



GOLDEN LOTUS FOR CHAN MENG KAM
The highest MSAR award is to be bestowed on gaming tycoon and former legislator Chan Meng Kam

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STDM TO OPERATE MACAU FERRY TERMINAL
STDM was granted the concession contract to operate the Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal for five and a half years

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MAN U: THE KING IS DEAD, LONG LIVE SOLSKJAER

P23 FOOTBALL



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FOUNDER & PUBLISHER Kowie Geldenhuys EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Paulo Coutinho

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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN' "

WORLD BRIEFS

PHILIPPINES Communist guerrillas abducted two soldiers and at least a dozen militiamen and seized several rifles in an attack yesterday on an army base in the southern Philippines, officials said, in the latest flare-up of an insurgency that has raged for nearly half a century.



US-N. KOREA The Trump administration's special envoy for North Korea said yesterday that Washington is reviewing easing its travel restrictions to North Korea to facilitate humanitarian shipments as part of efforts to resolve an impasse in nuclear diplomacy.

NEPAL's government has stopped eight Italian contractors from leaving the Himalayan country in an effort to complete a critical but much delayed water supply project for the capital.

PAKISTAN Officials say the government has approved fresh measures to avoid being blacklisted by an international group that monitors money laundering and terror financing.



YEMEN A cease-fire has halted months of heavy fighting in Yemen's port city of Hodeida, raising hopes that the latest U.N.-led peace efforts can end the civil war and alleviate the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

TURKEY Coastal emergency teams have rescued 16 crew members from a cargo ship that ran aground off the Black Sea coast of Sile in a dramatic operation that lasted several hours.

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IN FACE OF UNKNOWN RISKS

Lawmaker wants e-cigarette import ban

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EXCO

e-Gov platform to centralize over 700 functions

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weekend Guide
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Fitch awards Macau AA rating

The Macau SAR's credit ratings (long-term foreign and local currency issuer default ratings) has been awarded "AA" with a "stable" outlook, by Fitch Ratings. According to Fitch, ratings in the AA category indicate a very strong fiscal position for payment of financial commitments and the capacity is not significantly vulnerable to foreseeable events. Therefore, the expectations of default risk are very low. The rating agency said that the high ratings are underpinned by the city's robust external position, including a high ratio of net foreign assets to gross domestic product.

Theme park land concession expired

The government has declared the expiration of the concession of a land plot located in Taipa, next to the Estrada Almirante Marques Esparteiro, in front of the Regency Hotel. The land was declared expired because the concessionaire did not comply with the obligation to make use of the land within the period stipulated in the concession. It was intended to be used for the construction of a theme park known as "Oceanis Park".

DSSOPT to set up car park anti-flood standards

The Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT) has planned to establish flooding prevention standards for underground spaces in buildings. The first draft has already been completed, and will be put out for public opinions in the near future. The standards request the concerned party to conduct flooding risk assessment, and to set up permanent and flexible flooding prevention facilities. The standards will also require a regulated height for electricity supply facilities, as well as automatic power-cut facilities when buildings are faced with flooding.

298 road works to be carried out next year

A total of 298 road works are planned to be carried out across town in 2019, the Transport Bureau (DSAT) announced earlier this week. The figure represents a 3 percent decrease compared to that of this year. Some 57 projects will involve main roads and streets, an increase of 42 cases from 2018. The DSAT expects the road works to place a certain level of pressure on Macau's transportation since there will be more large-scale civil projects when compared to this year.

Lawmaker wants to ban import of electronic cigarettes

AP PHOTO



LAWMAKER Ho Ian Sang has suggested that the city ban the import of electronic cigarettes. In addition to calling for the ban, Ho suggested that "the SAR government study an increase in tobacco regulation, to extend the area reserved for warning messages on tobacco products' packaging, [...] and] to reduce the smoking addiction of users, in order to reach a [milestone] in tobacco control."

Ho added that "Macau should do research on quickly banning the import of electronic cigarettes, enhancing supervision and on cracking down on online sales of electronic cigarettes."

According to the city's tobacco user survey, there are 67,300 tobacco users in Macau aged 15 and above.

"In many developed regions, tobacco taxes are higher than those of the WHO [World Health Organization]. In European countries, such as Denmark and Portugal, tobacco tax accounts for up to 80 percent of the retail price. As a high-income region, there are conditions in Macau to raise tobacco taxes. In addition,

after the increase of the tobacco tax in Macau back in 2015, the volume of cigarette imports in 2016 fell by about 43 percent. However, the volume of imported cigarettes between January and September 2017 exceeded 300 million. Compared to the same period of 2016, the increase of about 10 percent shows that the effect of the last tax increase was limited, and that there is still room for increasing the tobacco tax," said Ho.

The latest survey on youth tobacco experience showed that 2.1 percent of students at middle school are currently smoking and 16.2 percent indicated that they had used an electronic cigarette.

Lawmaker Ho's comments reflect a growing trend around the world of concern for electronic cigarettes amid a lack of study into their potentially harmful effects and allure with the youth.

Just this week, U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams said parents, teachers, health professionals and government officials must take "aggressive steps" to keep children from using e-cigarettes.

For young people, "nicotine is dangerous and it can have negative health effects," Adams said in an interview. "It can impact learning, attention and memory, and it can prime the youth brain for addiction."

The latest surveys show that 16.2 percent of middle school students have used an electronic cigarette

Federal officials are scrambling to reverse a recent explosion in teen vaping that public health officials fear could undermine decades of declines in tobacco use. An estimated 3.6 million U.S. teens are now using e-cigarettes, representing 1 in 5 high school students and 1 in 20 middle schoolers, according to the latest federal figures.

Separate survey results released Monday showed twice as many high school studen-

ts used e-cigarettes this year compared to last year.

E-cigarettes and other vaping devices have been sold in the U.S. since 2007, growing into a USD6.6 billion business. Most devices heat a flavored nicotine solution into an inhalable vapor. They have been pitched to adult smokers as a less-harmful alternative to cigarettes, though there's been little research on the long-term health effects or on whether they help people quit. Even more worrisome, a growing body of research suggests that teens who vape are more likely to try regular cigarettes.

Adams singled out Silicon Valley startup Juul. The company leapfrogged over its larger competitors with online promotions portraying their small device as the latest high-tech gadget for hip, attractive young people. Analysts now estimate the company controls more than 75 percent of the U.S. e-cigarette market.

Adams recommends parents, teachers and health professionals learn about e-cigarettes, talk to children about the risks and set an example by not using tobacco products. **MDT/AP**

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Centralized e-platform for all public services to be launched next year

Julie Zhu

THE Executive Council has concluded the discussion on the draft of the administrative regulation for public e-services. The draft proposes the establishment of a centralized website or system through which users can access online services from all governmental departments.

The website will include more than 700 functions related to public services, such as making appointments, requesting information, submitting applications for civil servants' exams, and registering for voting.

The main change under the new system is that residents will have a singular user account. This specific account can be used across the entirety of the centralized website, allowing users to access all e-services provided therein. That means residents will no longer need to use different accounts for different governmental department websites as is currently the case.

The Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau (SAFP) will announce the website's launch later this year, according to SAFP Director Kou Peng Kuan. In its initial stages, the platform will make over 70 of the most frequently used public services available.

"Within two years [after launching], all services will be inte-

RENATO MARQUES



Spokesperson of the Executive Council, Leong Heng Teng

grated into the website, including making appointments and submitting applications," said Kou, explaining that, at the beginning, the most needed services, as well as domestic helper recruitment application, will be provided.

"In two to three years, the platform will include services that will cover areas involving a person's entire relationship with public services," said Kou.

From January 1, local residents can apply for an account with the centralized system at self-service kiosks.

Kou explained that in the first phase, the platform will offer services related to six governmental departments: the Identification Service Bureau; the Financial Services Bureau; the Legal Affairs Bureau; the Social Security Fund; the Transport Bureau; and, the Civic and Mu-

nicipal Affairs Bureau.

During this phase, the platform will be open for the submission of applications to recruit domestic helpers, and restaurant licensing.

There will be a transition period for both governmental departments and residents so they can familiarize themselves with the platform.

Spokesperson of the Executive Council, Leong Heng Teng, said that the system aims to make the public administration more convenient for residents.

The local government claims that this e-service is an achievement for the SAR government in "smart administration" with the help of the Alibaba Group.

In addition, in 2019, the government will review its five-year plan concerning the 2015-2019 Macau SAR E-administration Plan, and will launch the new plan for 2020-2024.

ONE-STOP RESTAURANTS LICENSE BILL AMENDED

THE EXECUTIVE Council completed the discussion on the draft bill of the amendment of the One-stop Licensing Service for Food and Beverage Establishments. The draft concerns only category 4 (coffee shops, ice-cream parlours, tea rooms) and category 5 (congee and noodle shops) food

and beverage establishments. The bill proposes to shorten the license period, and, in particular, to require an immediate issuing of inspection dates for the locations once the license-issuing department receives the applicant's notification for the completion of the refurbishment.

Chang Meng Kam to receive Macau's highest award

THE Macau government has announced this year's medals and honorary titles, at the suggestion of the Nomination Committee, to individuals and entities that have distinguished themselves in their personal achievements, contributions to society or services rendered to the MSAR.

The highest award, the Golden Lotus, is to be bestowed on gaming tycoon and former legislator Chan Meng Kam. The Silver Lotus will be awarded to lawmaker Davis Fong, former lawmaker Kwan Tsui Hang, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Tai Fung Bank Ho Hao Tong, and Wushu athlete Huang Junhua, who won gold at the 2018 Jakarta Asian Games.

The Golden and Silver Lotus accolades aim to reward the exceptional services for the image and good name or development of the MSAR.

Medals and Merit will be awarded to those who are distinguished in professional activities, commercial and tourist develop-

ment, educational activity, sport and artistic and cultural development. Among those to be recognized with the Medal of Altruistic Merit is Macau's bishop Stephen Lee as well as the Federation of Macao Workers Associations and the Macao General Women's Association.

Medals of Valor, Dedication and Community Services aim to reward public entities, agencies or workers, who have distinguished themselves most in the performance of their duties by providing relevant services. These awards will be given to the Civil Protection Operations Center, along with the emergency services of the Hospital Center Conde de São Januário.

Moreover, recipients of the Honorary Titles of Prestige and Value, which aim to distinguish individuals who prominently contribute to the development and prestige or social progress of the MSAR, will include the former Portuguese Consul General for Macau and Hong Kong Vítor Sereno and Pui Ching Secondary



Chan Meng Kam, winner of the Golden Lotus award

School team that participated in the International Science and Engineering Fair 2018.

The ceremony for the bestowing of this year's honorable medals and titles will take place during the first ten days of January 2019.

Gov't to celebrate handover with series of events

To celebrate the 19th anniversary of the establishment of the SAR, the government is holding a series of events today in which the public is invited to participate.

A highlight of the celebrations includes a flag raising ceremony at Golden Lotus Square at 8 a.m., which will be shown live by local state broadcaster.

The flag raising ceremony will be followed by gymnastic performances organized by the Sports Bureau.

A reception will also be hosted by the SAR government at Macau Tower Convention and Entertainment Centre at 9.30 a.m.

Several departments have prepared events to commemorate the anniversary including a commemorative postmarking service by the Macao Post and Telecommunications Bureau at a temporary counter at Macao Post's Senado Square

headquarters. The franking service is available from 9 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. tomorrow.

In addition, the Macao Government Tourism Office will stage a fireworks display on the waterfront near Macau Tower at 9 p.m.

The Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau is holding the "City of Romantic Love – Winter Flower Show", a special event coinciding with the SAR's anniversary.

This exhibition, which will run until January 26 at Avenida da Praia near the Taipa Houses, showcases a selection of different rose species.

On Sunday, the Cultural Affairs Bureau also held a handover celebration at Sai Van Lake Square, along with the Macao International Parade at Sai Van Lake Square, featuring 57 participating local groups and 18 groups from abroad.

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE 19TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MACAO SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION



Gov't grants STDM license to operate ferry terminal

GAMING group Sociedade de Turismo e Diversões de Macau (STDM) was granted the concession contract to operate the Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal for five and a half years.

The period of contract, signed between the local firm and the SAR, can be renewed if an agreement is reached between the two parties one year before the contract ends, as the Official Gazette outlined.

STDM won the public tender by initiating the highest monthly remuneration, amounting to MOP1.8 million.

The contract also indicated that STDM would pay 30 percent of utility expenses for the terminal, including water and electricity fees.

Aside from these fees, the group will also pay a MOP20 million deposit to the Marine and Water Bureau (DSA-



MA) before the contract is signed – a guarantee that the contract requirements will be fulfilled. The amount for the compensation can be revised according to changes that may occur in the commercial spaces.

The concession period will only commence sometime between January 1 and July 1.

STDM had owned the

exploration rights for the terminal from 1993, however it expired without renewal in 2011. Since then, DSAMA Port Authority took control of the terminal's operations.

Earlier this year, the local bureau noted that concession contracts for the cleaning, facility maintenance and management and operation of

the commercial area of the Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal is provided by different companies.

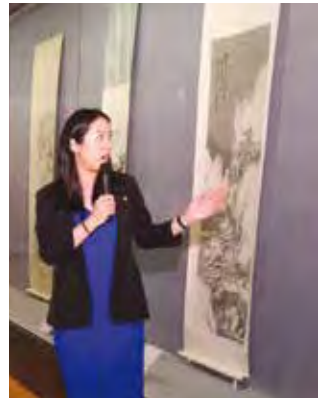
Aside from STDM, local firms including Companhia de CCCC Terceiro Macau, Limitada and Grupo CSI, Limitada also participated in the tender, offering a monthly fee of MOP500,000 and MOP350,000 respectively.

MAM presents paintings from Palace Museum

THE Macao Museum of Art (MAM) is presenting "The Shanghai School of Painting – Collections of the Palace Museum", featuring a total of 90 paintings by 20 representative artists of the Shanghai School.

The exhibition is the 20th large-scale exhibition organized by the museum in cooperation with the Palace Museum, and features paintings of the Palace Museum's collection created by the artists, including Wu Changshuo, Zhao Zhiqian and Xu Gu.

The exhibition systematically presents the artistic characteristics and epochal features of Shanghai School paintings, which include defining features of the school, the incorporation of traditional techniques, and the introduction of new artistic approaches through three chapters: "Commodity Painting", "Literati Style" and "New Style of New Time," organizers stated in a press release.



The exhibition will feature some paintings being shown for the first time and will last until March 10.

Meanwhile, MAM will hold a series of outreach activities including guided tours, which will commence on Saturday, and a thematic seminar held by an expert from the Palace Museum on March 10.

In addition, mini concerts by the Macao Orchestra and Macao Conservatory students will be held in the exhibition hall on February 24 and March 10, respectively.

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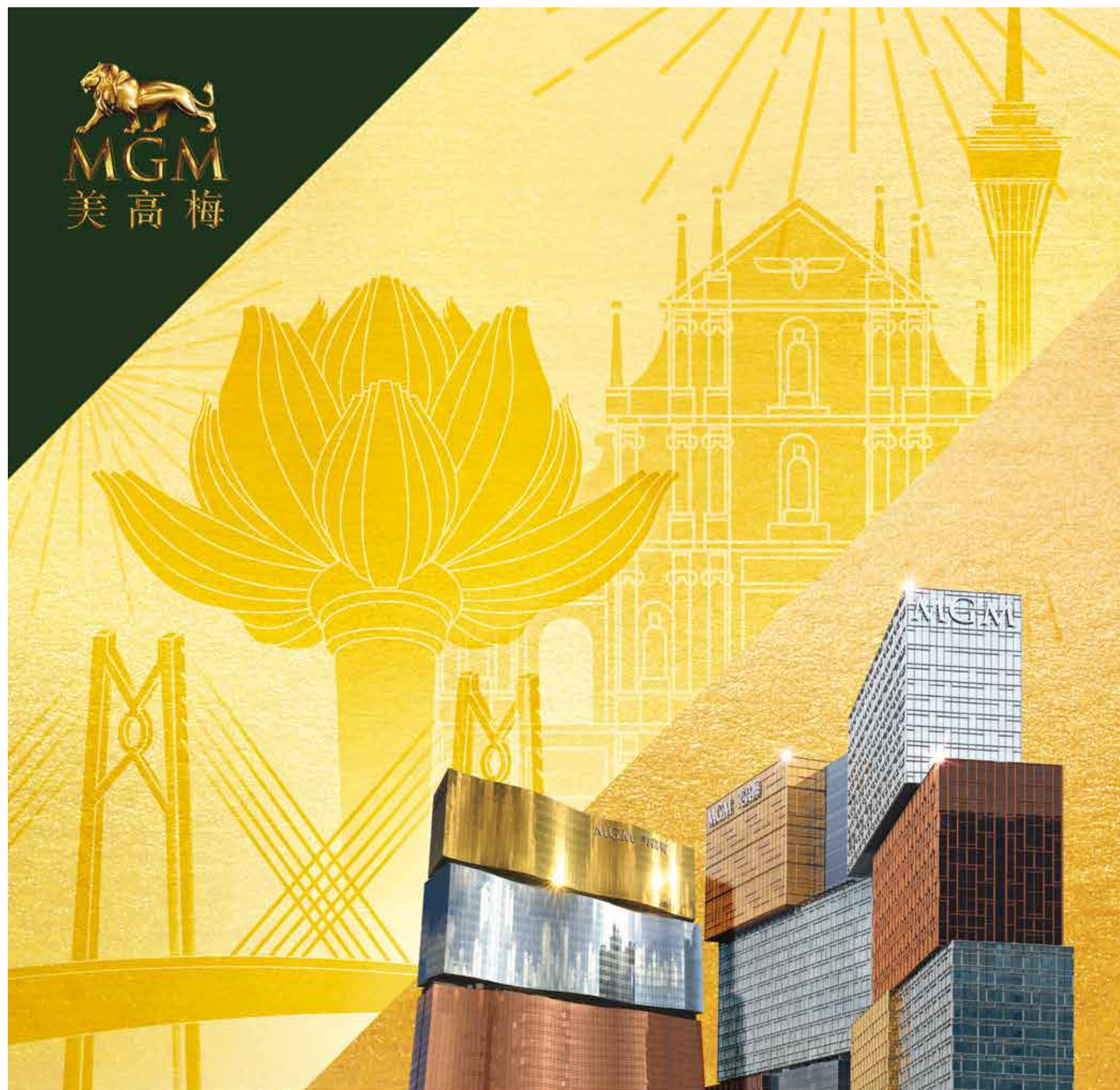
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GAMING

Revenues dip at Massachusetts and Connecticut casinos

WHILE gaming revenues appear to be stabilizing in the Macau SAR, with analysts this week even revising their forecasts upward, the northeast U.S. is not faring so well.

Gambling revenues have dipped at Massachusetts' casinos for another month, with the state Gaming Commission reporting that MGM Springfield generated USD21 million (MOP170 million) in gambling revenues in November, the third full month the state's first Las Vegas-style resort casino has been open.

Those gambling revenue figures are down from October's \$22 million and September's \$27 million.

Plainridge Park in Plainville, meanwhile, generated \$12.8 million in November, down from October's \$13.5 million and September's \$14.3



million, the commission reported.

MGM Springfield President Michael Mathis said in a statement the company is pleased with the western Massachusetts casino's "overall performance."

He said November represented "another solid month" for the proper-

ty, which is located near Connecticut and also generates revenues from restaurants, bars, a hotel and other attractions.

MGM provides 25 percent of its gross gambling revenues to the state while Plainridge Park contributes 49 percent.

Meanwhile, Connecticut's two casinos both re-

ported their fifth consecutive month of year-over-year gambling declines. Rhode Island's two casinos haven't yet reported their November revenue numbers.

Macau gross gaming revenue held approximately in the range of MOP22 billion to MOP27 billion per month throughout 2018, with the latest December forecasts sitting in the upper bound of the range and projecting about 13 percent annual growth.

The reasonable posting is in spite of a consistent decline in the stock value of Macau six operators led by the ongoing effects of the China-U.S. trade war, with Galaxy Entertainment dipping 10 percent since July and the worst performer, Melco International Development, freefalling 34 percent. **MDT/AP**

Student reports loss of MOP3.8m in phone scam

AN 18-year-old female student from the mainland has reported a loss of MOP3.8 million to a phone scam, the Judiciary Police (PJ) reported yesterday.

On the phone, criminals pretended to be workers from the police and prosecution authorities from mainland China.

On December 15, the victim received a phone call telling her she had mailed a package to Beijing, and that the Beijing police department had seized several illegal identification cards from the package. The caller then said that the victim was suspected of money laundering.

The phone call was subsequently transferred to different

criminals who posed as officers from different mainland judicial authorities. The scammers told her she would need to pay a fine.

The suspect asked her father for money, lying by saying that the money was for a proof to the school.

She mailed the money to the mainland bank account provided by the criminals.

The victim reported the case to Shenzhen's police authority and the PJ.

In addition to this victim, one local resident fell for a so-called "guess who I am" scam, while another two residents fell victim to concert ticket scams. In total, these three local residents reported a loss of MOP40,000.

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Oil near 15-month low on signs of surplus



OIL traded near its lowest closing level in 15 months in New York as fears over slowing global economic growth compounded concerns that markets face a supply glut in 2019.

Futures were little changed in New York after tumbling

12 percent over the past three sessions, its biggest three-day slump since 2016. Fears over growth persisted as Chinese President Xi Jinping showed little sign of backing down in a trade dispute with the U.S. and the market braced for a Federal Reserve rate hike. Meanwhile,

there are doubts over the effectiveness of output cuts pledged by the OPEC+ coalition at a time when American inventories are rising and Russia is pumping more.

"Commodities are not immune to concerns about the global economic outlook, and this

is driving negative sentiment across all asset classes," said Stephen Innes, the head of trading for Asia Pacific at Oanda Corp. in Singapore. "The toxic combination of oversupply worries and global growth distress should see oil prices languish into the year-end."

Crude has collapsed almost 40 percent from a four-year high in early October, and is set for the worst quarterly decline since December 2014. After taking a battering over the past few sessions, U.S. oil is in oversold territory for the first time since Nov. 30. Skepticism that the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies won't be able to prevent a glut in the face of surging American shale production and stockpiles has kept a lid on prices.

The industry-funded American Petroleum Institute was said to report that U.S. crude inventories rose 3.45 million barrels last week, adding to fears of an oversupply after a government report on Monday said shale output is set to expand. At the same time, Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said the country's oil production is rising, though it's preparing to implement reductions to conform with an accord between OPEC and its allies.

While the U.S. and China - the world's two biggest economies

- are planning to hold meetings in January to negotiate a broader truce in their trade spat, a speech by Xi on Tuesday fueled concerns over slowing growth as he pushed back against critics abroad, such as American President Donald Trump, and did not outline new policies that would stimulate the economy. **MDT/Bloomberg**

IN THE NEWS

- Saudi Arabia's government expects to earn more from oil next year, an optimism that defies most price forecasts for crude and contrasts with the kingdom's history of making conservative financial assumptions.
- Gunvor Group Ltd., one of the world's largest energy traders, was ordered to pay the Chinese government USD54 million for import tariffs it allegedly evaded by smuggling oil into the country.
- India will deposit payments for crude oil imported from Iran into escrow accounts of five of their banks held with state-run UCO Bank Ltd., a payment mechanism the two nations agreed to overcome U.S. sanctions, according to people with knowledge of the matter.

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Celebrations of the Establishment of Macau SAR 19th Anniversary

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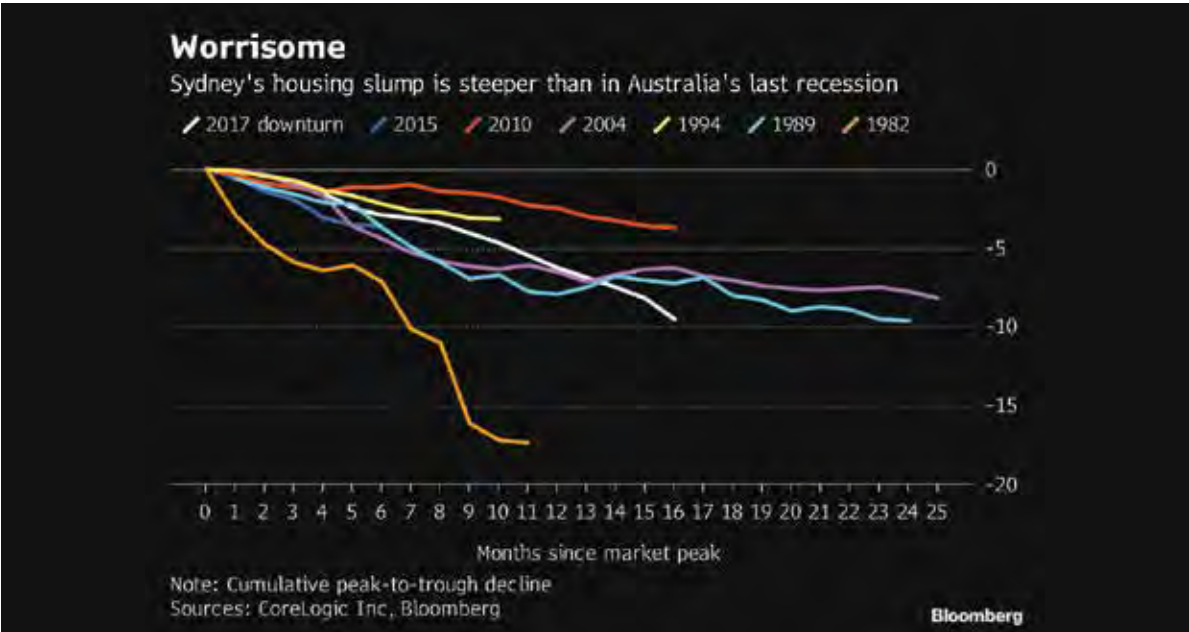
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Sydney's property plunge is becoming central bank's No. 1 worry

SYDNEY'S plunging house prices are usurping a prolonged wage slump as the key worry for the central bank, with markets now showing more chance of an interest-rate cut than a hike in 2019. Prices in Australia's biggest city have tumbled 10 percent and some economists are tipping a similar fall next year. While the central bank isn't panicking just yet, a 15 percent nationwide drop in prices would cut about AUD1 trillion (USD720 billion) from the housing stock value. That could deal a major blow to consumption, which props up about 60 percent of the economy. The wages picture isn't much brighter than property's, though the RBA and government say labor shortfalls are emerging in some industries. Pay packets rose 2.3 percent last quarter, a three-year high and inching closer to Governor Philip Lowe's goal of annual increases with a "3" in front of them. But a reasonable amount of slack remains in the labor market. In minutes of its last board

meeting released Tuesday, the Reserve Bank warned of a tri-fecta of risks that could disrupt household spending: low growth in household income, high debt levels and declining house prices. "Since 2016, the RBA's focus on financial stability has held them back from further rate cuts as they wait for wages and inflation to recover," said Daniel Blake, a strategist at Morgan Stanley in Sydney, who expects nationwide house prices to drop 10 to 15 percent. "In 2019, we see their focus turning to monitoring the negative wealth effects from a housing market adjustment." The housing slump could take some time to unwind. Historically, corrections have been triggered by very tight policy; the cash rate went above 17 percent in the pre-recession downturn, whereas now it's 1.5 percent. With no scope for deep rate cuts to draw buyers back to the market, and prices still at astronomical levels, it could take some time for affordability to return. Yet at the same time, the economy is still growing just above



its speed limit and the jobless rate is at 5 percent, the lowest in more than six years. Lowe said he suspects unemployment could fall to 4.5 percent without seeing rapid wage growth. With inflation low, the economy is in a relatively healthy position. "This is to some extent uncharted territory to see this sort of

dynamic play out in an environment where - as of now at least - the macro economy is traveling at a reasonable place," RBA No. 2 Guy Debelle said earlier this month. "Nearly all other house price falls have occurred in environments where there's been recessions and the like." The RBA would ideally like to

see household incomes start to enjoy a strong, sustainable increase to help the property market find a bottom quicker, and for that to flow through to faster inflation. Such a smooth transition would set the scene for the first rate increase since 2010, but it's also pretty unlikely. **MDT/Bloomberg**

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AP PHOTO



Two layers of barbed wire fencing ring the "Hotan City apparel employment training base" where Hetian Taida has a factory in Hotan in Xinjiang region

US reviews report of imports from forced labor in Xingiang camp

Martha Mendoza & Yanan Wang, Beijing

THE U.S. government said yesterday [Macau time] that it is reviewing reports of forced labor at a Chinese internment camp where ethnic minorities are sewing clothes that have been shipped to the U.S. market.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection said in a statement that reporting by The Associated Press and other media "for the first time appears to link the internment camps identified in Western China to the importation of goods produced by forced labor by a U.S. company."

The AP tracked shipments from a factory in a camp in China's far western Xinjiang region to Badger Sportswear in North Carolina. The company ships clothing to universities, colleges and schools around the United States.

Experts and a human rights organization say that possibly as many as 1 million Uighurs, Kazakhs and others from predominantly Muslim groups are arbitrarily detained in such camps, whose functions range from political indoctrination to forced labor.

Following the recent news media reports, Badger said that it had suspended business with Chinese supplier Hetian Taida Apparel and was investigating. A statement on its website says "one percent or less" of Badger products was sourced from Hetian Taida.

The Washington-based Workers Rights Consortium (WRC), which has agreements with many educational institutions to make sure the products they sell on campus are ethically manufactured, said that "forced labor of any kind is a severe violation of university

codes of conduct."

The group's executive director, Scott Nova, said in a message to affiliate universities that, building off the AP's report, WRC had gathered additional evidence indicating the factory that supplied Badger with collegiate apparel was "one and the same" as the factory inside the highly-guarded internment compound seen by AP reporters.

The factory was featured on a Chinese state television segment in October that characterized the camp as a vocational training center that helps minorities steer clear of religious extremism and gain employable skills.

The state-run China Daily published an article on Tuesday which profiled ethnic minorities in Xinjiang who have been recruited to work in garment factories. The story featured a 23-year-old woman named Burebgul Ali who was described as being "reluctant to work at the factory."

"But after skills training and learning Mandarin," the story said, "Burebgul found her job quite comfortable and could make at least 3,000 yuan [USD435] per month."

The AP spoke to a dozen former detainees and individuals who had friends or family in similar centers in Xinjiang who said they were given no choice but to work at factories on site. The Uighurs and Kazakhs, who were interviewed in exile in Kazakhstan, said that even professionals were trained to do factory work.

It's against U.S. law to import products of forced labor. Customs and Border Protection said it is part of its mission to enforce "both laws to protect individuals from forced labor and our Nation's economy from businesses profiting from this form of modern slavery." **AP**

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BLOOMBERG



HEZE

City eases home curbs, signaling possible policy shift

AN eastern Chinese city announced rule changes making it easier for people to sell homes, a move local media has called the first easing of such housing curbs nationwide in more than two years.

Heze, a city of about 9 million, in 2017 began requiring individuals to own their homes for at least two years before putting them on the market. That restriction has now been withdrawn, according to a statement from the local housing and rural-urban development bureau. Local financial daily China Securities Journal cited a real-estate analyst who described Heze as the first city to loosen housing sales curbs.

Some investors have begun to bet that China's leaders could turn to property easing measures to soften the blow from a burgeoning trade war on an already slowing economy. An index of property firms listed in Shanghai rose as much as 1.3 percent yesterday, the most in a week. Developers

traded in Hong Kong also advanced, with China Resources Land Ltd. climbing as much as 3.4 percent and China Overseas Land & Investment Ltd. up as much as 1.9 percent.

"The sales restriction had affected the market," said Fan Guifang, a saleswoman at Hua Yang Fang Chan, a property agent with dozens of stores in Heze. "We only have two or three deals a day. Scrapping this rule means we can probably increase transaction volumes because more people will be allowed to buy and sell."

Heze's property regulator yesterday said the home-curb easing was designed to prevent price fluctuations. China Securities Journal said in a commentary piece that it's too early to interpret the policy tweak as a sign of an all-round property loosening.

New-home prices rose an average 0.98 percent in November from October when they increased 1.02 percent in the 70 cities tracked by the government, according to Bloomberg calculations

based on data released by the National Bureau of Statistics Saturday. Many developers registered slower sales growth last month despite offering steeper buyer discounts.

Some first- and second-tier cities are expected to loosen property controls next year.

STEVE WONG
ANALYST

There's an expectation among market watchers that the government will relax property curbs due to the current lackluster economic conditions, according to Steve Wong, an analyst at Essence International Financial Holdings Ltd.

"Some first- and second-

tier cities are expected to loosen property controls next year, which will benefit developers with a high exposure to these cities," he said. "Currently, any positive news on property sector is a boost for investor sentiment."

Authorities in Heze put the curbs in place after property prices surged, in part due to a government program that pumped 3.2 trillion yuan (USD463 billion) into the economy to replace slums with shiny new tower blocks.

There was a similar easing of policy in Lanzhou, the provincial capital of Gansu, in January. The city in China's northwest scrapped home-buying limits in three districts on the outskirts to make purchases by non-local residents easier.

"The policy change in Heze could be the first of many local loosening in the property market this year," said Yan Yuejin, a Shanghai-based property analyst at China Real Estate Information Corp. "More cities will likely follow suit." **Bloomberg**

Third Canadian citizen detained, National Post says

CANADA'S foreign service confirmed that a third national was being held in China, the National Post newspaper reported, citing a statement from Global Affairs Canada.

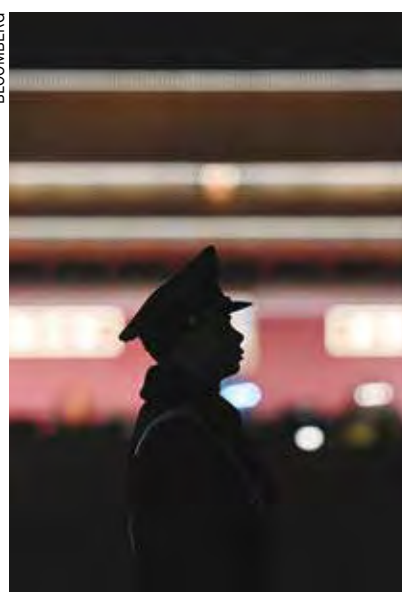
An agency spokesperson provided no further details, and drew no link between the case and those of two other Canadians detained last week in China, the National Post said. The Canadian Embassy in Beijing referred questions of the third case to public relations staff in Ottawa, who didn't immediately respond to a request for comment yesterday.

The report will likely fuel anxiety among Canadians traveling in China after the country's spy agency detained a former diplomat and a man who helped organize tourist trips to North Korea. The cases follow Canada's Dec. 1 arrest of Huawei Technologies Co. Chief Financial Officer Meng Wanzhou as part of a U.S.-led extradition bid, although Beijing has deflected questions about any link between the detentions and the Chinese executive's case.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a regular briefing in Beijing yesterday that she wasn't aware of the report of a third detained Canadian. A faxed request for comment sent to the Ministry of Public Security wasn't immediately answered.

The moves have prompted people on both sides to reconsider travel to each other's countries. The national Canadian body that markets the country as a tourist destination is halting new advertisements in China, CBC News reported. **Bloomberg**

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SINGAPORE

Regulators ban former Goldman Sachs exec with 1MDB links

Annabelle Liang, Singapore

SINGAPORE regulators placed a lifetime ban yesterday on a former Goldman Sachs banker who faces criminal charges in the United States and Malaysia for ransacking the 1MDB state investment fund.

The Monetary Authority of Singapore, or MAS, said it decided to lengthen its 10-year ban against Tim Leissner after he pleaded guilty to charges levied by the Justice Department in November. Leissner admitted to money laundering conspiracy and conspiring to violate foreign bribery laws in connection with 1Malaysia Development Berhad.

"The U.S. DOJ's charges and Mr. Leissner's guilty plea have provided further evidence of Mr. Leissner's involvement in fund flows related to 1MDB, which were previously not available to MAS," the authority said.

"The latest actions against Mr. Leissner arose from the close cooperation and continuing investigations by law enforcement and

COURTESY THE STAR



Former Goldman Sachs' banker Tim Leissner

regulatory authorities in the U.S., Singapore and other countries," it added.

The ban covers banking and business functions and the managing of capital markets services firms. It also prevents Leissner from being a director, substantial shareholder,

capital markets services licensee or exempt person for Singapore businesses dealing with securities, futures and funds management.

Leissner, who led Goldman Sachs' Singapore branch, managed three 1MDB bond issuances from 2012 to 2013. MAS said he issued

an unauthorized reference letter to a financial institution in Luxembourg, and falsely claimed the bank had conducted due diligence on fugitive Malaysian financier Low Taek Jho, also known as Jho Low.

Low, the named mastermind of

a scheme that pilfered billions of dollars from the state-owned fund, remains at large. He allegedly used the money for bribes and kickbacks to foreign officials, to pay for luxury real estate, art and jewelry and to help finance Hollywood movies including "The Wolf of Wall Street."

U.S. and Malaysian authorities have charged Low in absentia, Leissner and another former Goldman Sachs executive, Roger Ng Chong Hwa.

Singapore, which commenced 1MDB investigations in 2015, has shuttered two Swiss banks and fined others, including DBS Bank, UBS and Standard Chartered Bank for 1MDB-related lapses.

It has jailed, fined and imposed bans on several executives. In October, a Singapore court ordered the return of 15.3 million Singapore dollars (USD11.1 million) linked to the indebted fund.

"I think that the fines so far from Singapore have been relatively minimal, focused on a few facilitators rather than instigators, and have yet to go to the real serious issues of money laundering and kleptocracy," said Bridget Welsh, an associate political science professor at the John Cabot University in Rome.

"We will only get a better sense of the facets of 1MDB when the trials start. Exposure of the problem opens Singapore to greater scrutiny," she said. **AP**

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UK

London to unveil post-Brexit immigration plan amid business fear

THE British government is publishing long-awaited plans for a post-Brexit immigration system that will end free movement of European Union citizens to the U.K.

Home Secretary Sajid Javid said the proposals to be published yesterday set out a "skills-based immigration system built around the talent and expertise people can bring, rather than where they come from."

At present, all EU nationals can live and work in Britain under the bloc's free-movement rules, but that will end after the U.K. leaves in March.

The government is proposing no limit on the number of well-paid, skilled immigrants who can settle in Britain, but curbs on "low-skilled" workers.



Sajid Javid, UK Home Secretary

Many businesses are warning that a clamp-down on less well-paid immigrants will choke off the supply of workers to sectors including hospitality and health care. **AP**

EU investigating report of massive hacking on diplomatic cables

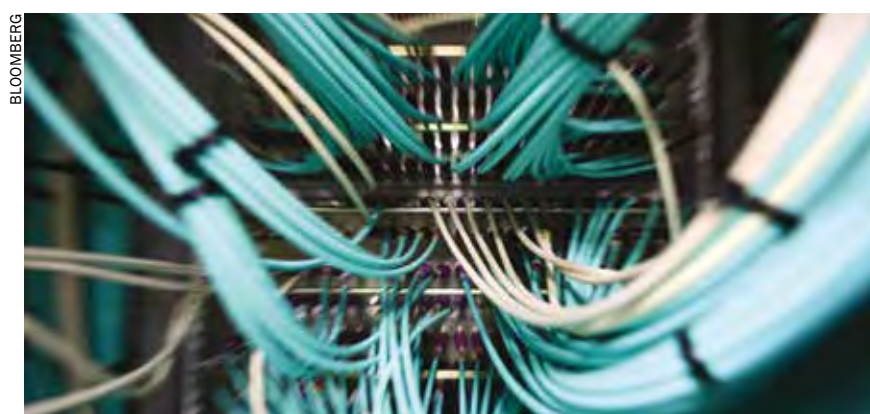
THE European Union is investigating "a potential leak of sensitive information" following a report that hackers breached the bloc's diplomatic communications network.

Using techniques similar to those used by an elite unit of China's People's Liberation Army, hackers downloaded cables over a period of three years, according to the report by the New York Times published yesterday [Macau time].

In response, a spokeswoman for the European Council said yesterday they were "aware of the allegations" and "actively investigating the issue."

The alleged attack was discovered by U.S.-based cybersecurity firm Area 1 Security, and included thousands of cables that reveal concerns about Donald Trump's administration, struggles dealing with Russia and China and Iran's nuclear risks.

In one cable, European diplomats described a July meeting between U.S. President Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin as "suc-



cessful [at least for Putin]," the New York Times reported. In another, a detailed report quoted China's President Xi Jinping in a meeting with European officials the same month as accusing Trump of "bullying" Beijing.

The news comes as relations between Washington and Brussels remain tense over trade, but are aligning over concerns over possible espionage by China, enabled by telecoms equipment companies like Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd.

The hackers discovered by Area 1

allegedly breached the EU's system through a phishing campaign directed at diplomats in Cyprus, after which they obtained access to passwords for the EU's database of exchanges, the NYT said. A spokeswoman for Cyprus in Brussels didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

"The Council Secretariat does not comment on allegations nor on matters relating to operational security," a European Council spokeswoman said in her statement. **Bloomberg**

AD

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Electric cars queue in the bus lane (left) on the main road into Oslo

Mark Lewis, Oslo

NORWAY

Boom in electric cars fueled by government incentives

A silent revolution has transformed driving in Norway.

Eerily quiet vehicles are ubiquitous on the fjord-side roads and mountain passes of this wealthy European nation of 5.3 million. Some 30 percent of all new cars sport plug-in cables rather than gasoline tanks, compared with 2 percent across Europe overall and 1-2 percent in the U.S.

As countries around the world — including China, the world's biggest auto market — try to encourage more people to buy electric cars to fight climate change, Norway's success has one key driver: the government. It offered big subsidies and perks that it is now due to phase out, but only so long as electric cars remain attractive to buy compared with traditional ones.

"It should always be cheaper to have a zero emissions car than a regular car," says Climate and Environment Minister Ola Elvestuen, who helped push through a commitment to have only sell zero-emissions cars sold in Norway by 2025. The plan supports Norway's CO2 reduction targets under the 2015 Paris climate accord, which nations last agreed rigorous rules for to ensure emissions goals are met.

To help sales, the Norwegian government waived hefty vehicle import duties and registration and sales taxes for buyers of electric cars. Owners don't have to pay road tolls, and get free use of ferries and bus lanes in congested city centers.

These perks are being phased out in 2021, though any road tolls and fees would be limited to half of what gasoline car owners must pay. Gradually, subsidies for electric cars will be replaced by higher taxes on traditional cars.

Registration tax on new cars is paid on a sliding scale with a premium for the amount of emissions produced. Elvestuen pledges that the incentives for electric vehicles will be adjusted in such a way that it does not scupper the 2025 target.

"What is important is that our aim is not just to give incentives," he says. "It is that we are taxing emissions from regular cars."

Using taxes to encourage consumers to shift to cleaner energy can be tricky for a government — protests erupted in France this autumn over a fuel tax that hurt the livelihood of poorer families, especially in rural areas where driving is often the only means of transportation.

In this sense, Norway is an outlier. The country is very wealthy after exporting for decades the kind of fossil fuels the world is trying to wean itself off of. Incomes are higher than the rest of Europe, as are prices.

Some 36 percent of all new cars sold are SUVs, which provide

de safety in the country's tough winters. Tesla's SUV, the Model X — the motor of choice for well-to-do environmentally-minded Norwegians — costs around 900,000 Norwegian kroner (USD106,000).

"Buying a Tesla model X is not much more expensive than buying a standard premium Volvo because gasoline cars are taxed heavily. That is also the reason Teslas sell well," says Christina Bu, General Secretary of the Norwegian Electric Vehicle Association.

The premium gas-powered Volvo XC90 SUV, for example, starts at 919,000 kroner (\$107,100) in Norway compared with \$47,700 in the U.S.

It should always be cheaper to have a zero emissions car than a regular car.

OLA ELVESTUEN
ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

To date, with its longer battery life, Tesla has dominated the upmarket family car space for electric vehicles, but more premium marques are entering the market, like the Audi Quattro e-tron. Demand is still outstripping supply, with Norwegians having to wait up to a year to get their hands on the steering wheels of their new electric vehicles.

Norway has pledged to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases by 40 percent by 2030, compared with 1990 levels. The country has work to do: by 2017, emissions were up 3 percent compared to the 1990 baseline. Cutting emissions from road transport will allow Norway to reduce the amount it has to spend buying up emissions certificates from other European countries to meet its target. The savings are likely to run into billions, potentially balancing out the cost of subsidizing electric cars.

Norway is looking to China for help in developing the market.

China has invested heavily in electric vehicles as it looks to meet its own Paris climate accord commitments, to clean up its choking cities and to get in early in a growing area of manufacturing. In October, 6 percent of new cars were electric, according to the China Association of Automob-

ile Manufacturers, up almost 50 percent from a year earlier. The market has huge growth potential, experts say, and like Norway, the market boom has relied on government incentives.

The hope in Norway is that the sheer size of China's market will encourage the industry to develop the technology more quickly — improving battery life, for example — and force down prices.

Experts say the electric vehicle market needs to develop more for sales to keep growing.

Battery life on smaller vehicles is slim and the resale market is untested. Fast battery charging points are slow compared with gasoline pumps, and on Norway's often empty mountain roads, these points are uneconomical despite government subsidies for the private companies that set them up.

Even in city centers, construction of such points has not kept pace with sales. At one station in Oslo, a Tesla driver cracks open his laptop while his car charges. Another, Ida Vihovde, drums her fingers as she waits for a charging station to free up.

"If the government put up more of these it would be OK," she says beside her electric VW Golf. "Right now there are no more chargers so I have to sit and wait." **AP**

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FRIDAY

13:00	TDM News (Repetição)
13:30	Telejornal RTPi (Diferido)
20:30	Telejornal
21:15	Portugueses Pelo Mundo Sr.2
22:00	Contentor 13
22:30	Filha da Lei - Fim
23:15	TDM News
23:50	O Amor É Lindo... Porque Sim!
01:25	Telejornal (Repetição)
02:10	RTPi Directo

SATURDAY

12:00	Endereço Desconhecido
12:30	Gostos e Sabores
13:00	TDM News (Repetição)
13:30	Telejornal RTPi (Diferido)
14:30	Os Nossos Dias Sr.2 - Compacto
18:10	Fotobox
18:25	Lusa Music Box
19:00	Animais Anónimos
19:40	1986
20:30	Telejornal
21:15	Terra Prometida
23:05	Tec Net
23:15	TDM News
23:50	Cá Por Casa Sr.2 - Estreia
00:55	Telejornal (Repetição)
01:40	RTPi Directo

SUNDAY

11:40	Endereço Desconhecido
12:00	Gostos e Sabores
12:30	TDM News (Repetição)
13:00	Telejornal RTPi (Diferido)
18:10	Fotobox
18:25	Lusa Music Box
19:00	Animais Anónimos
19:40	1986
20:30	Telejornal
21:15	Terra Prometida
23:05	Tec Net
23:15	TDM News
23:50	Cá Por Casa Sr.2 - Estreia
00:55	Telejornal (Repetição)
01:40	RTPi Directo

Offbeat

GOOD BOY! SERVICE DOG GETS HONORARY DIPLOMA



Whenever Brittany Hawley went to class, her loyal service dog Griffin was there. If she needed her cell phone, Griffin would fetch it. Even when she assisted patients as part of an internship, Griffin was there helping out as well.

So it's only fitting that when Hawley was honored for receiving her master's degree in occupational therapy from Clarkson University over the weekend, Griffin was once again at her side — with an honorary diploma of his own.

"I pushed for him to graduate from Day One," Hawley said this week. "He did everything I did."

The board of trustees of the Potsdam, New York, school honored the 4-year-old golden retriever at a recognition ceremony Saturday, saying he demonstrated "extraordinary effort, steadfast commitment and diligent dedication to the well-being and student success" of Hawley.

Hawley, 25, of Wilson, North Carolina, uses a wheelchair and has chronic pain. She said Griffin does a wide range of physical tasks for her including opening doors, turning on lights and bringing her items she indicates with a laser pointer. But perhaps more important is the comfort the dog provides amid her relentless, severe pain that causes anxiety and depression.

Hawley got Griffin through "paws4prisons," a program that teaches inmates at West Virginia prisons to train and place high-level assistance dogs.

"The inmates allow many dogs to come up to you and let the dog choose you," Hawley said. "Some dogs were scared of the wheelchair. Griffin jumped right into my lap and licked me across the face."

cinema

CINETEATRO

20 - 23 Dec



RALPH BREAKS THE INTERNET: WRECK-IT RALPH 2
ROOM 1
2:30, 4:30, 7:30 9:30pm
Director: Rich Moore, Phil Johnson
Starring: John C. Reilly, Sarah Silverman, Gal Gadot
Language: English (Chinese)
Duration: 122min



SPIDER-MAN: INTO THE SPIDER-VERSE
ROOM 2
2:30, 4:30, 9:30pm
Director: Bob Persichetti, Peter Ramsey
Starring: Shameik Moore, Jake Johnson, Hailee Steinfeld
Language: Cantonese
Duration: 117min



BUMBLEBEE
ROOM 2
7:30 pm
Director: Travis Knight
Starring: Hailee Steinfeld, Dylan O'Brien, Megyn Price
Language: English (Chinese)
Duration: 113min



POKEMON THE MOVIE: THE POWER OF US
ROOM 3
2:15, 4:00, 7:45pm
Director: Tetsuo Yajima
Starring: Emily Bauer, Sam Black, Kathryn Cahill
Language: Japanese (Chinese)
Duration: 97min



MORE THAN BLUE
ROOM 1
5:45, 9:30 pm
Director: Gavin Lin
Starring: Jasper Liu, Ivy Chen
Language: Putonghua (Chinese & English)
Duration: 105min

this day in history



1973 SPANISH PRIME MINISTER ASSASSINATED

The Spanish Prime Minister, Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco, has been killed in a car bomb attack in Madrid.

The 70-year-old, his bodyguard and a driver died instantly and four other people were injured after a remote-controlled bomb was detonated as he passed.

A massive explosion sent the car hurtling into the air and over the roof of the San Francisco de Borja Church where Mr Blanco had just been attending mass.

The vehicle landed on the second floor terrace of a building on the other side of the church and a great deal of damage was caused in the area.

No one has admitted carrying out the attack.

The Spanish Government has declared three days of national mourning and the cabinet has held two emergency meetings.

All public buildings are closed but it is not known if a state of emergency will be declared.

Police did not confirm the prime minister had been assassinated until six hours after the attack. They said the killers had dug a tunnel under the street the admiral used regularly on his return from mass.

Police said the killers triggered the bomb from an opposite basement in a well-planned assassination bid.

The prime minister's death came 15 minutes before the start of a trial involving 10 of Spain's leading opponents of the Franco regime, one of them a Roman Catholic priest.

They were arrested in a Madrid Church 18 months ago and were accused of unlawful assembly.

Thousands of angry demonstrators have campaigned against the case and have already clashed with police.

Commentators said the admiral's death must be seen in the context of this controversial trial and against the backdrop of his staunch support of General Franco's regime.

Not since the Civil War, which ended in 1939, has a government minister died in such violent circumstances.

The former naval officer, who was considered authoritarian and hated Communism, was devoted to the Roman Catholic Church.

He has been succeeded by the vice-prime minister Fernandez Miranda, 57.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Basque nationalists were blamed for the murder in retaliation for the execution of Basque militants in Spain.

Luis Carrero Blanco had only been prime minister for about six months when he was assassinated.

In June that year Franco had separated the duties of chief of state and head of government and Mr Blanco became prime minister.

He had been influential in improving links with monarchist groups, and his appointment as head of state was considered to be part of a process to restore the monarchy under Juan Carlos.

Mr Blanco was opposed by many for propping up Franco's hard line regime, stifling opposition and for opposing mainstream European political life despite the country's progress in tourism and trade.

YOUR STARS



Aries

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

It's time to handle a family matter that's been making you crazy. If the issue is money, you'll need to put your foot down right away and be nothing but firm with all parties concerned.



Taurus

April 20-May 20

You've put your own personal goals on hold for far too long. It's now officially time to go after them with the same determination you usually only display when someone you love needs help or advice.



Gemini

May 21-Jun. 21

There's no time like the present to give yourself a little pat on the back. You're not usually prone to that sort of thing, but your friends will be downright insistent that you do some celebrating.



Cancer

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Everything you think and feel is rapidly tumbling out of your mouth, virtually unfiltered. That's kind of scary for a creature as sensitive as you, but it will turn out to be a positive thing.



Leo

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

At work, don't underestimate yourself -- or your coworkers. The powers-that-be are seemingly omnipotent, but they weren't born with your talent for organizing the masses.



Virgo

Aug. 23-Sept. 22

You're well known for more than your common sense and sound judgment. A loved one you were thinking of confiding in may beat you to the punch. Take turns telling your stories.



Libra

Sep.23-Oct. 22

Even though you may have taken some time off lately, your superiors have never been happier with your performance. Unlike everyone else, you never fail to make sure everything is taken care of.



Scorpio

Oct. 23 - Nov. 21

You're done with the casual chitchat about the weather. You're back to your quest for just the facts, and you have a mission in mind. You want to know what the person you're with is really all about.



Sagittarius

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

You're notoriously generous -- and notoriously uncomfortable on the other side of the fence. You always end up doing battle with that nagging inner voice that tells you to buck up and handle it yourself.



Capricorn

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Still in the mood for love? If you are, don't be put off by a roadblock or delay that might initially seem to be ruining your evening. There's nothing wrong with changing plans.



Aquarius

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

You've decided to give yourself a couple of days off. You may not be able to separate yourself from your responsibilities just yet, but that doesn't mean you can't make plans to get away over the next couple of days.



Pisces

Feb.19-Mar. 20

The stars have arranged a day that's just perfect for exchanging vows -- or promises, at the very least. The good news is that everyone will be a lot more prone to think before they speak.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy



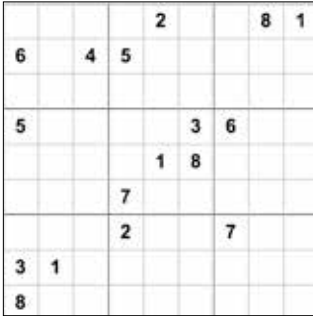
Easy+



Medium



Hard



WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-5	6	cloudy/smoggy
Harbin	-13	-3	clear
Tianjin	-2	7	clear/overcast
Urumqi	-10	-4	cloudy
Xi'an	-1	9	cloudy
Lhasa	-12	4	clear
Chengdu	6	10	cloudy/overcast
Chongqing	7	12	overcast/cloudy
Kunming	7	18	shower/clear
Nanjing	7	15	moderate rain/cloudy
Shanghai	11	14	drizzle
Wuhan	5	15	drizzle/clear
Hangzhou	8	12	drizzle
Taipei	16	23	clear
Guangzhou	17	24	drizzle/cloudy
Hong Kong	20	24	cloudy

WORLD

Moscow	-10	-6	flurry
Frankfurt	1	8	drizzle
Paris	8	10	drizzle
London	6	10	drizzle
New York	3	7	clear/cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1-Actress Ward; 5- Gumbo ingredient; 9- Gross; 14- Parroted; 15- "La Vie en Rose" singer; 16- Eagle's home; 17- Prefix for small; 18- Fast-food option; 19- Rock; 20- Sympathy; 23- Fine; 24- Corrida cheer; 25- Small purple plum; 29- Shrek, for one; 31- "Slippery" tree; 34- More frigid; 35- Haggis ingredient; 36- Intestinal sections; 37- In spite of; 40- Iowa city; 41- Pro ____; 42- Red fluorescent dye; 43- Laughing syllable; 44- Mouth bones; 45- Treasure State capital; 46- Arab instrument; 47- Little bit; 48- Star groups; 56- Minimum; 57- Compass direction; 58- Head of France?; 60- Loosen; 61- Entr ____; 62- Pressure; 63- Greeted the villain; 64- Dirty look; 65- Verge;

DOWN: 1- Newsman Donaldson; 2- Heroic; 3- Jester Jay; 4- Take ____ view of; 5- Choice; 6- Refreshment stand; 7- Fury; 8- Get an ____ effort; 9- Fortified feudal residence; 10- Fasten again; 11- Suffix with buck; 12- ____ Fein; 13- Gets the picture; 21- Native New Zealander; 22- Large artery; 25- Singer Shore; 26- Pueblo Indian village; 27- Bishop's headdress; 28- Uses a Singer; 29- Boots; 30- "____ grip!"; 31- Beethoven dedicatee; 32- Bolshevik leader; 33- ____ Carta; 35- "Saint Joan" playwright; 36- Worshiped one; 38- Commerce; 39- ____ say more?; 44- Protruded; 45- Madman at the tea party; 46- Actor Davis; 47- Sample; 48- Heavy stick; 49- Vintner's prefix; 50- Western pact; 51- Sharon of "Boston Public"; 52- Ornamental fabric; 53- Will-____-wisp; 54- Can't do without; 55- Deer sir; 59- Riviera season;

Yesterday's solution



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PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone – Report 1000
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Steve Douglas

MANCHESTER United turned to a popular former player by hiring Ole Gunnar Solskjaer as manager until the end of the season yesterday, 20 seasons after he scored the winning goal in the Champions League final.

Nicknamed the "Baby-Faced Assassin" during his time as a United player from 1996-2007, Solskjaer was known for his lethal finishing and ability to conjure up late goals typically as a substitute — none bigger than that close-range winner three minutes into injury time against Bayern Munich at Camp Nou in 1999.

Now he is on another rescue mission at United: To resuscitate the team after its worst start to a league season in 28 years, which led to the firing of Jose Mourinho on Tuesday after 2½ years in charge.

"Manchester United is in my heart," Solskjaer said, "and it's brilliant to be coming back in this role. I'm really looking forward to working with the very talented squad we have, the staff and everyone at the club."

Solskjaer had been coaching Norwegian team Molde, who said it had agreed to "lend" him to United to "help to put Molde further on the football map." He recently signed a three-year deal with the team.

"In football, you never know what can happen," Solskjaer said. "We get proof of (it) time after time. This is an opportunity I had to take."

The arrival of Solskjaer did not come as a surprise.

Earlier yesterday, Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg appeared to confirm Solskjaer was moving to United by writing on Twitter it was a "great day for Norwegian football" and wishing him "good luck keeping control of the Red Devils." It was later deleted.

Minutes after Solberg's tweet, a page was published on United's official website containing a video of Solskjaer celebrating after scoring the winner in the 1999

AP PHOTO



Ole Gunnar Solskjaer in 2014 when he was briefly Cardiff's manager

FOOTBALL

Man United hires former striker Solskjaer as interim manager

Champions League final. Under that, a post read: "Solskjaer becomes our interim manager, 20 seasons after clinching the Treble with THAT goal at Camp Nou..." That page also was later deleted.

The 45-year-old Solskjaer is a sentimental choice as an interim manager — United has said it will look to hire a permanent replacement for Mourinho at the end of the season — and one that should prove popular with fans who have grown weary of watching the team under the pragmatic Mourinho.

Solskjaer likes to play an attacking

brand of soccer modeled on the sides of Alex Ferguson, who was his manager at United in that trophy-laden decade when the Norwegian won six league titles, two FA Cups and the Champions League. He has said on a number of occasions that coaching United was his dream job.

Solskjaer is a gamble, however. His only previous experience of Premier League management was with Cardiff in the second half of the 2013-14 season, and he could not prevent the Welsh team from getting relegated. He was fired a few months later,

ending his spell with a record of only five wins from 30 games.

In a coincidence, Solskjaer's first game in charge of United will be at Cardiff on Saturday.

Solskjaer's playing career ended in 2007 after he failed to recover from a serious knee injury. He scored 126 goals in 366 appearances for United. He remained at the club in a coaching and ambassadorial role, and went on to become its reserve-team manager from 2008-10.

He coached Molde — his former club — from 2011, winning back-to-back titles in his first two

seasons and then the Norwegian Cup in his third. He returned there after his nine-month stint at Cardiff.

"Ole is a club legend with huge experience, both on the pitch and in coaching roles," United executive vice chairman Ed Woodward said. "His history at Manchester United means he lives and breathes the culture here and everyone at the club is delighted to have him and Mike Phelan back."

"We are confident they will unite the players and the fans as we head into the second half of the season." **AP**

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opinion

Made in Macao

Jenny Lao-Phillips



ANOTHER KIND OF WINTER SOLSTICE CELEBRATION

Aside from making this day a public holiday, the importance of Winter Solstice (Dongzhi) has often been downplayed in recent days. We all know that Winter Solstice is the day in which the night is longest; it is a day when families plan ahead for the big Dongzhi Dinner. Most of us are also familiar with the Chinese saying that "Winter Solstice is as big as Chinese New Year". But Dongzhi is more than just a family gathering and eating dumplings, the traditional food for the celebration. During the Han Dynasty, the Winter Solstice was much like a holy day. Here are some interesting legends or facts about the festival.

Firstly, we know that family dinner is an important part of celebrating Dongzhi. What our generation did not realise is that there is strong implication of filial piety surrounding the Dongzhi dinner. The ancient Chinese believed that though Dongzhi is in the midst of winter, it indicates the coming of Spring, a time of returning home. So, it is, therefore, an important time for the whole family, wherever they are, to go home and be together. This day also used to include ancestor worship, and members of the family who did not go home on Winter Solstice would be viewed as refusing to acknowledge their ancestors, which is a great sin in our culture – even grounds for being disinherited. So, do not think it is a public holiday to party with friends.

So, what about the dumplings? The festive food for Dongzhi is dumplings, but there are many kinds of dumplings in the Chinese culture, and various legends about eating dumplings on Winter Solstice. One interesting one is the story of Wonton, meat dumplings in soup which is the most popular in Macao. Legend has it that during the Han Dynasty, barbarians from the North constantly harassed villages at the frontier region, creating great resentment amongst the people. The two leaders of the barbarians were named Won and Ton. To express their anger, the frontier villagers wrapped dumplings with meat, and named them wonton. Eating wonton was a way to show their hatred towards the barbarians, and their hope for peace to come. As legend has it that wonton was created on Winter Solstice, it became a tradition to cook and eat wonton on the day.

What about the almost-religious practice of Dongzhi? In ancient China, it was common knowledge that Winter Solstice is the day where the Chi (the yin yang energy) is changed from Yin (dark) to Yang (bring), which was believed to be a blessing from heaven.

In order to celebrate this special blessing, the emperor made the day a public holiday. It is even recorded in the book 'The History of the Later Han', that Winter Solstice is for "gentlemen" (the term was broadly used in ancient China to refer to people of virtue) to rest their body and mind. So, no one was to work on the day; there could be no meetings no matter how urgently matters had to be resolved. Armies were to stand down, borders were to be closed, even business and tourism were to be ceased on the day. Relatives and friends were to share food with each other, and families were to go home and spend the day together.

Anyway, today is supposed to be the day of rest for our minds and souls as our chi changes from yin to yang. So, we should now put down our newspaper, turn off our computers, go home, do nothing and eat wanton for peace with our family. Happy Winter Solstice!

THE CYPRUS, GREECE, JORDAN LOOK TO ENHANCE TRADE, SECURITY TIES

Jordan's foreign affairs minister says his country is seeking closer ties with Greece and Cyprus as part of a strategy to bolster regional peace and security and promote economic cooperation.

Ayman Safadi says Jordan's King Abdullah is keen on expanding this partnership in "every possible direction."

Safadi was speaking yesterday after talks with his Cypriot counterpart and Greece's deputy fo-

reign minister to prepare for a meeting of the three countries' leaders early next year.

This partnership follows similar three-way collaborations that Cyprus and Greece have recently built with Israel and Egypt.

Cyprus' Foreign Minister Nicos Christodoulides said Cyprus and Greece will continue to advocate for tighter relations between the European Union and Jordan which he called a "vital EU partner."

Taliban say talks focused on US withdrawal from Afghanistan



U.S. peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad (left) talks with Pakistani Army Chief Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa

THE latest talks between the Taliban and a U.S. peace envoy on the war in Afghanistan focused on the withdrawal of NATO troops, the release of prisoners and halting attacks on civilians by pro-government forces, a Taliban spokesman said Wednesday.

U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad, who tweeted that talks held this week in the United Arab Emirates were "productive," was in Pakistan on Wednesday to meet with the chief of the country's army before heading to the Afghan capital Kabul later in the day. The UAE talks also involved Saudi, Pakistani and Emirati representatives.

The Taliban have refused to meet directly with the Afghan government, viewing it as a puppet of the U.S.

The insurgent group controls nearly half of Afghanistan, and are more powerful than at any time since a 2001 U.S.-led invasion. They carry out near-daily attacks, mainly targeting security forces and government officials.

In a significant development, three representatives of the Haqqani network — Hafiz Yahya, Saadullah Hamas and Dr. Faqeer, who goes only by a single name — were also present at the talks, according to a Taliban official, who asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the talks. This would be the first time a U.S. envoy has met with representatives of the Haqqani network, declared a terrorist group by Washington and considered one of the most lethal fighting forces in Af-

ghanistan.

Although part of the Taliban, the Haqqani network has its own military committee. Its leader, Sirajuddin Haqqani, is deputy head of the Taliban. Their prowess on the battlefield makes their presence at the meeting particularly significant because it's unlikely any agreement could be enforced without their support.

At the meeting, Khalilzad pressed for the release of two professors from the American University of Afghanistan who were kidnapped from Kabul in August 2016, the Taliban official said. A 2017 video message from King revealed he was in poor health.

It is widely believed the two Westerners are being held by the Haqqani group, which has close ties to Pakistan's premier intelligence agency known as the ISI.

Haqqanis have been demanding the release of Anas Haqqani, a brother of Sirajuddin captured by Afghan intelligence agents in 2014. Apparently, Taliban leader Haibaitullah Akhundzada ordered the three to attend the UAE meetings, the official said.

"We called for an end to the invasion and they insisted on the exchange of prisoners, including teachers of the university," said the Taliban official, adding there was no discussion about a cease-fire and "we do not hold any discussions on Afghanistan's internal issues with the Americans and we do not want any advice from anyone."

Two former inmates at the U.S. prison in Guantanamo Bay, ex-Taliban army chief Mohammed Fazle and former governor of western Herat province, Khairullah Khairkhwa, were also at the meetings.

The Afghan government sent a delegation that included the National Security Adviser Hamdullah Mohib to the UAE but it did not take part in the talks, instead holding separate talks with Khalilzad, who said he would meet with Afghan leaders later in the Afghan capital.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said no direct talks with the Afghan government had yet been held. The Taliban view the Afghan government as an American puppet and have long demanded direct talks with the U.S.

Khalilzad said he would like to see a "roadmap" agreement reached before Afghan presidential elections, scheduled for next April.

Since being appointed in September, Khalilzad has met on several occasions with all sides to try to start direct peace negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan government aimed at ending America's longest war, now in its 17th year. Washington has spent nearly \$1 trillion since 2001 when it led an invasion of Afghanistan to oust the Taliban after they harbored Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaida insurgent group, which carried out the 9/11 attacks against the U.S. MDT/AP

Station	Air quality
Roadside	65-95 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	50-70 Moderate
Ambient	65-95 Moderate

SOURCE: DSMG

WORLD BRIEFS

ROMANIA's top defense body has agreed to upgrade the country's armed forces and equipment in the next decade.

GERMANY Chancellor Angela Merkel's spokesman says the German leader has no plans to reshuffle her Cabinet after a one-time rival who narrowly lost the race for her party's leadership hinted he'd be interested in joining the government.



BELGIUM Prime Minister Charles Michel has submitted his resignation amid pressure on his government after the biggest coalition party quit over Michel's support for a United Nations compact on international migration.

EU Hackers have spent years eavesdropping on the diplomatic communications of European Union officials, a U.S. cybersecurity firm said yesterday, an operation disrupted only after researchers discovered hundreds of intercepted documents lying around on the internet. More on p17



BRAZIL Fire swept over a low-income neighborhood in the northern Brazilian city of Manaus, destroying at least 600 wooden houses, authorities said.

GUATEMALA Authorities said that they have withdrawn diplomatic immunity from 11 workers with a U.N.-sponsored anti-graft commission who have investigated cases of alleged corruption.

HOLIDAY TIMES

Macau Daily Times will not be published during the holiday. The Times will be back on the stands on Monday December 24. However the MDT website will be updated with breaking news during the recess period. We wish our readers, advertisers and friends the best of times.