



THE THEME PARK THAT NEVER WAS

P4



VOLUNTEER PROJECT IN THE PHILIPPINES

A group of students and professionals recently participated in a two-week volunteer camp in the Philippines

P5 MDT REPORT



BILLIONAIRE STUDENT

Why was one of China's most successful business figures studying in the US before being arrested?

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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'"

WORLD BRIEFS

SOUTH CHINA SEA The Philippine navy extricated one of its largest warships from the shoal where it ran aground last week near a hotly disputed region in the South China Sea. *More on p12*



JAPAN Typhoon Jebi swept through western Japan yesterday as the strongest tropical cyclone to come ashore in 25 years, causing widespread power outages and flooding the region's main airport. At least two people have been reported killed.

NAURU Tensions over China and refugees ran high yesterday at a meeting of Pacific leaders after host Nauru accused a Chinese official of bullying and temporarily detained a New Zealand journalist. *More on p13*



INDIA A highway overpass collapsed yesterday in the crowded Indian city of Kolkata, and some injured people were being treated at a nearby hospital, an official said.

AFGHANISTAN Insurgents have attacked security checkpoints in northern and eastern Afghanistan, killing six police, officials said yesterday.

ANGOLA At least 17 people were killed and an undetermined number wounded after two trains collided in the southern Angolan province of Namibe on a track line under Chinese maintenance, according to local news sources.

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FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Defamation trial over P. Horizon next month

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LAS VEGAS

The secret realm of catering to the whims of eccentric high rollers

P8-9 FEATURE

Taxi app criticized for option to provide 'gifts'

Lynzy Valles

A taxi app in the region which launched on August 15, is being criticized for featuring an option that allows users to provide some "gifts" when no taxis are nearby, with the intention of increasing the chances of acquiring a ride.

mTaxi - developed by MOME, which is a subsidiary of Macau Pass - has an option of "gifts (set)" where users can select the option of providing up to five sets of gifts.

The Times contacted the app developers to request further details on this option, yet they only replied, "the app is still new and still in test [mode]. It will probably be stable in two months."

As seen in the app, when no taxis are available, users will be notified, "there is no taxi nearby. You may provide some gifts. Please select the number of sets," with a choice to keep waiting on a taxi or to cancel the order.

Netizens on Facebook were qui-

ck to criticize the app, with some describing the move as shameful and damaging to the city's image; while others recalled the government's pledge to combat illegal taxi acts, calling on authorities to investigate the matter.

The Times contacted the Transport Bureau (DSAT) to inquire whether it is aware of this option, to which they replied that DSAT insists all operating taxis should comply with the law. "Therefore, it will break the law if taxi driver gets a charge which is different from the meter charge, and they will be punished MOP1,000," the bureau stated.

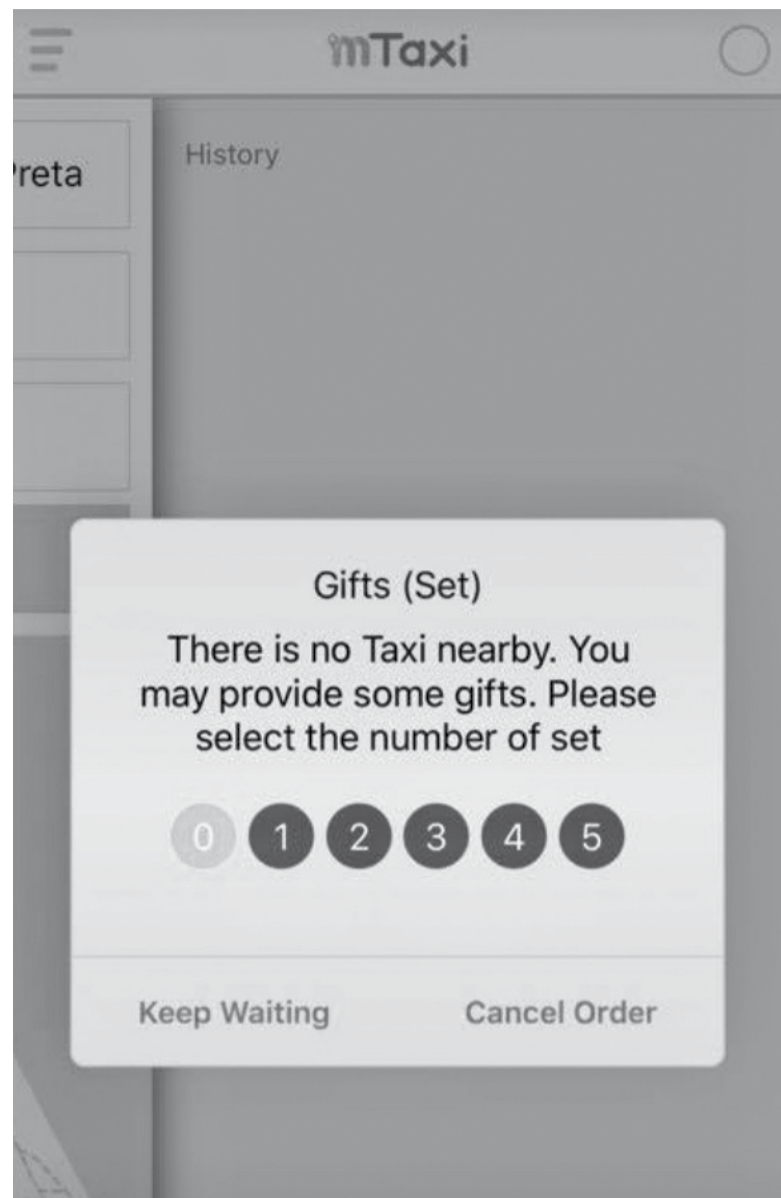
Yet it also recalled that if any companies would like to register and operate in Macau, the application would not be sent to DSAT.

"DSAT will keep cooperating with Public Security Police Force [PSP] in order to reduce all kinds of illegal taxi behaviors. DSAT will pay close attention to the company which offers transport

apps service," it noted, adding it encourages residents to report any case involving taxi overcharging.

Meanwhile, Andrew Scott president of the Macao Taxi Passenger Association (MPTA), told Portuguese paper Hoje Macau that the option to provide "gift sets" is not a fair way to operate, and he believes that DSAT should intervene in the matter.

"Prices paid for the taxi service are set by DSAT. In the official price list there is no reference to 'gifts'. We all realize that 'gifts' is a euphemism for extra pay, which encourages taxi drivers to meet a particular customer during the most 'busy' hours," he said. He added that available taxi drivers have a moral and legal obligation to provide services. "The creation of a 'gift' system entails the extra payment of an amount that makes taxi drivers available, whereas non-payment means that taxi drivers are no longer available. It's not a fair way to operate," he added.



Scammer duo caught while attempting one more heist

Renato Marques

TWO men from the mainland, wanted for a series of fraudulent activities, were finally caught with the help of a supermarket worker in the San Kio district. The suspects were wanted for participation in at least three confirmed frauds and a few more failed attempts that had also been reported to the authorities, including fraudulent money changing while paying for goods at convenience stores and supermarkets.

A Public Security Police Force (PSP) spokesperson said this week during a press conference that the men used the same "modus operandi" to try to scam the shops. They entered the shops and tried to purchase cheap items using high value



bank bills (MOP500 or MOP1,000). This would result in the cashiers asking them if they had

smaller bills or coins, and they would take back the initial payment while pretending to

search for coins. Upon not finding smaller change, they would request for change for the

larger bank note.

According to three shops, the men had successfully defrauded them of close to MOP1,500. In other cases, the cashiers noted the scam and refused to give any change.

Warned already about the occurrence of such a scam in other shops, a worker from a supermarket located in the Rua de Inácio Pessoa tried to stall one of the criminals while attempting to inform his supervisor. Acknowledging he had been caught, the man ran from the supermarket but was immediately chased by the shop staff until they apprehended him and called for help from the police.

Taken into custody, the man then exposed his brother. Both were presented to the Public Prosecutions Office

(MP) on September 3 for fraud.

In an unrelated case, a pair of Indonesian men were also caught after stealing a handbag and a mobile phone from a car seat.

According to the MP report, the men spotted a car parked in the street with one of the windows open. Inside the vehicle on the passenger seat was a handbag and a mobile phone belonging to a local woman.

After the victim filed a complaint to the police, officers sought and reviewed video footage from surveillance cameras from shops in the location and were able to identify the men.

They were finally caught by the police at their home located in Beco das Caixas in Central Macau, and presented to the MP on September 1, accused of theft.

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Times

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A local 20-year-old Huaqiao University student, who was transferred back to Macau two months ago after she contracted encephalitis while at university in the Fujian Province, has finally woken up from her coma condition.

The student who suffered severe brain damage from the encephalitis has awoken and the doctors at the Conde de São Januário Hospital (CHCSJ) are more optimistic about her condition after a initially pessimistic prognosis, TDM reported. The physicians at CHCSJ now expect that the patient can soon leave the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and continue her recovery in a common infirmary, although there are no certainties of when she might leave the hospital.

The Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Alexis Tam, has been following the case and yesterday paid another visit to the patient.

Exiting from his visit, Tam said, "I look at her as if I'm looking at my own daughter [who is of the same age]. I am very happy she has overcome death."

The impressive recovery of the patient was even described by the director of the



The recovering student (left) was visited by Alexis Tam

HEALTH

Student wakes from two-months coma

ICU as a "miracle."

"I can say that it is a miracle for me because at the time we

received the patient we were not very optimistic about the possibility of a recovery from

the patient. It was a path with a lot of challenges," said Liu Xiu Peng. **RM**

1,845 residents applied for mainland permit

The Ministry of Public Security of China announced that more than 1,845 Macau residents have applied for residential permits in mainland China. Starting from September 1, mainland China has been accepting applications for mainland residential permits from Macau, Hong Kong and Taiwan residents. Until last Monday afternoon, the Ministry of Public Security received more than 20,000 applications, including approximately 8,300 from Hong Kong residents and approximately 10,000 made by Taiwan residents. Guangdong received the most applications, followed by Fujian, Shanghai, Zhejiang, and Jiangsu.

Kiang Wu worker attempted suicide

A non-local worker employed by the Kiang Wu Hospital attempted to commit yesterday suicide by jumping off the top of the hospital's emergencies building. The worker is a 52-year-old female mainland resident hired by the hospital as a member of the cleaning staff. The woman was eventually brought back to safety after firefighters and police negotiators arrived at the scene. She declared the attempt was due to dissatisfaction with her job.

AD



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Julie Zhu

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Defamation trial over P. Horizon comments starts next month

THE developer of the Pearl Horizon project, Polytec group, has sued both a columnist and the director of the newspaper Son Pou for defamation.

The director of the Chinese newspaper, Chao Chong Peng, told the Times yesterday that the trial has been scheduled to start on October 3 in the Court of First Instance.

"We are waiting for the court's verdict [and trial]. We have [only] been communicating [with Polytec] through our lawyers," he said.

Chao told the Times that Polytec wants the defendants to apologize and to issue a payment of MOP2 million.

Polytec's reason for the lawsuit is that writer Lei Kong [the defendant] commented on a column published on Son Pou last year stating that for the Pearl Horizon project, Polytec is suspected of fraud for not complying with the contract to hand the houses to buyers.

Chao subsequently wrote a column on Son Pou's Facebook page, asserting that Polytec's legal action is exerting pressure on the newspaper and is an attempt to suppress freedom of speech.

"This time, Polytec's lawsuit is in bad faith, and is an attempt to suppress freedom of speech. The column, in which Polytec is accused of being under suspicion of fraud, shows that the writer was commenting and analyzing the Pearl Horizon case objectively, and is also based on the per-

RENATO MARQUES



spective of an economist," Chao wrote. "[The column] was even trying to provide a reasonable and legal solution to the settlement of the case, in particular, after [the developer] could not deliver the houses that had been already sold. During the short period between the approval [for the property project's develop-

ment] and the land being taken back by the government, and that other parties believed [Pearl Horizon] would not be able to complete the construction, as an existing fact," the Son Pou director continued.

"I thank [the columnist] for taking the pressure coming from the attempted suppression of

freedom of speech. The [second] author is accused of defamation. [...] The suppression of freedom of speech was clearly demonstrated, and is unprecedented in Macau," said Chao.

Lei has not been writing columns since he received the lawsuit notification, Chao informed the Times.

"Everything that's written in the article is in accordance with the law and is in the best interests of the public," said Chao.

Polytec's lawsuit is in bad faith, and is an attempt to suppress freedom of speech.

CHAO CHONG PENG
SON POU DIRECTOR

Contacted by the Times, writer Lei also commented that Polytec's move is to "not let the media, whom they dislike, talk and criticize them."

Lei had been writing for Son Pou for approximately 30 years.

"Because of this incident, I do not dare to write, and I can't write either," Lei told the Times.

In Lei's opinion, this lawsuit "is a serious incident, and it harms the freedom of press."

Gov't called to take back lands for failed theme park

Julie Zhu

LAWMAKERS Ella Lei and Lei Chan U held a press conference yesterday urging the government to reclaim the idle island lots located next to Estr. Alm. Marques Esparteiro.

The land in question was first granted in March 1997 for the development of a theme park named Ocean Park, which would include a series of leisure facilities, among them an aquarium and a plant garden. The land spans an area of 134,891 square meters.

In the contract, the government has clearly mentioned the land's development term. For instance, the company has to complete the development of the foundation facility of four zones within 24 months.

"However, as we all know, the land has been granted for more

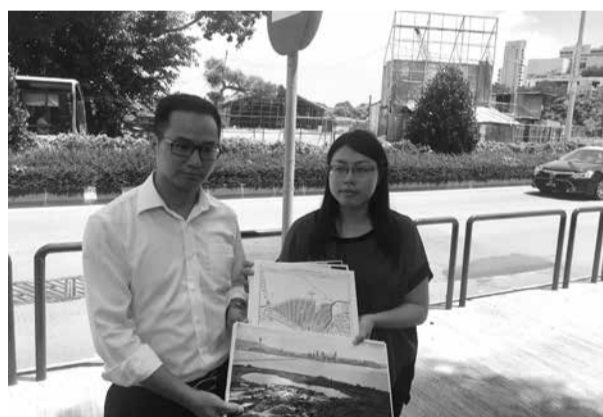
than 21 years, and remains undeveloped," the lawmakers stated in their press release.

Lei claims she submitted inquiries to the relevant government authority several times in the past regarding the land's reclaiming procedure.

In January 2017, the Secretary for Transport and Public Works at the Land, Public Works and Transport (DSSOPT) replied to Lei claiming that the government has been following the case and will announce the results to the public.

"Since the moment the government claimed it was following the case until now, one year and eight months have passed. When can the government finish the works?" Lei questioned.

"It is such a beautiful land. It is a finished land from sea reclamation. It is a land which can be



Ella Lei (right) and Lei Chan U

used immediately. Why can't we use it to build something [for public services]," Lei questioned, further remarking that "the land is next to such a beautiful coastline. Why can't it be opened for public usage? [...] We absolutely believe that there are conditions [for the government to take back the land]."

In Lei's opinion, the land is "very suitable" for building public houses. In addition, she su-

ggested increasing the green area and expanding activity spaces at the locations.

Currently, two zones of the land are being used for storage. The developer was responsible for building public roads on the relevant sites.

"Why is the most [illegally] occupied lands these areas? Is the government using them? Is the developer? Or has the developer lent the lands to other parties?" Lei questioned.

MAM calling for proposals for Venice Biennale

THE Macao Museum of Art (MAM) is calling for the submission of proposals to be exhibited in the Macao-China Pavilion at the 58th Venice Biennale International Art Exhibition, held in May 2019 in Venice, Italy.

According to a statement by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC), the call for submissions is open only to teams, which must be comprised of a minimum of two persons, including a curator and an exhibitor.

Applicants must hold a valid Macao SAR Resident Identity Card and should have participated in contemporary art exhibitions. The jury for reviewing the submissions will be comprised of local or overseas art experts, as well as representatives from the IC. The final selection will be announced in November 2018.

The 58th Venice Biennale Art Exhibition is themed "May you live in interesting times" and is

curated by Ralph Rugoff. According to the IC, the theme is a reference to the "uneasiness and chaos" of present times.

Established in 1895, the Venice Biennale International Art Exhibition is the oldest biennale and one of the three major art exhibitions held around the world. It is also the largest international contemporary art exchange platform. In 2017, the Biennale drew in over 615,000 visitors and art lovers from all over the world and was covered by around five thousand reporters from media outlets.

This year will mark the sixth occasion that MAM has participated in the Biennale under the name of "Macao-China" since 2007.

The regulations and application forms for the call for submission of proposals can be browsed or downloaded from MAM's website.

Local group visits Philippines for volunteer project

Lynzy Valles

A group of students and professionals recently participated in a two-week Outreach Program in the Philippines, which allowed participants to take an active involvement in the country's society.

This program is run by the Hon Lam Education and Research Association, which aims to strengthen society by encouraging cross-cultural promotion, value cultivation and education.

This year, a total of 22 participants, seven of whom were from Macau, visited underprivileged areas in the Philippines as part of the Summer Work Camp, including a medical center, a squat and a technical school.

Held from August 3 to 17 and for the sixth time, Joseph Sy-Chango, organizer of the camp, said that the visits expose local youth to the realities of life and the importance of helping those less fortunate than themselves.

The team, which consisted of volunteers from Macau, Japan, Hong Kong and Kenya, handed out school supplies and food supplies to people in need, particularly at the Philippine Children's Medical Center, which accommodates patients with heart and neurological diseases, as well as cancer patients.

"Many young people are trapped with a materialistic view of life. This outreach program awakened in them what true happiness is and life's meaning," said Sy-Chango, who is also a professor at the University of Macau.

"They saw that amidst suffering, [...] sickness and material scarcity, one can still manage to be joyful. It also made them appreciate the gifts they have and learn the importance of using them well. These and more are the learnings that the volunteers gained from this project," he added.

They also visited a place called "Bahay Aruga," which translates to "home care," a halfway house for children suffering from cancer, and visited a technical school that offers vocational courses catering to the needs of the poor.

"In Manila, we also visited informal settlers where



Joseph Sy-Chango (left, front row)



Volunteers during a field visit

re we gathered 50 kids and gave them school supplies. After that we went to Palawan, where we stayed for around nine days to do some carpentry work," said Sy-Chango.

They saw that amidst suffering, sickness and material scarcity, one can still manage to be joyful.

JOSEPH SY-CHANGO

In Palawan, an archipelagic province in the Philippines, the team helped to rebuild a classroom at a public school, and gave classes to high school students.

"This is how we can be of

service to others, particularly to those who are needy. There is a new world, especially for the students from Macau," said the organizer.

"They realized that they are the ones who learned a lot and [the camp] gave them a different perspective [on] life," Sy-Chango added.

According to Sy-Chango, the camp acquires different funding through individual residents, entities and corporate donors, including Galaxy Entertainment Group.

"The students only pay MOP3,300 for two weeks and everything is included. It's highly subsidized, and this includes the gifts that we hand to them," he said.

Meanwhile, the organizer said that the group would reach out to the government for funding support this year before their next trip, which will be in December.

The Work Camp has been held twice a year since 2015.

AD

29th MACAO International Fireworks Display Contest

Sea Area in front of the Macau Tower

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8/9 A Mystified Fireworks Dream	Japan Marutamaya Ogatsu Fireworks Co., Ltd.	Belgium HC Pyrotechnics
15/9 Shining Voices of Heaven	France Alpha Pyrotechnie	Portugal Grupo Luso Pirotecnia
24/9 A Sparkling Mid-Autumn Night	Germany Potsdamer Feuerwerk GmbH	Austria FIREevent - Die Feuerwerker
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UN says government should enforce measures against racial discrimination

THE United Nations (UN) Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) recently issued a report where it concludes its observations on China as a member state, and reviews the performance of the Special Administrative Regions of Macau and Hong Kong on this topic. The report from CERD compiles information and data submitted by groups based in Hong Kong. One of the concerns and recommendations expressed in the report relates directly to Macau and has to do with the fact that “Macau and China do not have a domestic law specifically defining and criminalizing racial discrimination fully in line with Article 1 of the Convention.” This fact saw the committee recommending that China (as a member state) and by extension the SARs “amend its domestic laws to expressly define and criminalize all forms of racial discrimination in full conformity with Article 1 of the Convention.” It further recommends that China “expressly prohibit both direct and indirect racial discrimination in all fields of public life, including law enforcement and other government powers.”

Another of the topics addressed in the UN report is a complete “absence of formal national human rights institutions,” in Macau. “Despite the functions fulfilled by the Commission against Corruption in Macau, China,” it recommended, that Macau “establish independent national human rights institutions in line with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles) to ensure their effective functioning.” At the same time, it recommended that the governments (both central and local) provide these institutions with “sufficient structural independence and financial and human resources.”

Another area where Macau is failing is regarding the lack of data on administrative complaints. The report notes that “the courts in Macau, China did not receive any cases relating to racial discrimination during the reporting period.”

In this sense, the CERD recommends that the government “conduct training programs for government officials and civil servants, including law enforcement officials, about anti-racial discrimination laws and related administrative and civil com-



plaint mechanisms, to ensure that victims are aware of their rights.”

According to the report, only two cases in Macau courts relate to “racist hate speech and hate crimes,” and in the last three years, “no criminal complaints were received and no criminal investigations were conducted in relation to racial discrimination.”

The Committee remarks that “an absence or a low number of complaints does not signify the absence of racist hate crimes or expressions of racial hatred.” Instead, it “may indicate barriers in invoking the rights in the Convention, including a lack of public awareness of the rights

under the Convention; a lack of access to, availability of or confidence in methods for seeking judicial recourse; fear of reprisals; and limited access to the police including due to language barriers or a lack of attention to or sensitivity to cases of racial discrimination.”

Poverty reduction is another area of concern for the UN committee. In the region where a large number of foreign migrant workers reside, “the official poverty rate is greatly increased when factoring in the high cost of living.” The Committee urges the local government to “take further steps to eliminate ethnic economic disparities, urging at

the same time that Macau present results in its next periodic report updating poverty rate statistics and other statistic indicators, disaggregated by ethnic and national origin, revealing the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, and the effectiveness of measures taken, including through the National Human Rights Action Plan 2016-2020.”

The Committee also expressed concerns over the low number of complaints filed by non-resident workers about employment agencies, noting, in “between January 2015 and June 2018, only 11 complaints from non-resident workers about employment agencies were found to be substantiated.”

The CERD recommends the government “further strengthen monitoring of the employment and living conditions of domestic migrant workers, and their access to education and affordable health care,” requesting once more that the government provide in their next periodic report “statistics on complaints, self-initiated and other investigations, prosecutions, sanctions and remedies to protect domestic migrant workers.”

The next report by the CERD will be released by 2023. **RM**

IAS to grant regular financial assistance to 3,300 families

THE Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) will once again grant its regular financial assistance to approximately 3,300 local families from September, according to a statement released yesterday by IAS.

The bureau expects

to distribute a total of MOP19.5 million to the beneficiaries.

“IAS has been paying close attention to the pressure on the lives of vulnerable families. IAS also actively materializes the government’s policy of 2018,” the bureau said

in the statement.

The money will be distributed starting from September 5, and will be handed out through the city’s eight banks by automatic transfer.

The amount of financial assistance will be equivalent to the amount stipu-

lated by the city’s minimum subsistence index.

The regular financial assistance is said to “help these families resolve the extra expenses resulting from the start of a new school year and from mid-autumn festival.”

Families consisting

of one to seven members will be granted, respectively in increasing order, MOP4,050, MOP7,440, MOP10,250, MOP12,460, MOP14,070, MOP15,680, and MOP17,290. Families with eight or more members will be granted

MOP18,870.

The amount of each subsidy is the same as that of last year. Last year, IAS handed out around MOP22 million from its regular financial assistance program to approximately 4,000 local families.



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Brandon Presser

IN Las Vegas, the ultimate sand trap-turned-capital of capitalism, there's no better byword for sophistication than the Cosmopolitan. Its 20-plus suites, known as the Boulevard Penthouses, are the most coveted rooms in town, largely because they're priceless. The only way in is by invitation, which means fronting over a million dollars (and preferably two) at the Reserve, the hotel's private, three-room casino on the 75th floor. It's a gaming experience so exclusive that not even James Bond could charm his way through the door.

When the resort offered me a staff position serving its penthouses' high-rollers, roving from butler to bartending stations and everywhere in between, I jumped at the opportunity. And after passing my security clearances, I was initiated into the secret realm of the Reserve, catering to the whims of the world's wealthiest gamblers. But it wasn't all popping bottles and cutting cigars—try cleaning up “lucky” piles of rotting fruit, or walking in on nude hotel guests instead.

Think what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas? Not this time... There's a fine line between letting high-rollers have the run of the house, and indulging all their gaming-adjacent vices. “It's a judgment-free zone,” explains Leslie Sadovia, Cosmopolitan's executive director of national casino marketing. “People can come and behave in an extreme manner, and we're not telling them not to.”

Some big spenders push this to the limit. One repeat guest prefers the suite with a chinchilla-fur hammock; he's been known to splay himself across it naked, waiting for a butler to find him. Another, a well-known basketball player, enjoys having sex on the morning of his departure while the butlers fastidiously pack up his luggage. And one of the casino's oldest guests—also one of the only high-rolling women—has garnered a colorful reputation for discarding fur coats (“I'm bored of them!”), and throwing fists in the gaming salon when her luck is waning. Her other favorite pastime: asking the butlers to dress up in pajamas, crawl into bed next to her, and read her bedtime stories. These incidents will hardly get you kicked out—though the staff will periodically step in with slaps on the wrist.

There is one habit that even the brattiest clients tend to avoid: getting blindingly drunk. When you're gaming at such astronomical dollar values, after all, it's critical to keep your wits.

You know the fruit bowl that's often waiting for you when you check into a fancy hotel room? In a Boulevard Penthouse suite, the value of your welcome amenity might be five or six figures.

Sometimes welcome gif-

GAMING

Things I never knew about Vegas



ts can include obscure objets d'art or vintage Chanel; the hotel has even hired a full-time chocolatier to create custom-made, edible sculptures inspired by a guest's Instagram account. But booze is, by far, the most popular option. On my shift, it was more than USD1,100 of liquor—a bottle of Macallan and Yamazaki whisky. (“A pretty basic gamer get,” I was told by a colleague.) Occasionally, it's \$14,000 bottles of wine from the Rothschild estate. Louis XIII cognac, priced at \$4,300 a bottle, is a far more common ask; one high-roller was so emphatic about having multiple, unopened bottles in his room, the casino team started engraving his name on them to prevent him from reselling them.

High-rollers love to compete with their buddies on who can outspend the other.

BRIAN BENOWITZ

Every Boulevard Penthouse guest comes with a rider detailing everything from favorite brands of ice cream to the exact number of minutes guests like their eggs hard-boiled. On one, I spotted these comical instructions: “Guest confuses American and cheddar cheese, so when she orders American please bring her cheddar, but tell her it's American.”

Which brings me to the pedantic room service tastes of big-

spender guests. Standard orders range from green juices to fresh seafood picked out via webcam from the casino's private aquarium. Off-property requests—which come with a \$25-per-hour service fee—are common and most frequently send butlers to such glamorous places as In-N-Out Burger and Target. Kim Mantle, Cosmopolitan's head of butler services, says she makes two or three trips a week to the mega-mart in search of various sundries; on my own run there, the shopping list included 10 boxes of Maltesers (the British chocolate candy) and several PlayStation 4 video games.

Regular trips are also made to Chinatown's 99 Ranch Market, and T&T Ginseng, emporiums that peddle a witch's brew of rare teas, herbs, and—strangest of the bunch—cordyceps worms. Haven't heard of them? Neither had I. Cordyceps aren't actually worms. They're a type of caterpillar-eating fungus that gets hand-picked in the Himalayas and sometimes used like Viagra. They're literally worth their weight in gold.

When a high-roller is ready to gamble upward of \$2 million, Brian Benowitz, Cosmopolitan's vice president of casino operations, can have the Reserve unlocked, set up with the client's preferred games, and fully staffed within 25 minutes.

Here, Baccarat is the prevailing game of choice. First, it's familiar to more than 50 percent of Reserve guests who hail from Asia and play it in Macao. It also has a significant house advantage, meaning that the Cosmopolitan will better incentivize its play. Higher risk, higher reward.

The casino's biggest Baccarat bet to date was \$300,000 per hand for an entire shoe—

that's 8 decks of cards, played out as roughly 60 hands in 60 minutes—on two tables simultaneously. Those are stakes of roughly \$600,000 per minute, or \$36 million per hour. (That nearly matches the 2017 gross domestic product of Tuvalu: \$40 million.) “I've never seen anything like it,” adds Benowitz. “There were some ups and downs, but eventually the casino won.”

The biggest client victory Benowitz has witnessed amounted to \$30 million over a short weekend trip, but that was before he started at the Cosmopolitan. Here, he's seen a high-roller score \$6 million playing Single Zero (European-style Roulette)—and lose up to \$7 million.

Excessive spending happens off the tables, too. “We've seen billionaires buy the Cosmopolitan out of their Champagne—that's millions of dollars' worth of alcohol—just because they can,” adds Benowitz. “High-rollers love to compete with their buddies on who can outspend the other.”

As an animal-friendly hotel, the Cosmopolitan fields a lot of pet requests. Butlers hustle schnauzers around the on-site dog walk, make trips to Petco for additional dog beds and leashes, and put in orders to the esteemed on-site culinary team for canine-specific gourmet feasts. But dogs aren't the only pampered critters in Vegas. A misbehaving sugar glider (aka a flying squirrel) with severe separation anxiety takes the prize for weirdest animal guest, while nocturnal snakes that required dozens of blackout shades might be the highest-maintenance.

Things get crazier when animal requests revolve around wild creatures, rather than domesticated pets. Once, someo-

ne asked for a monkey to be dressed up in a butler's uniform to check the guest in. And inebriated demands for zoo animals have ranged from llamas to tigers; the latter was needed to—no joke—reenact that infamous scene from *The Hangover*. Alas, none of those wishes could be fulfilled due to rules against animal cruelty—and common sense.

Also in the category of demands that can't be fulfilled: hookers. It's a common misconception that prostitution is legal in Las Vegas. While it's allowed in the rest of Nevada, Clark County prohibits it. The thinly veiled requests, however, come roughly once a week: “Can you introduce me to someone?”

Requests for drugs—usually cocaine—are also once-a-week occurrences that come with a hard “no.” (Unless, of course, butlers see a valid prescription.) Even directing guests to Nevada's legal marijuana dispensaries is a no-no, because the Cosmopolitan operates under a federal casino mandate that strictly forbids its consumption.

Among high-rollers, superstitions can quickly escalate from the demanding to the absurd. Some millionaires will sleep on the couch because they believe a bed with a headboard will beckon bad fortune. Others crowd themselves with citrus—often with holes poked to “unleash the luck”—scattering pierced oranges and lemons around the suite, letting them rot during longer stays. Also lucky for clients from the Far East: filling water basins to the brim. That's how one high-roller flooded his bathtub ... and the suite underneath.

It gets weirder: Some guests are completely phobic about having anything thrown away, lest the discarded object be something lucky. Hot winning streaks may be accompanied by mounds of cigarette ashes, crumpled paper, or random assortments of trash. It's so common, most butlers know never to remove anything from a gaming table without triple-checking. Once, a high-roller wanted to rescue an “auspicious” piece of used plastic wrap his wife had accidentally tossed, and sent his butler rifling through the hotel's trash system.

Of course, some quirks are fully individual. One notorious guest, for instance, requests glass after glass of scotch on the rocks while he's on the gaming floor—not for drinking, but to moisten a tiny brown “medicine bag” that hangs from his neck. No one's ever figured out what it is, but Mantle is sure the guest practices some kind of Santeria. “Once, we found a room service cart in his penthouse, half-mel-

until I ran a high-roller suite

ted by hundreds of candles," she says. "I'm honestly surprised he didn't burn the hotel down!"

Boulevard Penthouse guests get pampered by two legions of staff: butlers and hosts. Hosts are like banker-bestie hybrids who liaise between high-rollers and casino: they extend interest-free, seven-figure lines of credit and learn how much players are willing to throw down and how risk-prone they are.

Each of the Cosmopolitan's 25 hosts nurtures a portfolio of 300 to 500 clients who've demonstrated the propensity to play hard. Almost all of the clients are men, ranging in age from millennials to 70-year-olds, and they stick around for three to five years before going dark—usually due to bad investments, dips in the economy, or divorce.

Only 15 to 20 of a host's contacts can be deemed "worthy" of an open invite into the Boulevard Penthouses—and managing that VVIP list is among a host's most important tasks, since penthouse invites are on a "whenever you want" basis, rather than for particular dates or times.

It's no wonder, then, that hosts often become engrained



in their client's personal lives, being invited to weddings, birthdays, sports events, and kids' graduations. They get to dip into the casino's coffers for gifts that will cement the bonds, says Kelly Van Aken, vice president of national marketing. That can be anything from a fabulous bottle of wine to an \$18,000 Birkin bag, or a hand-delivered platter of Peking Duck from their favorite Vegas restaurant.

Seven-figure bets often mean sky-high tips. It's standard for

a weekending penthouse guest to leave between \$300 and \$500 for housekeeping—plus a few hundred dollars a day for the butlers. The record-setter, however, was a \$40,000 gratuity for a couple of days of service, left by a famously generous repeat guest. Like all other tips, it was divvied up amongst the butlers, based on their hourly work commitments.

But butlers don't get the biggest tips; dealers do. In fact, a gig at the Cosmopolitan's casino

is so coveted that auditions are by invite only. That's because its gamblers commonly make wagers with the intent of giving the dealer the winnings, as a tip. The Cosmopolitan's largest bet of this kind, a 150,000 wager, would have yielded \$300,000 in winnings for the dealer, had it not been a bust.

That giant vault in the basement of the Bellagio that Clooney and his crew masterfully emptied? There's no such thing. Casinos quickly move their li-

quid assets to banks and secondary locations—though almost \$91 million worth of chips was exposed on the casino floor while I was on staff.

Most thieves are small-time crooks—cheaters, really, or low-wagering guests who see opportunities to toss a chip onto a winning hand here and there. According to Benowitz, around 10,000 people pass through the Cosmopolitan's casino every day and 5 percent to 10 percent of them stop to gamble. How many of them try to cheat? Around one in 200.

High-rollers take this to a whole other level. "When a guest loses a million dollars in the casino, they want their million dollars back," explains Mantle, who tallies stolen items every day. Artwork, duvets, even bathroom scales: gone, gone, gone. The oversized Orbe bath amenities? Pilfered by the bagful.

But some guests are especially brazen about their thefts. One requested that the butler team get slippers from a competing casino so he could steal those, instead of the ones by his bed. Several have brought extra suitcases and asked the butlers to fill them with items from their suite—think coffee table books, unopened alcohol, and decorative Hermès knickknacks.

Turns out, even if you lose big at the casino, the hotel has its ways of making you feel like a winner. **Bloomberg**

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OPINION

Taiwan is not a bargaining chip with China

James Stavridis

I first visited Taiwan in the 1970s as a young officer serving in an American destroyer assigned to the Pacific Fleet. A small, dynamic nation at the northern edge of the strategically crucial South China Sea, the Republic of China (as Taiwan prefers to be known) was locked in a Cold War duel of geopolitics with its vastly larger cousin across the Taiwan Strait, the People's Republic of China.

I returned to Taiwan this week for meetings with senior officials — President Tsai Ing-wen, Foreign Minister Joseph Wu and the national security adviser, David Lee — and enjoyed seeing the extraordinary progress.

At the time of my first visit, I had my doubts about how long the Taiwanese could hold out against the mainland Chinese. But I came away with a deep respect for the courage, ingenuity and independent spirit of the Republic of China.

Now, five decades along, Taiwan continues to seek a balance between an aggressive posture that could provoke Chinese military action and simply capitulating and taking a Hong Kong-style deal for incorporation with China but retaining some semblance of autonomy. It is an increasingly difficult balance to strike.

Taiwan is a vibrant nation of 23 million people and a GDP of more than half a trillion dollars, edging toward the top 20 economies in the world. The Taiwanese produce advanced electronics, are on the cutting edge of artificial intelligence research, have dynamic maritime and aviation entities, and boast a capable military that is in the process of shifting to an all-volunteer force.

The U.S. continues to support Taiwan diplomatically, although formally adhering to the “One China Policy” demanded by the People's Republic — meaning that any nation desiring to do business with mainland China cannot have formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan. With the recent unfortunate defection of El Salvador, only 17 nations and the Holy See have formal diplomatic relations; although many — including the U.S. — have informal arrangements that are an effective substitute.

Beijing has been taking a wait-and-see approach to the issue of Taiwanese independence. While the Chinese could attempt a military action to force a merger, they would prefer a non-violent outcome. So long as Taiwan does not overtly declare independence, and other major actors (particularly the U.S.) follow the one-China policy, Beijing has been

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generally content to “let time do the work for them.”

But lately, there are increasing indications that China is less willing to wait: Its military has been operating around the sea and air approaches to the island; it has been putting very direct pressure on the nations that still recognize Taiwan to shift (especially in Latin America and the Caribbean); and it is increasing economic pressure on the Taiwanese. This fits with the more nationalistic style of President Xi Jinping and with Chinese ambitions to control the South China Sea, the northern gateway of which passes directly around the island of Taiwan.

What is the best U.S. strategy for dealing with this contentious issue?

■ **There are increasing indications that China is less willing to wait: Its military has been operating around the sea and air approaches to the island**

First, the Washington must recognize that support for Taiwan is not a bargaining chip to be put on the table to obtain better outcomes with mainland China. The U.S. has significant disputes with the People's Republic over trade imbalances, cyber-intrusions, intellectual property theft, North Korean bad behavior, and Beijing's territorial claims over the South China Sea. It is certainly tempting for the U.S. to use Taiwan as leverage in dealing with those issues, e.g. telling China to modulate its positions favorably for the U.S. in return for lessened U.S. support to the island. When he was president-elect, Donald Trump mused about doing exactly that, and as the trade dispute heats up, that temptation will grow.

That would be a significant mistake.

Taiwan has been a steadfast supporter of the U.S. for decades, and continues to perform as a staunch ally in a very turbulent and vital geopolitical arena. A betrayal of trust would have a ripple effect globally, further degrading U.S. credibility as an ally. It also misreads Beijing's intent and attitude — China has no interest in a deal involving Taiwan. The claim to the island is the ultimate red line in its foreign policy, and it is especially true that a nationalist government like Xi's will not be part of a negotiation involving Taiwan's status.

The Trump administration must

come to understand the overarching importance China places on eventually incorporating Taiwan into its governance structure, and display sophistication and strategic patience with the situation.

This means following the approach to Taiwan that has been in place for decades with bipartisan support: helping Taiwan militarily with sensible levels of advanced military sales following the mandate of the Taiwan Relations Act; providing political support internationally, such as helping Taiwan participate in international organizations even though it is not universally recognized as a sovereign state; and encouraging robust economic exchanges between the two nations.

Good examples of this are the recent sale of \$1.4 billion in advanced military hardware that was announced in 2017, and allowing high-level official visits between the Taiwan and the U.S. as permitted under the Taiwan Travel Act, which was passed this spring.

The U.S. should also encourage allies, partners and friends in the Indo-Pacific region to engage with Taiwan. Having better economic ties, and perhaps joint military training, between Taiwan and India, Japan and especially the nations around the littoral of the South China Sea would help maintain a balance between the People's Republic and Taiwan. So long as China sees that Taiwan has robust relations in the region it is unlikely to do anything preci-

pitous that could provoke a military confrontation.

During my recent visit, which was sponsored by both a U.S. and a Taiwanese think tank, I met with many senior officials from the government, military and private sector. The general tone is that Taiwan wants to stay cautious, balanced and sensible in its approach, and is clearly looking for peaceful outcomes. I heard from Taiwanese leaders that they don't want to fight China, and they value a status quo that provides them the benefits of democracy and free markets. But they are nervous as they see China ratcheting up pressure militarily, diplomatically and economically.

Over time, the choices ahead about the status of Taiwan must be made by the people of Taiwan, without fear or favor in reaction to pressure from across the strait. The Trump administration is so far taking a sensible approach in supporting the island and providing advanced technology for defensive military systems. It must resist the temptation to use Taiwan as a bargaining chip with China.

While undermining Taiwan in that way could provide some short-term relief on knotty problems between the two superpowers, it would be self-defeating over the longer term. Keeping faith with a faithful ally is the right course of action, and offers the most benefit to U.S. objectives in the region and beyond. **Bloomberg**

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WITH a USD7.3 billion fortune and business operations spanning the globe, Richard Liu could've spent the last days of August anywhere in the world. The JD.com Inc. founder chose to spend his time taking classes in Minneapolis as a student at the University of Minnesota.

Why was one of China's most successful and recognizable business figures hitting the books at all, much less so far from home in the Gopher State? That is part of the mystery surrounding Liu's days in Minnesota, where he was arrested for alleged criminal sexual conduct as the long Labor Day weekend got underway.

Liu, 45, is a student in the university's Carlson School of Management and was in Minneapolis to complete the American residency of a U.S.-China business administration doctorate program. The course takes place mainly in Beijing with a singular cohort of students: the average age is 50, and many are captains of industry. Co-led by Tsinghua University - the alma mater of Chinese leaders including Xi Jinping - its graduates include the executive manager of storied spirits-maker Kweichow Moutai and the head of fintech titan Ant Financial.

The Twin Cities program is one of scores that cater to a fast-rising Chinese demographic: senior executives. Unlike in the U.S., where luminaries such as Mark Zuckerberg and Bill Gates wear their college-dropout badges with pride, Chinese executives seek academic plaudits long

Why a Chinese billionaire was studying in the US before arrest

after they cease to matter for their careers.

"If you have a better degree and better education you get more recognition," said Wang Huiyao, founder of the Center for China and Globalization, a think-tank that advises the government. "China pays more attention to education."

It's not just about academic credentials. Many executives who grew up frustrated by overseas restrictions are indulging in travel freedoms. Others whose companies are exploring overseas markets hope to tap networks abroad and gain insight into their targets.

"For people like Richard Liu, it is not so much about knowing more people. It is surely for the purpose of widening his perspective, to learn new ideas, to get better understanding of the American society and market," said Freeman Shen, an alumnus and Carlson board of overseers member who founded electric-vehicle startup WM Motor Technology Co.

Liu was arrested by the Minneapolis police on an accusation of "criminal sexual conduct" late Friday night and held about 16 hours. A Police Department spokesman says the investigation is ongoing. Joseph Friedberg, Liu's attorney, said he is confident there will be no crimi-

nal charges and that the CEO did nothing wrong.

Liu is now back at work in his home country, a big source of scholars for American colleges. Though U.S.-China tensions are running high, the University of Minnesota continues to tout its decades-old tradition of welcoming students from the Orient. The college says it was among the first to resume exchanges after the normalization of relations with China in the late 1970s, establishing an office dedicated to maintaining ties in 1979. In 2008, it opened an office in Beijing to support that collaboration.

The "education at Minnesota is as rigorous as that in Harvard," added Shen, who also attended the Ivy League college.

Foreign graduates and recruitment executives say one deep-seated reason for the recent surge in popularity of overseas academic programs is an urgent need to solve the problems facing a rapidly changing economy: the rich-poor divide, technology development and sustainable growth among them.

"What worked before, everybody knows will not work in the future," said Ken Qi, a recruitment executive for Spencer Stuart. "The whole economy is under huge pressure to be transformed."

Such programs - offered by countless global universities - are increasingly popular among the executives Qi helps place in top-flight companies. The students run the gamut from internet startup founders to directors at state-owned enterprises, he said. Lower down the corporate ladder, a key attraction is the ability to network: much of China runs on connections.

That is part of the mystery surrounding Liu's days in Minnesota, where he was arrested

But the overarching driver may be a hunger to learn how to coax their Chinese companies into a new economic era. The country's businesses - especially those in tech - are increasingly sending their most promising graduates in unprecedented volumes for further study to learn how Western businesses use technology to deal with economic upheaval.

Spearheaded by seasoned academic, table-tennis enthusiast and Chinese citizen Tony Hai-

tao Cui, the Minneapolis doctorate program only produced its inaugural class of graduates in May of this year. A news report posted by Kweichow Moutai showed its executive manager Cai Fangxin getting his certificate from Carlson School of Management dean Sri Zaheer. Other graduates onstage that day included Chen Jianhua, chairman of Hengli Group Co. and Wu Xiaoli, deputy-director of information for Phoenix Media Investment. All are considered business elite.

"Carlson is known to transform students," Ant Financial Chairman Eric Jing, a Carlson grad, said in a commencement speech to the class of 2017. "I discovered a lot here. A wealth of knowledge, a global perspective and a desire to build more bridges between Carlson and China."

The trend of Chinese executives going abroad has only just begun, said Center for China and Globalization's Wang.

"It's going to increase because there are more business people who want to go study, there are more new problems, new challenges that need to be learned about," he said. "The market economy was not started here that long ago so it's quite natural for them to go to different B schools and have further studies." **Bloomberg**

Xi to send top ally to North Korea anniversary

Christopher Bodeen, Beijing

CHINESE President Xi Jinping will not attend celebrations of the 70th anniversary of North Korea's founding this weekend but will send a top ally to represent him instead, the ruling Communist Party announced yesterday.

Speculation had swirled over whether Xi would attend the celebrations following three visits to China this year by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Analysts said a decision by Xi not to travel to Pyongyang would indicate that Beijing expected further actions from Kim, including real signs of progress toward denuclearization.

The party's International Department said Xi would be represented by Li Zhanshu, the party's third-ranking official and head of China's rubberstamp parliament.

While China-North Korea relations have improved this year following a prolonged chill, China remains committed to U.N. economic sanctions placed on the North over its ballistic missile and nuclear weapons testing programs.

The celebrations in Pyongyang also come as U.S. President Donald Trump has blamed Beijing for the slow progress of denuclearization, suggesting that China has been encouraging North Korea to drag its feet with denuclearization to gain leverage against the U.S. in a trade dispute that has seen both sides leveling tariffs on USD50 billion of each other's products.

Last week, Trump tweeted that North Korea "is under tremendous pressure from China because of our major trade disputes



President Xi Jinping and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Dalian, last May

with the Chinese government," adding, "This is not helpful!"

China wasn't having any of it. Foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said Washington should "engage in self-reflection and stop flip-flopping and blaming others."

"Regarding America's attempts to pass the buck, I'm sorry, we'd rather not accept," Hua told reporters.

China has already distanced itself somewhat from its significant cooperation with the U.S. on North Korea. After supporting tough U.N. sanctions and scaling back trade with the North after it ramped up nuclear and missile tests last year, Beijing has eased the pressure on its neighbor slightly.

No Chinese head of state has visited North Korea since President Hu Jintao met with Kim's father, Kim Jong Il, in Pyongyang in 2005, a time when Beijing was urging the North to reform its economy and take part in six-nation denuclearization talks.

When the younger Kim took power in 2011, exchanges slowed as Kim sought to assert his independence and China grew impatient with Kim's nuclear and missile tests. Ties frayed last year when China supported tougher U.N. sanctions on Pyongyang and suspended coal and iron ore imports.

That made Kim's three visits to China this year all the more striking, a sign that the relationship was back on track.

A visit by Xi on such a symbolic occasion would have further underscored the unique historical ties between the two countries' ruling parties. Mao Zedong sent Chinese troops to aid North Korea after the Korean War began in 1950, setting up a relationship

once described as being "as close as lips and teeth."

Xi could have also used the opportunity to reassert China's claim to a place at the table when key decisions are made concerning Pyongyang's relationships with both Washington and South Korea, including over a possible formal end to the Korean War. Beijing is determined to ensure its interests are honored, especially its desire to maintain the viability of Kim's regime and keep U.S. and South Korean forces far from its border.

"I think Beijing is worried that North Korea will go its own way and work out new relationships with Washington and Seoul and move out of China's orbit," said John Delury, a North Korea

■ **The celebrations in Pyongyang come as Trump has blamed Beijing for the slow progress of denuclearization**

expert at Yonsei University in Seoul.

Michael Kovrig, senior adviser for Northeast Asia at the International Crisis Group, described a decision by Xi not to go as a "strong signal," indicating that "North Korea has a lot to do to get back in China's good graces."

Still, his appointment of a high-ranking official such as Li as his envoy appeared to indicate ties remained basically on track.

Kim's visits to Beijing displayed all the customary pomp and circumstance bestowed on his father and grandfather. A separate visit to the northern port of Dalian showed the two leaders strolling along the beach and chatting amid lush gardens — all apparently intended to imply a warm personal relationship between them.

Diplomats say Beijing continues to implement U.N. sanctions on exports of coal, iron ore, seafood and other products. In one area not covered by the sanctions, however, it seems to be cutting Pyongyang some slack: tourism.

Recent visitors to North Korea say numbers of Chinese visitors have exploded in recent months, with busloads turning up at key spots such as the Demilitarized Zone dividing the two Koreas and Mount Paektu, which touches the country's border with China.

China is likely advertising the potential benefits of North Korean compliance farther down the line.

"China has a strategy of trying to prevent North Korea from straying too far," Delury said. "This relationship is full of mutual distrust, but they keep it within certain bounds." AP

SOUTH CHINA SEA

Philippines extricates warship from Half Moon shoal

THE Philippine navy extricated one of its largest warships from the shoal where it ran aground last week near a hotly disputed region in the South China Sea.

Two Philippine security officials told The Associated Press early yesterday that tugboats were used to pull the BRP Gregorio del Pilar from the shallow fringes of Half Moon Shoal, which the Philippines calls Hasa Hasa, before midnight. The military later confirmed the successful extrication.

The frigate, which was being towed back to a Philippine port, ran aground during a routine patrol Wednesday night, damaging some of its propellers. Its

more than 100 crewmen were unhurt.

The barren shoal is on the eastern edge of the disputed Spratly archipelago, where tensions have run high in recent years after China built seven disputed reefs into man-made islands and reportedly installed missile defense systems.

Philippine defense officials notified their Chinese counterparts after the accidental grounding of the Philippine Navy frigate at the shoal, which Beijing claims, to avoid any misunderstanding, said the two Philippine officials, who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the issue publicly.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said last week that China offered to help but that the Philippines would handle it.

A Chinese frigate ran aground on the shoal in 2012 and was pulled away by Chinese military ships.

Half Moon Shoal lies about 110 kilometers from the southern tip of the western Philippine island of Palawan and south of the disputed Second Thomas Shoal, where a Philippine navy transport ship was intentionally grounded in 1999 and has since served as a Philippine military outpost.

China has repeatedly demanded the now-rusty BRP Sierra Madre be remo-

ved from Second Thomas Shoal, which is claimed by the Philippines and China.

A military report seen by the AP said the propellers of the BRP Gregorio del Pilar were damaged by the grounding. The crew reported, however, that the frigate was not taking in water.

At least four Philippine Navy and Coast Guard ships were deployed to secure the BRP Gregorio del Pilar and provide food and other supplies to its sailors. Tugboats were hired to extricate the ship and tow it to a Philippine port for repairs, military spokesman Col. Edgard Arevalo said.

The frigate is one of three former U.S. Coast Guard cutters acquired by the Phi-



A Philippine Navy ship is seen last week in the vicinity of Half Moon Shoal (or Hasa Hasa in Tagalog)

lippine military and now are the Philippines' largest warships.

The United States and Asian governments which have claims in the disputed sea, including the Philippines, have raised alarms

over China's island building and militarization of the strategic territory.

The Philippines has been one of the most vocal critics of China's assertive moves in the disputed waters. AP

Nick Perry, Nauru

PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM

Tensions run high over China and refugees at meeting

TENSIONS over China and refugees ran high yesterday at a meeting of Pacific leaders after host Nauru accused a Chinese official of bullying and temporarily detained a New Zealand journalist.

Nauru is hosting the Pacific Islands Forum, which is being attended this week by leaders from 18 member nations and delegations from other countries including the U.S. and China.

Nauru recognizes Taiwan and doesn't have diplomatic relations with China.

After a closed-door meeting at the forum yesterday, Nauru President Baron Waqa said a Chinese official had demanded to be heard when other leaders were due to speak.

"And he insisted, and was very insolent about it, and created a big fuss and held up the meeting of leaders for a good number of minutes when he was only an official," Waqa said. "Maybe because he was from a big country he wanted to bully us."

Even before the forum started there had been tensions with China after some other nations threatened to pull out following a dispute over whether Chinese officials could use their diplomatic passports to enter Nauru. Waqa said it had all been a misunderstanding, and that officials from both coun-



Nauru's President Baron Waqa (center) attends the opening ceremony of the Pacific Islands Forum in Nauru

tries often traveled to the other country using ordinary passports.

Nauru has been eager to limit discussion during the forum of the more than 600 refugees who live on the tiny island, and has placed restrictions on visiting journalists reporting on topics

outside the forum.

Nauru police detained 1 News journalist Barbara Dreaver for about three hours and revoked her forum accreditation after she was spotted interviewing a refugee outside a local restaurant.

Dreaver said she was just

doing her job.

"I was under the impression, and I know, we were allowed to talk to refugees," Dreaver said. "I think it probably shows things are a wee bit sensitive here, in fact a lot sensitive."

Waqa disputed whether Dreaver

was detained, saying she'd been taken to the police station for questioning and had cooperated. He said she breached protocols by not asking permission to speak to refugees in the high-tension environment.

"The media coming are not interested in the Pacific, but interested in something else," Waqa said. "We knew this all along, and it's sad."

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said in a statement that she was pleased that Dreaver had been released.

"This government believes in freedom of the press, throughout the world, and of course that includes the entire Pacific region," Ardern said.

Ardern is due to join the forum for its final day today. She has faced some criticism at home for the extra cost to taxpayers of flying her to Nauru separately after the rest of her delegation had arrived so she wouldn't have to be away as long from her infant daughter Neve. AP

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FMCC Seminar

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Date: Friday, 21st September 2018
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Banquet Hall 6-7 (Level 3)

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Seminar Fee:
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Vladicin Han

SERBIA

Turkey's crisis could slow its push for influence in Balkans

IN the south of Serbia, a Turkish car parts company has been hailed as a savior: its new plant created hundreds of jobs and breathed new life into a region that has long been underdeveloped and was devastated in the 1990s' wars.

But with the dramatic plunge in the value of the Turkish currency this year as a result of investor concerns and a diplomatic dispute with the U.S., there are worries in Serbia and the rest of the Western Balkans that such investments from Turkey may dry up.

Analysts say that the country's financial turmoil may slow future Turkish investments in Serbia, Bosnia, Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo, where Ankara is vying for influence, both economic and political, together with the European Union, China and Russia.

"We are worried, the crisis in Turkey cannot be without repercussions for us," Serbian Trade Minister Rasim Ljajic said recently as the Turkish lira fell.

Trade between the Western Balkans and Turkey has grown from USD430 million in 2002 to \$3 billion in 2016, with Serbia accounting for nearly one third. Turkey is now among the top 10 trading partners for Serbia and top three for Kosovo.

Western European leaders worry about the expanding authoritarian influence of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and are concerned that he may gain influence in the Balkans. The Western Balkan countries formally want to join the EU but their applications have virtually been put on hold because of the EU's internal problems



like Brexit, and that has exposed the Balkans to additional economic and political influence from Turkey, China and Russia.

The Balkans had been under Ottoman occupation for 500 years, meaning there are also cultural ties — for example, in Bosnia's and Kosovo's Muslim heritage—that have helped Turkey gain a presence.

Some think that the Western Balkans are significant enough geopolitically for Erdogan that Turkey will try to retain its existing investments and trade.

Aleksandar Medjedovic, a board member of the Turkish-Serbian Business Council, says Turkey will likely maintain plan-

ned investments but that they may be delayed.

"Fluctuations in the domestic currency rates always have an impact on the economy and they do impact on Turkish economy at the moment," said Medjedovic. But, he added, the "Balkans is a strategic area for Turkish investors."

In the Muslim-dominated Bosnia, Turkish investments are so far modest, but its political influence has risen since the bloody war there in the 1990s. Turkish aid groups have been rebuilding bridges and old Ottoman mosques and financing education. They have provided some 300 million euros for non-profit pro-

jects in Bosnia.

Demonstrating the extent of Erdogan's political influence in Bosnia, the Turkish president held a pre-election rally in May in the Bosnian capital, Sarajevo, after similar gatherings were banned in Germany and Austria.

While Turkey is not a major investor in Bosnia, Ankara last year pledged 3 billion euros (\$3.5 billion) in financing for the construction of a highway between Sarajevo and Belgrade, and officials expect that project to go ahead.

Medjedovic said Turkey sees the Balkans, particularly Serbia and EU member Croatia, primarily as a "gateway" for its goods to

the European Union.

So while there are questions about new investments, that may bode well for existing ones, like the spare parts factory in Vladicin Han, a small, drab-looking Serbian town of some 20,000 people where unemployment is rife. It produces mainly rubber parts for cooling and heating systems for clients such as Volkswagen, Skoda, Audi or Porsche.

“We are worried, the crisis in Turkey cannot be without repercussions for us.”

RASIM LJAJIC
SERBIAN TRADE MINISTER

The plant's Turkish manager, Fikret Aynibal, said that parent company Teklas Automotive has not taken any decision yet to stop investing in Serbia and the wider region because investment plans are based on five to ten years. If anything, Aynibal said, the company might invest more as turmoil reins at home.

"We are thinking to expand also in the Serbian region." AP

USA

New Yorker drops plans to interview Bannon at festival

Hillel Italie, New York

FACING widespread outrage, The New Yorker has dropped plans to interview Steve Bannon during its festival next month.

New Yorker editor David Remnick told The Associated Press in a statement shared yesterday [Macau time] with the magazine's staff that he had changed his mind. The former Donald Trump aide and ex-chairman of Breitbart News was supposed to be a featured guest during a prestigious gathering that over the years has drawn some of the world's most prominent artists and public figures. This year's guests include Emily Blunt, Zadie Smith and Sally Yates, who Trump fired as deputy attorney general after

she refused to back his initial ban on travelers from Muslim countries. The ban was advocated by Bannon, a senior White House adviser at the time.

"I've thought this through and talked to colleagues — and I've re-considered," Remnick, who has repeatedly denounced Trump and his administration, wrote of his decision on Bannon. "There is a better way to do this. Our writers have interviewed Steve Bannon for The New Yorker before, and if the opportunity presents itself I'll interview him in a more traditionally journalistic setting as we first discussed, and not on stage."

Remnick also acknowledged that festival guests, unlike those interviewed on radio or for a print story, are paid an honorarium,

along with money for travel and lodging.

In an email statement, Bannon wrote: "After being contacted several months ago and with seven weeks of continual requests for this event, I accepted The New Yorker's invitation with no thought of an honorarium."

"The reason for my acceptance was simple: I would be facing one of the most fearless journalists of his generation. In what I would call a defining moment, David Remnick showed he was gutless when confronted by the howling online mob," he added.

A letter from Remnick, dated June 28, details the invitation to Bannon.

"I would like to invite you to sit down with me for an informal, free-ranging discussion of the political

movements redefining international and local politics. This would include, of course, your work abroad as well as the upcoming midterms. There would be no need for prepared remarks, as we intend these events to be unscripted, lively, and spontaneous," Remnick writes, adding: "Naturally, the magazine would handle all your travel arrangements and accommodations; you would receive an honorarium; and you would also be invited to attend most other Festival events."

"We would be honored to have you," he writes at the end.

The New Yorker's announcement on Bannon came earlier and was denounced by Roxane Gay, Jessica Valenti and many others. Gay tweeted that "the in-



Steve Bannon

tellectual class doesn't truly understand racism or xenophobia. They treat it like an intellectual project, where perhaps if we ask 'hard question' and bandy about 'controversial' ideas, good work is being done." Filmmaker Judd Apatow had tweeted he would not attend if Bannon was interviewed. Kathryn Schulz was among the New Yorker

staff writers who tweeted that they had informed Remnick directly about their objections.

Tweeted Patton Oswalt: "I'm out. Sorry, @NewYorker. See if Milo Yiannopoulos is free?" a reference to the far-right writer and speaker whose memoir was dropped last year by Simon & Schuster after numerous complaints. AP

what's ON



MONKEY KING

TIME: 4pm & 8pm daily (except on Thursdays)

VENUE: Sands Cotai Theatre

ADMISSION: MOP380, MOP480, MOP680, MOP980, MOP1280

COTAI TICKETING: (853) 2882 8818

KONG SENG TICKETING: (853) 2855 5555

MACAU SCIENCE CENTRE

TIME: 10am-6pm daily (Except on Thursdays; open on public holidays)

VENUE: Macau Science Center

ADMISSION: MOP25 (Exhibition Centre)

MOP60 (Planetarium 2D dome or 2D

sky shows)

MOP80 (Planetarium 3D dome or 3D

sky shows)

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2888 0822

ANNUAL ARTS EXHIBITION BETWEEN CHINA AND PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING COUNTRIES - ALTER EGO

TIME: 10am-7pm (closed on Mondays)

UNTIL: September 9, 2018

VENUE: Macau Museum of Art, Old Court Building, Tap Seac Gallery, Taipa Houses Museum

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2836 6866

EXHIBITION OF NEW WORKS IN MAM COLLECTION

TIME: 10am-7pm (last admission 6:30pm; closed on Mondays)

UNTIL: October 26, 2018

VENUE: Macau Museum of Art

Admission: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

ART IS PLAY

TIME: 10:30am-10pm (last entry at 9:30pm)

UNTIL: September 9, 2018

VENUE: MGM Art Space, MGM Macau

ADMISSION: MOP120 (free admission for children aged two or under)

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8802 3833

FASHION REJUVENATION – EXHIBITION OF ECO-FRIENDLY AND FUNCTIONAL FASHION

TIME: 10am-8pm (closed on Mondays, open on public holidays)

UNTIL: September 30, 2018

VENUE: Macao Fashion Gallery

ADMISSION: Free admission

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2835 3341

Offbeat

WRONG MOVE. ISRAELI GENERAL'S TEXT MESSAGES MISFIRED TO OLD CELL NUMBER

An Israeli businessman yesterday [Macau time] said he received calls and messages from senior Israeli and foreign military officials after he was assigned the former phone number of Israel's military chief of staff.

Israeli Army Radio identified the man only as Yossi. Speaking to the radio station, he said he became alarmed when he began receiving what looked like very sensitive messages.

"A red light went on ... if it got in the hands of another citizen I don't know what would happen," he said.

It wasn't entirely clear how Lt. Gen. Gadi Eisenkot's number was passed on to a private citizen.

In a statement, the military said "the phone number was changed more than a year ago as part of routine procedure coordinated with the supplier." It did not elaborate.

According to the radio report, the provider said the number was not classified and was reassigned to another customer.

TV canal macau



13:00	TDM News (Repeated)
13:30	News (RTPi) Delayed Broadcast
15:00	Portuguese Soap Opera
15:50	Cartoons
16:15	Portuguese Comedy
18:40	Micellaneous
19:00	TDM Interview (Repeated)
19:35	Portuguese Serie
20:30	Main News, Financial & Weather Report
21:15	News from my Country - Portugal
22:05	Around the World
22:25	Portuguese Serie - Liberty 21
23:15	TDM News
23:50	Miscellaneous
00:45	Main News, Financial & Weather Report (Repeated)
01:10	RTPi Live

cinema



CINETEATRO

30 AUG - 05 SEP



HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA 3: A MONSTER VACATION

ROOM 1

4:45pm

Director: Genndy Tartakovsky

Starring: Adam Sandler, Andy Samberg, Selena Gomez

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 97min

ALONG WITH THE GODS: THE LAST 49 DAYS

ROOM 1

2:15, 18:30, 9:15pm

Director: Kim Yong-hwa

Starring: HA Jung-woo, JU Ji-hoon, KIM Hyang-gi

Language: Korean (Chinese & English)

DORAEMON THE MOVIE: NOBITA'S TREASURE ISLAND

ROOM 2

4:45pm

Director: Kazuaki Imai

Starring: Wasabi Mizuta, Megumi Ohara, Yumi Kakazu

Language: Cantonese (Chinese)

Duration: 109min

KILLING FOR THE PROSECUTION

ROOM 2

2:30, 7:15, 9:30pm

Director: Masato Harada

Starring: Takuya Kimura, Kazunari Ninomiya

Language: Japanese (Chinese & English)

Duration: 123min

L STORM

ROOM 3

2:30, 9:30pm

Director: David Lam

Starring: Louis Koo, Julian Cheung, Kelvin Cheng

Language: Cantonese (Chinese & English)

Duration: 90min



HINDI MEDIUM

ROOM 3

4:30, 7:00pm

Director: Saket Chaudhary

Starring: Irfan Khan, Saba Qamar

Language: Indian Dialect (Chinese & English)

Duration: 132min

this day in history



1962 MARILYN MONROE FOUND DEAD

Screen icon Marilyn Monroe has been found dead in bed at her Los Angeles home.

The 36-year-old actress' body was discovered in the early hours of this morning by two doctors who were called to her Brentwood home by a concerned housekeeper.

The doctors were forced to break into Miss Monroe's bedroom after being unable to open the door. She was found lying naked in her bed with an empty bottle of Nembutal sleeping pills by her side.

The local coroner, who visited the scene later, said the circumstances of Miss Monroe's death indicated a "possible suicide".

Marilyn Monroe was born Norma Jeane Mortenson on 1 June 1926 in Los Angeles.

Her mother, Gladys Baker, had mental problems which resulted in Norma Jeane spending most of her childhood in foster homes and orphanages.

She wed her neighbour, Jimmy Dougherty in 1942, but the marriage failed in 1946 due to Norma Jeane's new-found fame as a photographic model.

In 1944 while her husband was serving in the South Pacific with the Merchant Marines, Norma Jeane was discovered by photographer David Conover.

By 1946 she had signed her first studio contract with 20th Century Fox and changed her name to Marilyn Monroe.

Since 1947 she has appeared in 30 films, including The Prince and the Showgirl, Bus Stop, The Seven Year Itch, How to Marry a Millionaire and Some Like it Hot, for which she won a Golden Globe for Best Actress in a Comedy.

Her 1954 marriage to baseball star Joe DiMaggio lasted just nine months and on 29 June 1956 the star married playwright Arthur Miller.

But that marriage ended in 1961. Miss Monroe's romantic life has long been the subject of speculation and she has been linked with President Kennedy.

Millions of fans around the world will be deeply shocked by the star's premature and tragic death.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Marilyn Monroe was buried in the Corridor of Memories at Westwood Memorial Park in Los Angeles.

Two months before she died Monroe had been fired by Fox Productions for repeatedly failing to turn up on the set of the film Something Has Got To Give.

The production was never completed even though Monroe was re-hired by the film company on 1 August.

During the months before her death she had been seeing Joe DiMaggio and the pair had agreed to re-marry on 8 August 1962.

For 20 years after her death flowers from DiMaggio were delivered weekly to Monroe's crypt.

There has been much speculation about Marilyn Monroe's death and the causes of it. Many have suggested that it was highly unlikely she committed suicide but perhaps accidentally took an overdose of drugs.

Others have suggested that a third party may have administered the drug.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 The plans you formulate will be powerful reminders of the growth you've made and the growth you still want to make.

Taurus April 20-May 20 Your jam-packed schedule is a lot more flexible than you think it is, and one well-placed phone call will help give you a lot more breathing room.

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 You should feel empowered to ask for the space you need - there's a growing craving inside you for solo time, whether you realize it or not.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Your passion for justice is hotter than ever right now, so you might find yourself butting into a wrong situation that you feel needs righting.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Get ready for an unexpected event to clear out a lot of stress from your life. A particularly loud and abrasive personality has been making more frequent appearances in your life, much to your annoyance.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 There is a lot of humor and laughter entering your life right now, and it will keep you feeling mellow, content and laid-back.

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 Being out in the natural world is the right way to rejuvenate yourself and get a new perspective on where you're going right now.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 Today is the perfect day to clear your plate! You've got a lot of things going on, and this juggling act has got to stop before you run out of steam.

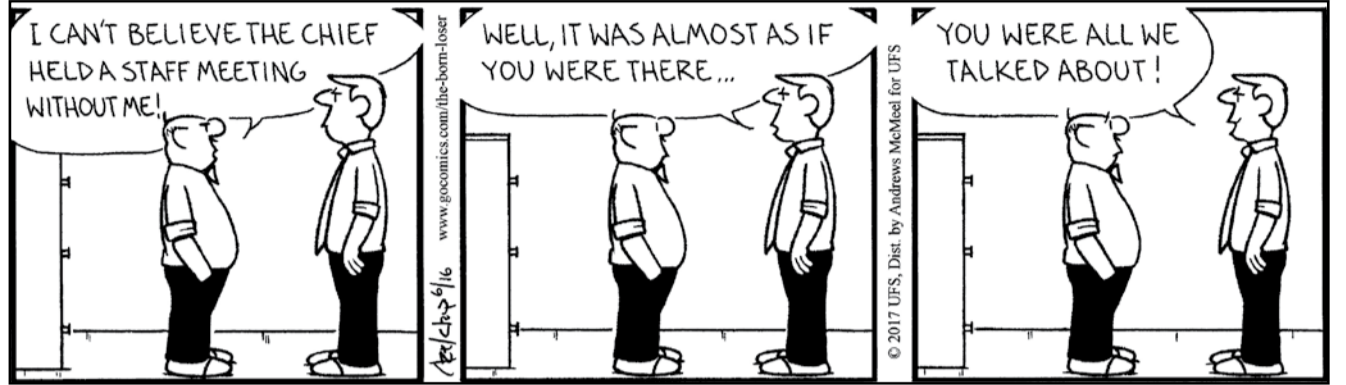
Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 You'll be experiencing the best of what people have to offer, and it will buoy you to share your own goodwill.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 To prevent yourself from flying off in all different directions (and wasting your time), look to a vacancy in your life.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 After many postponements, cancellations and even a few flake-outs, your social life is headed toward a much more predictable path.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 It's all about the finishing touches. Pay careful attention to grooming in the morning, and make sure you're stepping out the door dressed in the perfect look.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Sudoku puzzles categorized by difficulty: Easy, Easy+, Medium, and Hard. Each category contains a 9x9 grid with some numbers pre-filled.

WEATHER

Weather forecast table with columns for MIN, MAX, and CONDITION. It lists weather for various cities in CHINA and the WORLD.

CROSSWORDS

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Includes a 'Yesterday's solution' section with a completed grid and answers.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

List of useful telephone numbers including Emergency calls, Fire department, Police (PJ), Customs, S. J. Hospital, Kiang Wu Hospital, Commission Against Corruption (CCAC), IACM, and Tourism.



Real estate advertisement for JML Property, featuring 'FOR SALE' and 'FOR RENT' listings for various properties in Macau and Taipa, including Choi Long Meng Chui, Old Macau, Manhattan D unit, and Violet Court.



Pushing endurance beyond limits at Ultra Trail Mont Blanc

SINCE its maiden edition was held in rain, cold and hail back in 2003, the Ultra Trail Mont Blanc has gained legendary status in the runners' community. Set up in a breathtaking setting in the heart of the Mont Blanc massif, the 170-kilometer race with a total vertical gain of 10,000 meters — a height greater than Mount Everest — is regarded by many as the world's most difficult ultra-endurance event. Just finishing it is considered a victory by

the legion of amateurs competing alongside the elite runners. "Each person manages the emotions of experiencing one of the most incredible adventures of their lives and, at the same time, the fear of knowing if they will be capable of getting to the end," three-time winner Kilian Jornet wrote in his book "Run or Die." Starting and finishing in Chamonix, the annual high-altitude race takes a pack of about 2,300 runners through three differ-

ent countries (France, Italy and Switzerland) and across rivers and glaciers. Last weekend, the weather was so cold and windy that runners had to deal with temperatures that felt like minus-10 degrees Celsius (14 degrees F). This year's winner in the men's event was Xavier Thevenard, a Frenchman who covered the distance in 20 hours, 44 minutes, 16 seconds. The last finisher crossed the finish line more than 26 hours later. **AP**

Ronaldo, Salah, Modric make FIFA shortlist, Messi doesn't

LIONEL Messi failed to make the world player of the year shortlist this week for the first time since 2006, with Luka Modric and Mohamed Salah making their first appearance in the final three alongside Cristiano Ronaldo. Messi and Ronaldo have been the only winners of world soccer's main individual award from FIFA since 2008.



Modric made the FIFA Best shortlist after helping Real Madrid to a third straight Champions League title in May and then leading Croatia to the World Cup final. Ronaldo left Madrid after the Champions League final win over Liverpool to join Juventus. Salah was injured in the final but was recognized for his Premier League record 32 goals for Liverpool. The women's player

shortlist is headed by five-time winner Marta of Brazil. The Orlando Pride player is up against Lyon teammates Ada Hegerberg of Norway and Dzsenifer Marozsan of Germany. Didier Deschamps, who led France to the World Cup title, was nominated alongside the coach he outwitted in the final: Zlatko Dalic of

Croatia. Zinedine Zidane, who quit Real Madrid after a third straight Champions League title, completes the shortlist. The three coaches in contention for the women's game award are: Asako Takakura, who led Japan to the Asian Games title last week, Reynald Pedros of France and Sarina Wiegman of the Netherlands. **AP**

AD

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France's coach Didier Deschamps speaks during a press conference ahead of the game against Germany tomorrow

Football's new complex competition kicks off tomorrow

Graham Dunbar, Geneva

FOOTBALL'S newest competition kicks off this week in Europe with few knowing all the details of a complex format.

The UEFA Nations League certainly will get off to a good start: Germany hosts World Cup champion France tomorrow, England faces Spain on Saturday, Portugal plays Italy on Monday and Spain takes on Croatia on Tuesday.

In simple terms, the competition involves all 55 European national teams, playing in small groups and separated into four tiers using promotion and relegation, and produces a champion at a mini-tournament next June.

It will also award at least one place at the 2020 European Championship to one of the lowest-ranked teams on the

continent.

Because of the Nations League, traditional qualifying for Euro 2020 will start in March instead of the usual September following a World Cup.

UEFA believes all its member federations are getting something they like. Top-ranked nations want to play each other; the middle teams want winnable competitive games; low-ranked nations want hope of reaching major tournaments.

The North American football region now has its own version, while UEFA also designed a global version for about 220 teams which FIFA already has plans to adopt.

WHAT IS THE NATIONS LEAGUE?

A group stage involving 55 teams playing in four levels — Leagues A, B, C and D — from this week until November; a

Final Four mini-tournament in June 2019 for the group winners of League A; playoffs in March 2020 in all four tiers to fill the last four Euro 2020 qualifying places.

The last detail is the incentive for European football's smaller teams.

At least one League D team — possibly Azerbaijan, Belarus or Luxembourg, for instance — will qualify for Euro 2020.

WHY CREATE IT?

Few people seemed to like international friendlies which “really don't interest anybody,” then-UEFA president Michel Platini said when launching the Nations League in March 2014.

Plus, the biennial format should be good for business.

“These matches are relevant for every single market so you optimize in each market,” UEFA marketing director Guy-Laurent

Epstein has said.

UEFA hopes promotion of group winners and relegation of last-place teams up and down the four Nations League tiers will keep it dynamic.

GROUP STAGE

Groups of three or four teams play home and away on the usual national-team match dates protected by FIFA.

Teams in the top-two tiers — League A and B, each with four groups of three nations — still have dates free for friendlies against teams like Brazil and Argentina.

Lower-ranked teams are all booked up in the four-team groups of Leagues C and D.

FINAL FOUR

The four group winners from League A advance to a Final Four to decide the Nations League champion. The semifinals,

third-place game and final will be played in one nation from June 5-9. The host will be the winner of the Italy-Poland-Portugal group.

EURO 2020 QUALIFYING

The Nations League pushes back Euro 2020 qualifying into 2019, and affects the 10 groups to be drawn on Dec. 2 in Dublin. Top-tier teams going to the Final Four must be in one of the five smaller groups of five teams. That clears their June schedule for the mini-tournament.

The other five Euro 2020 qualifying groups have six teams, using all the FIFA dates to play 10 games from next March through November.

The top two teams in each qualifying group automatically advance to Euro 2020. The remaining four places in the 24-team lineup will be decided in Nations League playoffs.

EURO 2020 PLAYOFFS

In March 2020, each Nations League tier will have a four-team playoff bracket with the winner advancing to Euro 2020.

Playoffs will be for teams that failed to earn a direct Euro 2020 entry through the qualifying groups. Playoff entries will go to Nations League group winners, or teams with the next-best record.

The League A playoffs could be filled by League B teams because most top-tier teams will advance through the traditional qualifying format. The Euro 2020 draw will be in April, just a few weeks before the tournament begins in Rome.

POTENTIAL LOSERS

Top European clubs who liked to keep star players out of national team squads for friendlies are not delighted with extra competitive games on the calendar.

Even if national teams are not desperate to win the Nations League, the threat of relegation should mean strong teams are fielded.

Brazil, Argentina and other non-European nations also have fewer options for lucrative friendlies, especially in 2019. **AP**

Russia tracks growing rate of positive doping cases

James Ellingworth, Moscow

DOPING cases in Russia have almost doubled this year as athletes come under more scrutiny, the country's national anti-doping agency said yesterday.

Yuri Ganus, the director general of the agency, said it had detected 113 potential breaches of doping rules in the first eight months of 2018 — almost double the 59 it found in

all of 2017. The rise comes as Russia tries to reform its anti-doping system after years of scandals across multiple sports. “The number of breaches is alarming,” Ganus said.

It isn't clear how many of the cases have resulted in athletes being banned, a process which can take months or even years. Athletes are typically cleared in about 10 percent of cases, Ganus said.

The rise may be partly

because of extra testing. Ganus said the agency, known as RUSADA, collected 7,013 samples in the first eight months of 2018, about 800 more than all of last year.

If that pace continues until the end of 2018, RUSADA would roughly match the number of samples that major nations like the United States and China collected last year.

Russia was the leader by quantity of tests ahead of

hosting the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi. However, RUSADA and the national laboratory were both suspended in 2015 when the World Anti-Doping Agency found evidence of corruption.

WADA later ruled Russian anti-doping authorities routinely covered up positive samples from leading athletes. The number of tests in Russia plummeted as RUSADA was reformed with new staff.

Ganus said Russia's testing was now much more reliable, in part because of a greater focus on using intelligence to target specific athletes for testing.

There's also an investigative unit which tracked one group of Russian track and field athletes to a remote part of Kyrgyzstan, where they allegedly worked with a coach who is supposed to be serving a life ban for numerous doping cases.

WADA's executive com-

mittee is due to vote Sept. 20 on whether to formally lift RUSADA's suspension, although the agency is already carrying out most of its official duties.

“I don't have any optimism [that the suspension will be lifted],” Ganus said.

He added that the main obstacle was that Russian law enforcement was refusing to release samples from the closed Moscow lab, claiming they are needed for an investigation. **AP**

opinion

World Views
Lionel Laurent, Bloomberg

THE SOUND OF CORRUPT CASH
GUSHING THROUGH EUROPE

Europe's national regulators are discovering the limits of their ability to police cross-border money laundering in a complex and globalized financial system that's full of holes. As incomplete and imperfect as the region's banking union may be, more supranational oversight and co-operation would help.

The severity and complexity of corruption probes hitting supposedly humdrum, diversified consumer-and-business banks should be a wake-up call. Dutch bank ING Groep NV said on Tuesday it would pay 775 million euros (USD895 million) to settle a probe into corrupt practices and unusual payments, including sums sent by VimpelCom Ltd. to a firm owned by an Uzbek government official. ING admitted that clients had been able to launder money through their accounts for years.

Meanwhile, an investigation into allegations that Danske Bank A/S's Estonian operations were used to launder billions of dollars in illicit funds is nearing its end. As much as \$30 billion may have flowed through the Copenhagen-based bank's Estonian branch in a single year, according to the Financial Times. This would have been only one of many warning signs that went unnoticed between 2007 and 2015. Holding management accountable over goings-on in a small foreign branch has proven tricky.

At the local level, it's clear that banks and their managers need to be held to a higher standard – and risk tougher punishments. ING has suspended some senior staff and “held back” some pay, while the bank's executive board will waive their bonuses for 2018. Still, going by last year's figures, the latter will only cover about 1 percent of the 100 million euros of gains ING has had to pay back on top of a legal settlement. Over in Denmark, regulators have so far only delivered wrist slaps – new, tougher laws being considered wouldn't be retroactive.

But local crackdowns are nothing without better information-sharing between countries and a tougher approach to spotting weak cross-border links. VimpelCom's history of illicit payments in Uzbekistan led to a near-record \$795 million settlement in 2016. In U.S. court documents, the telecommunications company and others in the industry were accused of making of corrupt payments through banks in the U.K., Hong Kong, New York and Latvia – all via shell companies registered in Gibraltar. The Danske scandal involves money flowing from Russia into the European Union, and false data filed to Companies House in the U.K.

The sound of corrupt cash being sucked through Europe should be heard far and wide, and the holes in the system need to be plugged. The pan-European banking union is incomplete, with Denmark still debating whether to join, and the relatively young ECB regulator often lacks the power to encroach on individual member states' authority in enforcement matters. More supranational oversight, or improvements to the current regime, would help. The U.S. shouldn't be the only policeman in town.

THE TALIBAN SAY FOUNDER OF HAQQANI NETWORK DIES IN AFGHANISTAN

The founder of Afghanistan's much-feared Haqqani network, a former U.S. ally turned fierce enemy, has died after years of ill health, a Taliban spokesman said yesterday. Jalaluddin Haqqani (pictured) was 71.

Haqqani died Monday inside Afghanistan, Zabihullah Mujahed told The Associated Press in a telephone interview. The elderly founder of the outlawed Afgha-

nistan-based organization, once hailed as a freedom fighter by U.S. President Ronald Reagan, had been paralyzed for the past 10 years.

In announcing his death, Mujahed called Haqqani a religious scholar and exemplary warrior.

Because of his infirmity, Haqqani's network has been led by his son Sirajuddin Haqqani, who is also deputy head of the Taliban.



Botswana, long an elephant refuge, faces poaching threat



Christopher Torchia, Johannesburg

Botswana, long viewed as a rare refuge for African elephants, is coming under increasing threat from poachers.

Poachers are killing elephants in the southern African country in increasing numbers after wiping out large numbers of elephants in nearby Zambia and Angola, a conservation group said.

The Elephants Without Borders group and wildlife officials in Botswana have conducted half of a national elephant census and so far have counted nearly 90 “fresh and recent” carcasses of poached elephants, group director Mike Chase said in an email.

A similar census in 2014 found just nine carcasses, according to Chase. Botswana has an estimated 130,000 elephants, the most of any country in Africa.

The reported increase in elephant poaching in Botswana could reflect a trend in which poachers move into new territories as conditions become more difficult in regions where they usually operate.

Those conditions could include a dearth of elephants to kill after widespread poaching, or crack-

downs on trafficking syndicates in some cases.

Tanzania's Selous region, for example, was heavily hit by elephant poachers but recent data indicates that the killing has slowed. Even so, killings intensified around the same time in Mozambique's Niassa reserve to the south, which is linked to the Selous by a wildlife corridor.

The fight against elephant poaching has made some gains, including a ban on the ivory trade in China, the world's biggest consumer. But experts say the rate of annual elephant losses still exceeds the birth rate, and the encroachment of human settlements is reducing the animals' range.

Botswana, with a population of just over 2 million people, suffers some human-wildlife conflict but has more space than many

■ Elephants Without Borders so far have counted nearly 90 ‘fresh and recent’ carcasses of poached elephants

other countries for animals to roam. Kenya, for example, has a population 25 times larger and is almost as big as Botswana in geographical size.

Botswana's security forces have also had a reputation – and faced criticism from neighboring countries – for allegedly being quick to open fire on suspected poachers, including Namibians and Zimbabweans who were killed after illegally crossing the border.

President Mokgweetsi Masisi, who took office in Botswana this year, has taken steps to reduce the use of military weapons in operations against poachers, according to local media reports.

While the move may have alleviated tension with Botswana's neighbors, conservationists believe it could be providing an opening to emboldened ivory traffickers.

Poachers have targeted old bull elephants that presumably have the heaviest tusks, killing them when they go to drink at seasonal water sources, Chase said.

“A clear order has been put out for tusks of a specific weight, and I suspect such large ivory is in heavy demand, considering that there are few large tuskers left in Africa,” he said. AP

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

SOURCE: DSMG

WORLD BRIEFS

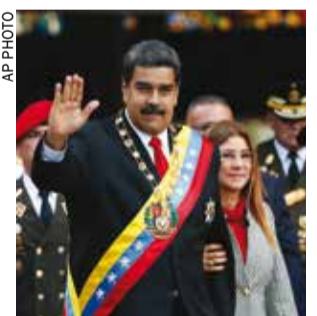
EGYPT An Egyptian man was arrested outside the U.S. Embassy in Cairo yesterday after chemicals in his backpack caught fire, in what authorities said was a botched attack.



GERMANY Authorities said they're stepping up surveillance of the far-right Alternative for Germany amid growing concern the third-largest party in parliament is closing ranks with extremist groups.

BRITAIN Bank of England Governor Mark Carney all but confirmed yesterday that he is to stay at the helm of the central bank for longer than planned to help ensure Britain leaves the European Union as smoothly as possible.

SPAIN said yesterday it has canceled the delivery of 400 laser-guided bombs purchased by Saudi Arabia, amid fears that the weapons could be used against Iran-aligned Houthi rebels in Yemen.



VENEZUELA President Nicolas Maduro said he is investing part of his personal savings in a gold-backed certificate as part of a much-questioned plan to crush hyperinflation and reactivate Venezuela's moribund economy.

MEXICO In his final state of the union address, outgoing President Enrique Pena Nieto blamed surging violent crime in Mexico on the inability of state and local police to handle the smaller gangs that emerged following the capture of cartel leaders.