhibited works are, in style and content, a reflection of Macau and the unique qualities that only this city can offer for the external viewer. The curator writes about the filmmaker's exhibition as if it was a well-considered dish, with balanced flavors and carefully sourced ingredients.

"[The exhibition is] a tasting menu, specially conceived with local produce and designed to provide the consumer with a unique experience by utilizing some of the most unusual, yet, remarkable ingredients and flavors that can only be found in Macau," the curator wrote.

"In filmic terms, Bessmertny's films breathe the essence of Macau's cultural diversity and contrasting urban environments:

a relaxed tension between the high culture, propelled by a casino-driven society, and the low culture, characterized by the local working class that still earn their living through traditional trades."

For Bessmertny, the fact that Macau is featured prominently in his work is mostly a consequence of the fact that he lives here. The characters hold the same meaning wherever they happen to be set, he said, "it just happens that the camera is here in Macau. I am trying to find a universal message. There are elements of Macau, but they could be found anywhere else too."

But that is not to say that the filmmaker does not hold Macau in high regard.

"[Macau] is definitely alluring," he admitted, and its charm makes him feel like he is "stuck in time in this mystical place."

"What makes it most interesting to me is that I came as an ou-

tsider, became familiar with the culture here and a fan of its history. There's so much story here, in this East-meets-West connecting point. [...] The inner harbor is one of the most cinematic spots, in terms of photography, but also meaning and art. It's a very poetic place that makes you feel both in the 1940s and in the present."

Bessmertny's latest project was a collaboration that led to a mini-documentary series exploring a number of eccentric, local personalities.

In the series' first and only episode so far, two seemingly unrelated individuals are juxtaposed in a humorous way, providing an insight into two very different Macau worlds. But it turns out that both the cardboard-collecting grandmother and the holder of the Mr. Macau 2016 bodybuilding title have more in common than first meets the eye: a love for 'cardio'.

Bessmertny is now writing a screenplay for his next project. He is still in the early stages and said that it would not make sense to disclose any information about it at this stage.

The exhibition at the Taipa Village Art Space runs until May 31 and admission is free.

THE FOUR SHORTS SHOWING AT THE EXHIBITION

Tricycle Thief (2014),

Macau's colour-saturated late-night landscape of dark streets, back alleys and neon lights is tailor-made for trouble, as a desperate tricycle driver discovers in this cautionary tale of need and greed.

The Great Debt (2016),

A single bank note travels through different hands in Macau and returns to its original owner.

Death of a Parrot (2017),

A gluttonous grape addict is barred from the gardens of pleasure. He will only be allowed back if he does the garden manager a favor.

Sampan (2017),

A fishing net entangles a fisherman, a businessman and an actress into a love triangle in the South China Sea.

MUSIC

Fado singers join Chinese Orchestra

FADO music played by the Macao Chinese Orchestra, featuring Portuguese singers Mísia and Pedro Moutinho, will take place on May 31 at the Cultural Center. The concert will be part of the Macao Arts Festival program.

Mísia is a Portuguese contemporary singer who is widely celebrated for her timeless and universal sentiments, which form part of her many songs sung not only in her native

language but also in many other languages.

Pedro Moutinho is a member of probably the most influential family in contemporary Portuguese fado of all time. His brothers are Camané, the fado singer whose impeccable career has become the standard by which all others are judged; and Hélder Moutinho, singer, lyricist, producer, one of the most versatile of all current fado singers.

By now, however, Pedro Moutinho has enough of a career of his own that it is no longer necessary to compare him to his brother's.

The concert's program features fados such as "Fado Adivinha", "Fogo Preso", "Lágrima", "Tive um Coração, Perdi-o", "Garras dos Sentidos", "Ao Deus Dará", "Veio a Saudade", "Alfama", and many others.



Mísia



Pedro Moutinho

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Claims of sexual abuse at local kindergarten

Julie Zhu

YESTERDAY, the Judiciary Police (PJ) reported that it had not yet found any sign of sexual assault on two kindergarten students who were allegedly abused by a staff member of D. José da Costa Nunes kindergarten.

According to parents' claims, at least three children from the same kindergarten room were sexually assaulted by one of the school's employees. The parents claim that the children were "inappropriately touched" by the suspect and filed complaints to the PJ.

The accused employee is reportedly a 30-year-old male worker who has been working at the school as an assistant since 2014.

The suspect has been under questioning, as revealed by the PJ yesterday morning. The PJ stated that the department will continue the investigation due to the gravity of the case.



Yesterday afternoon, the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEJ) held a press conference to announce relevant information concerning the case to the media.

Ng Mei Kei, head of the Division of Pre-School and Primary Education, said "this morning, parents came to DSEJ to report on the issue. We have been following up on relevant works. [...] The police have already begun its investigation, and [we had better] wait for it to report [the appropriate evidence]."

When questioned by the media concerning the number of children allegedly involved in the case, as well as other numbers related to the case, Ng provided a similar answer, repeating that the police are still investigating, and that the police will wait until all relevant information has been assessed before making announcements to the public.

The school was reportedly notified about a possible sexual assault incident last year. When repeatedly asked about when exactly the school

became aware of a possible incident, Ng said that "regarding this matter, since it involves details of the case, maybe [it's better] for the police to report."

Ng stated that DSEJ would handle the case according to the law in case it detects any violations.

Regarding whether DSEJ had conducted an internal investigation to determine the responsibilities of the school, Ng claimed that DSEJ will review the "whole procedure" and that it "will inspect the school's daily arrangements in order to offer [the school] timely suggestions."

"Regarding the situation reported by the parents, we will keep following it, and will continue communicating with the school," said Ng, adding that DSEJ only "learnt about the issue yesterday," but has already made great effort in handling the emergency.

"Concerning suspicions of sexual assault [in schools], we will arrange a counseling service and carry out timely school work, and will enhance sex education in schools," declared Ng.

The kindergarten management will meet with the parents of all students today, in light of this controversy that has shocked the school community.

Population passes 650,000

The total population in Macau was 656,700 as of the end of March this year, an increase of 3,600 quarter-to-quarter, the Statistics and Census Service said yesterday. Female population was 348,100, equating to 53 percent of the SAR. A total of 1,414 live births were delivered in the first quarter of 2018, a decrease of 268 quarter-to-quarter. Male births totaled 763 and the sex ratio at birth stood at 117.2, meaning 117.2 males were born for every 100 females. Mortality decreased by 33 quarter-to-quarter to 513. The top three underlying causes of death were neoplasms, diseases of the circulatory system and diseases of the respiratory system. Non-resident workers totaled 181,345 at the end of the first quarter of 2018, up by 1,889.

Angela Leong unaware of blacklist of casino workers

Lawmaker Angela Leong, who is also the managing director of SJM Holdings, has claimed to be unaware of casinos holding blacklists of their former employees. According to a report by TDM, Leong said that she had never seen any blacklist, and that SJM Holdings would never share information about its past workers with other gaming operators. In addition, Leong claimed that SJM Holdings tries its best to offer employment opportunities for former workers to return to the company. She further noted that SJM Holdings has always hired executives and dealers who left other casinos.

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Royal Flight Airlines launches regular flight to Moscow

Julie Zhu

ROYAL Flight Airlines will start offering a regular weekly service between Macau and Moscow, as announced yesterday at the launch ceremony of the Macau-Moscow route at the Macau International Airport (MIA).

Previously, Royal Flight Airlines had offered a weekly charter service between Macau and the Russian capital.

As opposed to previous years, the airline is providing a regular schedule service to Moscow instead of a charter-based service.

Eric Fong, director of Marketing Department of Macau International Airport Company Limited (CAM), extended a warm welcome to Royal Flight Airlines resuming their services at MIA.

"Since the beginning of its operation, the route has been well received by tourists, with the passenger load factor reaching more than 95 percent. Royal Flight Airline has... great confidence [about] the Macau-Moscow route. [...] In turn, MIA looks forward to expanding



operational opportunities with Royal Flight, aiming to open up new air services so as to further strengthen the route network, thus providing passengers with more convenient travel options," said Fong.

Simon Chan, President of the Civil Aviation Authority of Macau, on the sideline of the ceremony, said "flights to Moscow have been being operated for two years through a charter-based service in summer. Now, the market is mature, [...] following

the launching of a regular flight service, [the airline] will provide services throughout the whole year."

According to Chan, more than half of Macau's current flight routes are international ones.

"There were companies inquiring about [the opening of routes between Macau] and Europe but, so far, there has not been a single application," revealed Chan.

According to Chan, by the end of May, flights between Macau

and Cebu will also become available.

Chan also expects that, in the future, integrated transportation services over land, sea and air will become a trend.

Regarding the airport's expansion, Chan hopes that a report can be delivered to the Central Government in the third quarter of this year.

Cheng Wai Tong, a representative of the director of the Macau Government Tourism Office, said that the new regular flight route between Macau and Moscow would provide passengers with more options for the 2018 World Cup and the coming gold week of the Chinese National Day holiday.

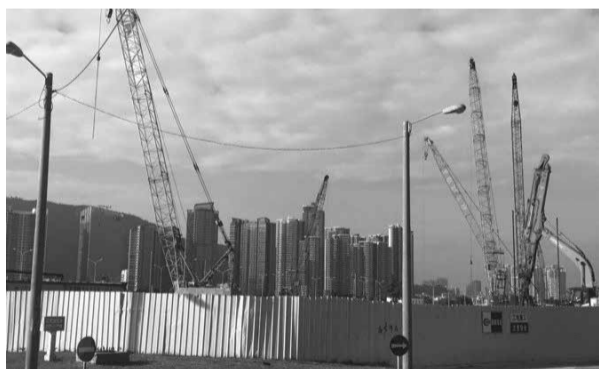
"[MGTO] hopes that more Russian tourists can visit Macau. Russia has become one of the most popular destinations among mainland tourists. Macau has many unique and diverse tourism aspects which are attractive to Russian tourists," said Cheng, adding that approximately 27,000 Russian tourists visited Macau in 2017, an increase of more than 5 percent year-on-year.

Tender for LRT Barra station construction project opens

THE public tender for the construction project of the main body of the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) Barra station opened this week, according to an official announcement published by the Transportation Infrastructure Office (GIT).

The project includes the construction of a metro tunnel, emergency circulation channels, as well as the station.

Construction sites are located between the Sai Van lake and the Sai Van bridge (on the Macau Pe-



ninsula side), and at the Avenida Panorâmica do Lago Sai Van.

A maximum of 1,331 working days for the construction period is

allowed. The quoted price of construction will contribute half to the government's decision.

The tender will remain open until June 5th.

Earlier on Monday, GIT has announced the termination of a contract with Mitsubishi Heavy Industries concerning the additional purchase of LRT trains.

"The Government and the LRT trains supplier have agreed on the termination of the contract for purchasing additional trains. The signed agreement primarily covers the settlement of the works that had been carried out, purchased materials, the processing and delivery of materials

and components that had been already produced, advance payment and progress settlement. The amount involved is about MOP360 million," the GIT announcement reads.

"The Government made this decision due to considering the current quantity of LRT trains purchased can already meet the needs of the development of the LRT network in [the] short to medium term. In this way, the termination of the contract can reduce the costs of train maintenance in the future, which comply with the general interests of the society," the report continued.

ENVIRONMENT

Solid waste reduction target of 30 percent set for 2026

The Environmental Protection Bureau (DSAP) is expecting to reduce Macau's solid waste by 30 percent by 2026.

In a recent meeting with the advisory council of the community of the islands, a DSPA representative reported that the bureau has already established short term, mid-term, and long-term plans concerning the construction of a waste landfill.

DSPA further suggested the establishment of a construction waste management regime, hoping to reduce sources of construction waste through methods such as regime or waste-reduction information programs.

It is expected that each Macau resident will have reduced their personal solid waste by 30 percent by 2026.

Moreover, DSPA is planning to initiate ground improvement works at the construction site of the waste landfill location within this year, expecting to relocate some of the inert construction waste to zone E1 at the New Urban Zone.

Besides DSPA, the Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau (IACM) also sent representatives to the meeting where they provided insight into the bureau's recycling project.

IACM currently conducts four recycling programs: a resource trash recycling program, a furniture recycling program, a school books recycling program, and a glass bottle recycling program.

In Macau, 375 organizations participate in the resource trash program, which makes 346 recycling spots available across town, in both residential and tourism areas.

Some 354 buildings are included in the furniture-recycling program, along with 39,400 households. Approximately 900 buildings across the city are not yet part of this program.

There are also 70 recycling spots for glass bottles, with 31 organizations currently members of the glass bottle recycling program.

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Chui meets with Thai Prime Minister



Chui Sai On (left) and Prayuth Chan-ocha

DURING the final stretch of his visit to Cambodia and Thailand, the Chief Executive yesterday met with the Prime Minister of Thailand, Prayuth Chan-ocha.

Both parties agreed to foster bilateral cooperation and to contribute to the One Belt, One Road initiative.

Chui Sai On stated at the meeting that Macau and Thailand could strengthen cooperation in regards to the financial and

cultural sectors.

Prayuth Chan-ocha welcomed the previous day's signing of a twin-city arrangement, which aims to promote cooperation and mutual development between Macau and Thailand's Phuket Province.

The Thai Prime Minister noted that in 2017 Macau received over 30 million tourists, of which 200,000 were from Thailand. On the other hand, around 80,000 trips by Macau residents were made to

Thailand. Prayuth Chan-ocha expressed his wish that tourist numbers continue to grow. He also said that the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge would bring benefits for regional cooperation, expressing his wish that the MSAR become a key door by which Thailand may enter the South China market.

Responding to Prayuth's comments, Chui Sai On noted that Thailand is "a world meeting point in terms of tourism" from which Macau could learn.



Local creative products showcased at Shenzhen fair

THE Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) and the Cultural Industries Fund have jointly set up the "Macao Creative Pavilion", promoting the participation of the city's design and performing arts entities at the 14th China (Shenzhen) International Cultural Industries Fair (ICIF).

Continuing until May 14 at the Shenzhen Convention and Exhibition Centre, the "Macao Creative Pavilion" is themed on local creativity, showcasing and commercializing local cultural and creative products, according to the IC. The opening ceremony of the pavilion was held yesterday and was presided over by local officials including the president of the Cultural Affairs Bureau Mok Ian Ian.

The pavilion aims to display and promote the city's original designs and accomplishments of the performing arts, highlighting Macau's

cultural and creative brands and their image. A total of ten cultural and creative entities from Macau are participating in the fair. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the PRC and the governments of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau organized the "Mainland, Hong Kong and Macau Cultural Industry Cooperation" forum at this year's fair.

The IC president was invited to be a guest speaker and attended the forum.

The IC has organized the participation of the city's cultural and creative sector in the ICIF since 2006, and has also been inviting local cultural and creative entities to join the pavilion since its inception in 2010.

The five-day event includes a number of exhibitors and organizations from mainland China and overseas.

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Int'l alliance bands together to fight money laundering

THE formation of an international alliance against money laundering was announced this week in Hong Kong, involving government representatives from China, the Philippines, Thailand and Cambodia. The group has been spearheaded by a Hong Kong-based NGO, which is receiving support from regulators, former central bankers and government officials.

According to Reuters, the alliance will share information to combat the evolving technology that makes it more difficult to track and regulate illicit money flows across Asia.

Among the supporters is Anselmo Teng, former head of the Macau Monetary Authority. Teng, who retired from the Authority last year, told Reuters that the Macau Special Administrative Region had been successful in curbing illicit money outflows



through its new automatic teller machine (ATM) regulations.

The regulations entered into force last year and involve, among other measures, facial recognition technology to be rolled out to Macau ATMs. The measures are aimed at curbing money laundering and illicit capital

outflows from mainland China.

"ATM cash withdrawals have dropped [in Macau] as a result of the KYC measures because it has effectively stopped this cross-border illegal cash withdrawal activity," Teng told Reuters.

However, as the crackdown intensifies in Ma-

cau, Hong Kong has seen a sharp rise in the number of ATM withdrawals, which local media dubbed "suspicious". Authorities in the neighboring SAR did not dispute the reported surge, but told the South China Morning Post that there were "many reasons" for fluctuating withdrawal levels.

Clarie Lo, co-chair of the Alliance and former Deputy Secretary of the Hong Kong government's Financial Services and Treasury Bureau, said that other countries and territories in the Asia-Pacific region could learn from the measures that have been introduced in Macau.

"Things like the experience from Macau will be very useful and beneficial for other jurisdictions around Asia which does not have this technology or know how to do so," she told Reuters.

CCAC investigation over Ilha Verde land's ownership

THE Association of Synergy of Macao has urged the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) to investigate the ownership of a land plot in Ilha Verde district, the association announced.

The association pointed out that several matters concern the land's ownership, ranging from its size to the plans. This particular plot of land was originally bought by the St. Joseph's Seminary with MOP2,000 back in 1828.

According to the association's report, the Ilha Verde No.2506 land plot only occupies four properties at the Estr. Marginal da Ilha Verde.

Therefore, it has been suspected that the land plot does not include the Ilha Verde mountain and its vicinity, which in total accounts for an area of 35,000 square meters.

The association has also doubted the justifiability relating to the fact that a party used 2,000 patacas to purchase 56,000 square meters of land in 1828.

Moreover, the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) previously reported the discovery of at least 11 military bunkers or buildings on Ilha Verde, although an earlier CCAC report had noted that the existence of military facilities on private land goes against common sense.

By mentioning the aforementioned governmental announcement, the association also believes that military facilities on Ilha Verde's private lands contradict common sense.

The association has already delivered its request to CCAC to investigate the case in order to ensure that state lands are not being illegally occupied.

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AL PLENARY

Lawmakers focus on shortage of qualified professionals

Renato Marques

THE Legislative Assembly (AL) plenary convened again yesterday to continue to hear the spoken enquiries from lawmakers and responses from the government, regarding the lack of qualified human resources staff in Macau.

Several lawmakers inquired as to which tasks are currently being performed by the Talents Development Committee (CDT) in regard to this problem.

The Committee's Secretary-General, Sou Chio Fai, explained that the government has conducted studies that detected a lack of qualified personnel in the mid- and upper-classes, and has already launched three different programs that target different sectors such as the "Incentive Plan for Qualified Professionals," the "Incentive Plan for the Qualified Professionals, and the Skilled Talents Acquiring Plan" and the "Elites Nurturing Plan."

Sou noted that the CDT has been working together with several institutions and offering scholarships and other relevant programs to foster local residents' development as well as to strive for the return of the around "160,000 Macau residents that, due to academic or work reasons, are spread all over the world, and in which a good part are qualified staff in several professional fields." He estimated that from these, "the ones that live and study in the mainland are over 100,000."

Despite the several studies and programs noted by Sou, the lawmakers reaffirmed their position that Macau is not doing enough and reiterated that at the same time that the MSAR is trying to attract these "highly

qualified" people, other neighboring regions are doing the same, questioning also which specific areas the Macau government is targeting.

The Secretary-General of CDT agreed that Macau must make a bigger effort, "We must be more active and keen on these works," explaining that one of the bigger focuses of the CDT is the "Database of Talents." This is separated into "three main areas: Scientific Investigators, Finance and Social and Health Fields," and Sou added that the government has been paying a lot of attention to try to attract these talents to Macau, trying to demonstrate that, "Macau has only 31 square kilometres but [possesses] opportunities that expand to other [neighboring] regions."

In this aspect, Sou said that it is important to keep in contact with residents that go abroad to study because it is normal that if they study abroad eventually they end up establishing their lives there. "We have been trying to keep that contact through several ways in order to convince these people to return and pay service in Macau," he noted.

Raising a high number of questions in the debate was lawmaker Mak Soi Kun, who called on Sou to explain the concepts of "elites" and of "qualified staff" and whether the government is thinking of attracting these people by "skipping" the requirements of the government centralized system tenders.

Ip Sio Kai was urging the government to have a "sense of urgency" and face the matter as an "urgent matter that need to be solved," suggesting that the government begin hiring needed qualified staff from abroad, noting, "this is not going to jeopardize in any way the job of local

people but instead help to develop the region and in that way benefit all [the society]."

Ip recalled that the government has a "Human Resources Reserve Database" that has more than 9,000 people registered and in which over 7,000 are residents, calling on the executive to move forward and solve the problem by hiring them.

The same lawmakers had already expressed a similar position on the previous day, when Ella Lei called for the training of locals to focus on the most important tasks and develop their careers, saying, "I think and agree that we can open more training opportunities for locals to reach a more professional level but we lack a lot of human resources and we have a lot of non-resident workers, this is clear," she said.

"The non-resident workers (TNR) are also important and they are also working towards the development of Macau. These people also need training and there isn't any [for them] as they aren't locals." Ip replied. "We need to train also the TNR to perform better and develop the performance of the local companies. There are people that can legally work in Macau but then cannot make accreditation tests and others," he noted, giving the example of the insurance mediators. "This does not make sense," Ip concluded.

It was an opinion which, as during the previous day, provoked criticism from Lei, who said, "We [are] not supposed to import talents but to train ours locally," then gave some statistics: "From the 154,000 [workers],

we already have 5,856 [imported] specialized workers, which account for 3.8 percent of the total," he said, urging the CDT to "think on how to perform local training" and not "to go abroad [and] get more people." Finally a quota was proposed for the hiring of such staff of "one-for-one" [one locally-trained to one hired from abroad].

Elaborating on the idea was Chan Iek Lap, who picked up the case of the Traditional Chinese Medicine physicians. "We keep talking about import but we don't give enough opportunities and show incapacity to deal with the ones [talents] we have and to give them job opportunities," he said.

There are many residents working outside, but Macau seems to not be attractive in any way for these people to return.

CHAN HONG

Also on the topic, lawmaker Chan Hong said that he hopes that CDT "could [better] perform its duties," recalling cases of professions such as Information Technology and Mechanics, in which she claims, "There are many residents working outside, but Macau seems not be attractive in any way for these people to return. They have no trust that here they will manage to live their lives," concluding by saying, "Talents and land plots are the things that we lack [...] in Macau."

Merging of two bus companies confirmed

AT the plenary session to reply to several spoken enquiries, the Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosario, responded affirmatively to the question of lawmaker Ho Ion Sang over whether it was true that two of the current public buses operators (TCM and New Era) will merge into a single company.

The question was one of the very few that Rosario responded to on the topic of the bus operators, explaining that "we are now at the last stage of the negotiations [with the companies] and would not be [appropriate] or convenient to reveal the details at this stage."

The acknowledgement by Rosario that TCM and New Era will merge into a single company also raised questions from other lawmakers about the process.

Rosario explained, "there a contract term that allows this merging. So both companies presented such request and we authorized," he said. "We believe that this will have a positive contribution to the public transport system as

Macau is a small territory and we find it a good solution for two companies to turn into one."

Advancing on the possible advantages the merger, Rosario also said that it "might turn out that we have less overlapped buses and better optimization" of transport routes, reaffirming that he believes (and the companies have given guarantees) that there will be no problems with drivers and other workers.

As for the possibility of adding more environmentally-friendly buses - namely using electricity or natural gas as fuels - the Secretary said that for now there are many limitations regarding both systems, namely on the location for the refueling of natural gas-powered buses.

On the topic, Lam Hin San, director of the Transport Bureau, added that at the moment, "11 percent of the casino shuttle buses are already eco-friendly" and the government has the goal to extend the fleet of such vehicles operating in the public system to a total of 120 by 2020, almost two-fold the existing number.

REAL ESTATE MATTERS

Why do property prices move slower than stock prices?

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

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SAM LEE

When asked to point out the difference between investing in property and stocks, many investors remark that the property market is not as volatile as the stock market on a day-to-day basis. Like any other marketplace, the property market is subject to cyclical booms and busts but individual property prices typically won't oscillate the way stock prices do.

If they are both subject to market forces, why are property prices slower to change? Firstly, we don't have a real-time minute-to-minute consensus about what a property is worth. Final sales prices for particular properties are not often disclosed- so

even if you know that a transaction was reached on a particular property you can only take your best guess at the sold price based on the listed price. The Macau government (DSEC) takes the aggregated market data and releases reports, but there is always a lag between the market and the information.

Secondly, it's harder to panic buy or sell properties. If you see the value of your stock portfolio falling, you could instantly sell before it falls any further or place a stop-order to sell the stock if it drops below a certain price. With property, even if you panicked today it would

take at least a couple of months for the sale to actually happen. This also adds to the time-lag between the data and the market.

Lastly, property prices tend to be sticky. Sometimes you will get strange scenarios where the market values of properties are supposedly falling but you don't actually see individual property prices dropping. This is often because the owner can't sell even if they want to since they'd end up owing more on the mortgage than they'd achieve from the sale.

If you'd like to find out more, please feel free to get in touch at info@jml-property.com

China Merchants Bank is accused of racial discrimination in suit

CHINA Merchants Bank Co. was accused of discriminating against African-Americans in a lawsuit filed on behalf of a former executive who claims she was fired for blowing the whistle on its conduct.

The Shenzhen, China-based firm's former head of U.S. corporate banking, Xin Wang, said that she was dismissed after more than eight years for making complaints about discriminatory conduct toward the black community, according to a lawsuit filed in New York federal court on Tuesday. Wang says she first brought the issue to the attention of management in April 2017 when Morgan Stanley sought more than USD26 million in financing from the bank for a \$105 million syndicated real estate loan to finance a project in Harlem. The bank approved only \$10 million, based on an opinion by its head of risk management that the project's deficiencies in-



clude the neighborhood in which it was located - "where the African population is more concentrated," according to the suit. "While there is no place in society for racist stereotypes and discrimination, this is particularly the case for financial institutions that hold access to capital, growth and development," David E. Gottlieb, an attorney for Wang, said in a statement. "China Merchants Bank's blatant discrimination and then retaliation against Ms. Wang when she raised complaints about this conduct

is simply reprehensible." The bank said in a statement that the allegations in the suit are without merit and that the company intends to contest them aggressively and expects to prevail. "Discrimination of any kind is unacceptable, and we work very hard to ensure that both our workplace and our lending practices are free from discrimination," the company said. "Our lending decisions are made based on sound risk management and practices, and we take pride in investing in our people and our community." Bloomberg



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GAMING

Hard Rock granted casino license in Atlantic City

Wayne Parry, Atlantic City

HARD Rock had an easy time with New Jersey gambling regulators on Wednesday, gaining a license to reopen a casino and begin Atlantic City's recovery from a string of gambling hall closures on a property that President Donald Trump once hailed as "the eighth wonder of the world."

The Casino Control Commission granted a license to Hard Rock, the worldwide hotel, gambling and entertainment company owned by Florida's Seminole Indian tribe. It is reopening the former Trump Taj Mahal.

The casino is set to reopen on June 28 — the same day as another shuttered Boardwalk casino, the former Revel property, that will open as the Ocean Resort Casino. Together, the new casinos will restore as many as 6,500 of the 11,000 jobs Atlantic City lost when five of its 12 casinos went out of business since 2014. Casino officials say Hard Rock has received 50,000 applications for 4,000 jobs.

"What we have in store is going to blow people away," said Jon Lucas, chief operating officer of Hard Rock International. "It'll be a boost for the reinvention of Atlantic City."

Four casinos — The Atlantic Club, Showboat, Trump Plaza and Revel — went out of business in 2014. The Trump Taj Mahal followed in 2016.

Hard Rock gutted and is completely renovating the casino resort that Trump opened in 1990.

"We could have just re-carpeted and put up some [memorabilia]. But we want to grow Atlantic City rather than just moving people from an existing facility," said Ja-



Job applicants interact with screening staff during a hiring event for the soon-to-open Hard Rock casino

mes Allen, CEO of Hard Rock International.

The casino has budgeted USD30 million for entertainment in its first year, Allen said. That will fund over 300 nights of live music, comedy and drama. Carrie Underwood (June 29) and Pitbull (June 30) will be the first acts to perform there.

The casino will have no debt, being self-financed by Hard Rock and its local investment partners, Allen said. The resort plans to offer internet gambling and sports betting, if it is legalized.

The Taj Mahal went bankrupt within a year of Trump's opening, and Trump lost control of it in a subsequent bankruptcy years later when bondholders took over. His friend and fellow billionaire Carl Icahn shuttered the Taj Mahal in 2016, after failing to reach a labor agreement with Atlantic City's main casino workers' union.

Hard Rock bought it in March 2017 after repeatedly testing the waters in Atlantic City. It had proposed, then abandoned a plan for a smaller music-themed casino in 2011, and its executives considered buying Revel after that casino had gone dark. **AP**

Rolls-Royce debuts its first SUV

ROLLS-ROYCE has officially entered off-road territory. Yesterday, the Goodwood-based, Bayerische Motoren Werke AG brand debuted the USD325,000 Cullinan, its first SUV.

Named after the largest diamond discovered to date, the vehicle is the latest in a long line of six-figure big rigs from the world's most prestigious automakers. It is also one of the last major luxury automakers to add one: In April, Lamborghini unveiled its \$200,000 Urus; Bentley showed its USD200,000 Bentayga V8 late in 2017.

"At this point in the history of automotive design, SUVs have become homogenous and ubiquitous," Giles Taylor, Rolls-Royce's director of design, told reporters. "The label SUV is now applied to anything with a

two-box silhouette and the least suggestion of going off tarmac. [So] we envisioned an authentic, three-box, all-terrain, high-bodied car with a convention-challenging design and absolute capability that would satisfy the adventurous urges of our clients."

In a series of YouTube videos created with National Geographic, the BMW Group crown jewel has been "tested to destruction" all over the planet.

The Cullinan stands six feet off the ground—four inches taller than its closest competitor, the Bentayga. At 5,864 pounds, it's more than 500 pounds heavier than the Bentayga, too. Angular sides and that high, flat top make it look more imposing than the rounded Bentayga or even Lamborghini's crouching, super-sporty Urus. **Bloomberg**

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Young people outside high-tech giant Tencent headquarters in Shenzhen

Young Chinese are sick of working long hours

Denise Hruby, BBC News

GLIITZY nightlife, museums, live concerts – Shanghai promises everything that attracts young professionals to an expensive city. But Li Zhepeng, a 25-year-old who arrived from China's heartland, wasn't able to enjoy any of it.

Instead, he spent his time at the office working. He would clock in at 9am, after a 90-minute commute to the outer suburbs where his e-commerce firm rented cheap office space, and usually left well after 8pm.

"Sometimes, there was no reason for the long hours – it was just the whole work culture," Li says. The young professional was expected to stick to a grueling work schedule that has become so pervasive in Chinese companies that it's now commonly referred to as 996: working from nine in the morning to nine in the evening, six days a week.

As a low-level employee at an e-commerce site, Li was tasked with posting descriptions of toys and backpacks. He was even expected to work on Sundays, when he'd reply to questions from customers from Australia, Europe or the US from home.

For that, Li received a salary of 3,500 yuan a month, or about USD560. That's less than half of the monthly rental

cost of a one-bedroom apartment outside the city centre, and so he's sharing a small apartment with three flatmates.

Li said that initially he felt he couldn't be too picky: he had majored in English, not in one of the sought-after science or technology fields, and he had attended a low-ranked university. Many of his friends are unemployed.

At the forefront are millennials who are often better educated, more aware of their rights

But he nonetheless then became part of a phenomenon that experts have started to notice – young professionals pushing back against employers who expect them to work around the clock.

At the forefront are millennials who are often better educated, more aware of their rights and more interested in finding something fulfilling than the previous generation. And as only children (China's one-child policy wasn't eased until 2015), they are also out-

poken and pampered.

"In my experience young people, especially the post-90s generation, are reluctant to work overtime – they are more self-centered," says labour rights expert Li Jupeng, one of many who have observed some millennials challenging the 996 concept.

The relative affluence of their parents and grandparents is part of the reason. China's rapid economic transformation has given rise to a sizeable middle class, with almost 70 percent of the country's urban population making between \$9,000 and \$34,000 annually in 2012. In 2000, that figure was just 4 percent.

As only children, millennials are receiving a lot of support from their families – including a financial safety net should their careers not go as planned.

Although their options for pushing back are limited, some are no longer willing to put in long hours for a meagre paycheck.

Li, for example, decided quickly that he hadn't come to Shanghai to spend every waking hour in an office or commuting.

"You work around the clock, and you get very, very tired," Li says. "But if you complain, they say you can just go and find another job." After just 20 days on the job, he resigned.

In some cases, young workers have sued their employers. That's according to a report by Zhang Xiaolin, a senior legal counsel at Wusong Network Technology (a Beijing-based law consulting company) and venture capital firm China Growth Capital.

"Theoretically, a 996 work schedule is against the law," she says. Companies may apply for special permission to adopt a 996 schedule if their business warrants it. Pilots or train conductors, for example, can work longer shifts than the eight hours stipulated under Chinese law. But e-commerce businesses like the one Li was working for do not qualify.

"So even if these companies try to apply for such working hours, most of them would not get approval from the labour administration," Zhang says. In legal disputes, that can put the employee at an advantage.

It's not just the hours, but also the pay – more than 40 percent of start-ups they interviewed did not have a clear compensation scheme for overtime, she added.

In his second job, also at an e-commerce firm, Li was more self-confident. He spoke to his boss, asked for a more manageable workload and to leave on time every once in a while. She agreed.

To most of his colleagues, speaking up was a brave move. "They said I was their idol," he says.

There are historical reasons behind the emergence of the 996 culture.

When China's tech and start-up scene started to flourish in the early 2000s, most companies sought employees

willing to work around the clock, something which helped some of them grow into the country's biggest companies. Tech company Tencent, for example, is among the world's five most valuable firms.

"For the last 10 or 15 years, the work culture has been extremely intense," said William Bao Bean, a venture capitalist and the managing director of start-up accelerator Chinaccelerator.

And because China's tech companies, who were among the first adopters of unpaid overtime, are now the largest employers, companies in other fields have also started to make their staffs work longer hours in a bid to match their success.

The normalisation of unpaid overtime led to the invention of the phrase 996 – but Bao Bean says the very existence of the phrase is also a sign that attitudes might be changing.

"The fact that there is now a word for it and that we are having a conversation about this shows that the market is maturing," he says.

However, Bao Bean says that people who like their work environments are not grumbling about the hours. Companies who inspire their employees offer good compensation packages and that are prestigious can find people to work 996 without complaint, he says.

"China has moved from a society that was told what to do, to one that is doing what it wants to, and that's also a millennial thing," he says.

Software developer Johnson Wu works six days a week, about half of them on nine to nine schedule – not more than any other company would expect him to work. Often he gets home too late to put his child to bed and he hasn't watched a TV series in years.

But his employer is Huawei, China's biggest tech company by revenue, which has been growing faster than mobile phone competitor Apple. The pay is good and his company's name is well respected. When he introduces himself as a staffer, people nod in recognition.

Li is trying to find something similar – a meaningful job, better pay perhaps or at least the chance for more professional development. He left his second job after about three months despite his negotiating success. The job, he said, didn't make him happy and he didn't get along with his boss.

He's living off his meagre savings and says that his parents have offered to support him financially while he figures out what to do with his life. At the moment, he's interviewing for a job with a travel company in Fiji. And in the meantime, he says: "I'm just going to relax." **Courtesy BBC News**

WU XIAOHUI

Court sentences Anbang founder to 18 years for fraud

A court in Shanghai sentenced the founder of the Chinese insurance company that owns New York City's Waldorf Hotel to 18 years in prison yesterday after he pleaded guilty to fraudulently raising billions of dollars from investors, state media reported.

Shanghai's No. 1 Intermediate People's Court also ordered the confiscation of 10.5 billion yuan (USD1.6 billion) in assets from Wu Xiaohui, the former chairman of Anbang Insurance Group, which had gained a reputation for ambitiously expanding into hotels, real estate and insurance from Canada to South Korea.

Wu, who founded privately owned Anbang in 2004, has been accused of misleading investors and diverting money for his own use. He was detained last year and regulators seized control of Anbang in February. He was shown on state TV in March admitting guilt.

Wu initially had denied his gui-

AP PHOTO



It at his one-day trial, according to an earlier court statement.

According to Xinhua, Wu concealed his ownership of shares in companies controlled by Anbang, filed false statements with financial authorities and lured investors by offering rates of return above that offered elsewhere. Much of the business relied on selling insurance products to

raise investment capital.

It said he used more than 100 companies under his control to manage funds and authorities later recovered bank savings, real estate and other assets. Wu used his position to misappropriate 10 billion yuan (\$1.5 billion) in Anbang's deposits, according to Xinhua's lengthy report.

Xinhua said the court determi-

ned the length of the sentence according to the facts of the case, the severity of the crime, and its "degree of social harm." It said more than 50 people were present at the sentencing, including Wu's relatives and journalists.

Anbang last month said it was receiving a \$9.6 billion bailout from a government-run fund. That would mean the government fund owns 98 percent of the company, wiping out most of the equity stake once held by Wu and other shareholders.

The company had engaged in a global asset-buying spree in recent years, raising questions about its stability. Anbang discussed possibly investing in a Manhattan skyscraper owned by the family of U.S. President Donald Trump's son-in-law and adviser, Jared Kushner. Those talks ended last year with no deal.

The negotiations with Kushner Cos. about 666 Fifth Ave. prompted members of the U.S. Congress to raise ethics concerns.

The Anbang case is one of a string of scandals in what had been a stodgy Chinese insurance industry long-dominated by state-owned insurers. The industry's former top regulator was charged in September with taking bribes and other insurers have been accused of reckless speculation in stocks and real estate.

The Communist Party has made reducing financial risk a priority this year after a surge in debt prompted rating agencies last year to cut Beijing's credit rating for government borrowing.

Anbang is being run by a committee of officials from China's insurance regulator, central bank and other agencies. They have said its obligations to policyholders and creditors are unaffected.

Over the years, Anbang grew to more than 30,000 employees with 35 million clients. It diversified into life insurance, banking, asset management, leasing and brokerage services.

Speculation is rife over possible sales of Anbang's assets, which, in addition to the iconic Waldorf — purchased for almost \$2 billion — include Dutch insurer Vivat NV, the San Francisco Westin St. Francis and hotels, real estate and insurance holdings in Canada, Belgium and South Korea. AP

ZTE

Tech giant crippled, US imports held amid trade spat

Kelvin Chan, Hong Kong

A Chinese tech giant brought to its knees and delays for imported U.S. cars, apples, lumber and other agricultural products are early signs the widening trade dispute between China and the U.S. is exacting a toll on both sides.

More talks aimed at resolving the conflict are planned for next week in Washington, while both sides dig in for a fight over their trade imbalance.

The tech company, telecommunications equipment and smartphone maker ZTE, said yesterday that it's ceasing "major operations" after the U.S. last month banned it from doing business with American suppliers for seven years as a punishment for illegal exports.

Also this week, businesses and officials reported that American products are running into delays in customs clearance because of stepped-up inspections at Chinese ports, suggesting Beijing may be making life tougher for U.S. companies as the dis-

AP PHOTO



pute drags on.

ZTE's crippling business ban stems from a case dating to before the Trump administration, but analysts say the outcome was worse than expected, reflecting a deterioration in trade relations as the two countries vie for technological dominance.

"It has become really political now," said Nikhil Batra, a telecom analyst at IDC. "There would be wider consequences than for just the telecom industry" and for the companies directly involved, he added.

The U.S. Commerce De-

partment's ban cut off ZTE's access to vital technology and components like semiconductors from U.S. suppliers.

ZTE said in a statement that it has enough cash and will seek to fulfill its contracts. It was unclear if the company is planning to shut down: last week during trade talks in Beijing Chinese officials appealed to their U.S. counterparts to end the ban.

But in another sign of fallout from the sanctions, Australian telecom company Telstra said Thurs-

day it will stop selling the company's mobile phones and broadband devices because the U.S. ban prevents ZTE from making them.

"This was a difficult but necessary step," Telstra's head of innovation and strategy, Michele Garra, wrote in a blog post.

ZTE sells smartphones globally and supplies networks or equipment to some of the world's biggest telecoms companies. Losing access to U.S. suppliers is a heavy blow for it and the companies it buys from. The company is the No. 4 smartphone vendor in the U.S., where it also sources more than 40 percent of its components, according to IDC data, a multibillion-dollar revenue stream for suppliers like Qualcomm and Intel. Finding alternate suppliers won't be easy, "therefore, this U.S. ban would be a fatal crisis for any company," said Yan Sufe, analyst at Zero Power Intelligence Group. "We can't rule out that there will be layoffs later on."

At the same time, U.S.

companies exporting to China are seeing their goods held up at China's ports.

Customs officials were stepping up checks on Ford vehicles for stricter inspections of their emissions systems, ostensibly to comply with new regulations.

"That check is apparently quite onerous," said a person briefed on the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity. "It involves disassembling the vehicles and evaluating each of the components of the emissions system. Once a vehicle is taken apart it can't be sold so it forces long delays and high storage fees for those vehicles in China."

Last year Ford imported 18,819 autos, including Lincoln-brand vehicles, which arrived at ports in Shanghai and Tianjin. The company said in a statement, "We are closely monitoring our situation at the port."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture said it has received reports of "increased inspections" of many products, without being

more specific. The department said in a statement that it is "troubled by reports that China continues to impose unjustified restrictions on U.S. products."

Chinese customs officials said on Monday they were tightening up quarantine inspections of apples and lumber imported from the U.S. for signs of rot, pests or diseases.

Inspectors in Shanghai, Shenzhen, Qingdao and Xiamen would send samples for lab testing and shipments would not be able to pass through customs while the tests are carried out and any contaminated shipments will be returned or destroyed, according to the notice posted on China's General Administration of Customs website.

China's Foreign Ministry said it had no information on the inspections and spokesman Geng Shuang said at a regular briefing that the country "always follows law-based, scientific and fair principles when carrying out quarantine and inspection on imported products." AP



AFGHANISTAN

Suicide bombers strike in Kabul, killing seven

Rahim Faiez, Kabul

SUICIDE bombers struck two police stations in Afghanistan's capital yesterday [Macau time], killing at least seven people and wounding 17, officials said.

Interior Minister Wais Ahmad Barmak said a total of eight suicide bombers took part in the attacks, one of which was claimed by the Islamic State group and the other by the Taliban.

In the first attack, in western Kabul, the attackers hurled hand grenades and blew themselves

up, setting part of the station on fire, Barmak said, adding that a third suicide bomber was shot and killed by police. He said two police were killed in the attack and two police and a civilian were wounded. IS claimed the attack in a brief statement carried by its Aamaq news agency.

The second attack unfolded in the city center, where a suicide bomber struck the entrance to a police station in order to clear the way for another four bombers. Barmak said "two or three" more attackers were holed up in a near-

by building, trading fire with security forces. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement sent to media.

Najib Danish, spokesman for the Interior Ministry, said the violence ended after almost seven hours.

Public Health Ministry spokesman Wahid Majroh said a total of seven people were killed and 17 wounded in the attacks.

Both the Taliban and IS frequently target Afghanistan's Western-backed government and security forces. Twin suicide bombings claimed by IS last week

killed at least 25 people, including nine journalists who had rushed to the scene of the first attack. It was the deadliest assault on reporters since the fall of the Taliban in 2001.

Elsewhere in Afghanistan, the Taliban advanced on a district compound, officials said, with one reporting the capture of the northern district by the insurgents and another saying heavy fighting was still underway.

The battle for the compound in the Bilchirgh district, in the northern Faryab province, came a day after the insurgents captured the district compound in the remote Tala wa Barfak district, in the northern Baghlan province. The Taliban have captured several districts in different parts of the country from Afghan security forces since 2014, when the U.S. and NATO formally concluded their combat mission and shifted to a

supporting role.

Mohammad Hashim, a member of parliament from Faryab province, said the Taliban captured the district headquarters in Bilchirgh early Wednesday after more than 40 security forces retreated under heavy fire. He said the Taliban also captured several villages nearby. Provincial police spokesman Abdul Karim Yuresh said the fighting is still underway and that government forces still hold the compound.

The Taliban issued a statement saying they control the district and claiming to have killed 10 security forces.

Elsewhere in Afghanistan, the Taliban attacked a school being used as a voter registration center, killing eight soldiers in the latest in a series of attacks targeting preparations for elections later this year.

Abdul Aziz Beg, head of the governing council in the western Badghis province, said two other soldiers were wounded and one is missing.

"There are many areas in the province under a high security threat, and this site was one of those areas," he said, adding that the center was some 30 kilometers west of the provincial capital of Qala-e Now.

In the eastern Nangarhar province, a rocket fired by insurgents struck a market, killing two people and wounding 19, according to Attahullah Khogyani, spokesman for the provincial governor. He said another four other civilians were killed and 15 wounded in a gunbattle in the same district, in which two insurgents were killed and seven wounded. It was unclear who was behind the attacks, but the Taliban and an Islamic State affiliate are both active in the province. **AP**

INDONESIA

Militants surrender to end detention center riot

DOZENS of Islamic militant prisoners who took over a police detention center near Indonesia's capital and killed five officers surrendered to police yesterday, the country's top security minister said.

The riot erupted late Tuesday at the headquarters of the elite Mobile Brigade police in Depok, on Jakarta's southern outskirts, where four days earlier authorities arrested three militants they accuse of planning to attack police.

Most of the prisoners surrendered before dawn yesterday following an ultimatum from security personnel, said Coordinating Minister for Politics, Law and Security Wiranto, who goes by one name.



About 10 inmates refused to give up but shortly were subdued when police fired smoke bombs and tear gas.

He said those involved were "detained terrorists." "They committed cruelty by seizing weapons, holding hostages, torturing and even killing the offi-

cers in cruel and vile manners, beyond the limits of humanity," Wiranto said at a news conference.

He said inmates had controlled about 30 guns and weapons they took from officers and a store room.

Earlier, Deputy National Police Chief Muhammad Syafruddin said all 155

inmates were involved in the riot. He said they took nine officers hostage and killed five of them, while another four were tortured. The last hostage, a chief sergeant, was released just after midnight in exchange with food.

One inmate was killed, police said.

Syafruddin said the inmates would be moved to other penitentiaries including the prison island of Nusa Kambangan off the southern coast of Java.

The Islamic State group's Amaq News Agency published a report after the riot broke out saying the melee was between its fighters and the counterterrorism squad.

Those provoking the riot were about 30 to 40 inmates from Jemaah Anshorut

Daulah, a network of Indonesian extremist groups that pledges allegiance to Islamic State group leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, National Police spokesman Setyo Wasisto said in an interview with local MetroTV.

Police have said the incident was triggered by a trivial disagreement about a delay in an inmate getting food from his family.

President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo expresses gratitude to all security forces involved in the efforts to control the situation and restore security in the Mobil Brigade's headquarters.

"I need to emphasize, the state and the whole nation are never afraid and will never give any room to terrorism and efforts that disturb the security of the

country," Jokowi said.

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, has carried out a sustained crackdown on Islamic militants since the 2002 Bali bombings by the Jemaah Islamiyah network that killed 202 people, mostly foreigners.

The network was neutralized following the arrests of hundreds of its militants and leaders. But new threats have emerged recently from Islamic State group-inspired radicals who have targeted security forces and local "infidels" instead of Westerners.

It was the second riot in the detention center since November, when detained militants attacked prison guards who were searching for contraband and cellphones. **AP**



Winner: former Malaysian ruler Mahathir Mohamad



Loser: incumbent Prime Minister Najib Razak

MALAYSIA

Mahathir has 'clear mandate to govern' the country, vows reforms

Stephen Wright & Eileen Ng,
Kuala Lumpur

MALAYSIA'S former authoritarian ruler Mahathir Mohamad, who in a stunning political comeback led opposition parties to their first election victory in six decades, said yesterday they have a clear mandate to form a government and insisted he should be immediately confirmed as prime minister.

In a lively news conference peppered with cussing and trademark wisecracks, 92-year-old Mahathir flagged significant changes for Malaysia, which he described as being left in a "mess" by defeated Prime Minister Najib Razak and the National Front coalition.

The election result is a political earthquake for the Muslim-majority country, ending the National Front's unbroken 60-year rule and sweeping aside Najib, whose reputation was tarnished by a monumental corruption scandal, a crackdown on dissent and the imposition of an unpopular sales tax that hurt many of his coalition's poor rural supporters. It is also a surprising exception to backsliding on democratic values in Southeast Asia, a region of more than 600 million people where governments of countries including Thailand, Cambodia and the Philippines have swung toward harsh authoritarian rule.

"We need to have this government today without delay," Mahathir said. "There is a lot of work to be done. You know the mess the country is in and we need to attend to this mess as soon as possible and that means today. So we expect that today, well, I'll be sworn in as prime minister."

Supporters of the incoming government took to the streets of Kuala Lumpur to celebrate their unexpected victory. Many analysts had thought the National Front might lose the popular vote but cling to a majority in parliament due to an electoral system that gave more power to its rural Malay supporters.

You know the mess the country is in and we need to attend to this mess ASAP and that means today.

MAHATHIR

People stood on roadsides waving the white, blue and red flag of the opposition alliance that triumphed in Wednesday's election. Cars honked their horns as they sped past.

"I'm so happy," said Zarini Najibuddin while waving the opposition flag. "I hope we'll have a better Malaysia now. Malaysia reborn!"

But Ibrahim Suffian, co-founder of the Merdeka Center for Opinion Research, said the new government will have to contend with "enormous forces of inertia and resistance from within the government elites."

"The bureaucracy and the rest of the government apparatus has never been used to this idea, having been, you know more than 60

years being under the same political party," he said.

Mahathir, leader for 22 years until stepping down in 2003, was credited with modernizing Malaysia but also known as a heavy-handed leader who imprisoned opponents and subjugated the courts.

Angered by the graft scandal at state investment fund 1MDB, Mahathir emerged from political retirement and joined the opposition in an attempt to oust Najib, his former protege.

The U.S. Justice Department says USD4.5 billion was looted from state investment fund 1MDB by associates of Najib between 2009 and 2014, including \$700 million that landed in Najib's bank account and a \$23 million

pink diamond necklace bought for Najib's wife. He has denied wrongdoing.

Mahathir said the new govern-

The National Front will honor the principle of democracy in the parliament.

NAJIB

ment will not conduct a witch hunt, but Najib will have to face the consequences if he has broken the law.

Police to ensure transition of power

MALAYSIAN national police chief Mohamad Fuzi Harun says security in the country is under control and police will ensure a smooth transition of power following the opposition's election victory.

He called for the new government to be installed as soon as possible and promised to give it the police's full cooperation.

Mohamad Fuzi said yesterday the previous day's election was largely peaceful except for some scuffles between supporters of opposing political camps.

He said police used a water cannon in the administrative capital, Putrajaya, early yesterday to disperse a group of opposition supporters setting off fireworks to celebrate the election victory.

The election victory of opposition parties led by Malaysia's former authoritarian leader Mahathir Mohamad has raised uncertainty for the economy and for big projects linked to China's regional infrastructure initiative.

Analysts said yesterday that Mahathir's strong track record in handling the Asian financial cri-

sis of two decades ago could prevail in the long run.

Malaysia's currency, the ringgit, fell soon after the results were known. The impact on local share markets won't be seen until they reopen on Monday.

The country remains heavily dependent on exports of both commodities and manufactured goods but the World Bank says its economic outlook is "favorable." **MDT/AP**

Bridget Welsh, a Southeast Asia expert at John Cabot University in Rome, said it was hugely ironic that Mahathir, who damaged Malaysia's democratic institutions with his strong-arm rule, has returned as its political savior.

"It is not just a comeback," she said. "It is about making amends about his mistakes and moving Malaysia forward."

Mahathir said the new government would seek the release and full pardon of Anwar Ibrahim, an opposition icon imprisoned on sodomy charges that Anwar and his supporters said were fabricated by the National Front to crush the opposition. Anwar, whose sentence ends on June 8, should be free to participate in politics, he said. Anwar, a former deputy prime minister in the ruling party, was also imprisoned under Mahathir following a power struggle.

On the economic front, Mahathir vowed to cancel a goods and service tax imposed since 2015 and said the government could also renegotiate the terms of Chinese loans for infrastructure projects.

He criticized a "fake news" law pushed through parliament by the National Front during the lead-up to the election. Mahathir is being investigated under that law for claiming a plane he was to travel on was sabotaged during the campaign.

Mahathir disputed Najib's assertion during a concession speech that Malaysia's king must appoint the new prime minister because no single party has a parliamentary majority, calling it "confusion." The constitution, he said, only specifies that the prime minister must represent those with a majority in the legislature. Opposition parties won more than 135 seats in the 222 seat parliament.

In his speech, Najib, 64, said he accepted the "verdict of the people."

The National Front "will honor the principle of democracy in the parliament," he said. **AP**



GOLAN HEIGHTS

Israel hits dozens of Iranian targets in Syria after barrage

THE Israeli military yesterday said it attacked nearly all of Iran's military installations in neighboring Syria in response to an Iranian rocket barrage on Israeli positions in the occupied Golan Heights, in the most serious military confrontation between the two bitter enemies to date.

Israel said the targets of the strikes, its largest in Syria since the 1973 war, included weapons storage, logistics sites and intelligence centers used by elite Iranian forces in Syria. It also said it destroyed several Syrian air-defense systems after coming under heavy fire and that none of its warplanes were hit.

Iranian media described the attacks as "unprecedented," but there was no official Iranian comment on Israel's claims.

Israel has acknowledged carrying out over 100 airstrikes in neighboring Syria since the civil war erupted in 2011, most believed to be aimed at suspected Iranian



weapons shipments bound for the Hezbollah militant group.

But in the past few weeks, Israel has shifted to a more direct and public confrontation with Iran, striking at Iranian bases, weapons depots and rocket launchers across Syria, and killing Iranian troops. Israel accuses Tehran of seeking to establish a foothold on its doorstep. Iran has vowed to retaliate.

Reflecting the scope of the overnight attacks, Russia's military said 28 Israeli jets were involved, striking at several Iranian and government sites in Syria with 70 missiles. It said half of the missiles were shot down.

Speaking at the Herzliya Conference, an annual security gathering north of Tel Aviv, Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman said Israel would respond fiercely to any further Iranian actions. **AP**

TERRORISM

Europe's convicts

Lori Hinnant, Paris

OVER the next two years, terrorism convicts will walk free from European prisons by the dozens — more than 200 inmates who largely formed the first wave of jihadis streaming to Syria and Iraq, dreaming of an Islamic caliphate not yet established.

In all, about 12,000 Europeans left to fight with the Islamic State group and al-Qaida; about a third of those are now believed to be home, mostly living freely. Some are awaiting trial, but most never faced serious charges due to insufficient evidence. And many more saw their travel plans thwarted, left behind to stew.

How much of a threat do these avowed extremists living throughout Europe pose, and how equipped are authorities to handle them? The response has been, at best, improvised.

The impending releases of jihadi veterans could be considered "a fourth wave of returnees," according to Rik Coolsaet, a scholar at Belgium's Egmont Institute.

"There are a number of personal frustrations and motivations that have pushed the kids in their journey to ISIS that we now have to ad-

dress," Coolsaet said. "If we don't address it now, the environment will remain as conducive for this kind of jihadi violence."

Farid Benyettou, an ex-jihadi who served four years in prison and has now publicly renounced extremist violence, fears Europe is not ready.

Once nicknamed the "imam Voltaire" after the school he left to become a backroom preacher to young Muslims, Benyettou has written a book detailing his descent into Islamic extremism.

Among the members of the group he once led were Cherif and Said Kouachi, who gunned down 12 people at the offices of the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo in 2015.

The cell epitomizes Europe's urgent question: Are the terrorism convicts verging on freedom like Benyettou, the Kouachis or somewhere between?

"These guys who are convicted today or who are awaiting trial will get out one day," Benyettou told The Associated Press. "And that's the issue, in fact: What kind of preparations will there be for their release?"

Terrorism prison sentences in Europe until very recently averaged about six years, compared to 13 years in the United States, according to Europol data. Since 2015,

AD

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gain freedom to improvised response



Farid Benyettou, an ex-jihadi who served four years in prison and has now publicly renounced extremist violence

sentences have risen, but remain well below U.S. levels.

"The danger is the risk of recidivism. We should not be too quick to believe certain terrorists who say they are repentant," Catherine Champrenault, the Paris prosecutor general, recently told Le Monde newspaper.

France, which has been struck repeatedly by Islamic State fighters and sympathizers, will free 57 inmates — about half its cur-

rent population of terrorism convicts. In Britain, where nearly half of terrorism sentences are four years or less, 25 inmates are due for release — fully three-quarters of those convicted under one of the country's main terrorism statute as of mid-2017. In Belgium, 80 acknowledged foreign fighters already are free and as many as 44 others will be joining them. In Spain, 21 of 34 returning extremists already were free as of late

last year. And in Bosnia and Kosovo, every jailed foreign fighter will go free.

In just those countries alone, the total runs to more than 200, according to the AP's count.

And the actual number is undoubtedly higher because not every country releases data — notably Germany, which had nearly 1,000 residents leave for the war zone but releases no comprehensive figures on con-

victions or releases.

The most recent attack blamed on returning foreign fighters was in March 2016, when an Islamic State cell of jihadis set off suicide bombs at the Brussels airport and in the metro. The network already had attacked a Paris-to-Brussels high-speed train in August 2015 and orchestrated a brutal assault on Paris in November 2015. In all, the cell killed 162 people.

Still, the overwhelming majority of returning jihadis have not been arrested and have caused no harm.

Many of the homegrown extremists are young and poor with limited education, and feel cut off from society.

Once free from prison, no programs or policies govern them.

France applies a range of post-release constraints, ranging from requiring those freed to periodically check in with authorities — as is the case for Benyettou — to home detention.

In Bosnia, where all 23 terrorism convicts are leaving prison, the Justice Ministry said local housing, social workers and employment agencies are notified, but that there's little capacity to do much more.

Britain has limited counseling and monitoring, and offers a voluntary re-integration program.

And Spain began "re-education and reinsertion" in 2016 in which terrorism inmates are evaluated for risk and undergo counseling. But the government said only 10 out of 146 extremist inmates have undergone the much-hyped program.

For Benyettou, getting support as he planned a future was crucial to abandoning extremism. He studied first to be a nurse only to see that dream evaporate because of the Charlie Hebdo attacks. He is now training as a trucker.

"Everyone has setbacks in life, plans that don't happen. For me, it's my past," he said. "You bounce back and try to do something besides to fall back on this logic of victimhood."

And that's where many fear Europe will fail the next wave of terrorism convicts

"Sending them back to exactly the same circumstances that caused them to take up violent extremism," said Richard Barrett of the Soufan Group, an expert on violent extremism. "Well, unfortunately, you're probably going to get the same result." AP

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FRIDAY

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

SATURDAY

- 10:30 Comedy
- 11:35 Miscellaneous
- 12:30 Miscellaneous
- 13:00 TDM News (Repeated)
- 13:30 News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast (PT)
- 15:00 Miscellaneous
- 16:55 Miscellaneous
- 17:50 Miscellaneous
- 18:35 Miscellaneous
- 18:35 Miscellaneous
- 20:30 Main News, Financial & Weather Report (PT)
- 21:00 Grimm Sr. 3
- 22:20 Miscellaneous
- 23:00 TDM News
- 23:30 Miscellaneous
- 00:30 Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
- 01:05 RTPi Live

SUNDAY

- 10:25 Kids Serie
- 11:00 Sunday Mass (Live)
- 12:00 Miscellaneous
- 13:00 TDM News (Repeated)
- 13:30 News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
- 15:00 Miscellaneous
- 16:55 Brainstorm
- 17:40 Got Talent Portugal
- 19:20 Portuguese Serie
- 20:30 Main News, Financial & Weather Report
- 21:00 Non-daily Portuguese News
- 22:00 Documentary
- 23:00 TDM News
- 23:30 Miscellaneous
- 00:15 Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
- 00:50 RTPi Live

Offbeat

JAPANESE MUSICIAN CANCELS IRAN CONCERT AS BAND HAS AMERICANS



A Japanese new-age musician named Kitaro has reportedly cancelled a concert in Iran because his band includes Americans, just after President Donald Trump pulled the U.S. out of the Iran nuclear deal.

Iran's semi-official Fars news agency reported yesterday that Kitaro cancelled a live concert later this month in Tehran as six members of the band are Americans.

Kitaro's management did not immediately respond to a request for comment from The Associated Press. He won a Grammy in 2001 for his album "Thinking of You."

Fars said concert organizers, who it relied on for its report, spent two years planning the concert. Fars said they now "preferred to keep silent in the current situation and wish for better days."

Trump pulled America out of the 2015 accord earlier this week.

cinema

CINETEATRO

03 - 09 MAY



AVENGERS: INFINITY WAR
ROOM 1
2:30, 6:00, 9:00pm
Director: Anthony Russo, Joe Russo
Starring: Robert Downey Jr, Chris Evans, Chris Hemsworth
Language: English (Chinese)
Duration: 149min



SUBMERGENCE
ROOM 2
2:30, 9:30pm
Director: Wim Wenders
Starring: Alicia Vikander, James McAvoy, Charlotte Rampling
Language: English (Chinese)
Duration: 107min



THE MERCY
ROOM 2
6:30, 7:30pm
Director: James Marsh
Starring: Colin Firth, Rachel Weisz
Language: English (Chinese)
Duration: 91min



THE TROUGH
ROOM 3
02:30, 04:30, 7:30, 9:30pm
Director: Nick Cheung
Starring: Nick Cheung, Xu Jing Lei, He Jiong, Miu Kiu Wai
Language: Cantonese (Chinese & English)

this day in history



1971 BRITAIN'S OLDEST TABLOID CLOSES

The Daily Sketch newspaper which was founded in 1909 has been published for the last time.

Enclosed in today's souvenir issue was a copy of its sister paper the Daily Mail to which owners Harmsworth Publications hope former Sketch readers will now switch.

However, production of the last copies of the Sketch was held up by an industrial dispute over manning of the printing presses.

At its peak the Daily Sketch achieved a circulation of 1.3 million copies a day but in recent years readership of the paper has been in decline.

The Sketch's fate was sealed two months ago when Harmsworth Publications announced plans to shut down the paper, although the exact date was a closely-guarded secret until recently.

The closure has resulted in more than 800 people being made redundant - they are among 1,700 being laid off by Associated Newspapers, Harmsworth's parent company.

But the former editor of the Sketch, David English, remains with the company. He was appointed editor of the Daily Mail after the Sketch's closure was announced.

Associated Newspapers is now pinning its hopes on the revamped Daily Mail capturing the Sketch's market.

Earlier this month the Mail was transformed from a broadsheet into a tabloid and has taken on many of the Sketch's features such as the Peanuts cartoon strip.

The new Mail's success is even more crucial for Harmsworth's survival given that it also publishes the loss-making Evening News.

The Mail's main competitor for the Sketch's readers is widely regarded to be the Daily Express.

The Express' new editor, Ian McColl, is expected to take the paper further to the right and thus encroach on ground traditionally occupied by the Mail.

The latest developments are another twist in the on-going battle of the tabloids which began when Rupert Murdoch took over the Sun two years ago.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Under David English the new Daily Mail soared in popularity especially among the middle classes.

In 1992 after 20 years at the Mail, David English became editor-in-chief and chairman of Associated Newspapers.

He died in 1998.

Rivalry in the tabloid market intensified in 1984 when Robert Maxwell took over the Mirror Group.

In February 1987 he launched the London Daily News - in direct competition with Associated Newspaper's Evening Standard.

However, after fierce resistance from Associated Newspapers the London Daily News closed in July 1987 with losses in the region of £50m.

In 1986 a new tabloid entered the market when Eddy Shah launched Today - the first national newspaper to be printed in colour.

But in 1995 Today became the first national paper to close since the Daily Sketch.

YOUR STARS

Aries

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

You need to slow down and remember that patience really is a virtue. Things are looking good for you, and that means that just a little longer is all you need to wait before things really take off!

Taurus

April 20-May 20

You are feeling a surge of romantic energy — and it feels terrific! No matter where you are on the spectrum, from single to partnered, you should feel yourself moving closer to the place you want to be.

Gemini

May 21-Jun. 21

Try to think hard today — things are going your way for sure, but you may need to focus more on stuff that you find boring. It's not the end of the world; in fact, this could be really good for you!

Cancer

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You need to deal with large groups of people today — maybe in real life, maybe online or maybe just trying to get from place to place. Your energy is perfectly suited for this kind of socializing.

Leo

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

You need to avoid the temptation to get all riled up over perceived slights today. Your ego is a bit more fragile and exposed, so keep that in mind when you're trying to respond to people.

Virgo

Aug. 23-Sept. 22

Try branching out a bit — you need to spice up your life and make sure that you're not just going through the motions. Fortunately, your awesome energy makes it easy to get out in the world.

Libra

Sep.23-Oct. 22

Your tendency toward overindulgence is somewhat troublesome today — but don't worry too much about it! Your social life is sure to take off, and there's nothing wrong with that.

Scorpio

Oct. 23 - Nov. 21

An extremely unusual — but not once-in-a-lifetime — occurrence makes life a little weird, but you need to just roll with it and wait for the other shoe to drop. It doesn't take long to make sense.

Sagittarius

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

It's the small stuff that is getting you down today — but you still need to deal with it! Just make sure that you're really focused and not just going through the motions. That can cost you!

Capricorn

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Your kids — or those you're closest to — are more fun than ever, and you should make sure to give them all the time they need. It's one of those days when you feel part of something larger than yourself.

Aquarius

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

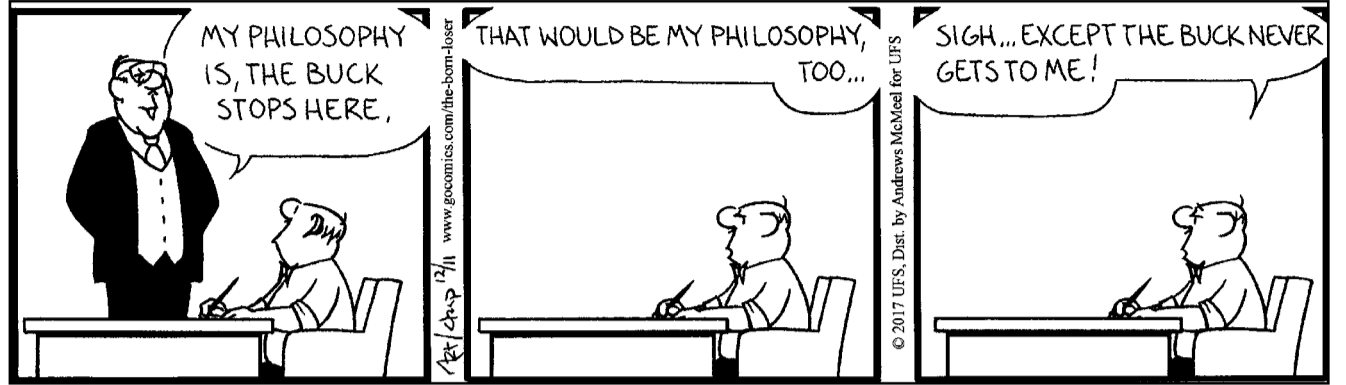
Your capacity for learning never seems to get used up, and on a day like today, you should find that you're taking in new information like a bright kid on the first day of school.

Pisces

Feb.19-Mar. 20

A beautiful illusion is all it takes to get you misty-eyed or excited for the future — but because it starts with a dream doesn't mean it isn't totally real! Don't ask too many questions today.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy

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

Easy+

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

Medium

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

Hard

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
--	-----	-----	-----------

CHINA

Beijing	18	24	cloudy/overcast
Harbin	7	24	cloudy/clear
Tianjin	20	24	cloudy/drizzle
Urumqi	14	27	clear
Xi'an	15	23	drizzle
Lhasa	6	16	shower/drizzle
Chengdu	16	25	drizzle/cloudy
Chongqing	18	22	drizzle
Kunming	13	27	clear
Nanjing	16	23	cloudy/thundershower
Shanghai	17	26	cloudy
Wuhan	18	24	drizzle/moderate rain
Hangzhou	15	28	cloudy
Taipei	21	28	cloudy
Guangzhou	22	28	shower
Hong Kong	23	26	shower

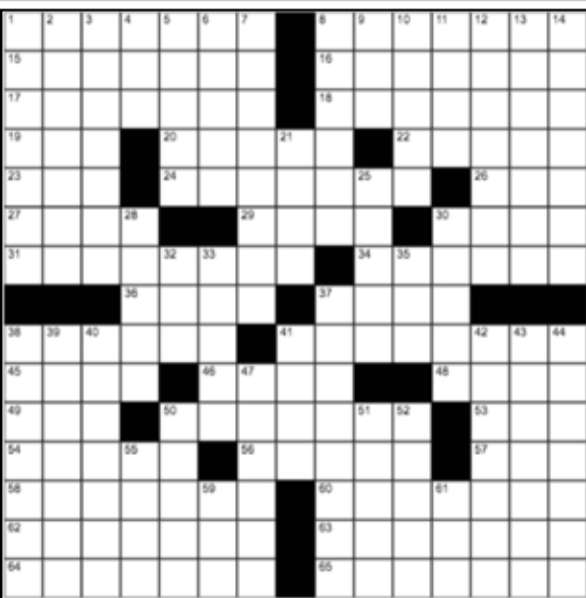
WORLD

Moscow	3	18	clear/cloudy
Frankfurt	13	19	drizzle
Paris	8	22	clear
London	6	16	cloudy/overcast
New York	11	23	drizzle/clear

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Goods; 8- Feed bag; 15- Place for bottling suds; 16- Typical; 17- Tedium; 18- Defames; 19- Explosive stuff; 20- Jazzman Blake; 22- Gold bar; 23- Lord, is ___?; 24- Hoarding; 26- ___ Darya (Asian river); 27- Roy's "singin' partner"; 29- Monetary unit of Lesotho; 30- Teen follower; 31- Charged; 34- Greek goddess of the moon; 36- Secular; 37- Zaire's Mobutu ___ Seko; 38- Rogue; 41- High priest of the Jews; 45- ___ the finish; 46- Paint crudely; 48- In this place; 49- Horseless carriage; 50- Campers bedding; 53- Tread the boards; 54- Having wings; 56- Preminger et al.; 57- Groove; 58- Denominator; 60- Random; 62- Monotonous; 63- Resembling drops; 64- Associated; 65- Tried;

DOWN: 1- State of decline; 2- A lobe or full type of assault; 3- Prolific; 4- Female sheep; 5- Surrenders, as territory; 6- Freshwater fish; 7- Serving as a symbol; 8- Carte blanche offer; 9- Eggs; 10- Baseball commissioner Bud; 11- ___ Brockovich; 12- Luggage; 13- Nickname; 14- Considered expression; 21- Camaro model; 25- Japanese-American; 28- Razzle-dazzle; 30- First Hebrew letter; 32- It paves the way; 33- ___ Janeiro; 35- Conductor ___ Pekka Salonen; 37- Deliberate damage; 38- Assistant to a matador; 39- Queued up; 40- Small Spanish sailing vessel; 41- Abrupt; 42- Rumor; 43- Curved like a bow; 44- Colonized; 47- Worshiped; 50- Intoxicate; 51- Place; 52- Atty.-to-be exams; 55- Ike's ex; 59- Suffix with Capri; 61- Tony-winning Hagen;



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- PJ (Open line) 993
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- PSP 28 573 333
- Customs 28 559 944
- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IACM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
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- Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
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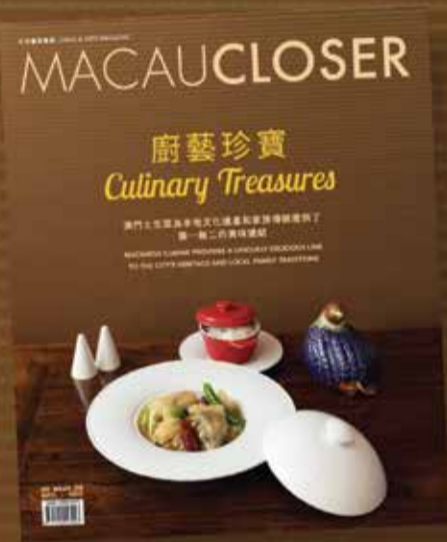

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FOOTBALL

Stoke, West Brom lose identity, EPL status; Swansea set to follow

Steve Douglas, Manchester

THEY were perennial mid-table finishers boasting some of the clearest identities in the English Premier League.

Stoke City — physical, tough and with a hostile home stadium. Former Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson once labeled Stoke's players "the jolly green giants."

West Bromwich Albion — direct, well-organized and dangerous at set pieces.

Swansea — stylish passers, dominant in possession and always looking to attack.

From 2013-17, the three teams ended each Premier League season between eighth and 15th — except for West Brom's 17th-place finish in 2014. Opponents knew what they were going to get when they played Stoke, West Brom and Swansea, and still found those teams difficult to handle.

Being safe and stable can be dangerous in England's wealthy top division, though. Owners can grow restless and fans can demand ambition, wanting teams to get to the next level or try something different. And that type of thinking has done Stoke, West Brom and Swansea no favors at all.

Heading into the last weekend of the season, Stoke and West Brom have already been relegated, and third-from-last Swan-



Stoke City's Xherdan Shaqiri reacts after Stoke City are relegated

sea is almost certain to join them. For so long part of the Premier League furniture because of their differing styles, it seems none of these teams will be greatly missed by English or international audiences.

In all three cases, the teams' identity has been lost and their squads have been assembled with an increasingly unworkable mix of players. Stoke, West Brom and Swansea have all tried to change in recent years and now they might be wishing they hadn't bothered.

STOKE

Stoke has undergone perhaps the biggest transformation of any Premier League team in recent years.

The turning point came in 2013 when Tony Pulis was fired after seven years. Stoke was by then an established top-flight team that reached the FA Cup final in

2011 — losing 1-0 to Manchester City — and played in the Europa League the following year, but the style of football was increasingly turgid and among its most dangerous ploys was Rory Delap's long throw. "If you're given steak and chips every day," Pulis once said, defending his style, "steak and chips becomes the norm."

Wanting a bit more entertainment from the team, Stoke hired Mark Hughes that year and in a couple of years went from being compared, by some opposition fans, with a rugby side to being branded "Stokealona" in a lighthearted reference to Barcelona.

In came exciting attacking players who had lost their way at big European clubs — Xherdan Shaqiri, Ibrahim Afellay, Bojan Krkic and latterly Jese Rodriguez, for example — and Stoke briefly became fun to watch, if less defensively sound.

Hughes pulled off three straight ninth-place finishes and then a 13th place last year. But Stoke lost its way this season after selling its X-factor attacker Marko Arnautovic in the off-season, becoming a team that not only struggled to create chances but was the most porous at the back.

WEST BROM

The shadow of Pulis has also hung over West Brom after he brought his pragmatic and direct approach to The Hawthorns from Stoke (via Crystal Palace) and typically delivered a couple of solid mid-table finishes — 14th in 2016 and 10th in 2017.

He was fired in November, though, after West Brom's slump in form that stretched back to the end of the last season. Fans had also become disenchanted with the team's style and the club's new Chinese owner clearly wanted more from a squad containing USD40 million of new signings

Alan Pardew was hired as a replacement, promising a side that "plays on the front foot, tries to sustain attack" and was "slightly more hairy scary perhaps."

It proved to be a bad appointment, with a squad still partly infused with a Pulis mentality unable to adapt to Pardew's style. West Brom won one league game in four months under Pardew and was 10 points from safety when he was fired in April.

SWANSEA

Swansea's reputation as one of the most admired and pleasing-on-the-eye teams in English football began under the stewardship of Roberto Martinez from 2007-09, and continued under Brendan Rodgers (2010-12) and Michael Laudrup (2012-14).

The "Swansea Way" disappeared, however, in a haze of hirings that didn't fit the club's ethos or playing philosophy. After Garry Monk's departure in December 2015, Francesco Guidolin (10 months), Bob Bradley (three months) and Paul Clement (one year) came and went as the Welsh team's bid to become more streetwise, and less reliant on its old passing game, stuttered.

What is Swansea now? Few could put a label on a team that is facing relegation under charismatic Carlos Carvalhal after a run of four losses culminating in the damaging 1-0 home defeat to Southampton.

With Huddersfield drawing 1-1 at Chelsea on Wednesday to secure its Premier League status, Swansea needs to beat Stoke at home on Sunday and hope Southampton loses at home to Manchester City — all with an unlikely nine-goal swing because of Swansea's inferior goal difference.

After seven years, Swansea's stay in England's top flight is coming to an end. **AP**

CYCLING

Battaglin wins 5th stage as Dennis maintains Giro lead

ENRICO Battaglin surged ahead at the perfect moment to win the fifth stage of the Giro d'Italia yesterday [Macau time] as Chris Froome and most of the other favorites finished in the main pack.

Rohan Dennis held onto the overall leader's pink jersey with a 1-second lead over defending champion Tom Dumoulin, with four-time Tour de France winner Froome 55 seconds back in 19th place.

Giovanni Visconti, a Sicilian looking to impress before his home fans, led coming around the final turn with 200 meters to go before Battaglin accelerated to take his third career Giro victory.

Battaglin, who rides for Team LottoNL-Jumbo, fi-



Italy's Enrico Battaglin celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win the fifth stage of the Giro d'Italia

nished third in a slightly tougher stage on Tuesday.

"The finish was a bit different to yesterday. Yesterday was really a powerful sprint on a really steep climb," said Battaglin, who also won Giro stages in 2013 and 2014. "Today was a steep climb but at two kilometers to go, and I had a little bit of time to rest and recover and do a

really good sprint."

Visconti crossed second and Jose Goncalves of Portugal finished second, both with the same time as Battaglin.

Battaglin clocked slightly more than four hours over the 153-kilometer leg from Agrigento to Santa Ninfa in southwestern Sicily.

The start of the stage was delayed for 15 minutes

due to an accident on the racing route that left a motorcycle driver in serious condition.

Simon Yates, the Briton who won the young rider classification at last year's Tour de France, sits third overall — 17 seconds behind Dennis, who claimed the lead after the second stage.

"It was a nice day on the bike, on quite a slow pace because of the head wind," said Dennis, an Australian with BMC. "I felt a bit of stress every now and then but I am glad to be in the Maglia Rosa. We're only on day five, that means sixteen days to go. Tomorrow will be another story with the Etna. I'm looking forward to see how I'll go up there."

Stage 6 concludes with an arduous ascent up Mount Etna that should shake up the overall standings. Then the race heads over to mainland Italy and climbs up the peninsula to the defining legs in the Alps.

The only overall contender who struggled on Wednesday was Astana rider Miguel Angel Lopez, who misjudged a turn with six kilometers to go, rode straight off the road and fell into a patch of high grass. He finished 42 seconds behind.

Four riders — Ryan Mullen, Laurent Didier, Eugert Zhupa and Andrea Vendrame — were involved in an early breakaway. Vendrame, the last survivor of the breakaway, was

caught by the main pack with three kilometers to go.

While the first half of the stage was not very challenging, the second half included three fourth-category climbs.

The final two kilometers were mostly uphill, including one demanding section at a gradient of 12 percent.

The stage began near Agrigento's Valley of the Temples archaeological site and concluded in the valley of Belice to commemorate the 50th anniversary of an earthquake that killed more than 200 people. Santa Ninfa was one of the hardest hit towns by the quake.

The Giro ends in Rome on May 27. **AP**

opinion

Bizcuits

Leanda Lee



CASUAL AND LABORIOUS CONTEMPT

The most recent decision in relation to increasing the charges to foreign-worker mothers in hospital fees for giving birth at the public hospital is triple-whammy discrimination of the vulnerable.

The fact that foreign workers were to be charged a nine-fold increase over existing charges (the promise for a reduction to a three-fold increase being reneged upon), to MOP8,775 for natural births and MOP17,550 for C-sections (note that local residents benefit from free healthcare during confinement) was already morally abhorrent. The existence of a differential itself is understandable given the existing fee structure already in place in the healthcare system whereby foreign workers pay 100% of the scheduled fee and residents obtain a 30% discount; foreign visitors pay double the scheduled fee. It is the increase in that differential which is difficult to stomach. However, worse still, the most recent cock-eyed sweetener to the bitter deal for the least advantaged among us establishes a waiver for workers earning less than the meagre MOP4,050 per month but only upon condition of proof of marriage. This goes far beyond the original decision, as outdated, value-laden, patriarchal authoritarian sanctimoniousness: let's just have a public stoning of these foreign hussies and get it over and done with, shall we?

Firstly, marital status should have nothing to do with access to decent healthcare. Macau rightfully provides free services to Macau resident mothers before, during and after child birth, yet systemically demonstrates that foreign-workers and, in particular, single mothers are less deserving. Single mothers far away from their homes and family support structures are in an even more vulnerable position and therefore in even greater need of support and care. Macau brings individuals into our community, giving them visas to work, yet absolves itself of responsibility in times of need.

Further, the application of a MOP4,050 income threshold at which level foreign workers can apply for a two-thirds waiver in medical fees concedes that the fees are a burden to low-income workers. This equates to Macau's subsistence wage. As these foreign workers typically repatriate much of their earnings to their families, they live on much less than the subsistence wage. Further, how a foreign worker's earnings are to be determined is problematic as many are actually paid less than their contracts state. These are truly the most vulnerable members of our community and we have a duty of care to them given that we have encouraged them into our midst.

Discrimination based upon marital status and income levels which only applies to a certain category of individuals – foreign workers (these tests do not apply to residents) – clearly signals the value the Government places on these women who contribute to our daily lives, business operations and economy. It makes a laughing stock of the World Health Organization's "Health for All" objective to which Macau is said to subscribe.

Another concerning development is the drafting of law covering part-time workers. Any casualisation of the work-force risks loss of hard-won protections. The draft suggests that a probation period, annual leave, prior notice, compensation for termination of contract and social welfare payments would not apply. Alarm bells should ring. In Macau's current situation of low unemployment, casual part-time work offers flexibility to both workers and employers and helps cater to seasonal labour requirements of industries like MICE and construction. However, should the power balance shift to employers, casualisation confers cost reduction benefits and encourages a growing under-employed class without certainty of ongoing employment and income.

Casualisation of the workforce has created an underclass of workers in many countries, increasing income inequality, diminishing their ability to build assets and a stable future. If workforce flexibility is required by employers, a far less risky option which would not undermine the protections of local workers would be open up access to the workforce to foreign students.

THE BRITAIN APOLOGIZES 'UNRESERVEDLY' FOR KIDNAPPING OF LIBYAN

Britain has apologized "unreservedly" for its role in the capture of a Libyan dissident who was later tortured by the late dictator Moammar Gadhafi's government.

Attorney General Jeremy Wright says Prime Minister Theresa May has written to Abdel Hakim Belhaj and his wife Fatima Boudchar acknowledging that Britain's actions "contributed to your detention, rendition and suffering."

Belhaj, a former fighter in the Libyan Islamic

Fighting Group that had opposed Gadhafi, and his wife were kidnapped in Thailand in 2004 and sent to Libya.

They say British intelligence provided information that helped the CIA abduct them and have spent years pursuing British officials through U.K. courts seeking compensation and an apology.

Boudchar was in the public gallery of the House of Commons yesterday to hear Wright's apology.

Trump gives freed Americans flag-waving, wee-hours welcome

STAGING a made-for-TV, still-of-the-night arrival ceremony, President Donald Trump welcomed home three Americans freed by North Korea and declared their release a sign of promise toward his goal of denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula.

Speaking yesterday on an air base tarmac with the former detainees by his side, Trump called it a "great honor" to welcome the men to the U.S., but said "the true honor is going to be if we have a victory in getting rid of nuclear weapons."

Trump also thanked North Korea's Kim Jong Un for releasing the Americans and said he believes Kim wants to reach an agreement on denuclearization at their upcoming summit. "I really think he wants to do something," the president said.

First lady Melania Trump, Vice President Mike Pence, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and other top officials joined Trump to celebrate the occasion at Joint Base Andrews near Washington. The men — Kim Dong Chul, Kim Hak Song and Tony Kim — had been released Wednesday amid a warming of relations between the longtime adversaries.

Shortly before 3 a.m. the president and first lady board-



ded the medical plane on which the men had traveled and spent several minutes meeting with them privately. The group then emerged at top of the airplane stairway, where the men held up their arms in an exuberant display.

As the men entered into view, U.S. service members on the tarmac burst into applause and cheers.

"This is a special night for these three really great people," Trump told reporters. On the U.S. relationship with North Korea, Trump declared, "We're starting off on a new footing."

The freed prisoners appeared tired but in excellent spirits, flashing peace signs and waving their arms as they emerged from the aircraft. When asked by reporters how it felt to be home, one of the men answered through a

translator, "It's like a dream; we are very, very happy." They later gave the president a round of applause.

After Trump's remarks, the three men boarded a bus for Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, where they are to be evaluated and receive medical treatment before being reunited with their families.

The White House carefully choreographed the event, hoisting a giant American flag between two fire trucks on the tarmac and inviting reporters to witness the return.

The image-conscious president told reporters, "I think you probably broke the all-time-in-history television rating for 3 o'clock in the morning."

Hours later, Trump tweeted, "On behalf of the American people, WELCOME HOME!" **AP**

Spears says stage persona is 'healthy' way to combat shyness

IF you thought the workout videos Britney Spears recently posted on social media looked grueling, the pop superstar confirms that they were — even if she and her trainer boyfriend made it look easy.

Spears and Sam Asghari went through intricate movements, including Asghari lifting Spears several times and Spears doing a headstand — and it seemed effortless. But in reality, Spears says he put her through it.

"He's a trainer so everything has to be so perfect. We probably did 40 [takes] and I hurt myself," she joked in an interview with The Associated Press. "It looked great, he did a good job and he edited it really, really well."

She said she'll often tap her



oldest son, Sean Preston, to shoot her videos and photos for social media and those are usually in one take.

"With [Sam], I did it a million times and I swear it was horrible, but when I do it just with my kids it's really fast," she said.

Spears said she prefers challenging workouts because she has "always been an active person" and gets bored easily. She plans to ramp up those

exercises in the coming weeks as she prepares to return to touring with the "Piece of Me" tour, sponsored by Pepsi. She'll also be one of the superstars included in the Pepsi Generations summer campaign where the company will reissue retro cans featuring acts that have participated in earlier campaigns, including Michael Jackson and Ray Charles.

Spears' tour takes her Las Vegas residency on the road and will be the last opportunity for fans to see that show. She'll perform dates across North America and Europe. It kicks off July 12 in Washington, D.C.

Spears said she looks forward to getting back onstage because it helps bring her out of her shell. **AP**

Station	Air quality
Roadside	60-80 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	35-55 Good
Ambient	60-80 Moderate

WORLD BRIEFS

AFGHANISTAN A United Nations report is criticizing the nearly two dozen recent attacks on voter registrations centers in Afghanistan, warning they are tantamount to an "assault on democracy."



SYRIA The Israeli military yesterday said it attacked nearly all of Iran's military installations in neighboring Syria in response to an Iranian rocket barrage on Israeli positions in the occupied Golan Heights.

More on p14

PALESTINE The Hamas militant group's leader in the Gaza Strip yesterday said tens of thousands of protesters in a mass demonstration along the Israeli border next week could burst through the fence and swarm into Israel.



ITALY The populist leaders of the 5-Star Movement and the League announced progress yesterday toward forming a new Italian government after two months of political stalemate.

PORTUGAL's president has vetoed a bill that would have allowed citizens as young as 16 to change their gender identity without needing a medical report as long as they had parental consent.



NICARAGUA Tens of thousands of Nicaraguans have joined one of the largest marches to date in weeks of protests against a government crackdown on dissent.

BRAZIL Firefighters have found human remains that appear to belong to three different people as the search continues in the rubble of a building occupied by squatters that caught fire and collapsed in Sao Paulo last week.