



**FEELING THE CHRISTMAS VIBE**  
A Christmas market at Tap Seac Square, featuring a series of activities for children, has been drawing crowds  
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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'"

**WORLD BRIEFS**

**CHINA** State media say eight people were killed after a hijacker with a knife drove a bus into pedestrians in Longyan in Fujian province.  
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**THAILAND** The search for a missing 2-year-old boy in which even elephants were employed ended grimly with the discovery of the toddler's body in a sugarcane plantation.

**MYANMAR** A court has heard an appeal filed by lawyers for two Reuters journalists sentenced to seven years in prison on charges of illegal possession of official documents. A ruling will be issued next month.



**KOREA** North and South Korea broke ground yesterday on an ambitious project to modernize North Korean railways and roads and connect them with the South, but without progress in nuclear negotiations, regular trains won't be crossing the border anytime soon.  
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**DUBAI** The United Arab Emirates has released photos of a daughter of Dubai's ruler after friends and supporters say she was forcibly returned to Dubai after fleeing months earlier.  
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**NEW TAX POLICY**

**Local exports to China to become tariff-free** P7

AP PHOTO



**Santa gets pushed out as country's leaders emphasize tradition** P10 CHINA

# Christmas Market continues to attract crowds

**R**ESIDENTS flocked to Tap Seac Square the day after Christmas to witness the Christmas Market 2018, which features a series of activities for children.

The theme of this year's Christmas Market is "Christmas Candy House," which features decorations such as spinning teacups and an artificial snow area for the first time.

The two-week event features 13 Christmas gift stalls and 11 snack stalls, and is also offering products from the local cultural and creative industries.

The snack stalls are operated by associations active in the food and beverage sector, providing various types of special market snacks for the public.



**You can really feel the Christmas vibe here.**

LANIE FERNANDES

One of them is a stall that serves traditional snacks from Cape Verde. From its main dishes to deserts, participants saw the fair as a way to introduce their authentic menu.

"This is our first year here; it's been good. We've seen diffe-

rent kinds of food and people. We are offering many dishes from Cape Verde, from rissole to donuts," said Lanie Fernandes.

"This event is also a way to promote food from our country, and we can also see food from other countries. There were more people yesterday because it was Christmas. You can really feel the Christmas vibe here," she added.

Meanwhile, the organizer, the Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau, invited associations to participate and has cooperated with the Cultural Industries Fund to invite local cultural and creative businesses to jointly operate the Christmas gift stalls.

"The pedestrian flow has been okay. There are some locals and some mainland tourists who came for some games,"

said Apple Leung, a participant who was selling locally-made products.

"I will come again next year. There are some people coming to see the products, [and] there were also some people buying the products as Christmas gifts or as souvenirs," she added.

With the aim of creating a joyful atmosphere, the market also showcases a series of stage performances including instru-

mental music performances, interactive games and band and dance performances, along with a parade featuring Christmas-related mascots. Activities for children include a merry-go-round and an inflatable candy house, which is open to residents free of charge.

The fair will feature performances and interactive games from 8:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. until January 3. **LV**

# Lawmaker calls for measures against overload of tourists

**L**AWMAKER Lam Lon Wai has asked the government to implement measures to deal with the overload of tourists.

In his written inquiry to the local government, Lam pointed out that a 9.1 per cent growth in the number of tourists during the first 11 months of 2018 has been recorded, and that the Public Security Police Force has also predicted a new record of crossings for the upcoming Chinese New Year.

"[The number of cross-

sings] has posed several kinds of pressure across all Macau's ports, and transportation and tourism networks. [...] The Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge is unable to distribute the human flow around the border gate. Indeed, on the contrary, it [the bridge] has increased the number of crossings at the border gate and, in turn, has deteriorated the transportation situation in the northern district," Lam wrote in his inquiry.

"Faced with this overload

of tourists, what measures does the authority have to ensure the residents' normal life and the tourists' tourism experience? What mandatory or encouraging measures does the authority have aiming at diverting the tourists and the tourism industry to use other ports [rather than the border gate] to reduce pressure across the border gate?" Lam asked.

According to PSP statistics, a total of 575,000 crossings were recorded on Christmas Day. Of tho-

se, 390,000 were recorded from the border gate, 60,500 of which were from HKZMB. Of the latter, 43,000 were from the outer harbor ferry terminal.

As of 5 p.m. on Christmas Day, a total of 347,000 crossings were recorded. Some 314,000 crossings were registered during the same period (until 5 p.m.) on Christmas Day, 2017.

The PSP also reported that 42 taxi overcharging infractions were recorded on December 24 and 25.

PAULO BARBOSA



Tourists attend a Light Festival event this week

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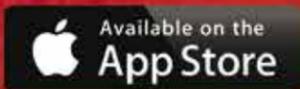
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# News At Hand



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“ THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’ ”

**C**ARITAS Macau held a series of Christmas parties for its eight aged care homes, which accommodate some 700 local senior citizens.

The non-governmental organization held different events for the senior citizens including lunch gatherings and performances.

According to the Secretary-General of Caritas Macau, Paul Pun, the festive season serves as a way to cheer up the senior citizens, particularly those with dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

Speaking to the Times, Pun commented, "they may not be Catholics but they treasure this opportunity to join Christmas activities. We take this opportunity to make them happy, especially those who are deteriorating due to different illnesses."

"Some [senior citizens] easily forget [but] Christmas events are a bit easier for them to recall because it's an event full of happiness," Pun added.

Although visiting hours of these aged care homes are from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Pun hinted that not many of these residents are being visited by their families on a regular basis.

Thus, Pun stressed that

## Caritas hosts Christmas activities for the elderly



Paul Pun

Christmas Day is an opportunity for these family members to gather in the aged care homes.

"[These events] are also an

encouragement to family members. Everybody has the opportunity to celebrate but for the elderly homes it's difficult, be-

cause the staff have to divide work amongst themselves since many are on holidays," Pun explained.

According to the secretary-general, the larger aged care homes, including the House of Mercy Elderly Home, had welcomed performances from Caritas Kindergarten and other private individuals.

St. Francis Xavier Home for the Aged welcomed a group of doctors who offered Christmas presents, and migrant workers who performed singing and dancing numbers.

Aside from the aged care homes, Caritas Macau also held a series of parties to celebrate the festive season for its retired workers and members of the community who are intellectually disabled.

"Our budget has increased because we have more homes and the number of services recipients have [access to] also increased. Some activities were supported by government, and some are from private entities and volunteers," explained Pun.

According to the Caritas head, the festive season serves as a reminder to think of those in need. "How we can mobilize people to care for others, especially those who are being neglected; and also think of those who are not able to be with us. It's about sharing our time and lives with others," he said. **LV**

## Hong Kong-India flights launch with potentially disruptive business model



**I**NDIAN budget airline IndiGo is trialing low-cost flights connecting Hong Kong with the South Asian subcontinent, with a Bangalore route debuting last week. This follows another low-cost airline, Gurgaon-based Spicejet, which launched a route between Hong Kong and New Delhi last month.

Speaking to the South China Morning Post, IndiGo Chief Commercial Officer William Boulter said that the plan for its Banga-

lore route and other Indian connections was to use smaller planes over longer distances with possible midway refuel stops.

The company is also looking to launch longer-haul flights to London using its existing fleet, with possible stopovers at either Baku in Azerbaijan or Tbilisi in Georgia, by the middle of next year.

"We are in a test phase and to an extent experimenting with some of these routes," Boulter told the

SCMP. "We pride ourselves on having the lowest cost among operators in India [...] and that enables us to always be competitive. Any price that is put into the market, we will match."

The SCMP suggests that if IndiGo succeeds with the long-haul flights it is planning, this could open up new routes to other destinations in Europe and Australia, posing yet another challenge to traditional airlines.

Before that, the airli-

ne needs to prove that its smaller planes requiring refueling can be a competitive alternative to the traditional airlines and local low-budget carriers.

"One can do market studies," said Boulter, "but until you [start] the route and understand the competitive dynamics, it's always tough. But that is what makes the airline industry more interesting."

### Macau has also been on the radar for direct flights to the Indian subcontinent

"We are confident our narrow-body approach will be helpful in terms of profitability," he said.

With regards to the Hong Kong route, IndiGo says that sales are growing but still fall short of the airline's average of 84 percent of seats sold. For now, the route is selling about 65 to 70 percent of seats, however Boulter has positive expectations for January 2019.

Macau has also been on the radar for direct flights to the Indian subcontinent, with the idea having been discussed several times in recent years.

### FOOD SAFETY

## Sulu Sou calls for prevention against African swine fever

**L**AWMAKER Sulu Sou has asked the government to prevent the African swine fever from spreading to Macau.

The lawmaker remarked that many cases of people bringing unquarantined products from mainland China to Macau have been reported.

"Regarding the case where Taiwan tested positive for the African swine fever [ASF] virus gene in pork sausages coming from Macau, I want to ask the administration authority how the virus-carrying meat product concerned could have passed quarantine and have been imported to Macau?" Sou asked.

"Considering the continuous spread of ASF in Guangdong, what measures will the administration authority take to ensure that the infected pigs and meat products will not be carried and brought to Macau?" Sou wrote in his inquiry to the government.

"What kind of measu-

res does the administration authority have to ensure customers' rights in face of the possibility of a price hike due to live pig supply reduction?" Sou writes.

In early August this year, the mainland's countryside department of the ministry of agriculture reported the first ASF outbreak in Shenyang province, where over 40 pigs died.

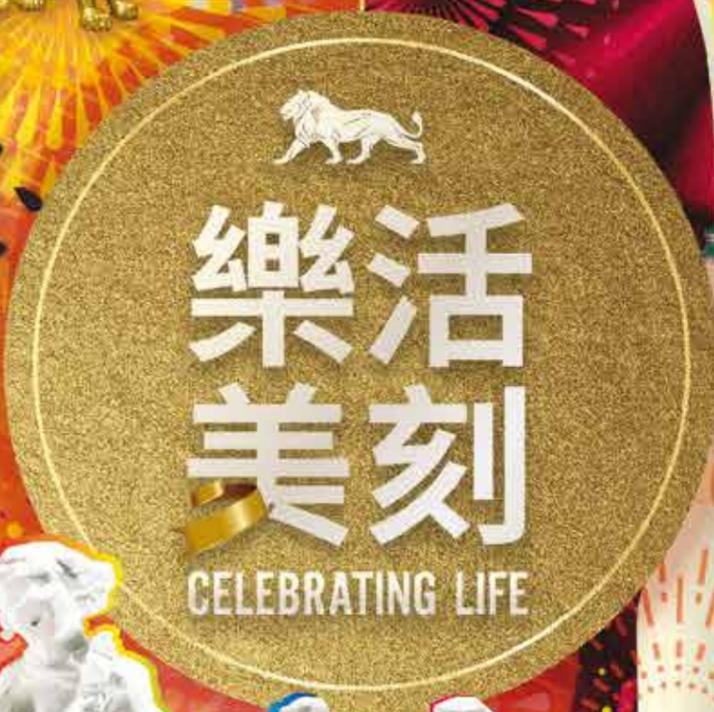
Since the first case's report, many subsequent African swine fever outbreaks have been reported in mainland provinces, including Fujian and, more recently, Guangdong.

The Chinese government has always claimed that the outbreaks are under control.

Last week, a case was reported from a farm in Zhuhai. Following this report, Macau's Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau (IACM) issued a statement clarifying that no live pigs had been imported to Macau from the affected pig farm in Zhuhai.



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# Mainland to lift tariffs on Macau, HK companies

**G**OODS originating from Hong Kong and Macau that are exported to the Chinese mainland will not be subjected to tariffs from 2019. According to a report by Xinhua news agency, the revised tariff policy is intended to bring new opportunities to companies in the SARs and deepen economic ties among the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area.

Starting from January 1, goods of Hong Kong and Macau origin imported into the mainland will enjoy zero tariffs under the framework of the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA), the Department of Customs of the Chinese Ministry of Finance announced this week.

Aron Harilela, chairman of Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce, said the new policy would enhance the competitiveness of Hong Kong's small- and medium-sized



Egg tarts 'made in Macau'

enterprises and help to open up more economic and trade opportunities.

"The new policy will encourage [the] 're-industrialization' of Hong Kong. It will also promote Hong Kong companies to explore more opportunities in the mainland," said Jimmy Kwok, chairman of the Federation of Hong Kong Industries.

"Hong Kong companies can take this chance to take active

part in the economic transformation of the mainland. They can also cooperate with their counterparts in the mainland to develop both domestic and overseas markets," said Jonathan Choi, chairman of the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce.

Along with the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link, Hong Kong-Zhuhai

-Macau Bridge, and the upcoming land control point at Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai, allowing goods from Hong Kong to be tariff-free when imported into the Chinese mainland will accelerate the flow of factors of production in the Greater Bay Area, which will further facilitate trade and economic cooperation among the Greater Bay Area, said Choi. **MDT/Xinhua**

## Reading Map of Macau released

The Reading Map of Macau 2018 has been released, with both Chinese-Portuguese and Chinese-English bilingual editions. Published by the Macau Public Library under the Cultural Affairs Bureau, the map features routes linking different World Heritage sites and aims to promote Macau's distinctive reading venues to residents and tourists. The map is divided in two parts: a map and a booklet. The map marks all the branch libraries, reading rooms and film archives under the Culture Affairs Bureau and features five culturally significant routes. The booklet includes information on the libraries, serving as a guide on library resources and services for the public. The map has a print run of 25,000 copies and is available at the libraries of the Cultural Affairs Bureau for free.

## Zhejiang delivers 10 billion parcels in 2018

Eastern China's Zhejiang Province, home to Internet giant Alibaba and several large courier companies, shipped over 10 billion parcels in 2018, the provincial postal administration said. Cross-border parcel services grew rapidly, with the number of parcels to other countries as well as to Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan exceeding over 200 million, up 117 percent, said Wang Deben, deputy head of the administration.

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### One more site to become available in Busking Program

The Calçada da Igreja de São Lázaro is going to be included in the Busking Program starting from next year, the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) announced earlier this week. The opening times for this site will be between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. on Saturday, Sunday and public holidays. The site only allows one group of artists (with a maximum of two people) to perform at once. Currently, the program has three busking points: the Anim'Arte Nam Van; Casas-Museu da Taipa; and Jardim da Fortaleza do Monte. The Busking Program was launched in November of 2016.

### One dead from traffic accident

A 63-year-old Macau resident has died as a result of a car accident that took place on Christmas Day at the Avenida Dr. Rodrigo Rodrigues, at around 10 p.m. The man was riding his motorbike when he collided with a taxi. The victim was sent to the Centro Hospitalar Conde de São Januário. His death was announced yesterday, in the early morning. In the first nine months of 2018, six people died from car accidents.

### HKZMB

# Zhuhai port recorded 2.9m crossings in first two months

**T**HE Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge Zhuhai port has recorded a total of 2.9 million crossings since its opening in October. A total of 60,000 vehicle crossings were registered.

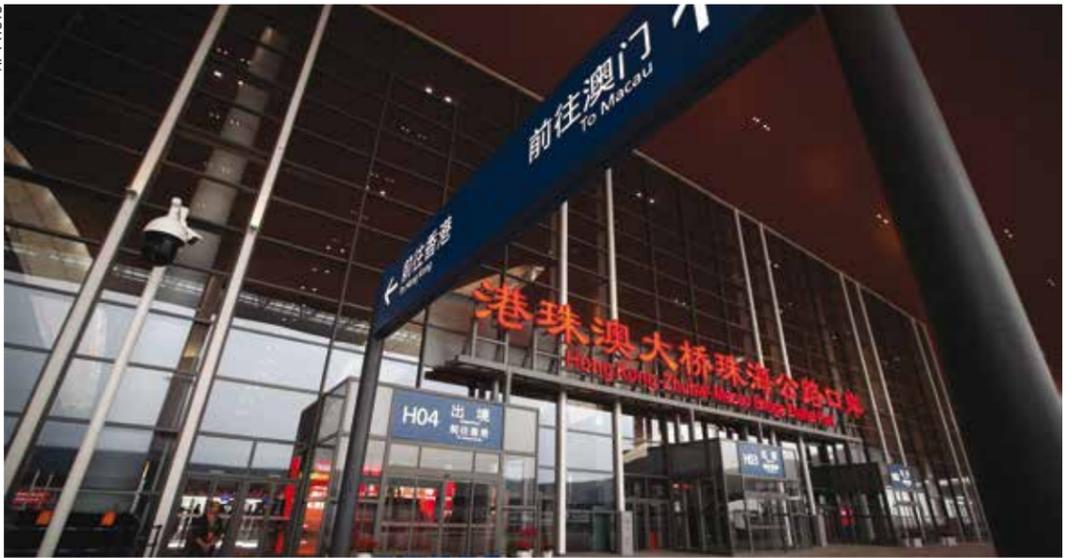
Over 70 percent of the Zhuhai port users were from mainland China, with a small percentage of Macau users.

Additionally, over 100 students used the Zhuhai port to go from Zhuhai to Hong Kong in order to study.

For the past two weeks, a 70 percent increase in cargo was recorded across the Zhuhai port.

Since the opening of the HKZMB, several problems have been reported, including mainland tour guides working in Hong Kong and Macau for tour groups, senior mainlanders taking advantage of the bridge shuttle bus discount, and an overall decline in the traffic situation in the vicinity

AP PHOTO



of the Macau port.

Last week, the Director of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), Helena de Senna Fernandes, said that a big surge in the number of same-day visitors from mainland China has been recorded since

the bridge's opening.

According to the MGTO head, a 15 percent increase in mainland tourists has also been registered since the bridge's opening.

Earlier in November, Hong Kong's Secretary for Com-

merce and Economic Development Edward Yau Tang-wah revealed that group tours from mainland China to Hong Kong through the HKZMB had increased tenfold, from 70 tour groups in the first week, to 700 until the end of November.

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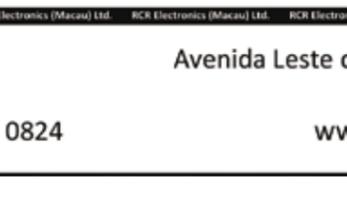


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# Gatwick drone raid's legacy of lost fees, fortified airports

Ellen Milligan

**A**S thousands rush to complete journeys disrupted by the recent drone incursions at London Gatwick airport, here's a guide to how the aviation industry is responding, and what the long-term fallout might be.

## MANAGING CHAOS

Airlines have a legal duty to get travelers to their destination, no matter if a flight is halted by the weather, strikes or the appearance of mysterious flying objects. Where services are canceled, that might mean switching passengers to later departures or booking them onto rival carriers at other airports. Refunds can alternatively be offered to allow people to make their own arrangements, or to simply call it a day and go home.

## NOT OVER YET

While Gatwick reopened for flights on Friday as police and the military deemed anti-drone measures installed at the airport sufficient to prevent further incursions, services were patchy, with dozens of jets stranded elsewhere. Only 45 percent of morning services operated as planned and the hub suffered a setback in the evening when a further drone sighting led to a brief shutdown.

Police on Sunday announced a 50,000 pound (USD63,000) reward for help finding those responsible for the disruptions as they released without charge a couple who had been arrested the prior day. Sunday was scheduled to be Gatwick's busiest day of the holiday season, with 134,000 passengers due to fly in and out, and the airport aims to be operating a full schedule by



EasyJet is the airport's biggest carrier

then, stopping disruption from running into Christmas Eve.

## COUNTING THE COST

When customers decide to take alternative flights, airlines get to keep the original revenue but must pay for extra food and hotel accommodation, and possibly a seat with another operator. If passengers opt for a refund the carrier's obligation ends. The U.K. Civil Aviation Authority judged the Gatwick incident an extraordinary circumstance, meaning airlines don't need to fund meals and trips out for customers forced to spend an extra day on vacation, for which they can be viable in the event of strikes by their own staff. People may be able to claim these and other costs on their insurance policies.

"There's a fundamental loss in revenue when you can't fly at

such a busy time, and are unable to re-book customers onto flights that are already full," says John Strickland, director of JLS Consulting in London. "You also incur additional costs for refunds and basic welfare, so you're being hit from all angles."

EasyJet said it's too early to put a figure to the cost of the dislocation. Other major operators at the airport include British Airways, Virgin Atlantic Airways Ltd., Norwegian Air Shuttle ASA, Thomas Cook and TUI AG. Gatwick itself faces a significant hit from lost landing and car-park fees and providing welfare to stranded passengers. Shop footfall has also been lower, hurting retailers.

## STOPPING A REPEAT ATTACK

The International Air Transport Association backs better

training for drone operators, increased surveillance around airports, and technological curbs to stop flights into sensitive areas, a technique known as geo-fencing, says Giancarlo Buono, the airline lobby group's European safety director.

A host of competing technologies are also available that claim to be capable of halting drones in their tracks, with dozens pushing their products following this week's events. Among established players, Liteye Systems Inc. uses radio signals to force the machines to land, while DroneShield Ltd. is developing a device resembling a traditional ballistic weapon. Police in Japan have even experimented with snagging drones with a net midflight.

The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration, though, last year advised airports not to experi-

ment with anti-drone devices because it hadn't had a chance to vet them. And solutions such as jamming signals could create safety problems by interfering with aviation radio systems.

Gatwick itself says there's no one licensed product that could have prevented what it called an "unprecedented incident," and that drafting in the military was ultimately the only answer.

## PILOTS UNCONVINCED

The British Airline Pilots Association gave a lukewarm welcome to the reopening of Gatwick and said it's still concerned about the risk of a drone collision, suggesting craft could fly undetected around the airport's perimeter and obstruct flight paths outside the immediate detection zone.

The pilot union advised members to request speed reductions from air traffic controllers to minimum levels in the event of drone sightings, to plan ahead for possible delays and diversions, and to be read to declare an emergency should a device pose an imminent threat.

## DRONE AGE STILL COMING

The emerging drone industry has expressed concern that a political backlash following the Gatwick shutdown could lead to significantly tighter regulations and stymie revenue growth that research firm Technavio predicts will average 36 percent a year through 2022 to reach \$14.7 billion.

With Amazon.com Inc., Uber Technologies Inc. and Facebook Inc. among companies keen to embrace the technology, the incident is unlikely to hold back expansion and could even clear the way for commercial operators, said Aapo Markkanen, an analyst at Gartner Inc.

"While new regulations are likely to make consumer use of drones more restricted, they will at the same time make the operating environment easier and more certain for enterprises and public-sector organizations," he said. **Bloomberg**

## corporate bits

### SANDS CHINA HOLDS PARENTING SEMINARS FOR EMPLOYEES



Sands China Ltd. recently held a series of parenting seminars for employees, aimed at promoting work-life balance and encouraging healthy

parent-child relationships. The four seminars were held between November 20 and 30, with topics covering sex education; parent-child

communication skills and discipline; parental emotional management; and managing family and work. The program aims to help

employees better anticipate their children's developmental changes, carry out child-rearing responsibilities and provide positive early learning experiences. The seminars and workshops are part of Sands China's care for the well-being of its employees, extending to their families and loved ones.

The parenting seminars were held in coordination with the Taipa Education Centre, an initiative of the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEJ). Speakers invited by the DSEJ to conduct the seminars included representatives from the Child Protection Centre, Against Child Abuse Macau Association, the Macau Parenting Association, and the Young Men's Christian Association of Macau.

### CEM AMBASSADORS TEAM CELEBRATES CHRISTMAS WITH FAMILIES IN NEED

With Christmas approaching, the CEM Ambassadors Team has joined hands with volunteers from the Macau Federation of Trade Unions, General Residents Association of Macau, Women's General Association of Macau, Aliança de Povo de Instituição de Macau and Caritas de Macau to organize a film screening before Christmas, in a bid to send blessings and care during this festive season.

On the day of the event, nearly 200 participants including CEM ambassadors, volunteers and 45 families in need enjoyed a Christmas cartoon movie together at Cinema Alegria.

Afterwards, each child received a gift pack from CEM as a



token of CEM's wish for progress in their studies and a merry Christmas. The atmosphere was welcoming and harmonious.

Cecilia Nip, Director of CEM Regulatory Affairs and Corporate Communications Office, said that since its establishment, CEM Ambassadors Team has been focusing on the needs of people from different social strata.



A man sells Christmas decorations on a street of Zhangjiakou in northern China's Hebei province



A sales person waits for customers near a Christmas tree decoration

# Santa gets pushed out as leaders emphasize tradition

Erika Kinetz, Shanghai

IT took less than 24 hours for all the Christmas trees, lights and bells to disappear from a 27-story shopping and office complex in the Chinese city of Nanyang.

Even the giant teddy bear at the mall entrance wasn't spared, said Ma Jun, who works at a tutoring company in the building. "Everything is gone and cleaned," she said.

Christmas continues to be a shopping festival across most of China, with huge trees adorning shopping malls in Shanghai and Beijing, but a growing emphasis on traditional culture by the ruling Communist Party and the systematic suppression of religion under President Xi Jinping are imperiling Santa Claus's position.

At least four Chinese cities and one county have ordered restrictions on Christmas celebrations this year, according to official notices and interviews. Students, teachers and parents from 10 schools around China told The Associated Press that Christmas celebrations have been curtailed.

"The ongoing local reaction against Christmas is part of the wider sentiment since Xi took power," said Zi Yang, a China expert at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore.

Xi is trying to broaden the appeal of the Communist Party by casting it as a crusader for Chinese tradition in a fast-changing world, he said. "Therefore, foreign cultural elements such as Christmas are placed on the chopping block."

The seasonal humbug follows similar outbreaks of

anti-Christmas rhetoric in 2014 and 2017. It appears not to be centrally organized, but rather a spreading resistance to foreign festivals by local authorities seeking to align themselves with the growing tide of cultural nationalism.

The squeeze on Christmas is an example of how efforts to "normalize" thinking bled into the everyday lives of many Chinese. That push exploded into view this year through re-education camps for Uighur Muslims and a crackdown on Christian churches that has continued with force in recent weeks.

In Nanyang, about 950 kilometers west of Shanghai, government officials stopped by the office and shopping complex on Dec. 16 to say that Christmas decorations would have to come down, said Ma, the tutoring company employee.

An official from the city's urban management bureau hung up when asked for comment.

Nine hours by car south, Hengyang, a city in Hunan province, said in a Dec. 19 notice posted on an official government social media account that anyone caught holding Christmas sales or celebrations that blocked the streets would be punished. Communist Party members, the notice said, should avoid foreign festivals and instead be "models of adherence to Chinese traditional culture." Hengyang police posted a video on their official social media account of locals discussing the importance of Chinese culture and plans to avoid ostentatious Christmas celebrations.

Langfang city, just south of Beijing, banned Christmas

stage performances and merchandising promotions, according to a notice circulated on social media.

Shop windows were to be stripped of Christmas stickers and streets kept free of Christmas banners and lights. Law enforcement patrols were to be stepped up Dec. 23-25 to prevent illegal signs of celebration.

The Langfang urban management bureau declined comment. The state-run Global Times newspaper argued that Western media are exaggerating China's crackdown on Christmas and reported that the restrictions in Langfang were aimed not at Christmas but at cleaning up roadside stalls and migrant vendors in hopes of winning a "National Civilized City" award from the Communist Party.

## At least four Chinese cities and one county have ordered restrictions on Christmas celebrations this year

Some 270 kilometers west, Fuping county, also in Hebei province, issued a similar clean-up notice. Though the Dec. 21 announcement mentions Christmas eleven times, an official from the Fuping urban management bureau said the rules were aimed at street vendors generally, not Christmas.

Police in the Panlong dis-

trict of Kunming, the capital of Yunnan province in southern China, circulated a notice that hotels, karaoke parlors, internet cafes, bars and other crowded places must prohibit Christmas-related decorations and activities.

"It is forbidden to hang Christmas stockings, wear Christmas hats, place Christmas trees, and so on," the notice read.

It wasn't clear if the notice applied to all of Kunming city, though a police officer told the AP that the order to circulate it came from city officials.

Reverend Jonathan Liu, founder of the Chinese Christian Fellowship of Righteousness, a California nonprofit, said the pushback against Christmas reflects Xi's efforts to "Sinicize" religion.

Preachers are coached on how to convey Communist Party core values in their sermons and national flags and songs have been injected into some church services, he said.

Liu provided the AP with a notice sent to churches in Zhoukou, a city to the east of Nanyang in Henan province.

It tells churches to vet Christmas plans with the government, forbids minors from participating in Christmas events and caps expenses at 2000 yuan (USD290). "I wish you all a happy Christmas! God bless you," read the notice, which Liu received from a pastor in China.

An official at the United Front Work Department in Zhoukou referred queries to the religious affairs bureau, which could not be reached for comment.

Before becoming president, Xi went to Finland in 2010 and was photographed with

Santa Claus. That kind of chumminess appears to be a thing of Christmas past, experts say.

The central government issued guidelines last year for a cultural revival project that calls for a marked boost in the international influence of Chinese traditional culture by 2025.

"You have a culturally conservative ethos in the country that has definitely been encouraged by the central party-state," said Guo Yingjie, a professor of Chinese studies at the University of Sydney. "It's not hard for university presidents or officials to say, 'OK celebrating Christmas can easily be seen as de-Sinicization or promoting Western culture.'"

Students have taken to social media to complain about restrictions on Christmas celebrations at their schools. At a top Shanghai university, a student union had its Christmas plans cancelled for the first time, an organizer told the AP on condition of anonymity, fearing rebuke.

The students came up with a solution: By replacing "Christmas" with "New Year's" in their activity proposal and changing the date from Dec. 25, it sailed past school administrators.

Students in the city of Qingdao were reprimanded for hosting an event about gratitude on Thanksgiving Day and warned not to celebrate Christmas publicly, according to a student, who also spoke on condition of anonymity, fearing retribution.

Liu Kaiming, president of the Institute of Contemporary Observation, a civil society group in the city of Shenzhen, said that despite the drumbeat of official discontent, Christmas cheer continues to spread in China.

"The sound of resistance is more powerful on the surface, but it has no practical effect," he said. "Young people's enthusiasm for the festival is ever-increasing." AP

Dake Kang, Yanan Wang

# Prominent rights lawyer tried in closed proceedings

**T**HE trial of a prominent human rights lawyer began in northern China yesterday with about two dozen plainclothes police stationed outside a courthouse and at least one supporter taken away by police.

Reporters, foreign diplomats and supporters were prevented from approaching the municipal court in Tianjin city where lawyer Wang Quanzhang was being tried. Wang's wife, Li Wenzu, was prevented from attending the proceedings by security agents who had blocked the exit of her apartment complex since Tuesday.

Li told The Associated Press by phone yesterday that Liu Weiguo, Wang's government-appointed lawyer, confirmed the trial had started. But he did not tell her whether it was now over or whether a verdict had been reached.

The court said in a statement on its website that it "lawfully decided not to make public" the trial hearings because the case involved state secrets. A decision will be announced at a future date, the court said.

Wang is among more than 200 lawyers and legal activists who were detained in a sweeping 2015 crackdown. A member of the Fengrui law firm, among the most recognized in the field broadly known in China as "rights defending," he was charged with subversion of state power in 2016. He has been held without access to his lawyers or family for more than three years.

Fengrui has pursued numerous sensitive cases and repre-

AP PHOTO



Plainclothes security officers take away a supporter of Wang Quanzhang



Wang Quanzhang (left) and his wife Li Wenzu pose for a photo with their son

sented outspoken critics of the ruling Communist Party. Wang represented members of the Falun Gong meditation sect that the government has relentlessly suppressed since banning it as an "evil cult" in 1999. Group leaders have been sentenced to lengthy prison terms and ordinary followers locked up as alleged threats.

Li has campaigned tirelessly for her husband's release. Earlier this month, she and other wives of detained lawyers shaved their heads in an act of protest. In Chinese, the words for "hair" and "law" are near-homophones — "We can be hairless, but you can't be lawless," they chanted.

She was given only two days'

notice that the trial was to take place. The trials of Chinese human rights figures are often scheduled during the Christmas period, when many Western diplomats and journalists are away on holiday.

**Wang is among more than 200 lawyers and legal activists who were detained in a sweeping 2015 crackdown**

On Tuesday, five cars were stationed outside Li's home, she said, and a state security officer urged her not to travel to Tianjin. Yesterday, they cordoned off her apartment unit with police tape.

Li and Wang Qiaoling, the wife of another rights lawyer who was detained, described in a statement their encounter with state security at 5:30 a.m. yesterday. A state security officer offered to drive them to Tianjin, but he said that the trial proceedings were not public and that they would not be allowed to attend.

Li and Wang wrote that they declined the officer's offer and tried to leave Li's apartment complex, only to find that all six gates out of the complex had po-

lice parked outside.

Diplomats from the U.S., Swiss, U.K. and German embassies were outside the Tianjin courthouse. They said they had requested access to attend the trial but were denied.

A man shouted his support for Wang Quanzhang before he was shoved into a car by plainclothes officers.

"A frail scholar, and you all torment him like this," Yang Chunlin yelled, referring to Wang. "Wang Quanzhang is the greatest person in China."

"I demand political reform, I demand civil rights, I demand elections within the party, respect for human rights," Yang said before he was taken away. **AP**

## Beijing slips open door for US natural gas as winter hits

**C**HINA last month imported two tankers of U.S. liquefied natural gas, nudging open a doorway that had been closed shut for a month at a time when America is rapidly expanding its ability to export the heating fuel.

The three operating U.S. terminals soaked up more than 5.1 billion cubic feet of natural gas from American shale basins on Sunday, the most ever. With two more U.S. terminals slated to open in the first quarter of 2019, China's re-emergence as a customer as wintry weather descends offers a much-needed outlet for exports.

"This is important because priced U.S. natural gas with the tariff is still economical compared to other sources," said Het Shah, founder of Analytix.AI, an energy market data analytics company in Calgary. "These

tankers probably left the U.S. gulf coast in late October."

While the imports offer short-term hope, Chinese companies are still unlikely to cement long-term deals for more LNG, hindering future projects, without Beijing and Washington resolving their differences over a festering trade war that's spurred tit-for-tat tariffs in a wide variety of sectors.

The world's second largest economy imported a record 5.99 million tons of LNG in November even as its reliance on American LNG fell. U.S. imports reached 138,892 tons, according to data from China's General Administration of Customs. That equates to about 6.3 billion cubic feet of gas, or two tankers worth, Shah said.

In November a year earlier, China imported six tankers of American LNG at a time when China's traditional su-



pliers in Central Asia were unable to keep up with demand as cold weather descended. The Asian giant was forced to turn increasingly to the U.S. for the fuel after requiring both businesses and homes to stop burning coal

to cut pollution.

China has imported 60 cargoes from the U.S., or 12 percent of total shipments from the lower 48 states, according to U.S. Energy Department data going back to February 2016. **Bloomberg**

## Attacker on Chinese bus kills 8 people, wounds 22

**C**HINESE state media say eight people were killed after a hijacker with a knife drove a bus into pedestrians in a southeastern Chinese city.

The official Xinhua News Agency reported that 22 others were injured, one seriously, in the Tuesday afternoon attack in Longyan in Fujian province, about 1,000 kilometers south of Shanghai.

The attacker was captured, a police statement said. It did not say how many fatalities occurred aboard the bus and how many among pedestrians.

A video clip on the website of the Beijing News newspaper showed a half dozen police officers wrestling the attacker to the ground in the middle of a street as traffic flowed past.

Xinhua said that police have identified the attacker as a 48-year-old unemployed man. The news service said that initial investigation had found that the man had had a conflict earlier in the day with an official of a neighborhood committee with whom he and long been at odds.

The investigation was continuing. **AP**

# Koreas break ground on railways but sanctions block project

Kim Tong-Hyung, Seoul

**N**ORTH and South Korea broke ground yesterday on an ambitious project to modernize North Korean railways and roads and connect them with the South, but without progress in nuclear negotiations, regular trains won't be crossing the border anytime soon.

The ceremony at the North Korean border town of Kaesong came weeks after the Koreans conducted a joint survey on the northern railway sections they hope to someday link with the South. It's one of several peace gestures agreed between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and liberal South Korean President Moon Jae-in as they push ahead with engagement amid a stalemate in larger nuclear negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang.

But beyond on-site reviews and ceremonies, the Koreans cannot move much further along without the removal of U.S.-led sanctions against the North.

A South Korean train carrying about 100 people — including government officials, lawmakers and aging relatives separated by the 1950-53 Korean War — rolled into the North Korean border town of Kaesong, where they were greeted by North Koreans including Ri Son Gwon, who heads an agency



South and North Korean government officials connect northern and southern railroad tracks

dealing with inter-Korean affairs.

North and South Korean officials signed a concrete railroad tie, unveiled a new signboard and observed a ceremonial connecting of northern and southern tracks at Kaesong's Panmun Station, according to South Korea's Unification Ministry.

Officials from China and Russia were also invited to witness the symbolic start of an ambitious project Seoul hopes will one day link South Korea with the Trans-China and Trans-Siberian railways. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, executive secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission

for Asia and the Pacific, also attended, according to the South Korean ministry.

"The railways will not only reduce time and space but also the distance between the hearts of the South and North," South Korean transport minister Kim Hyun-mee said at the ceremony.

While stressing the importance of the project, Kim Yun Hyok, the North Korean vice railways minister, added an apparent jab at Seoul by saying that the Koreans should push further with engagement instead of "wobbling on the path while listening to what others think."

North Korea has repeatedly voi-

ced displeasure about the slow progress in the reconciliatory projects agreed between their leaders. Seoul's enthusiasm for inter-Korean engagement has also created unease with Washington, which has called for its allies to maintain pressure until Kim takes firmer steps to irreversibly and verifiably relinquish his nuclear weapons and missiles.

The Seoul government plans to conduct further surveys on North Korean railways and roads before drawing up a detailed blueprint for the project. Actual construction will proceed depending on the progress in the North's denuclea-

rization and the state of sanctions against the country, the ministry said.

"We plan to hold detailed negotiations with the North to coordinate on the specific levels we want to achieve in the modernization of railways and roads and how to carry out the project," said Eugene Lee, the ministry's spokeswoman.

Even if the North takes concrete steps toward denuclearization and gains sanctions relief, some experts say updating North Korean rail network could take decades and massive investment.

Seoul said it received an exemption to sanctions from the U.N. Security Council to proceed with yesterday's ceremony as it involved South Korean transport vehicles and goods. The Koreans' joint survey of North Korean railways in November, which also required U.N. approval, marked the first time a South Korean train traveled on North Korean tracks.

The Koreans in December 2007 began freight services between South Korea's Munsan Station in Paju and the North's Panmun Station to support operations at a now-shuttered joint factory park in Kaesong. The South used the trains to move construction materials north, while clothing and shoes made at the factory park were sent south. The line was cut in November 2008 due to tensions over North Korea's nuclear ambitions.

The Kaesong factory park was shut down under the South's previous conservative government in February 2016 following a North Korean nuclear test and long-range rocket launch. **AP**

# Japan to resume commercial whaling, but not in Antarctic

Mari Yamaguchi, Tokyo

**J**APAN announced yesterday that it is leaving the International Whaling Commission to resume commercial hunts for the animals for the first time in 30 years, but said it would no longer go to the Antarctic for its much-criticized annual killings.

Japan switched to what it calls research whaling after the IWC imposed a moratorium on commercial whaling in the 1980s, and now says stocks have recovered enough to resume commercial hunts.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said Japan would resume commercial whaling in July "in line with Japan's basic policy of promoting sustainable use of aquatic living resources based on scientific evidence."

He added that Japan is disappointed that the IWC

— which he said is dominated by conservationists — focuses on the protection of whale stocks even though the commission has a treaty mandate for both whale conservation and the development of the whaling industry.

"Regrettably, we have reached a decision that it is impossible in the IWC to seek the coexistence of states with different views," he said.

Suga said the commercial hunts would be limited to Japan's territorial waters and its 200-mile (323-kilometer) exclusive economic zone along Japan's coasts. He said Japan would stop its annual whaling expeditions to the Antarctic and northwest Pacific oceans, noting that non-signatory states are not allowed to do so.

The IWC imposed the moratorium on commercial whaling three decades

ago due to a dwindling whale population. Japan switched to what is called research whaling, but the program was criticized as a cover for commercial hunting since the meat is sold on the market at home.

The environmental group Greenpeace condemned the yesterday's announcement and disputed Japan's view that whale stocks have recovered, noting also that ocean life is being threatened by pollution as well as overfishing.

"The declaration today is out of step with the international community, let alone the protection needed to safeguard the future of our oceans and these majestic creatures," Sam Annesley, executive director at Greenpeace Japan, said in a statement.

"The government of Japan must urgently act to conserve marine ecosystems, rather than resume com-

mercial whaling."

Australia's government, often a vocal critic of Japan's whaling policies, said in a statement that it was "extremely disappointed" with Japan's decision to quit the commission.

However, New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters joined Australia in welcoming Japan's withdrawal from the southern ocean. Japan was the only country with an ambition to return to commercial whaling in the Antarctic Ocean.

Japanese Fisheries Agency official and longtime IWC negotiator Hideki Moronuki said Japan would use the IWC's method to carefully determine a catch quota, but declined to give an estimate.

Japan has hunted whales for centuries, but has reduced its catch following international protests and declining demand for



In this Sept. 2013 photo, a minke whale is unloaded at a port after a whaling for scientific purposes in Kushiro

whale meat at home. The withdrawal from the IWC may be a face-saving step to stop Japan's ambitious Antarctic hunts and scale down the scope of whaling to around the Japanese coasts.

Japan slashed its annual quota in the Antarctic by about one third after a 2014 International Court of Justice ruling that the country's research whaling program wasn't as scientific as Japan had argued. Japan currently hunts about 600 whales annually in the Antarctic and the Northern Pacific.

Fisheries officials have said Japan annually consumes thousands of tons of whale meat from the research hunts, mainly by older Japanese seeking a nostalgic meal. But critics say they doubt commercial whaling could be a sustainable industry if younger Japanese don't view the animals as food.

Suga said Japan would notify the IWC of its decision by Dec. 31 and remains committed to international cooperation on proper management of marine life even after its IWC withdrawal. **AP**



A woman stands near debris at a tsunami-ravaged area in Carita



A man inspects the damage at a tsunami-ravaged village in Sumur

## INDONESIA

# Authorities ask people to avoid coast near volcano, fearing new tsunami

Niniek Karmini, Carita Beach

**I**NDONESIAN authorities asked people to avoid the coast in areas where a tsunami killed more than 420 people last weekend in a fresh warning issued on the anniversary of the catastrophic 2004 Asian earthquake and tsunami.

The big waves that followed the eruption of Anak Krakatoa, or "Child of Krakatoa" island volcano, hit communities along the Sunda Strait on Saturday night. The eruption is believed to have set off a large landslide on the volcano, either on its slope or underwater, displacing the water that slammed into Java and Sumatra islands.

Indonesia's Meteorology, Geophysics and Climatology Agency asked people late Tuesday to stay at least 500 meters and up to 1 kilometer from the coastline along the strait, which lies between the two main islands. Government workers are monitoring Anak Krakatoa's eruptions and high waves and heavy were expected, said agency head Dwikorita Karnawati.

"All these conditions could potentially cause landslides at the cliffs of the crater into the sea, and we fear that that could trigger a tsunami," she said at a news conference. She asked that communities remain vigilant and not to panic.

The tsunami struck without warning, taking people by surprise even in a country familiar with seismic disaster. No big earthquake shook the ground beforehand, and it hit

at night on a holiday weekend while people were enjoying concerts and other beach and resort activities.

It was a sharp contrast to the disaster that struck 14 years ago off the western coast of Indonesia's Sumatra island. An enormous 9.1 magnitude earthquake rocked the area the morning after Christmas, creating gigantic waves that surged far inland swallowing everything in their path. The wall of water killed some 230,000 people in a dozen countries, more than half in Indonesia's Aceh province.

## ■ The country's system of tsunami detection buoys — deployed after the 2004 disaster — has not worked since 2012

The devastation was vast, and the disaster was among the worst witnessed in recent history. Saturday's event, coupled with an earthquake and tsunami in September on Sulawesi that killed at least 2,100 people, triggered flashbacks for some who survived the 2004 tragedy.

"When it happens, I always remember what we have been through," said Qurnaty, 54, who uses only one name and

lost her home and several family members to the waves in the hard-hit provincial capital of Banda Aceh. She prayed with surviving family members at a mass grave there on Wednesday's anniversary. "Every time I see them [on TV], I feel really, really sad. All we can do from here is to pray for them."

Though recovery was slow, some victims of the latest tsunami said they remember the resilience of the Acehnese people, which gives them hope that they too can rebuild their homes and their lives.

"I am scared, I am traumatized by the tsunami that I only knew before from the news. Now I know how horrifying a tsunami is," said Kusmiati, who uses only one name. Her face was still bruised and her legs swollen after she and her husband managed to survive being hit and dragged under by the waves after fleeing a beach villa in Carita, where they were working.

Beaches were largely empty in the area, which is typically crammed with tourists, and police patrolled on motorbikes warning people to stay away from the coast. Some residents defied the order, returning to what was left of their homes to begin cleaning up as heavy rain fell and waves pounded the shore.

"I am still afraid that the tsunami will return, so when dark comes, I stay at a temporary shelter on the hill," said Rohayati, who worked to salvage what was left of her battered house, 300 meters from the sea. "I hope the government can provide a tsunami

warning, like a siren, for people living in coastal areas so we can be alerted of a potential tsunami and have time to save ourselves."

The country's system of tsunami detection buoys — deployed after the 2004 disaster — has not worked since 2012, with some units being stolen or vandalized.

Karnawati, of the meteorology agency, said that because the tsunami was caused by volcanic activity, it would not have been picked up by the system's seafloor sensors, which monitor movement from conventional earthquakes responsible for most of Indonesia's tsunamis.

Residents of Sumur village, which has been slow to receive aid due to roads being cut off, remained stunned by how quickly the tsunami hit. The beach, located just a few kilometers from the tourist island of Umang near Java's western tip, is popular for snorkeling and other water activities. The tsunami decimated the area, ripping houses from their foundations and bulldozing concrete buildings.

Scientists have said the waves were recorded in several places at about 1 meter high, but Sumur residents insisted they towered more than 3 meters, possibly as high as 5 meters, which the government's disaster agency also confirmed in some areas.

"There was no sign of a tsunami when we were at the beach. The sea didn't recede," said Tati Hayati, who was enjoying a pleasant evening with 10 other people when the disas-

ter hit. "It was calm and bright with the full moon."

When she spotted high, fast-moving waves launching toward the shore, she ran to her car and managed to get inside. But she couldn't outrun it. She said the car was struck by three waves, breaking out the back window and filling the vehicle with gushing water.

"We were locked inside. The car was swaying in the waves and we thought we would all die," Hayati said. "We almost could not breathe and I almost gave up when I groped the key in the water and managed to open the door, and the water began to recede. We got out of the car and ran to safety."

More than 21,000 people were displaced from their homes and heavy equipment was urgently needed in the Sumur subdistrict near Ujung Kulon National Park to help get aid flowing and reach people who may be injured or trapped, said Sutopo Purwo Nugroho, spokesman for Indonesia's Disaster Mitigation Agency.

The death toll was 429, with more than 1,400 people injured and at least 128 missing, he said.

Anak Krakatau formed in the early 20th century near the site of the cataclysmic 1883 eruption of Krakatoa, which killed more than 30,000 people and hurled so much ash that it turned day to night in the area and reduced global temperatures.

Anak Krakatau has been erupting since June and did so again 24 minutes before the tsunami, according to the geophysics agency. **AP**

AP PHOTO



Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan

SYRIA

## Turkey 'determined' to drive out Kurdish forces

Zeynep Bilginsoy, Istanbul

**TURKEY** said it is working with the United States to coordinate the withdrawal of American forces but remains "determined" to clear U.S.-allied Kurdish fighters from northeastern Syria.

Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told reporters that "if Turkey says it will enter, it will," in comments carried by private DHA news agency. His comments came amid reports that Turkey-backed Syrian rebels are getting ready to begin a military operation in and near the northern town of Manbij that is controlled by Kurdish-led fighters.

For weeks, Turkey has been threatening to launch a new offensive against the Kurdish fighters, who partnered with the U.S. to drive the Islamic State group out of much of northern

and eastern Syria. Ankara views the Kurdish forces as terrorists because of their links to an insurgent group inside Turkey.

President Donald Trump announced the planned withdrawal of U.S. forces after a phone call with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan earlier this month.

The minister also said Ankara and Washington have agreed to complete a roadmap on Manbij until the U.S. withdraws. Un-

■ **The Turkish army continues to dispatch tanks, artillery and other equipment to the border**

der the June deal, Kurdish forces would leave Manbij, in the western Euphrates valley, but delays have infuriated Turkey.

Turkey-backed Syrian opposition fighters have been moving to the outskirts of Manbij and the Turkish army continued to dispatch tanks, artillery and other equipment to the border and an area administered by Turkey in northern Syria, according to Turkish media reports.

Maj. Youssef Hammoud, of the Turkey-backed Syrian rebels known as the National Army, said the military operation against Kurdish-led forces in northern Syria is "near but has not started yet."

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a war monitor, said Turkey has ordered rebels it backs to begin a military operation in Manbij "in the coming hours."

"It is crucial that the U.S. doesn't appear as not having kept its promises," Cavusoglu said.

He argued that Turkey has the "strength to neutralize" IS on its own and criticized France, which has promised to stay in Syria despite the U.S. decision.

Cavusoglu warned it would not benefit France if it was staying in Syria to protect the YPG, the main Kurdish militia in Syria.

Erdogan, speaking to reporters in Ankara, said Turkey was taking into account Trump's announcement on Syria rather than French President Emmanuel Macron's decision. The future of the international coalition against IS, which includes Turkey, the U.S. and France, remains unclear.

The Turkish president also announced that a delegation was heading to Moscow and that he would meet with Russian Pre-

sident Vladimir Putin. Turkey has been negotiating on behalf of the Syrian opposition with Russia and Iran, which support the Syrian government, as part of efforts to end the nearly 8-year civil war.

Trump announced last week that the U.S. will withdraw all of its 2,000 forces in Syria, a move that will leave control of the oil-rich eastern third of Syria up for grabs. Russia launched its military operation in Syria in 2015 to back its longtime ally President Bashar Assad.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryakov said Tuesday in an interview with the RIA Novosti news agency that it would be a "big mistake" to dismantle a hotline that Russia and the U.S. use to prevent potential clashes in Syria, despite the U.S. withdrawal, and said he sees no indications the Americans would do that. **AP**

Bassem Mroue, Beirut

**ISRAELI** warplanes flying over Lebanon fired missiles toward areas near the Syrian capital of Damascus late Tuesday, hitting an arms depot and wounding three soldiers, Syrian state media reported, saying that most of the missiles were shot down by air defense units.

The TV, quoting an unnamed military official, identified the warplanes as Israeli. Lebanon's the state-run National News Agency earlier reported that Israeli warplanes were flying at low altitude over parts of southern Lebanon.

## Israeli attack near Syrian capital wounds 3 soldiers, says report

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a war monitor, said Israeli airstrikes targeted three positions south of Damascus that are arms depots for Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group and Iranian forces.

The reported attack near Damascus is the first since U.S. President Donald Trump announced last week that the U.S. will withdraw all of its 2,000

forces in Syria, a move that will leave control of the oil-rich eastern third of Syria up for grabs.

Following Trump's announcement, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said that Israel would "continue to act against Iran's attempts to entrench itself militarily in Syria, and to the extent necessary, we will even expand our actions there."

Nearly an hour after the

attacks began, Damascus residents could still hear the air defense units firing toward targets in the air.

"The aggression is still ongoing," said a presenter on state TV, which interrupted its programs to air patriotic songs.

Later the TV quoted an unnamed military official as saying that Syrian air defenses "shot down most of the missiles before reaching their targets and

the aggression damaged an arms depot and wounded three soldiers." It added that the Israeli warplanes fired the missiles from Lebanese airspace.

Israel's military spokesman's unit did not confirm the raids, but said in a statement that "an aerial defense system was activated against an anti-aircraft missile launched from Syria." No damage or injuries were reported by the Israeli military.

Israel is widely believed to have been behind a series of airstrikes in the past that mainly targeted Iranian and Hezbollah forces fighting alongside the government in Syria. Tuesday's attack is the first since a missile assault on the southern outskirts of Damascus on Nov. 29.

Russia announced it had delivered the S-300 air defense system to Syria in October. That followed the Sept. 17 downing of a Russian reconnaissance plane by Syrian forces responding to an Israeli airstrike, a friendly fire incident that stoked regional tensions. **AP**

TUNISIA

# Protests after journalist sets himself on fire

**PROTESTS** erupted Tuesday in Tunisia after the death of a journalist who set himself on fire to protest economic problems in the North African nation, prompting clashes with police and nationwide concern.

Journalist Abderrazak Zorgui posted a video online before his self-immolation in the struggling provincial city of Kasserine describing his desperation and calling for revolt. He expressed frustration at unemployment and the unfulfilled promises of Tunisia's 2011 Arab Spring revolution.

Authorities said Zorgui died of his injuries Monday soon after being taken to the hospital.

His actions prompted a protest Monday night in Kasserine that degenerated into violence, with police firing tear gas to disperse protesters who blocked roads and threw stones at police. Interior

Ministry spokesman Sofiane Zaag said Tuesday that six police officers were injured and several people arrested in the protest.

A new protest was held Tuesday night in Kasserine, with new tensions with police, and other actions were reported elsewhere.

A similar self-immolation - by a street vendor lamenting unemployment, corruption and repression - led to nationwide protests fueled by social media that brought down Tunisia's long-time authoritarian president in 2011. That ushered in democracy for Tunisia and unleashed similar movements around the Arab world.

Tunisian reporters expressed solidarity with Zorgui, lamenting precarious conditions for freelancers with no legal protections and low pay amid Tunisia's struggling economy. **MDT/AP**

ITALY

# Quake from Mount Etna volcano jolts Sicily; 10 injured

Frances d'Emilio, Rome

**A** quake triggered by Mount Etna's ongoing eruption jolted eastern Sicily before dawn yesterday, slightly injuring 10 people and prompting frightened Italian villagers to flee their homes.

Italy's Civil Protection officials said the quake, which struck at 3:19 a.m., was part of a swarm of some 1,000 tremors, most of them barely perceptible, linked to Etna's volcanic eruption this week.

The quake struck north of Catania, the largest city in the eastern part of the Mediterranean island, but no injuries or damages were reported there. Italy's national seismology institute said it registered a magnitude of 4.8 and occurred at a relatively shallow depth, 1 kilometer under the mountain's surface.

The tremor damaged some rural homes, including structures that had been abandoned years ago, toppled a Madonna statue in a church in the town of Santa Venerina and opened up cracks on a highway, which was



closed for inspection, Rai state radio said.

One 80-year-old man was safely extracted from the rubble of his home, the Italian news agency ANSA said.

A woman told state radio that a heavy armoire in her home had toppled over, trapping her sister, who was then safely pulled out by her father. In another house, a ceiling collapsed.

"Etna remains a dangerous volcano, and this country of ours is unfortunately fragile," government undersecretary Vito Crimi said, adding there were no fatalities and 10 slight injuries.

The quake was also felt in the ups-

cale Sicilian resort town of Taormina.

The Civil Protection agency said temporary shelters were being set up for people whose houses were damaged or who were too alarmed to return to their homes.

In recent days, Etna's latest eruption has been shooting volcanic ash, heavy smoke and lava stones into the air, coating roads and homes nearby with ash. A new fracture has opened near Etna's southeast crater and lava has been flowing down an uninhabited slope.

Etna, the largest of Italy's three active volcanoes, has been particularly active since July. **AP**

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## what's ON



VESTIGES OF LINES, GUILHERME UNG VAI MENGE ON THE OCCASION OF THE CELEBRATION OF THE 19TH ANNIVERSARY OF MACAU HANDOVER TO CHINA

TIME: 12pm-8pm (Tuesday to Sunday)

3 pm-8pm (Monday)

UNTIL: February 23, 2019

VENUE: Albergue SCM

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2852 2550

MACAU GIANT PANDA PAVILION AND PAVILION OF RARE ANIMALS

TIME: 10am-1pm & 2pm-5pm daily

VENUE: Seac Pai Van Park

ADMISSION: MOP10 (Pavilion of Rare Animals)

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2888 0087

FLEETING SPEEDS

TIME: 2pm-7pm (closed on Sundays)

UNTIL: December 31, 2018

VENUE: Creative Macau - Center for Creative Industries

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2875 3282

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

"STYLE-ENCOUNTER MOMENT"

TIME: 10am - 8pm

UNTIL: December 30, 2018

VENUE: Macau Fashion Gallery

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2835 3341

KEITH HARING MAZE MACAU

TIME: 1pm-9pm

UNTIL: December 31, 2018

VENUE: Cotai Expo Hall F, The Venetian Macau

ADMISSION: MOP150

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2882 8818

## Offbeat

## POKER PLAYER TURNS USD5 BET INTO \$1 MILLION AT CASINO

A man playing poker at an Atlantic City casino has won \$1 million on a \$5 bet.

The man, identified only as a Lakewood resident, made the three-card poker "6 Card Bonus" bet Saturday afternoon at the Borgata Hotel Casino. He then hit a royal straight flush of diamonds, a hand that overcame 1-to-20 million odds.

The man was dealt the 10, queen and ace of diamonds. The dealer's hand was the nine, jack and king of diamonds.

Casino officials say it's the first time this bet has been hit at the Borgata.

## TV canal macau



13:00	TDM News (Repetição)
13:30	Telejornal RTPi (Diferido)
15:00	Mistura Fina
15:55	Zig Zag
16:55	Quem Quer Ser Millionário
19:00	Montra do Lilau (Repetição)
19:35	Os Nossos Dias Sr.2
20:30	Telejornal
21:15	TDM Talk Show
21:50	Livros com João Guedes
22:00	Todas as Palavras
22:25	Nome de Código: Sintra
23:15	TDM News
23:50	Resumo Liga dos Campeões 2018/2019
	Macau Sítios: História Que Eu Ta Vai Contar - Coloane
00:10	Telejornal (Repetição)
00:55	RTPi Directo

## cinema



## CINETEATRO

27 DEC - 02 JAN



## THE GRINCH

ROOM 1

2:30, 4:15, 6:00, 7:45pm

Director: Yarrow Cheney, Scott Mosier

Starring: Benedict Cumberbatch, Cameron Seely, Rashida Jones

Language: Cantonese

Duration: 86min

## MORE THAN BLUE

ROOM 1

9:30 pm

Director: Gavin Lin

Starring: Jasper Liu, Ivy Chen

Language: Putonghua (Chinese & English)

Duration: 105min



## BUMBLEBEE

ROOM 2

2:30, 4:45, 7:15, 9:30 pm

Director: Travis Knight

Starring: Hailee Steinfeld, Dylan O'Brien, Megyn Price

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 113min



## RALPH BREAKS THE INTERNET: WRECK-IT RALPH 2

ROOM 3

2:30, 4:45, 7:15 9:30pm

Director: Rich Moore, Phil Johnson

Starring: John C. Reilly, Sarah Silverman, Gal Gadot

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 122min

## this day in history



## 1985 GUNMEN KILL 16 AT TWO EUROPEAN AIRPORTS

At least 16 people have been killed and more than 100 injured during simultaneous twin terrorist attacks at Rome and Vienna airports.

Gunmen opened fire on passengers queuing to check-in luggage at departure desks for Israel's national airline, El Al.

The attacks were indiscriminate and started within minutes of each other at about 0815 GMT today.

No group has yet admitted carrying out the attacks.

At least 13 people were killed, three of them gunmen, after six men, described by witnesses as being of Arab origin, fired bullets at travellers waiting in the main departure hall at Rome's international airport.

Chaos broke out during what is reported to have been a five minute attack as passengers fell to the floor for cover.

Italian police returned fire as bullets rang out across the concourse leaving a trail of blood and broken glass.

Some unconfirmed witness reports describe having heard two "bombs" explode before the gun fire.

Two gunmen, in their twenties and of Arab origin, were captured alive.

One of them was taken to a military hospital for surgery and a third attacker is said to have escaped.

In similar scenes in neighbouring Austria, three gunmen threw four hand grenades into crowds of passengers queuing to check-in for a flight to Tel Aviv.

It is understood they then pulled out Kalashnikov submachine guns as Austrian police returned fire.

They escaped by car but were pursued by police who opened fire.

One of the men is reported dead, the other two were severely wounded and eventually surrendered to police.

It comes amid reports airport authorities received warnings Arab militant groups were planning a pre-Christmas terrorist campaign at terminals across the world.

Security at London's Heathrow Airport has been stepped up with Israel's El Al planes currently grounded.

Extra police surveillance at check-in desks has been mounted while special branch officers are "mingling" with the crowds.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

The final death toll rose to 18 and 120 people were injured. Initially the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) was blamed for the attacks but its leader Yasser Arafat denounced the killings. It is widely believed Abu Nidal, Father of Struggle, whose real name was Sabri al-Banna, masterminded the assault. He split from Arafat's group in 1974 and is believed to have been behind the murder several high ranking PLO officials and for terrorist attacks designed to undermine the organisation. Abu Nidal fronted the rival group - Fatah Revolutionary Council - which was generally thought of as the world's most feared terrorist organisation before the rise of al-Qaeda. He was found dead in mysterious circumstances in Iraq in August 2002.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Make an effort not to candy coat what you say to people today...

Taurus April 20-May 20 As this day moves forward, you will feel more and more connected to the people around you.

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 While you might not have clairvoyant powers, today you will have a neat knack for predicting the future.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 There will be plenty of time in the coming days to find the alone time you so desperately want right now.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Try a new market, visit that new intriguing restaurant and when you see someone with a particularly fetching haircut...

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 Your fiery enthusiasm for what you believe in is powerful - you can always make things happen with your emotional conviction.

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 If you can step back and look at the bigger picture, you will immediately see what you need to do and how you need to spend your time.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 Your ego is going to get many small boosts today, which will send you into a well-deserved, confident phase of life.

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 You are where you need to be, and if you aren't happy about the accommodations, be patient.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 Have you been giving someone the silent treatment? It won't do you much good - you can't make your point unless you clearly communicate your feelings and needs.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 You can take command today - if you want to. You have been noticing how those in power are those most scrutinized...

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 If you can increase activity in your life right now, you will be able to concentrate on keeping yourself calm and positive about not knowing everything all the time.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

WEATHER

Weather forecast table with columns for MIN, MAX, and CONDITION. Includes sections for CHINA and WORLD with cities like Beijing, Harbin, London, and New York.

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Toward the mouth; 5- Sailing hazards; 10- Biol., e.g.; 13- Fiddling emperor; 14- Greek island in the Aegean Sea; 16- Lion, tiger, leopard, or jaguar; 17- Question a decision; 19- Campers, briefly; 20- Latin stars; 21- And others, in Latin; 23- Kauai keepsake; 24- Ask for divine guidance; 28- Make possible; 30- Wild prank; 32- Burrowing lagomorph; 33- Occupant; 35- Grazing spot; 36- Offshore sight; 38- Complain; 42- Boob tubes; 43- Observation; 45- Free from danger; 49- Continues obstinately; 53- Blows one's top; 54- Have \_\_\_ in one's bonnet; 55- Bauxite, e.g.; 56- Fondle; 58- Spokes; 60- Light brown color, common to pale sunworshippers; 61- Indemnification; 65- PC panic button; 66- Like some inspections; 67- Kind of awakening; 68- Consumed, usually food; 69- \_\_\_ Park, Colorado; 70- Iowa State city; DOWN: 1- Marked down; 2- \_\_\_ Pieces; 3- Frigid; 4- Entrance; 5- Relieve (of); 6- Heart chart, for short; 7- \_\_\_ de cologne; 8- At liberty; 9- Female sibling; 10- Write hastily; 11- Mounted soldier; 12- Part of TGIF; 15- Yoga posture; 18- Textile worker; 22- Test area; 25- Wife of a rajah; 26- Proverb; 27- Longing; 29- Greek vowel; 31- City in GA; 34- Laid-back; 36- Cloudy; 37- The act of issuing; 39- Suffix with concession; 40- Capital of Lesotho; 41- Year in Edward the Confessor's reign; 42- Quattro minus uno; 44- Mineral spring; 46- EMT's skill; 47- In \_\_\_ (unborn); 48- Ancient ascetic; 50- Chemically active metallic element; 51- Vacuum tube having three elements; 52- Fishing nets; 57- Flat sound; 59- Gillette brand; 60- Leaves in a bag; 62- \_\_\_ for tat; 63- Suffix with meteor; 64- French possessive;

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

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999
Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
Fire department 28 572 222
Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993
Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333
Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944
S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
IACM 28 387 333
Tourism 28 333 000
Airport 59 888 88



AD

Real estate advertisement for JML Property, featuring 'FOR SALE' and 'FOR RENT' sections with property details like 'Sea View Condo, Hellene Gardens' and 'Ocean Garden Elm Court'.

# USA Hockey's deal with top women help

Larry Lage, Michigan

**K**ELLY Pannek is on pace to graduate from the University of Minnesota in the spring with a finance degree. With two internships in wealth management also on her resume, she is a prime candidate to get hired in the business world.

The 2018 Olympic champion plans to put her off-ice-career on hold, thanks to a landmark deal involving USA Hockey last year.

"I plan on just playing hockey as long as I can because I can," she said.

That used to be a challenging choice for the nation's top female hockey players.

After threatening not to show up at the 2017 world championship at USA Hockey Arena, the top American female players in the sport agreed to a package of improvements, including one that helped their bottom line. Post-graduate hockey players can make about USD70,000 a year and about \$130,000 annually in Olympic years.

"The progress we made through that deal has changed a lot of our lives, and changed the

future of our sport," said Meghan Duggan, who captained the U.S. when it won gold over Canada at the Olympics earlier this year. "Before that, all of us relied on other income from a second job, spousal and family support because we weren't earning a living that supported us in an appropriate way. The deal also created awareness and cultural change."

During USA Hockey's training camp last week, where 44 of the top women in the sport gathered, the governing body had some of its top executives in attendance. Three-time Olympian Hilary Knight said that was new and suggested a dramatic difference in support.

USA Hockey executive director Pat Kelleher was in suburban Detroit not just to be seen. He said he heard what the women had to say and shared information about the USA Hockey's mission.

"The communication is better than it has been," Kelleher said before one of his meetings with the group. "Relationship-wise, we need to have great teammates and be great teammates. We want to understand their side and what they're looking for. We

AP PHOTO



Hockey forwards Hilary Knight (left) and Amanda Kessel skate during practice in Plymouth, Mich.

also want to give them more background on our organization, which has 650,000 participants and 1.2 million members. There's a lot that goes with that."

Before the 2017 agreement,

many players had to juggle jobs and decide whether to stick with the sport or to give it up to pay the bills.

Knight used to squeeze in private lessons on the ice between

her own training and competition to make ends meet after graduating from Wisconsin.

"Coming out of college and having that transition without a set template of what you should

AD

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# their careers

be doing and how to be a professional was challenging," said Knight, now 29 and playing with the CWHL's Les Canadiennes in Montreal.

Two-time Olympian Amanda Kessel, who is 27, said the increased training stipend allows her to live in New York City and not worry about balancing her career with a life as much as before.

### Before the 2017 agreement, many players had to juggle jobs and decide whether to stick with the sport or to give it up

"It was just stressful," she said. "You still loved playing hockey, but when you're 25, 26 years old and you don't have an income you're think, 'What am I doing?' I had some help from family at

times. I had side money from camps and just had to pinch pennies. Now, I have no problem getting a massage or going to physical therapy and paying out of pocket to take care of myself."

The deal with USA Hockey also allows women to collect their training stipends while pregnant, a benefit enjoyed by the Monique Lamoureux-Morando and Jocelyne Lamoureux-Davidson.

Pannek acknowledged she didn't worry too much about the fight for better benefits previously because she was still in college on a scholarship. But just months away from graduating, she is grateful for the path paved by those before her.

"I saw how hard our veterans worked to set this up for all of us coming out of college," she said. "I couldn't imagine how it used to be. Coming out of college this next year is really special because there are options. I can get an education and I know I can use it, but maybe not right now and put that into the future and play hockey for the next few years. I want to keep playing as long as I can and then use my degree." AP

## UFC

# Jones-Gustafsson fight moved from Las Vegas to LA area

Ken Ritter, Las Vegas

A UFC rematch this weekend between Alex Gustafsson and former UFC light heavyweight champion Jon Jones is being moved from Las Vegas to Southern California after doping officials reported that Jones tested positive for low levels of a banned steroid, officials said earlier this week.

UFC 232 events that had been set for Saturday at T-Mobile Arena will be held at The Forum in the Los Angeles suburb of Inglewood, UFC spokeswoman Lenee Breckenridge said.

Breckenridge did not respond to questions from The Associated Press about the reason for the relocation.

Jones (22-1) beat Gustafsson (18-4) in a tough bout in 2013. Jones hasn't fought since for testing positive for a banned steroid in July 2017.

Nevada State Athletic Commission executive Bob Bennett said Jones was allowed to withdraw his application for a fight license in Nevada after commission



Jon Jones (left) and Alexander Gustafsson face off

Chairman Anthony Marnell III said he wanted to postpone the fight until after a January hearing about Jones' recent doping tests.

The U.S. Anti-Doping Agency said it got notice last week that urine samples from a Dec. 9 test showed Jones had what the agency called an extremely small amount of an anabolic steroid metabolite in his system.

It was the same substance that was detected in July 2017, when Jones' victory over Daniel Cormier for the light heavyweight

title was overturned and Jones received a 15-month suspension for doping.

"At these extremely low levels, Jones obtained no performance enhancement," a statement from the doping agency said. It said Jones is not facing proceedings for violating UFC anti-doping policy.

Breckenridge said in a statement that AXS.com planned refunds at original points of purchase for buyers of tickets to the Las Vegas event. AP

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opinion

**Girl About Globe**

Linda Kennedy



**'FISH AND SHIPS' LAW, PLEASE.**

Fish provide an alibi for doing nothing - 'Gone Fishing'. They comfort us after a broken heart - 'plenty more fish in the sea'. And they help us count our units: 'drink like a fish'

They're not just vital for the marine ecosystem - they're crucial for idioms. Which is why reports of fish jumping to their deaths are alarming.

I was rambling along a pier in a Hong Kong marina this week. There were three fish gasping on the wooden slats. Odd. Was this Dignitas for fish?

Or a cult, led by a big fish, pent on a suicide pact?

I didn't know what to do. I was a fish out water. Buddies, I thought, we are in this together.

Fish talk: Different kettle of fish. Cold fish. Bigger fish to fry. Language is rich in such idioms - it's like fish are omega 3 for words.

For this reason, as well as for nature, we must save fish. Fish extinction would mean Eroding Idiomatic Diversity. And there is a substantial threat. Sightings of fish jumping to their deaths are not unusual in Asian waters.

In July, at a port in Taiwan, thousands of fish jumped from the water and onto a fisherman's boat.

And in 2015, tens of thousands of small fish were reported to be seen flying out of the sea in Stanley, in the south of Hong Kong.

Taking on the role of Saviour of Fish To Protect Idioms (perplexingly but luckily vacant) I started to investigate possible causes.

Dead fish can be caused by algal bloom, which starves fish of water. Or waste being dumped nearby.

Or, more intriguingly, terror. In Taiwan, a big fish chasing the other fish was given as a possible theory.

Jumping fish might also be a natural phenomenon that, quite simply, happens seasonally. This was one guess for the Stanley sardine exodus.

Or insects can lead fish into temptation. Fishy spots a yummy flea or fly above, but its leap towards lunch doesn't end well.

All reasonable explanations, but now we get to a hypothesis that convinces me: fish jump after getting a fright caused by horns from shipping vessels. Aha.

In 2013, French carmaker, Peugeot Citroen found that car horns are honked 40 times more often in China than in Europe, and they adapted their vehicles' tooting toughness for the Chinese market.

It's no fish-style jump to think this tendency towards over-use could extend to horns on board ships skippered by Chinese. Super yachts are being targeted by marinas in Hong Kong. Will more luxury cruisers with Chinese captains mean increased honking locally of horns? And more fish jumping out of the water?

I've heard expats fondly call Hong Kong 'Honkers'. Super yacht captains, do not mistake this abbreviation for the type of person welcome here.

Back at the marina, I gently nudged one fish towards the water. Its flat body didn't take well to nudge-based motion and flipped over.

I picked it up and, at the side of the dock, let it slither into the sea. It didn't move. Upsettingly, I was too late.

China is now even using acoustic cameras to catch drivers who honk without good reason. The camera and microphones record a two-second video, and analyse if the driver has reason to sound the horn. If not, it's a fine.

If horny Chinese super yacht skippers start to erode the marine ecosystem by frightening fish into leaping to their deaths, I suggest the government here installs similar acoustic cameras in Hong Kong waters. Preserve fish. Preserve idioms. We need a 'Fish and Ships' law.

**THE THAILAND LEGISLATURE LEGALIZES MEDICAL MARIJUANA AND KRATOM**

Thailand's legislature on Tuesday agreed to amend the country's drug law to allow the licensed medical use of marijuana, as well as kratom, a locally grown plant traditionally used as a stimulant and painkiller.

Thailand is the first country in Southeast Asia to take such action, which is also under consideration in neighboring Malaysia. New Zealand's government earlier this month enacted a law

liberalizing the medical use of marijuana, which had previously been tightly restricted.

The Thai legislation passed its final reading at the National Legislative Assembly by a vote of 166-0 with 13 abstentions.

Recreational use of the drugs remains illegal and subject to prison terms and fines commensurate with the quantities involved. Public hearings showed overwhelming support for the measure.

RUSSIA

**Putin crows as he oversees hypersonic weapons test**

Vladimir Isachenkov, Moscow

**R**ussian President Vladimir Putin oversaw a test yesterday of a new hypersonic glide vehicle, declaring that the weapon is impossible to intercept and will ensure Russia's security for decades to come.

Speaking to Russia's top military brass after watching the live feed of the launch of the Avangard vehicle from the Defense Ministry's control room, Putin said the successful test was a "great success" and an "excellent New Year's gift to the nation."

The test comes amid bitter tensions in Russia-U.S. relations, which have sunk to their lowest level since the Cold War times over the conflict in Ukraine, the war in Syria and the allegations of Russian meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Putin's hopes for repairing ties with Washington under President Donald Trump have fizzled amid investigations into allegations of Trump's campaign ties with Russia, and tensions have escalated as the U.S. administration slapped Russia with new waves of sanctions.



The Avangard was among the array of new nuclear weapons that Putin presented in March, saying that Russia had to develop them in response to the development of the U.S. missile defense system that could erode Russia's nuclear deterrent.

In yesterday's test, the weapon was launched from the Dombrovskiy missile base in the southern Ural Mountains. The Kremlin said it successfully hit a designated practice target on the Kura shooting range on Kamchatka, 6,000 kilometers away.

"The Avangard is invulnerable to intercept by any existing and prospective missile defense means of the potential adversary," Putin

said after the test, adding that the new weapon will enter service next year with the military's Strategic Missile Forces.

When first presenting the Avangard in March, the Russian leader said the new system has an intercontinental range and can fly in the atmosphere at 20 times the speed of sound, bypassing the enemy's missile defense.

He emphasized that no other country currently has hypersonic weapons.

Putin has said that Avangard is designed using new composite materials to withstand temperatures of up to 2,000 degrees Celsius that come from a flight through the atmosphere at hypersonic speeds. **AP**

**THE DECISIVE MOMENT**



Christmas spirit: Seasonal decorations are displayed at a shopping mall as Hong Kong celebrates the Christmas holidays.

Station	Air quality
Roadside	65-95 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	60-80 Moderate
Ambient	55-75 Moderate

SOURCE: DSI/MG

**WORLD BRIEFS**

**AFGHANISTAN** An official says a suicide bomber disguised as a beggar has killed six people in a wealthy subdivision of the southern city of Kandahar.

**TUNISIA** Protests erupted after the death of a journalist who set himself on fire to protest economic problems in the North African nation, prompting clashes with police and nationwide concern. *More on p15*

**UKRAINE**'s leader has announced an end to the 30-day martial law imposed after Russia seized Ukrainian ships in the Black Sea.

**POLAND** Firefighters say six people have died in a fire at a small wooden building sometimes used by the homeless in an outlying district of Warsaw.



**ITALY** An earthquake triggered by Mount Etna's eruption jolted eastern Sicily before dawn, injuring at least 10 people, damaging churches and houses on the volcano's slopes and prompting panicked villagers to flee their homes. *More on p15*

**BRITAIN** Officials say three migrants have been intercepted trying to take a small boat from France to Britain. Another 40 migrants were stopped trying to cross the Channel on Christmas Day.



**US** Yesterday was the first full business day after several government departments and agencies closed up over the weekend due to a budgetary stalemate between President Donald Trump and Congress. And there is no end in sight.