



### CINEPHILIA GROWING IN MACAU

Efforts to promote the local film industry are bearing fruits, according to Sound & Image Challenge director Lúcia Lemos

P2 MDT INTERVIEW



### BLAZE DESTROYS SUPERMARKET

P7



### MA JIAN GETS HEAVY SENTENCE

A Dalian court yesterday sentenced China's former deputy intelligence chief to life in prison for corruption

P11



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# Local groups organize tsunami relief

P7,12 INDONESIA

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### WORLD BRIEFS

**HONG KONG's** exports contracted unexpectedly in November, highlighting the risks for the trade-dependent city whose top two partners are embroiled in a trade war. Exports fell 0.8 percent compared to last year, versus almost 15 percent growth in October.



**THAILAND** Investigators have found Thailand's deputy prime minister innocent of failing to declare assets a year after he was discovered to have several luxury watches that would have been out of reach of his government salary.



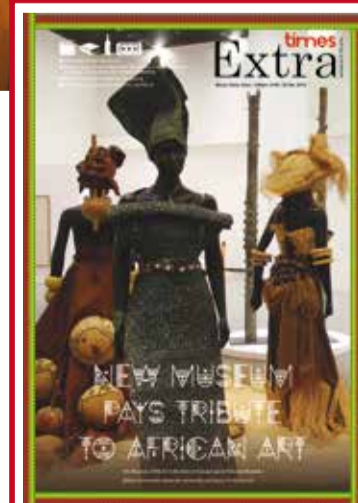
**INDIA** Authorities have ordered firefighters in the capital to sprinkle water from high-rise buildings to settle dust and stop garbage fires and have banned construction activity as hazardous air quality affects millions of people. More on p13

More on backpage

### TAIWAN

# Thousands protest taxes with nod to French rallies

P11



**Extra** times  
weekend Guide  
INSIDE





LÚCIA LEMOS  
SOUND & IMAGE CHALLENGE DIRECTOR  
CREATIVE MACAU COORDINATOR

## Film enthusiasts recording growth, says festival director



**T**HE recently concluded Sound & Image Challenge recorded a continuous increase in the number of films it presented to the public this year.

Held at Dom Pedro V Theatre, the program included 84 shorts, 10 video-clips, talks, three master classes, and concerts at the opening and awarding ceremonies.

Celebrating its ninth edition earlier this month, the short film festival featured some of the latest local and international short films and music videos.

The festival featured two kinds of competition "Shorts" and "Volume", which target films directors, producers, professionals and aspirants not only in the film industry but also in the music fields.

According to the festival director, Lúcia Lemos, the number of local film enthusiasts is growing, acknowledging the region's efforts in promoting the film industry.

**Macau Daily Times (MDT)** – This year was the ninth edition of festival, how has it grown in terms of the quality and number of films the festival feature?

**Lúcia Lemos (LL)** - It was much greater in terms of the number of films, which doubled. Some films were discussed with the professionals behind the movies so it [the festival] gave different perspectives and techniques. [...] a huge num-

ber of film directors came, it was great and it made a difference. The presence of those filmmakers was highlighted, including those people who are related with the film such as the producers. We believe that the quality is hard to compare. The topics are more or less the same every year but the way to approach the visual narrative is different. I believe the festival created a chance for filmmakers and movie enthusiasts to interact and know more about the process of the film.

**MDT – Can you also see a growth in the number of residents that are into these kinds of festival?**

**LL** – Yes, the numbers have increased. We received good feedback from the master classes that we held. The participants were more active because I saw that they now raised more questions to the filmmakers. We also had post-screen sessions so there was really an opportunity for the public to express their thoughts towards the film.

**MDT – Were there differences in the way local filmmakers directed their films compared to those from outside Macau?**

**LL** - I feel that they are more independent now, maybe because many have studied abroad and they showed a kind of western

style in the way they directed the film; so that really made a difference. There is a difference between those who went abroad to study [and those who stayed in Macau]. In the future, we hope that we would have more of these [filmmakers]. We also created some cash awards with [the hope] to encourage people to submit good works.

**MDT – Can Macau achieve its goal of having a place in the cinema industry?**

**LL** – Yes, we can see that that is the intention of the International Film Festival Macao: it's to bring Macau into this scene, and allow the public to have an increase in their knowledge of this industry. I do believe that Macau will be a place for making and editing films. There are a lot of things to do regarding this area. As we know, local filmmakers have to go to Hong Kong or Taiwan for post production works [but] I think there [will be] many companies who will be interested in establishing such firms in Macau.

**MDT – What can the public expect with Creative Macau's activities next year?**

**LL** - We are still in the very beginning. [...] For now, I don't want to tell anything because it's still too early but what we'll do for sure is that we will be more related to cinema because we always have to improve, and make things better, and encourage local filmmakers to [produce works] this year. I think it makes sense that we get more attachment from the locals and see if they are willing to collaborate and not only bring people from abroad because that costs a lot of money. **LV**

### EDUCATION

## IFT's Bachelor Degree Programs open for online applications

**T**HE Institute for Tourism Studies (IFT) announced it will start receiving online applications for Daytime Bachelor Degree

Programs from January 3 to 18. Six English-taught degree programs are open for applications, namely Culinary Arts Manage-

ment, Heritage Management, Hotel Management, Tourism Business Management, Tourism Event Management, as well as

Tourism Retail and Marketing Management.

The programs use English as the instruction medium and practicums

and internships are integrated in the first and third years, allowing students to gain hands-on experience in related fields. According to a statement issued by IFT, "the employment of IFT graduates, who are welcomed by employers in tourism and hospitality sectors, is quite satisfactory."

The institute's teaching team now comprises mem-

bers from 18 countries and regions, while its students are from 25 countries and regions. With over 106 partner institutions and organizations in 32 countries and regions, IFT has established connections with 588 international tourism and hospitality companies both locally and globally, providing students with many internship opportunities.

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

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

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

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ADMINISTRATOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

SECRETARY Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com

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## Gov't announces benefit regime for next year

**T**HE amount of social security benefits and allowances provided by the Macau SAR for the coming year has been announced via Executive Order No. 307/2018 published in the Official Gazette. The amounts will take effect from January 1, 2019, according to a government statement.

According to the Executive Order, the old-age pension allowance will be set at MOP3,630 per month, the same amount as the disability pension.

The unemployment allowance will be set at MOP145 per day. The hospitalization sickness allowance will also be MOP145 per day, but the non-hospitalization sickness allowance will be MOP110 per day.

The Social Security Fund website notes that the payments of old-age pension, disability pen-

sion, unemployment allowance and sickness allowance cannot coincide with one another. If a beneficiary qualifies for more than one of the above-mentioned benefits, the individual can select whichever is the most favorable.

The government has also announced increases to several other benefits. The birth allowance, for which the application must be submitted within 60 days of the birth date or adoption date, will increase from MOP5,000 to MOP5,260 per application.

Meanwhile, the marriage allowance will increase from MOP1,957 last year to MOP2,060 per application and the funeral allowance will be set at MOP2,670 per application. The "relief payment" will be set at MOP2,385 per month, according to the Executive Order.

## IAS collects opinions for domestic violence law review

**T**HE Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) is collecting opinions on the three-year review of the city's implementation of the domestic violence law.

Yesterday, IAS held a cross-department meeting regarding the domestic violence law. During the meeting, IAS reported the statistics on the city's domestic violence cases concerning the first half of 2018. A sharing session of domestic violence cases was also carried out at the meeting. Furthermore, IAS reported its plan for the year of 2019.

The bureau introduced the draft of the three-year review of the law's implementation. The draft is now out at different IAS departments in order to collect opinions.

IAS Director Vong Yim Mui said that, since the law came into effect, for over two years it has depended on all concerned government departments' mutual support and assistance.

Vong hopes that the bureau can continuously improve the law's efficiency.

Physical abuse was a prominent factor in domestic violence cases registered this year, according to statistics released by IAS.



The Social Welfare Bureau headquarters

In the first half of 2018, 32 cases of domestic violence were reported across Macau: 19 involving spouses, ten involving children and three involving other family members.

As described in the IAS report on the central registry system for domestic violence cases, 22 of the cases involved physical abuse.

There were five cases of psychological abuse, two cases of sexual assault and three cases of multiple kinds of violence.

The region's domestic violence law came into effect on October 5, 2016.

In 2017, there were 96 confirmed cases out of 2,278 reports on domestic violence. Seventy-three cases

involved spouses, 20 involved children, one involved seniors and two cases involved other family members.

Recently, IAS held a training course on handling domestic violence, which drew approximately 400 attendees from government departments and social service organizations.

IAS expressed its hope that such courses could help different types of professionals in social services – including but not limited to educators, social workers and psychological counselors – improving their basic knowledge and skills in recognizing, assessing and intervening in domestic violence cases.

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## Macau's GNI up by 10.3pct in 2017

**M**ACAU'S Gross National Income (GNI) rose by 10.3 percent year-on-year in real terms in 2017, while per-capita GNI went up by 9.7 percent year-on-year in real terms, the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) revealed yesterday.

At current prices, GNI amounted to MOP372.96 billion in 2017, which was MOP32.83 billion less than Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at current prices in 2017, representing a net external factor income outflow of the same amount that was equivalent to 8.1 percent of GDP in 2017, slightly lower than the value (8.2 percent) registered in 2016.

In 2017, per-capita GNI was MOP574,668, as compared to per-capita GDP at MOP625,254, the report added.

GNI refers to the total

income earned by residents of an economy from engaging in various economic activities within or outside the economy, corresponding to GDP plus income earned by resident investors from abroad, minus income earned by non-resident investors from investment in Macau.

Total outflow of external factor income reflects income earned by non-resident enterprises and investors from investment in Macau. In 2017, total outflow of external factor income went up by 21.8 percent year-on-year to MOP75.01 billion.

Total inflow of external factor income reflects income earned by resident enterprises and investors from abroad. In 2017, total inflow of external factor income increased by 32.6 percent year-on-year to MOP42.18 billion.

RENATO MARQUES



## Lawmaker inquires about tourism police efficiency

**L**AWMAKER Lei Chan U has asked the government about the results of the city's tourism policies.

In March 2017, the Public Security Police Force (PSP) established a tourism police force. Currently, there are 60 tourism police officers, while in the beginning there were 30 officers.

"In recent years, the number of Macau's tourist arrivals has been continuously growing. [...] In the first ten months of this year, tourist arrivals

increased 8.4 percent year on year. [...] However, there are only around 60 tourism police officers [...], whether this scale [of tourism police officers] can cope with the continuously growing number of tourists makes people doubt," said Lei.

"The tourism police has been established for nearly two years. Has the government authority reviewed the effect of the tourism police officers' work? Can the current number of

tourism police officers cope with the continuous growth of tourist arrival numbers? Will the government authority continue to expand the scale? What improvement plan or measures does the government have regarding the functions of tourism police officers? [...] Will the government adjust the stationing of police officers, for instance, to the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge?" Lei wrote in his inquiry to the government.

AD

2018  
12/20

2019  
03/17

**Exhibition Venues:**

- Macao Contemporary Art Center**  
 - Navy Yard No.1  
 Rua de S. Tiago da Barra, Macau  
 10:00-19:00, Closed on Mondays
- Tap Seac Gallery**  
 Avenida do Conselheiro Ferreira de Almeida, n.º 95, Macau  
 10:00 - 21:00
- Temporary Exhibition Gallery of IACM**  
 Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro, n.º 163, Macau  
 09:00 - 21:00
- Exhibitions Gallery, Taipa Houses**  
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Academic Year 2019/2020

# Central Registration for Children Entering Kindergarten for the First Time



**Aims**

To optimise schools' enrolment mechanism, allowing schools to know the demand for school places as early as possible; to simplify the registration process for parents enrolling their children in infant education for the first time, enabling parents to choose the school for their children as early as possible.

**Eligibility**

Macao residents aged 3 by 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2019, who will enrol in infant education in Macao for the first time.

**Timeline (Year 2019)**

<b>Enrolment information</b>	Starting from 1 <sup>st</sup> January onwards, parents can consult the enrolment information on the DSEJ website or school website.
<b>Central Registration</b>	Parents register on the DSEJ website or at the DSEJ counters between 4 <sup>th</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> January.
<b>Schools release the interview date and time</b>	Between 20 <sup>th</sup> and 23 <sup>rd</sup> February
<b>School admission interviews</b>	Between 1 <sup>st</sup> and 31 <sup>st</sup> March
<b>Printing out the "Registration slip"</b>	Macao residents print out "Registration slip" at the self-service kiosks between 1 <sup>st</sup> and 10 <sup>th</sup> April.
<b>Release of the admission list and submission of the "Registration slip"</b>	Schools release the admission list Between 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> April Parents of admitted students submit the "Registration slip" to the school selected for their children to attend. Between 6 <sup>th</sup> and 10 <sup>th</sup> April (On school working days)
<b>Release of the admission list of waitlisted students and submission of the "Registration slip"</b>	Starting from 11 <sup>th</sup> April onwards, schools release the admission list of waitlisted students. Parents of waitlisted students submit the "Registration slip" to the preferred school or conduct process for transferring their children to another school. Between 11 <sup>th</sup> and 30 <sup>th</sup> April
<b>Enrolment at other schools</b>	If children have not been admitted to any school until 11 <sup>th</sup> April, i.e. after schools release the admission list of waitlisted students, or parents want to enrol their child in other schools, parents can visit the DSEJ website to check the status of K1 places available at different schools, and go to the schools that still accept enrolment for enquiries and registration.

**Gentle Reminder:**

- To enrol in Macao schools, non-Macao Residents must possess a stay or residence permit for over 90 days issued by the authorised entity of the Macao SAR. Parents must process the registration at any of the DSEJ counters. "Registration slip" can be printed out from the DSEJ website/DSEJ counters.
- Schools set no limit to the number of registrants and interviews. There is also no priority for early registration in the central registration system. Therefore, parents do not need to rush to be the first to register.
- The DSEJ will provide "Service of consultation and arrangement of school places" to parents who are in need.

**Inquiry number: 8397 2309**  
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“ THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’ ”

# Groups hold fundraising events for Indonesia's tsunami victims



AP PHOTO

A woman and her child walk past debris at a tsunami-ravaged area in Carita

**I**NDONESIAN migrant groups and Caritas Macau have been holding a series of fundraising events to raise funds for the survivors of the recent tsunami that struck parts of western Indonesia last week.

At least 430 people were killed on Saturday when the tsunami, which was sparked by landslides from an erupting volcano, hit Sunda Strait. Some 1,500 people were injured and about 22,000 residents had to relocate from their homes in villages.

This led non-government organization Caritas Macau to set up an appeal to the public on December 24 to raise funds for these victims.

The organization allocated MOP200,000 for relief efforts, and is also allocating additional funds through its charity sales.

Speaking to the Times, secretary-general of Caritas Macau Paul Pun said that the fundraising activities would be ongoing for three months.

"We are holding a three-month fundraising process. Tomorrow, we will hold a fundraising activity in Brito School. If possible, in this three months, we will plan a visit to the [affected] areas but not soon," said Pun.

"Hopefully we'll be able to show that local people care for the survivors. It's still the Christmas season [so] I hope we do not forget those in areas who are suffering from natural disasters," he added.

Although Pun admitted that the organization is not expecting a significant amount of funds that will be raised, the official hoped that residents would be aware of the organization's efforts

in raising resources for the victims of the tsunami.

Pun said that there have also been calls on its hotline from people willing to give their assistance to fundraising efforts.

Meanwhile, the Indonesian Migrant Workers Union is holding a fundraising event on Sunday at Three Lamps Square, hoping to raise awareness for the victims.

According to Yosa Wariyanti, chairperson of the association, the association also held small gatherings at the square to raise funds for the victims of the previous natural disasters that occurred in Indonesia.

"It is a bit of assistance to help relieve the burden of the victims. It would be used to purchase their basic needs including food, medicine and other necessities," said Wariyanti. LV



## Supermarket fire outbreak forces evacuation of 30 people

**A** severe fire broke out at a Vang Kei Supermarket located on the Av. do Ouvidor Arriaga, at a junction with R. do Padre Antonio Roliz, at 2 a.m. yesterday.

The windows of the supermarket melted completely during the fire, with only their frames remaining afterwards.

The Fire Services Bureau (CB) used two jets to extinguish the fire. During the fire fighters' operation, hazardous items were removed from the scene. The fire spread across an area of 10m by 20m around the vicinity of the supermarket.

According to the CB, the fire spread quickly due to the fact that the supermarket had an abundance of flammable goods.

In total, the CB deployed eight am-

balances and 33 fire fighters to rescue operations, which were carried out smoothly.

One person felt discomfort after inhaling smoke, and was sent to Conde S. Januário Hospital for further medical assistance. Approximately 30 residents near the location left their buildings on their own initiative.

According to the CB, the fire might have been caused by a mechanical failure in one of the supermarket's fridges.

The owner of the supermarket and Chairman of the Board of Vang Kei Hong, surnamed Yip, felt fortunate that nobody was injured during the accident.

Yip said that, at the current stage, he could not assess the losses resulting from the fire.

## Bus network to extend operation hours during New Year

**I**N order to cope with all sorts of celebrations during the upcoming New Year, the Transport Bureau (DSAT) is going to implement a New Year transportation schedule.

Starting from tomorrow, several roads will implement traffic control, and on December 31, 39 buses will have their last headways set at 1 a.m.

Between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. on both December 28 and 29, between 2 p.m. and 11 p.m. on December 30, and, finally, between 2 p.m. on December 31 and 0:30 a.m. on January 1 of 2019, transportation at some locations in the vicinity of the Rotunda de Carlos da Maia will be suspended.

Between 9 a.m. on December 28 and 12

p.m. on January 1, parking spaces along a section of the R. da Restauração will be closed.

A parking ban will also be implemented at the Nam Van lake plaza, R. Oeste de Entre Lagos, and other areas in the vicinity of the Nam Van.

Restricted traffic will be enforced in the vicinity of the Nam Van lake, the Legislative Assembly, Barra, and the Largo do Carmo as well.

The last headways of many bus routes (including 1, 3 and 10) will depart from their terminals at 1 a.m. on January 1.

The majority of buses passing by the Court of First Instance, the Macau Tower and the vicinity of this area will stop at their corresponding temporary stations.

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REAL ESTATE MATTERS

Micro-apartments in Hong Kong, anyone?

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



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SAM LEE

There was a recent article in the South China Morning Post titled "Hong Kong's infatuation with multimillion-dollar shoebox homes is over as quickly as it began". The article read "of the 1,549 micro-apartments built by 10 developers in Hong Kong since 2016, one in three remained unsold..." and continued to say that according to industry analysts and developers, the micro-apartments will likely fall in price in 2019, with declines up to 30 per cent.

Micro-apartments are typically less than 200 square feet in size, and at the height of the bull market a 190 square-foot flat in Sai Ying Pun broke records when it was sold at HKD 6.52 million, or HKD 34,315 per square foot! The Hong Kong bull market came to an end August of 2018, when the vacancy tax introduced to boost Hong Kong's housing supply started squeezing developers and mortgage rates started rising for the first time in 12 years.

This left some buyers with a very small, and very expensive property with declining value. For some, it could even mean

hitting the dreaded "negative equity" territory where the value of the property is LESS than the amount borrowed against the same property. Negative equity usually occurs when a speculative buyer who is over-leveraged gets caught near the top of the market before it turns. In many cases the property gets foreclosed by the lender, usually a bank, and if this happens across a wider scale it can have devastating economic implications as we know.

Fortunately, we do not have micro-apartments under 200 square feet for sale in Macau, but we are likely to feel the impact of the broader market shifts in Hong Kong. What are a couple of quick lessons we can learn from this situation? The first and most obvious lesson is that we do not want to run into a raging bull-market with cash-in-hand. It is best to stay away from frenzied property sales floors and watch the crowd from a distance. No matter how much it feels like the bull market will continue forever, it never does. The truly good deals are found during bear markets anyway.

The second lesson is that you generally want to avoid the extreme ends of the market. If you buy at the very bottom (micro-apartments) or at the very top (luxury properties) of the market, you'll find that demand can shift very quickly with the turn of the market. The safest place is generally in the middle of the market where demand is more robust. Savvy investors know to buy lower-middle class properties, and add value to turn them into upper-middle class properties. Lastly, we must recognise that real estate is an archaic and stubborn industry. Although there is a true housing crisis in Hong Kong and innovation is required, when it comes to potentially the biggest investment for you and your family, you do not want to be at the cutting-edge of the innovation where there are additional layers of uncertainty. Building micro-apartments was a speculative experiment by the developers in a bull market, but it turns out people don't really want to live in 200 square foot houses if at all possible. Can't say I'm too surprised!



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# Did 2018 usher in a creeping tech dystopia?

Matt O'Brien, AP Technology Writer

**W**E may remember 2018 as the year when technology's dystopian potential became clear, from Facebook's role enabling the harvesting of our personal data for election interference to a seemingly unending series of revelations about the dark side of Silicon Valley's connect-everything ethos.

The list is long: High-tech tools for immigration crackdowns. Fears of smartphone addiction. YouTube algorithms that steer youths into extremism. An experiment in gene-edited babies.

Doorbells and concert venues that can pinpoint individual faces and alert police. Repurposing genealogy websites to hunt for crime suspects based on a relative's DNA. Automated systems that keep tabs of workers' movements and habits. Electric cars in Shanghai transmitting their every movement to the government.

It's been enough to exhaust even the most imaginative sci-fi visionaries. "It doesn't so much feel like we're living in the future now, as that we're living in a retro-future," novelist William Gibson wrote this month on Twitter. "A dark, goofy '90s retro-future."

More awaits us in 2019, as surveillance and data-collection efforts ramp up and artificial intelligence systems start sounding more human, reading facial expressions and generating fake video images so realistic that it will be harder to detect malicious distortions of the truth.

But there are also countermeasures afoot in Congress and state government — and even among tech-firm employees who are more active about ensuring their work is put to positive ends.

"Something that was heartening this year was that accompanying this parade of scandals was a growing public awareness that there's an accountability crisis in tech," said Meredith Whittaker, a co-founder of New York University's AI Now Institute for studying the social implications of artificial intelligence.

The group has compiled a long list of what made 2018 so ominous, though many are examples of the public simply becoming newly aware of problems that have built up for years. Among the most troubling cases was the revelation in March that political data-mining firm Cambridge Analytica swept up personal information of millions of Fa-



Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg arrives to testify before a joint hearing of the Commerce and Judiciary Committees on Capitol Hill

cebook users for the purpose of manipulating national elections.

"It really helped wake up people to the fact that these systems are actually touching the core of our lives and shaping our social institutions," Whittaker said.

That was on top of other Facebook disasters, including its role in fomenting violence in Myanmar, major data breaches and ongoing concerns about its hosting of fake accounts for Russian propaganda.

It wasn't just Facebook. Google attracted concern about its continuous surveillance of users after The Associated Press reported that it was tracking people's movements whether they like it or not.

It also faced internal dissent over its collaboration with the U.S. military to create drones with "computer vision" to help find battlefield targets and a secret proposal to launch a censored search engine in China. And it unveiled a remarkably human-like voice assistant that sounds so real that people on the other end of the phone didn't know they were talking to a computer.

Those and other concerns bubbled up in December as lawmakers grilled Google CEO Sundar Pichai at a congressional hearing — a sequel to similar public reckonings this year with Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and other tech executives.

"It was necessary to convene this hearing because of the

widening gap of distrust between technology companies and the American people," Republican House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy said.

Internet pioneer Vint Cerf said he and other engineers never imagined their vision of a worldwide network of connected computers would morph 45 years later into a surveillance system that collects personal information or a propaganda machine that could sway elections.

**More awaits us in 2019, as surveillance and data-collection efforts ramp up and artificial intelligence systems start sounding more human**

"We were just trying to get it to work," recalled Cerf, who is now Google's chief internet evangelist. "But now that it's in the hands of the general public, there are people who [...] want it to work in a way that obviously does harm, or benefits themselves, or disrupts the political system. So we are going to have to deal

with that."

Contrary to futuristic fears of "super-intelligent" robots taking control, the real dangers of our tech era have crept in more prosaically — often in the form of tech innovations we welcomed for making life more convenient.

Part of experts' concern about the leap into connecting every home device to the internet and letting computers do our work is that the technology is still buggy and influenced by human errors and prejudices. Uber and Tesla were investigated for fatal self-driving car crashes in March, IBM came under scrutiny for working with New York City police to build a facial recognition system that can detect ethnicity, and Amazon took heat for supplying its own flawed facial recognition service to law enforcement agencies.

In some cases, opposition to the tech industry's rush to apply its newest innovations to questionable commercial uses has come from its own employees. Google workers helped scuttle the company's Pentagon drone contract, and workers at Amazon, Microsoft and Salesforce sought to cancel their companies' contracts to supply tech services to immigration authorities.

"It became obvious to a lot of people that the rhetoric of doing good and benefiting society and 'Don't be evil' was not what these companies were actually living up to," said Whittaker, who is also a

research scientist at Google who founded its Open Research group.

At the same time, even some titans of technology have been sounding alarms. Prominent engineers and designers have increasingly spoken out about shielding children from the habit-forming tech products they helped create.

And then there's Microsoft President Brad Smith, who in December called for regulating facial recognition technology so that the "year 2024 doesn't look like a page" from George Orwell's "1984."

In a blog post and a Washington speech, Smith painted a bleak vision of all-seeing government surveillance systems forcing dissidents to hide in darkened rooms "to tap in code with hand signals on each other's arms."

To avoid such an Orwellian scenario, Smith advocates regulating technology so that anyone about to subject themselves to surveillance is properly notified. But privacy advocates argue that's not enough.

Such debates are already happening in states like Illinois, where a strict facial recognition law has faced tech industry challenges, and California, which in 2018 passed the nation's most far-reaching law to give consumers more control over their personal data. It takes effect in 2020.

The issue could find new attention in Congress next year as more Republicans warm up to the idea of basic online privacy regulations and the incoming Democratic House majority takes a more skeptical approach to tech firms that many liberal politicians once viewed as allies — and prolific campaign donors.

The "leave them alone" approach of the early internet era won't work anymore, said Rep. David Cicilline, a Rhode Island Democrat poised to take the helm of the House's antitrust subcommittee.

"We're seeing now some of the consequences of the abuses that can occur in these platforms if they remain unregulated without meaningful oversight or enforcement," Cicilline said.

Too much regulation may bring its own undesirable side effects, Cerf warned.

"It's funny in a way because this online environment was supposed to remove friction from our ability to transact," he said. "If in our desire, if not zeal, to protect people's privacy we throw sand in the gears of everything, we may end up with a very secure system that doesn't work very well." AP



# China heads into trade talks bracing for more US demands

CHINA enters trade talks said to begin early next month in Beijing having made concerted efforts to end the standoff with the U.S., and also unsure it's done enough.

Since Presidents Xi Jinping and Donald Trump came to a temporary truce almost a month ago, China's removed a retaliatory duty on U.S. automobiles and is drafting a law to prevent forced technology transfers. It's also slashed import tariffs on more than 700 products and began buying U.S. crude oil, liquefied natural gas and soybeans again.

Officials have been in constant contact with the U.S. to try to determine what else is needed to move things forward in January, according to people familiar with the talks. It appears to Chinese officials that the U.S. itself isn't clear on what it wants, said the people, who asked not to be named because the negotiations are private.

China wants the U.S. to remove the punitive tariffs that have



been imposed and not add new ones, but suspects the U.S. will ask for more before it agrees to do that, the people said. Officials are working on alternative retaliatory measures in case the talks collapse, they said.

"After the meeting in Argentina, the incentive for China to speed up opening up and reform has increased," said Lu Xiang, an expert in bilateral ties at the state-run Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in

Beijing. "The key obstacle to a deal is whether the U.S. demands are a bottomless pit."

The newly announced measures are a response to the "appropriate U.S. concerns," he said, using the term in the Chinese truce statement which referred to some of the issues the U.S. has raised.

China's flurry of policy announcements since the Argentina meeting between Trump and Xi happened despite Canada's arrest of a top Huawei Technologies executive at the U.S.'s request, and despite Xi delivering a defiant speech declaring China wouldn't be dictated to by anybody. China underscored its determination to implement the agreement by including it as a key goal in an important annual policy statement published last week.

Deputy U.S. Trade Representative Jeffrey Gerrish will lead the Trump administration's team heading to Beijing in the week of Jan. 7, people familiar told Bloomberg News on Wednesday. The group will also in-

clude Treasury Undersecretary for International Affairs David Malpass, the people said.

Chinese Ministry of Commerce spokesman Gao Feng confirmed in a regular briefing Thursday in Beijing that the two sides planned to sit down for talks next month. Gao provided no date and said both countries continue to maintain close communication.

News of the talks was followed by a potential source of renewed strain: a Reuters report saying Trump might declare a national emergency next month that would ban U.S. companies from using telecommunications equipment made by Huawei and ZTE Corp. Asked about the report Thursday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hua Chunying said a "certain country" needed to address cybersecurity concerns with facts and stop politicizing national security issues.

China is eager to seal a deal while at the same time is intent on preserving its economic system, said Jonathan Fenby, chairman of China research at TS Lombard in London. It aims to give Trump enough to be able to claim victory by March, enabling it to get on with the business of modernizing its economy, he said. **Bloomberg**

## Separatist behind Chinese Consulate attack is killed in Afghanistan

A separatist leader blamed for masterminding last month's attack on a Chinese Consulate in Pakistan has been killed in a bombing in Afghanistan, Pakistani officials and the separatist group said yesterday.

Aslam Baloch, one of the leaders of the Baluch Liberation Army, and five of his associates were "martyred" in a blast, according to Jeeyand Baloch, a spokesman for the group. He did not provide further details. Pakistani security officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Baloch was killed Tuesday in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar.

Mohammad Yousof Younosi, a provincial council member from Kandahar, said six people were killed when a suicide bomber attacked a house Tuesday in a wealthy subdivision of the city. He said the blast, which was a block away, blew out the windows of his home and several others in the neighborhood.

He said he knew one of the people killed, who hailed from Pakistan's Baluchistan province, and had alerted



authorities to their presence several weeks ago.

"Their language and clothing was different from ours. I knew they were not from Afghanistan and I worried about who they were," said Younosi. Police arranged for them to relocate, but Younosi said they moved only one block away.

No one immediately claimed the attack. Several militant and separatist groups operate in Baluchistan.

Pakistan has accused Afghanistan of sheltering Baluch separatists, including those behind a deadly attack on the Chinese Consulate in Karachi last month. Afghanistan in turn accuses Pakistan of sheltering the Taliban and other Islamic extremists.

Three gunmen attacked the consulate in Karachi, triggering a shootout that left the assailants, two police officers and two civilians dead. **AP**

## Beijing's answer to GPS extends coverage beyond Asia Pacific

CHINA'S alternative to the American-owned GPS extended its service beyond the Asia-Pacific region yesterday with a goal of becoming a dominating technology in the future.

Called Beidou, the service works like GPS, using a series of satellites to provide users precision positioning with an error of about 10 meters. Most smartphone chips sold globally will be compatible with Beidou, the first navigation system to have built-in telecommunications features such as text messaging.

"From today, wherever you go Beidou will be with you, anywhere, anytime," said Beidou spokesman Ran Chengqi at an event in Beijing.

China started work on its own satellite navigation and positioning system in the 1990s to reduce its dependence on the Global Positioning System developed by the U.S. Named after



the Chinese word for the Big Dipper star pattern, the Beidou system is now in its third stage and is capable of providing navigation and positioning services in different geographical regions. The goal is to have complete worldwide coverage by the end of this decade.

Beidou, which provides navigation and positioning for China's military and critical infrastructure, is finding increasing use in everything from mapping services to cars and smartphones. China launched the 42nd and 43rd Beidou satellites in November, extending coverage to some parts

of Europe and Africa.

Beidou is among a slew of ambitious projects that the world's second-largest economy is undertaking to sharpen its competitiveness in aerospace. Earlier this month, China sent a probe to the far side of the moon, a place no other country's probe has ventured into. The nation is also developing civil passenger aircraft that could eventually rival models from Airbus SE and Boeing Co., while its private startups are racing to launch rockets to send satellites into orbit at low cost to meet demand for commercial space services. **Bloomberg**



TAIWAN

# Thousands protest taxes with nod to French rallies

Ralph Jennings, Taipei

**T**HOUSANDS of Taiwanese, taking a page from France's yellow vest movement, protested yesterday for the third time in a week to demand lower taxes and the fair handling of tax disputes.

Wearing yellow vests, they shouted slogans and blared air horns outside the Ministry of Finance in Taipei, the capital city, and waved banners calling Taiwan's tax collection policies illegal. Some wore clear plastic raincoats over their vests in a light rain.

"This is about our futures," said Joanna Tai, a 23-year-old English-language graduate student who plans to teach after graduation next year.

"We look at wages in Hong Kong and mainland China. We want to know why there's so much of a gap with Taiwan," she said. "Then a lot of my classmates want to start companies and be their own bosses but, because of taxes, a lot of small businesses have folded."

The Tax & Legal Reform League, an activist group, called the protest after marshaling about 20,000 people outside the presidential office in an initial demonstration a week ago, and another 10,000 on Saturday, according to organizers and Taiwanese media.

The organizers said they were inspired by the success of the recent French protests, which turned violent and were blamed for 10 deaths. The



Taiwanese protests have been peaceful.

French President Emmanuel Macron eventually agreed to scrap a tax hike for gasoline and diesel and increase the minimum salary for full-time workers, as well as other steps.

"We saw Macron and he wanted to soften up, so that gave us some encouragement to protest, so we hope the president here can hear our voices," Reform League media liaison Wang Chih-lan said. "The Ministry of Finance is the major culprit. It's a big organization that's causing poverty in Taiwan."

A ministry spokeswoman said earlier this week that anti-

tax activists have been pushing for lower taxes for about 20 years. Tsai Meng-chu said that the ministry has responded to some of their complaints on its website, including a rebuttal to allegations that the tax system contributes to poverty. "Their complaints are just that they're not satisfied with the tax system," she said, noting that Taiwan offers payment deferrals to low-income individuals.

Protesters said they had received tax bills sent in error or asking for too much tax. An appeal costs too much, they said, and tax collectors sometimes keep hounding them for taxes even after losing in court.

Income taxes add hardship to young people in low-paid, entry-level jobs, some said.

The average monthly wage in Taiwan is USD1,364, and the minimum wage is set to rise to \$750 in January. During her campaign, President Tsai Ingwen said she would work on wages and welfare for youth.

Taiwanese who earn less than \$2.42 million New Taiwan dollars (about \$78,500) a year pay no more than 20 percent in taxes, according to data compiled by professional services firm KPMG.

KPMG ranked Taiwan 33rd for the world's highest taxes on a list of 135 countries and regions. France ranked 12th. **AP**

## Ex-deputy intelligence chief given life sentence



Ma Jian appears in a Dalian courtroom

**C**HINA'S former deputy intelligence chief was sentenced yesterday to life in prison for corruption.

Ma Jian has been found guilty of crimes including accepting bribes and insider trading, said a court in the northeastern port city of Dalian. Ma, who previously was the vice minister of the state security bureau, was also ordered to pay more than 50 million yuan (USD7.26 million) in penalties.

The court said in a statement online that Ma used his political power to aid the business operations of Guo Wengui, a real estate billionaire wanted by Chinese authorities. The New York-based Guo has published a slew of online videos in which he makes sensational allegations of corruption in the upper echelons of China's ruling Communist Party.

Guo gained control of a national securities company after Ma sent letters addressed from the state security bureau to threaten and pressure individuals to hand over their shares to Guo. Separately, Ma also obtained insider information about the same company whose shares his relatives later purchased, resulting in profits of more than 49 million yuan (\$7.2 million).

Ma is the latest top official to be ensnared in Chinese President Xi Jinping's banner anti-corruption campaign, which he launched shortly after taking power in 2012. Xi pledged to take down both high-level "tigers" and low-level "flies" in a drive to purge the ruling Communist Party of rampant corruption.

The initiative has won Xi broad popularity among the general public, but his critics — Guo included — have called the crackdown a convenient way to eliminate political enemies. **AP**

## Investment in Germany plunged in second half, EY says

**C**HINESE companies spent far less on German firms in the second half of this year as Chancellor Angela Merkel's government moved to tighten its grip on foreign investment, according to data compiled by business services provider Ernst & Young LLP.

Chinese investment in German takeovers or in stakes in German companies plunged to USD311 million during the period from almost \$10 billion in the first half of 2018. The number of transactions for the full year dropped to 34, compared with 54 in 2017 and 68 the previous year.

"We expect the number to stabilize next year," Yi Sun, an EY China business specialist, was quoted as saying by the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, which first published the figures. "It will take some time before we see another slight increase."

Merkel's cabinet this month agreed to lower the threshold for government probes of foreign stakes in German businesses to 10 percent, driven by concern about China's efforts to gain footholds in sensitive industries, such as those related to security and defense. Media companies are also included, while the previous 25 percent threshold remains in force for all other cases.

Germany has stepped up pressure for coordinated EU action since the takeover of robot maker Kuka AG by China's Midea Group Co.

in 2016. That led the government to rethink its tools for shielding technology companies and securing German competitiveness.

German state-owned investment bank KfW agreed in July to temporarily acquire a 20 percent stake in 50Hertz Transmission GmbH, thwarting an attempted acquisition by a Chinese company.

In August, Merkel's cabinet stopped a Chinese bid for the first time by vetoing the potential purchase of machi-

ne-tool manufacturer Leifeld Metal Spinning AG.

EY is advising Chinese clients to avoid investing in German companies like aerospace suppliers, Yi Sun told the FAZ. Europe's biggest economy nonetheless remains "relatively open" compared to the U.S. and Canada, and there are investment opportunities in machinery, auto parts, health care, pharma and chemicals, she added.

EY's figures for 2018 are inflated by Zhejiang Geely Holding Group Co.'s acquisition in February of a stake of almost 10 percent in Daimler AG, FAZ said. **AP**



INDONESIA

# Danger zone around island volcano widened

Syawaludin Zain, Niniek Karmini

**I**NDONESIA raised the danger level for an island volcano that triggered a tsunami on the weekend, killing at least 430 people in Sumatra and Java, and widened its no-go zone.

The country's volcanology agency said yesterday that the Anak Krakatau volcano's alert status had been raised to the second-highest level and the exclusion zone more than doubled to a 5-kilometer radius.

The eruption on Saturday evening caused part of the island in the Sunda Strait to collapse into the sea, apparently generating tsunami waves of more than 2 meters. Most tsunamis are caused by earthquakes.

The government has warned communities in the strait to stay a kilometer away from the coastline because of the risk of another tsunami triggered by Krakatau's eruptions. A navy vessel was expected to pass by the island later yesterday, which could give scientists more information about the risks of a second collapse.

"There's still a chance of a landslide, even under the sea

level or on the sea level," said Rudy Sunendar, head of the energy ministry's geology department.

"We don't know exactly because we are not yet gone to the field" due to bad weather, he told The Associated Press at the volcano's monitoring post. "Based on the satellite imagery interpretation, there is collapse of some area of Mount Anak Krakatau."

Saturday's disaster struck without warning, surprising people in a country that regularly suffers landslides, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. No big earthquake shook the ground beforehand, and the waves surged inland at night on a holiday weekend while people were enjoying concerts and other beachside activities.

Indonesia's tsunami warning system relies on land seismometers and buoys connected to tidal gauges and is not equipped to detect underwater landslides. The system, in any case, has not operated for years because the buoys have been vandalized or not maintained because of low funding.

Heavy rains and high seas

AP PHOTO



A man cleans the debris from a house in a tsunami-hit area in Carita

have hampered the search for victims. Some bodies were found at sea and at least 159 people are missing.

Yesterday, residents of badly affected Banten province on Java island were searching through the debris of destroyed or damaged homes for anything salvageable.

"I've lost everything I have, my house and all belongings inside it," said farmer Muhammad Sarta.

"I just hope for some help from the government," he said. "Hopefully there will be some repairs. I have nowhere to go. I have no money. Whatever I had was lost in the water."

Radar data from satellites, converted into images, shows Anak Krakatau shrunk dramatically following Saturday's eruption.

Satellite photos aren't available because of cloud cover but radar images from a Japan

Aerospace Exploration Agency satellite taken before and after the eruption show the volcano's southwestern flank has disappeared.

JAXA's post-eruption image shows concentric waves radiating from the island, which experts say is caused by its ongoing eruptions.

Dave Petley, head of research and innovation at Sheffield University who analyzed similar images from a European Space Agency satellite, said they support the theory that a landslide, most of it undersea, caused the tsunami.

"The challenge now is to interpret what might be happening on the volcano, and what might happen next," he wrote in a blog.

Anak Krakatau, which means Child of Krakatau, is the offspring of the infamous Krakatau volcano that affected the global climate with a massive eruption in 1883.

Anak Krakatau first rose above sea level in 1929, according to Indonesia's volcanology agency, and has been increasing its land mass since then. AP

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Ashok Sharma, Shonal Ganguly

**I**NDIAN authorities have ordered firefighters in the capital to sprinkle water from high-rise buildings to settle dust and stop garbage fires and have banned construction activity as hazardous air quality affects millions of people.

New Delhi recorded one of the highest pollution levels of the year on Sunday with the air quality index, measuring sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide, touching 450.

The air started improving Wednesday with an increase in wind speed. However, the level of PM 2.5, tiny particulate matter that can dangerously clog lungs, exceeded 320 yesterday, more than 13 times beyond what the World Health Organization considers safe, according to the U.S. Embassy reading.

A government advisory asked people to avoid jogging outdoor and use masks. The government has banned diesel vehicles that are more than 10 years old. It also ordered builders to cover construction sites to stop dust enveloping the area.

"There are so many cars [...] there is so much dust. It all goes inside [our body]. If we don't wear a mask then we face a lot of [health] problems," said Om Prakash, a traffic police constable wearing a protective mask on a New Delhi road.



Motorcyclists wearing pollution masks ride in New Delhi

INDIA

# Firefighters battle air pollution in New Delhi

ring a protective mask on a New Delhi road.

India's air pollution comes

mostly from diesel fuel-burning vehicles, coal-fired

power plants and crop bur-

ning. It worsens in the dry

winters, as winds die down and pollution pools over the

Delhi plains.

Vehicular smog mixes with smoke from festival-season fireworks as well as countless illegal pyres of garbage burned by homeless migrants to stay warm as temperatures near freezing. And the construction sends up clouds of dust.

Vivek Chattopadhyaya, a senior program manager with New Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment, said that air quality most of the days in and around the Indian capital during the winter season was "very poor, poor and severe."

"Delhi's air quality, when we say improvement, what we notice is that it falls from severe to very poor days. None of the days are good, satisfactory or even moderately polluted," he said. "We need to meet the quality standards, which are the safest standards for the people to breathe the air. So that should be our target."

The Indian capital saw some success following a 1998-2003 program that removed power plants from the city center and adopted compressed natural gas, CNG, for running buses and rickshaws. The buses had run on diesel and the rickshaws on gasoline and highly polluting kerosene. Of all possible fuels, CNG releases the smallest amounts of particulate matter.

But years later the pollution levels are back up. **AP**

JAPAN

# Whalers unhappy with plan to resume hunts

Isabel Reynolds

**C**OUNT Japan's own whalers among those unhappy with the government's plan to resume commercial hunts - but not in the bountiful whaling grounds around Antarctica.

A Japanese foreign ministry official told reporters yesterday in Tokyo that whalers were also upset with the plan. The briefing came a day after Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government drew international criticism with its decision to withdraw from the International Whaling Commission and resume commercial hunts in its exclusive economic zone.

The move to end "scientific" hunts in near Antarctica was opposed by the local whaling industry, the foreign ministry official said, declining to be identified according to ministry policy. The official called the



Packs of whale meat to be sold hang at a whale meat specialty store in Tokyo

decision to end hunts in the Southern Ocean - where Japanese whalers have sometimes clashed with environmental activists - a "painful" one.

New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters was among officials to object to the move Wednesday, calling whaling an "outdated and unnecessary practice." Still, both New Zealand and Australia welcomed the end to the Southern Ocean hunting.

Japan says it kills about 600 whales a year and the

industry employs fewer than 300 people. Yet the issue has an out-sized presence in the national psyche, which the foreign ministry official compared to matters like gun control and abortion in the U.S. Norway and Iceland -- both members of the whaling commission -- also hunt commercially.

Japan plans to use a method laid out by the commission to calculate a sustainable harvest. The first hunt is set to take place in July. **Bloomberg**

# Small bombs hit popular southern Thai beach, damaging statue

**T**WO small bombs exploded at a popular beach in southern Thailand, one of them damaging an iconic statue beloved by tourists, police said.

Police in Songkhla province said they're looking into whether the bombs late Wednesday were related to a Muslim separatist insurgency that has wracked nearby provinces since 2004, taking almost 7,000 lives.

One of the explosions damaged the Golden Mermaid statue, which is an unofficial symbol of the province, said police Lt. Gen. Ronnasilp Phusara. The other took place about 300 meters away, near the beach's Cat and Mouse sculpture.

Police said a bomb disposal squad discovered and destroyed three other explosive devices found near a trash area and under

rocks near the Golden Mermaid statue.

The insurgency has mostly affected the three southernmost provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, which have Muslim majorities in predominantly Buddhist Thailand. Songkhla, with a substantial Muslim population, has generally been spared the violence, though its biggest city, Hat Yai, has suffered several bombings.

Although terrorism is not considered a major problem in Thailand, tourist spots have been sporadically targeted since 2006, when a series of bombs were set off in Bangkok at New Year's Eve gatherings, killing three people and wounding more than three dozen. In 2016, bomb explosions in five beach towns popular with tourists killed four

people and wounded dozens.

In both cases, southern separatists were suspected but responsibility was never definitively established.

Thailand's most spectacular attack in recent years occurred at the Erawan Shrine in the center of Bangkok's tourist district in August 2015. Twenty people, mostly foreign tourists, were killed and more than 100 hurt.

Thai authorities blamed human traffickers angry at a crackdown, but another theory holds that it was carried out by militants from China's Muslim Uighur minority in retaliation for Thailand sending back to China a group of Uighurs who had fled repression there. Two Uighur men are currently on trial for the bombing. **AP**





## VATICAN

# Pope's initial blind spot on sex abuse threatens legacy

Nicole Winfield, Vatican City

**I**T has been a wretched year for Pope Francis, whose blind spot on clergy sex abuse conspired with events beyond his control to threaten his legacy and throw the Catholic hierarchy into a credibility crisis not seen in modern times.

The latest development — a high-profile verdict in a far-away country — cements the impression that Francis simply didn't "get it" when he first became pope in 2013 and began leading the church.

Early missteps included associating with compromised cardinals and bishops and downplaying or dismissing rumors of abuse and cover-up. Francis finally came around in 2018, when he publicly admitted he was wrong about a case in Chile, made amends, and laid the groundwork for the future by calling an abuse prevention summit next year.

But damage to his moral authority on the issue has been done. Before his eyes were opened, Francis showed that he was a product of the very clerical culture he so often denounces, ever ready to take the word of the clerical class over victims.

The year started off well enough: Francis dedicated his annual Jan. 1 peace message to the plight of migrants and refugees. Soon thereafter, he baptized 34 cooing babies in the Sistine Chapel and urged their mothers to nurse, a typical Franciscan show of informal practicality amid the splendor of Michelangelo's "Last Judgment."

Then came Chile.

Francis' January visit was dominated by the clergy abuse scandal there, and featured unprecedented protests against a papal visit: churches were firebombed and riot police used water cannons to quell demonstrations.

Chilean opposition to Francis had actually begun three years prior, when the Argentine-born pope appointed Juan Barros as

bishop of the southern diocese of Osorno. Francis had dismissed allegations that Barros ignored and covered up abuse by Chile's most prominent predator priest, imposing him on a diocese that wanted nothing to do with him.

"The day they bring me proof against Bishop Barros, I'll speak," Francis said on his final day in Chile. "There is not one shed of proof against him. It's all slander. Is that clear?"

Francis defended Barros because one of his friends and advisers, Chilean Cardinal Javier Errazuriz, defended Barros. Francis in 2013 had named Errazuriz to his inner circle, a formal parallel cabinet of nine cardinals who meet every three months at the Vatican.

Chilean victims, though, had long charged that Errazuriz had been deaf to their claims while he was archbishop of Santiago, giving cover to abusers and their enablers. Francis disregarded the victims' concerns and appointed Errazuriz to the high-profile cabinet post.

In the wake of his disastrous trip to Chile, Francis slowly came around to the victims' view, in part in response to reporting by The Associated Press. He ordered an in-depth investigation into the Chilean church, admitted to "grave errors in judgment" and personally apologized to the victims he had discredited. He accused the Chilean leadership of creating a "culture of cover-up" and secured the resignations of every active bishop there, Barros included. He vowed that the Catholic Church would "never again" hide abuse, and earlier this month the Vatican announced Francis had fired Errazuriz from the cabinet.

Also removed was Cardinal George Pell, who left his post as the Vatican's economy minister in June 2017 to stand trial for historical sex abuse offenses in his native Australia. Like Errazuriz, Pell had been the target of abuse victims' ire for years, well before

Francis brought him to the Vatican, given his prominent role in Australia and the church's horrific record with abuse there.

Both men deny wrongdoing. But their continued presence on the Council of Nine, as the cabinet is called, became a source of scandal for the pope, who bid them farewell in October with a letter thanking them for their service. For Pell, the C9 removal suggests he won't resume work at the Vatican since his five-year term expires early next year.

**■ By summer, Francis appeared to be well on his way to steering himself out of the 2018 sex abuse crisis. Then Round 2 hit**

They are not the only cardinals on the hot seat: The current archbishop of Santiago is under investigation in a broad criminal inquiry into sex abuse cover-up. Prosecutors in a dozen U.S. states are investigating church files. A cover-up trial in France has two cardinals as defendants, including the Spaniard who heads the Vatican office that processes sex abuse cases. The Holy See invoked sovereign immunity to spare Spain's Cardinal Luis Ladaria Ferrer. But it has no such power to protect Cardinal Philippe Barbarin, the archbishop of Lyon, France, who is accused of failing to report a self-confessed abusive priest to authorities. Francis has said French justice should take its course but has

praised Barbarin as "brave."

Despite such problems, with the Chile scandal largely atoned for and decisions made to purge his inner circle of compromised members, Francis appeared by summer to be well on his way to steering himself out of the 2018 sex abuse crisis.

Then Round 2 hit.

In July, Francis removed U.S. Archbishop Theodore McCarrick as a cardinal after church investigators said an allegation that he groped a teenage altar boy in the 1970s was credible. Subsequently, several former seminarians and priests reported that they too had been abused or harassed by McCarrick as adults.

A month later, a grand jury report in Pennsylvania revealed seven decades of abuse and cover-up in six dioceses, with allegations that more than 1,000 children had been molested by about 300 priests. Most of the priests were dead, and the crimes far predated Francis' papacy.

But the combined scandal created a crisis in confidence in the U.S. and Vatican hierarchy. It was apparently common knowledge in the U.S. and Vatican leadership that "Uncle Ted," as McCarrick was known, slept with seminarians, and yet he still he rose undisturbed up the church ranks.

Having removed McCarrick and approved a canonical trial against him, Francis should have emerged as the hero in the saga since he righted the wrong of St. John Paul II, the pope from 1978-2005 who had promoted McCarrick to begin with and whose record on abuse issues is far worse than Francis' given his inaction.

But Francis' get-tough victory lap was cut short when a former Vatican ambassador to the U.S. accused the pope himself of participating in the McCarrick cover-up.

In an 11-page denunciation in August, Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano claimed that Vatican offi-

cial from the top on down over the course of three pontificates had known about McCarrick's penchant for seminarians, and turned a blind eye.

Vigano wrote that he had told Francis in 2013, at the start of his pontificate, that McCarrick had "corrupted a generation" of seminarians and priests and that Pope Benedict XVI had eventually sanctioned him for his sexual misconduct.

Vigano claimed Francis disregarded his 2013 warning and rehabilitated McCarrick from those sanctions, making him a key adviser and entrusting him with delicate missions to China and elsewhere.

Francis never responded to Vigano's laundry list of claims. Instead, Francis took to blaming the devil — "the Great Accuser" — for sowing division and discord in the church, an indirect jab at Vigano that only fueled conservative outrage at Francis and demands that he come clean about what he knew about McCarrick and when.

The Vatican didn't help Francis' standing any when, without providing any plausible reason, it blocked U.S. bishops from adopting accountability measures to try to restore trust with their flocks.

It now seems clear that Francis, at least at the start of his pontificate, was willing to overlook past sexual misbehavior or cover-up claims if those responsible had atoned. Francis launched his pontificate with his famous "Who am I to judge" comment, about a gay priest whom he had appointed to a top advisory position despite allegations he had had a string of lovers.

That comment, which won him plaudits from liberal Catholics and landed him on the cover of Advocate magazine, may now be his undoing. If he had judged his advisers more scrupulously at the start of his pontificate on their abuse and cover-up records, he might have retained more credibility in 2018. **AP**



**A**N Israeli security official has confirmed responsibility for overnight airstrikes in Syria, saying the air force had hit a series of targets involved in Iranian arms transfers to the Hezbollah militant group.

Russia had criticized the airstrike, saying it endangered civilian flights. The comments highlighted the increasingly tense relations between Israel and Russia, which have grown strained since the September downing of a Russian plane by Syrian forces responding to another Israeli raid.

The Israeli official said the air force had attacked several Iranian targets in three main locations late Tuesday and early Wednesday. He said the targets were primarily storage and logistics facilities used by archenemy Iran to ship weapons to Hezbollah, an Iranian-backed Lebanese group that fought Israel in a 2006 war.

The Israeli official said it was Syrian air defenses that endangered the civilian planes, by firing 30 missiles in response to the airstrike. He also claimed that Iranian forces are operating less than 80 kilometers from the Israeli border, contrary to Russian assurances.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity under standard Israeli security protocols. The military has not commented on the incident.

**SYRIA**

# Israeli official confirms airstrikes as Russia objects

On Wednesday, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said that six Israeli F-16 jets launched a "provocative" raid at the moment when two civilian airliners were preparing to land in Damascus and Beirut, creating a "direct threat" to the aircraft.

Lebanon's acting Transport Minister Youssef Fenianos confirmed Konashenkov's account, saying the two airplanes in Lebanese airspace "narrowly" escaped Israeli warplanes, averting a "human catastrophe." Fenianos said Lebanon will present a complaint to the U.N. Security Council.

Konashenkov said the Syrian military didn't fully engage its air defense assets to avoid accidentally hitting the passenger jets. He added that Syrian air traffic controllers redirected the Damascus-bound plane to a Russian air base in Syria's coastal province of Latakia.

Konashenkov said Syrian air defense forces shot down 14 of the 16 precision-guided bombs



dropped by the Israeli jets, while the remaining two hit a Syrian military depot 7 kilometers west of Damascus, wounding three Syrian soldiers.

The Israeli official said the Israeli jets hit all their targets, in some cases causing secondary explosions. He said they also destroyed a Syrian anti-aircraft battery.

In recent years, Israel has acknowledged carrying out scores of airstrikes in neighboring Syria, most believed to have been aimed at suspected Iranian arms shipments to Hezbollah. Iran and Hezbollah have sent forces to Syria to bolster President Bashar Assad, who appears close to victory after a devastating seven-year civil war.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has repeatedly said Israel will not allow Iran to establish a permanent military presence in postwar Syria.

Israeli officials have also expressed concern about U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw U.S. forces from Syria. The U.S. presence has given Israel an extra element of protection.

The Syrian Foreign Ministry accused Israel of exacerbating the crisis in the country and standing in the way of the government's war on terrorism.

In messages sent to the U.N. secretary-general and the president of the Security Council, the ministry said the Israeli airstrike wouldn't have been launched if it wasn't for what it called "unlimited" U.S. support for Israel.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a war monitor, said Tuesday's Israeli strike targeted three positions south of Damascus that are arms depots for Hezbollah and Iranian forces. **MDT/AP**




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**TV canal macau**

**FRIDAY**

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

**SATURDAY**

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

**SUNDAY**

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

**Offbeat**

**OFFICIALS: MAN BROKE INTO HOME, GOT OWNER TO GIVE HIM A RIDE**



Authorities in Maine say a man broke into a home, had a bite to eat, watched TV and even got a car ride from his unsuspecting victim.

The York County sheriff's office said 35-year-old Derek Tarbox broke into a Waterboro home Sunday afternoon, took a shower, got dressed in the homeowner's clothing and was watching television when the homeowner arrived. The intruder said he mistakenly thought the house belonged to a friend and asked for a ride home.

The homeowner told authorities that seemed plausible, so he drove him to a house in Hollis, which actually belonged to Tarbox's relatives. The victim later realized his home had been ransacked.

Tarbox, who was arrested in Limrick, was due to be arraigned on burglary and other charges Wednesday. It was unclear if he has a lawyer.

**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**



**1993 MAFIA LINK IN COCAINE HAUL**

British customs officials have seized £70m of Colombian cocaine which is thought to be directly linked to the Mafia.

The discovery of more than a quarter of a tonne of cocaine came after British Customs and Excise officials were tipped off by Italian anti-Mafia investigators.

The international operation also involved the help of Colombian police.

More than a tonne of cocaine was seized, 263 kg of it was impounded in Britain and the rest in Sicily where two Italians were arrested.

In Britain two men, from north London and Chelmsford, Essex, were remanded in custody at Ipswich magistrates court charged with smuggling.

A third man was released on police bail.

"This is the first confirmed involvement of the Mafia in drugs smuggling into the UK. The job was the province of the police in Rome and we acted after we received instructions from them," a Customs and Excise spokesman said.

The Colombian merchant vessel, Maipo, travelled directly to Britain and docked at Felixstowe where customs officers had been preparing for their arrival since last week.

Customs officials were in waiting as a container adapted to hide drugs was unloaded on the dock.

The three men were kept under surveillance for two days when they were arrested as they returned to Felixstowe to pick up the drug.

The haul is believed to have originated from one of the world's largest drug cartels - the Medellin in Colombia.

Investigators claim it is unusual for parties from a third country to be involved in smuggling from South America.

They suggest it indicates the Mafia is increasing its grip on the world's drug trade by filling the gap created by the death of the Colombian drugs baron, Pablo Escobar, the head of the Medellin cartel.

He was ambushed and shot by Colombian police earlier this month.

Courtesy BBC News

**IN CONTEXT**

British, Italian, and Colombian anti-drug officials hailed a new era of international co-operation following the seizure in Britain that partly disrupted Colombia's Cali cartel.

In total, 13 people in three countries were arrested.

The seizure was part of a larger operation by Italian forces to curb the activities of the mafia who had apparently identified Britain as a "safe" place to be on the run.

British detectives said the mafia had established "cells" in the country and they were involved in at least nine areas of serious crime, including fraud, arms dealing and drug trafficking. The former president was executed on 30 December 2006 after Iraq's highest court rejected an appeal.

The Iraqi government filmed the event to prove that Saddam Hussein was dead. It stopped short of showing the actual hanging. Unofficial footage taken on a mobile phone revealed that he was taunted by his Shia executioners right up until the moment of his death. More camera-phone pictures emerged a week later showing his body with a severe neck wound - shocking images that exacerbated tensions between Sunni and Shia Muslims.



YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Your hard work is coming to a head today, and you may find that you need to just step back and let the results speak for themselves.

Taurus April 20-May 20 Art holds special appeal today, so seek out a museum you love or find something totally new and enthralling.

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 A boundary emerges that you hadn't seen - or even considered - before. Things may get a little weird as you adjust, but the good news is that this should clarify an important relationship.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Now is the time for you to follow up on that one old email or task that you've been putting off for too long.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Your desires may stretch a little further than reality will allow today, but that just means you've got to find ways to stick closer to the truth.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 Go out somewhere new and strange and wonderful tonight - your energy demands a change of pace!

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 It's just way too easy for you to freak out over a seeming abandonment today - but if you can let it happen you should soon find that it's just a test of freedom.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 Sometimes you are rigid, and then there are days like today. You can tell that if you're not flexible, things are unlikely to go your way.

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 A new responsibility comes your way - are you ready for it? You may have to deal with a little backlash, but you are sure to take to it with relish once the adjustment period is over.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 A pervasive sense of fun suffuses the day - no matter what else is happening. Somehow, your good energy lifts your spirits and you find yourself smiling, at least on the inside.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 It's time for a change - but not one of your famous radical shifts. This is a good day for something small and progressive, just enough so that people take notice but not so much that they get nervous.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 Your communication skills are legendary today, thanks to an infusion of great energy that guides your hand or tongue as you form words.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

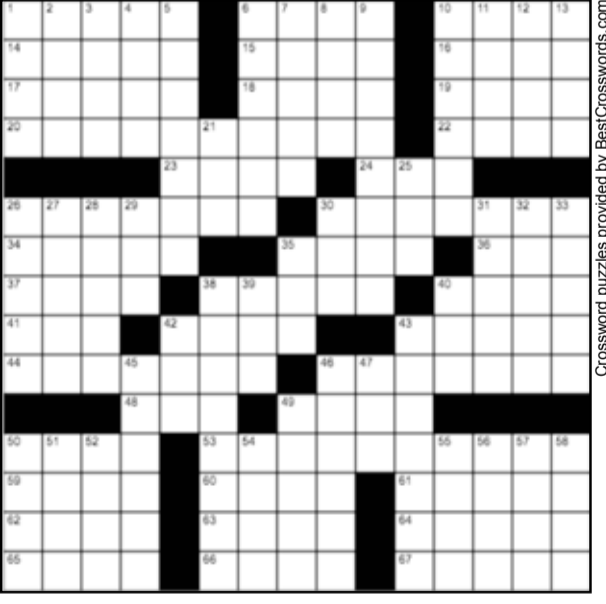
Sudoku puzzles categorized by difficulty: Easy, Easy+, Medium, and Hard. Each category contains a 9x9 grid with some numbers pre-filled.

WEATHER

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

CROSSWORDS

Crossword puzzle clues and solutions. Includes 'ACROSS' and 'DOWN' clues, and a 'Yesterday's solution' grid with filled-in words.



USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

List of useful telephone numbers including Emergency calls (999), Fire department (28 572 222), Police (993), Customs (28 559 944), and others.




Real estate advertisement for JML Property, featuring 'FOR SALE' and 'FOR RENT' listings for various properties in Macau and Taipa, including Sea View Condo, Ocean Garden Elm Court, and Va Fat Taipa.

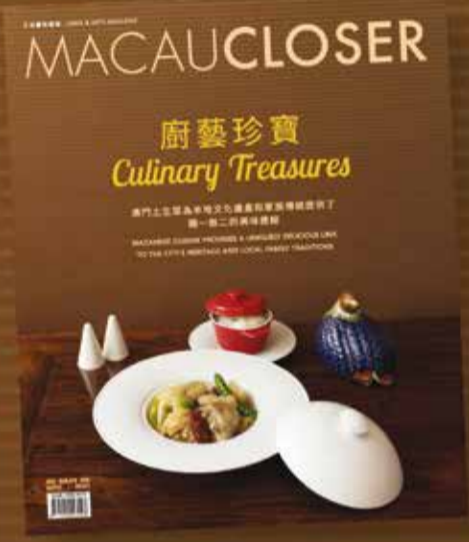


# MACAUCLOSER

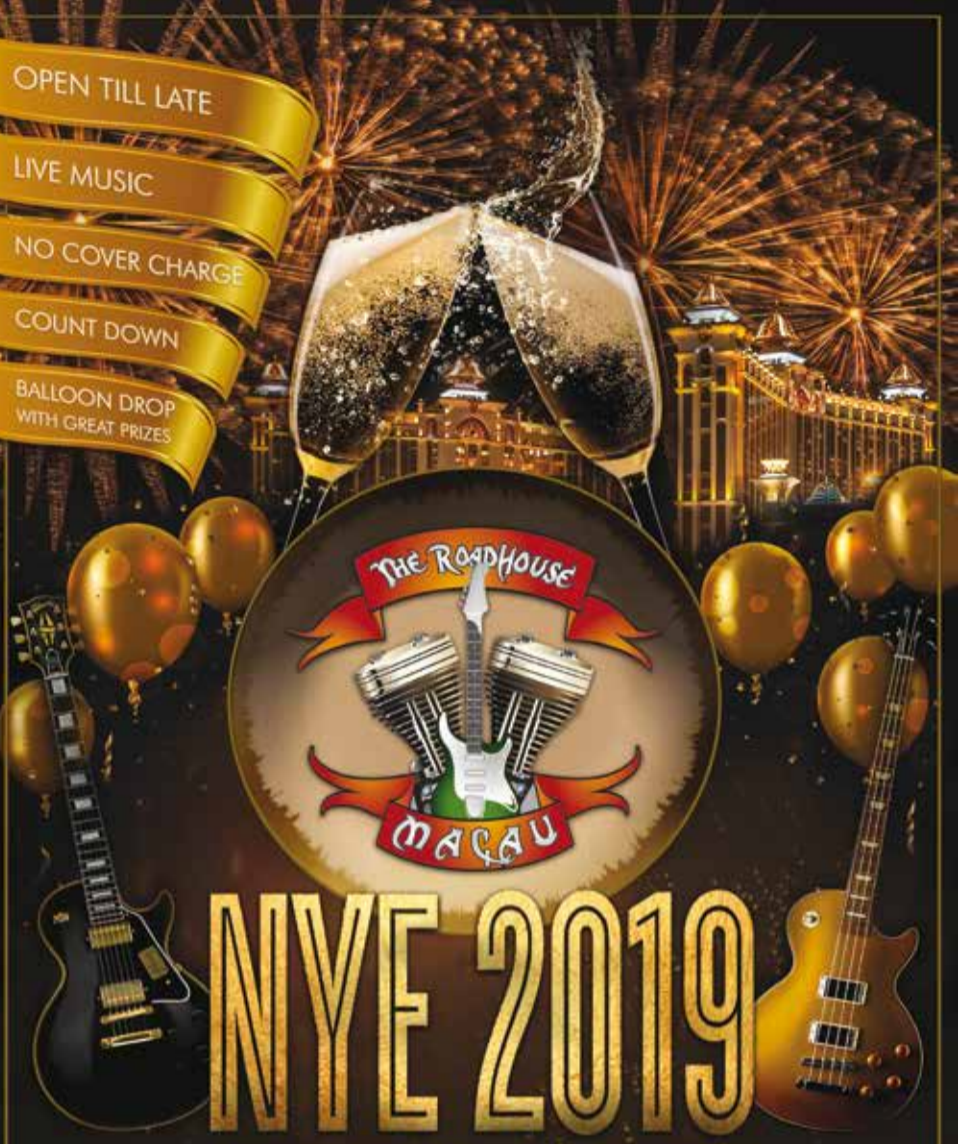
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Amanda Lee Myers

**A**N Oregon man became the first person to traverse Antarctica alone without any assistance on Wednesday, trekking across the polar continent in an epic 54-day journey that was previously deemed impossible.

Colin O'Brady, of Portland, finished the bone-chilling, 930-mile (1,500-kilometer) journey as friends, family and fans tracked the endurance athlete's progress in real time online.

"I did it!" a tearful O'Brady said on a call to his family gathered in Portland for the holidays, according to his wife, Jenna Besaw.

"It was an emotional call," she said. "He seemed overwhelmed by love and gratitude, and he really wanted to say 'Thank you' to all of us."

O'Brady was sleeping near the finish line in Antarctica late Wednesday and could not immediately be reached for comment.

The 33-year-old O'Brady documented his nearly entirely uphill journey — which he called *The Impossible First* — on his Instagram page. He wrote Wednesday that he covered the last roughly 80 miles (129 kilometers) in one big, impromptu final push to the finish line that took well over an entire day.

"While the last 32 hours were some of the most challenging hours of my life, they have quite honestly been some of the best moments I have ever experienced," O'Brady posted.

The day before, he posted that he was "in the zone" and thought he could make it to the end in one go.

"I'm listening to my body and taking care of the details to keep myself safe," he wrote. "I called home and talked to my mom, sister and wife — I promised them I will stop



# American man first to solo across Antarctica unaided

when I need to."

Though others have traversed Antarctica, they either had assistance with reinforced supplies or kites that helped propel them forward.

**"I'm no longer the same person I was when I left on the journey, can you see it in my face?"**

COLIN O'BRADY

In 2016, British explorer Henry Worsley died attempting an unassisted solo trip across Antarctica, collapsing from

exhaustion toward the end of the trek. Worsley's friend and fellow English adventurer Louis Rudd is currently attempting an unaided solo in Worsley's honor and was competing against O'Brady to be the first to do it.

Besaw said O'Brady plans to stay on Antarctica until Rudd finishes his trek, hopefully in the next few days.

"It's a small club," she joked. "His intention is to wait for Louis and have kind of a celebratory moment with the only other person on the planet to have accomplished this same thing."

O'Brady described in detail the ups and downs along the way since he began the trek on Nov. 3. He had to haul 375 pounds (170 kilograms) of gear largely uphill and over sastrugi, wave-like ridges created by wind.

"Not only am I pulling my [...] sled all day, but I'm pulling it

up and over thousands of these sastrugi speed bumps created by the violent wind," he wrote in an Instagram post on Nov. 12. "It's a frustrating process at times to say the least."

On Nov. 18, he wrote that he awoke to find his sled completely buried from an all-night blasting of wind and snow. That day he battled a 30 mph (48 kph) headwind for eight hours as he trudged along.

"There were several times I considered stopping, putting my tent back up and calling it a day," he wrote. "I wanted so badly to quit today as I was feeling exhausted and alone, but remembering all of the positivity that so many people have been sending, I took a deep breath and focused on maintaining forward progress one step at a time and managed to finish a full day."

On Day 37, or Dec. 9, O'Brady wrote about how much he's

changed, along with a selfie in which he looks almost in pain, snow gathered around his furry hat.

"I'm no longer the same person I was when I left on the journey, can you see it in my face?" he wrote. "I've suffered, been deathly afraid, cold and alone. I've laughed and danced, cried tears of joy and been awestruck with love and inspiration."

Though O'Brady had initially thought he'd want a cheeseburger at the end of his nearly impossible journey, Besaw said her husband has been fantasizing about fresh fish and salad because he has mostly been eating freeze-dried foods.

As for what's next for O'Brady, who also has summited Mount Everest, Besaw said she's not entirely sure.

"We are just so in the moment celebrating this right now," she said. "Then we'll see what's next on the horizon." **AP**

## SAILING

# Comanche regains lead in Sydney to Hobart

**COMANCHE** regained the lead in the Sydney to Hobart yacht race yesterday after rival Wild Oats XI had taken the overnight lead among a tight tussle of the four remaining supermaxis.

The line honors favorite Comanche currently holds a small lead with only half a dozen miles separating Black Jack, InfoTrack and nine-times winner Wild Oats XI, as the line honors contenders commenced their crossing of Bass Strait earlier Thursday.

After winds dropped on Wednesday evening, Comanche's 2017 race re-

cord mark of 1 day, 9 hours, 15 minutes 24 seconds appears to be safe as the lead boats are not expected to arrive in Hobart, Tasmania until Friday morning, well past the 1115 GMT required to set a new record.

Winds are expected to swing around to the west before changing to the south.

The all-female crewed Wild Oats X, skippered by Australian Stacey Jackson but with sailors from Britain, New Zealand, the U.S. and the Netherlands is about 20 nautical miles behind InfoTrack in the 630-nautical-mile race

(1,170 kilometers) down the southeastern Australian coast, across Bass Strait and into Hobart, the capital of the island state of Tasmania.

M3 Team Hungary became the latest of four boats to retire from the 85-strong fleet and has made her way to Ulladulla on the New South Wales south coast.

International supermaxi entry Sun Hung Kai Scallywag from Hong Kong was one of two early retirements on Wednesday after it sustained a broken bow sprint. The other retirees are TP52 Zen and Patriot. **AP**





opinion

**Bizcuits**  
Leanda Lee



**TIME: THE CHRISTMAS GIFT**

Christmas 2018 marks the year we sent nothing to landfill.

Ten family members sat down to Christmas dinner of ham (honey-glazed with assistance from the bees up the garden), and roast crackling pork, prawns done two ways, the salads, and bread and smoked salmon eased down with a prequel magnum of Moët while we stood out under the grapefruit tree, and a scattering of local wines thereafter. The secret family Christmas pudding recipe was ceremoniously passed on to the most deserving of the next generation in another momentous occurrence.

The previous day, Grandma's short-bread, (fruit-)mince pies, freshly baked scones with jam from the neighbours' loquats and - in a nod beyond sugar and carbohydrates - Quiche Lorraine with home-made cheese and greens plucked from the veggie patch were had for afternoon tea with 13 friends and neighbourhood drop-ins: the 7-month aged fruit cake, force-fed with brandy over that period, and covered by now with rock-hard royal icing was the pièce de résistance.

As I write, a rumbling on the road in front of the house alerts me to our waste-free status this Christmas; the weekly rubbish truck just passed by not ten minutes ago - it is late this post-Christmas stinking-hot 36-degree Australian Thursday afternoon, as I enjoy summer holidays with family. Late, probably due to the driver having to stop every now and again to collect Christmas thank-you presents left out by the generous and thoughtful.

Our bins had not been put out last night for collection because, although there were bottles and cans for recycling, it could go another month or so, and the bin destined for landfill had had nothing added to it this week - this Christmas week!

As the abundance on the table suggests, there were no scrooge moments. We had lots of presents under the Christmas tree, a real one smelling of freshly-cut pine, reminiscent of a 1970s after-shave. It has taken us five years of mindful consumption and - as some might say - slow indoctrination, but this year it all came together.

Wrapping and ribbons had been put aside from previous years and reused creatively, just as in my childhood; jams, jellies and biscuits had been baked and presented in glass with pretty cloth wrapping and hand-written cards; special truffle oils and salt bought; exquisite cologne and "happy" socks; and lots of books exchanged. The little girl next door was happier unwrapping and messily savouring her favourite fruit and crawling after our retreating dog than receiving some bit of momentary attention-holding plastic thing. Watching the dog doing a body-wag as he snuffled his way through brown paper to his chicken-treat had all eyes smiling - he had been sniffing at that package under the tree for days!

We had largely skipped the supermarket this year. Brandy custard in tetra-paks, pavlovas in cardboard boxes, brandy-snaps and cakes in moulded plastic, puddings and all the trappings are readily available, and it really would only take an hour to gather everything together for a bang-up Christmas luncheon. But that's not special. Anything so readily accessible by simply opening a wallet to a faceless corporation just does not cut it in the "special" category stakes. Besides, the wastage and plastic footprint from such consumption quickly tips it into the "ugly" category. Instead, we planned and pre-ordered ingredients from local producers and grew and made a lot.

The one major investment this year has been time - together.

Conversations had throughout the year that had revealed preferences had been listened to and remembered in the planning over the months. Somehow, investing time to understand individually held gift-related philosophies and quirks really made a big difference this year. Some chose not to give, and some chose not to receive, some chose to participate and some to observe Christmas. And, it was good.

**THE WYNN ACCUSES GENTING OF COPYING ITS LOOKS FOR LAS VEGAS PROJECT**

Genting Group's USD4 billion foray in the heart of American gambling was met with a lawsuit by Wynn Resorts Ltd., which says the competitor's yet-to-open property in Las Vegas looks too similar to its own marquee properties.

The design of Genting's Resorts World Las Vegas, directly across the street from Wynn Las Vegas and Encore, is "substantially and confusingly similar" - including a concave facade and horizontal banding above and between the lines of glass panes, according to the trademark infringement complaint Wynn filed in federal court in Las Vegas.

Resorts World Las Vegas will have a unique Chinese theme, according to its website. It will compete with Wynn and other Las Vegas casino operators for high-spending Asian gamblers who visit the city. The resort will include a hotel, multiple authentic, regional Chinese restaurants, more than 100,000 square foot in gaming space, as well as retail and nightlife, according to its website.

Representatives of Resorts World Las Vegas didn't immediately respond to a request for comment on the Dec. 21 lawsuit.

**Queen Elizabeth II riffs on wisdom, family's busy year**

Gregory Katz, Frank Augstein

QUEEN Elizabeth II wove personal reflections into the latest edition of her annual Christmas message, saying she hoped her long life brought a measure of wisdom and noting her grandchildren's contributions to Britain's royal family.

The 92-year-old queen, the world's longest-reigning living monarch, also included the customary tribute to military personnel and wishes for world peace in the message, which was pre-recorded at Buckingham Palace and televised Tuesday.

"Some cultures believe a long life brings wisdom," Elizabeth said in the recording. "I'd like to think so. Perhaps part of that wisdom is to recognize some of life's baffling paradoxes, such as the way human beings have a huge propensity for good and yet a capacity for evil."

On a lighter note, the queen listed the House of Windsor's 2018 milestones with the same unabashed pride of someone writing their yearly Christmas letter for friends and far-flung relatives.

"It's been a busy year for my family, with two weddings and two babies, and another child expected soon. It helps to keep a grandmother well occupied," Elizabeth said, not forgetting to mention her own firstborn.

"We have had other celebrations too, including the 70th birthday of The Prince of Wales," otherwise known as heir to the throne Prince Charles.

The annual message was broadcast to many of the 53 Commonwealth countries. Elizabeth recalled that her father, King George VI, welcomed eight former British colonies at the first meeting of Commonwealth leaders in 1948.

"Even with the most deeply held differences, treating the other person with respect and as a fellow human being is always a good first step towards greater understanding," she said.

The queen mentioned her father, from whom she



inherited the throne when he died in 1952, again while expressing gratitude for soldiers and sailors past and present. During World War I, two decades before his own unexpected ascension to the throne, he served with the Royal Navy and saw friends killed in battle, Elizabeth said.

**Some cultures believe a long life brings wisdom. I'd like to think so.**

QUEEN ELIZABETH II

"At Christmas, we become keenly aware of loved ones who have died, whatever the circumstances. But, of course, we would not grieve if we did not love.

Earlier in the day, Elizabeth and her family received cheers from a Christmas crowd when they arrived for a church service in the English countryside. A chauffeured limousine delivered the queen, while her descendants and their spouses walked from a nearby estate of the monarch's.

Prince Charles led the way, followed by his sons: Prince William and his wife, Catherine, and Prince Harry and his pregnant wife, Meghan. Harry and the former American actress known as Meghan Markle married in May and are expecting their first child in the spring.

The couple walked arm in arm next to William and Ca-

therine. Many in the crowd wished them "Merry Christmas" as they strolled to the church in the English countryside on a cold, wintry morning.

After the 45-minute service, people gave them flowers as they headed back for a traditional Christmas lunch.

The queen's husband, Prince Philip, who is 97 and largely retired from public life, did not attend the service. Charles' wife Camilla, who is recovering from flu, also missed church.

William and Catherine's three children - Prince George, 5, Princess Charlotte, 3, and 8-month-old Prince Louis, also stayed home.

Britain's royals usually exchange small gifts on Christmas Eve, a practice popularized by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. The queen typically frowns on extravagant gifts, and many of the presents are novelty items.

When the queen was younger, Christmas meant a brisk family walk through the woods on Christmas or an excursion on horseback.

Elizabeth delivered her first Christmas Day message when she took the throne in 1952. The seasonal addresses aired on the radio until she made the transition to television in 1957.

They have been broadcast during every year of her reign save one. In 1969, the queen decided her family had received enough exposure from giving a TV crew unusual access for a documentary. That year, she issued the message in writing. **AP**

Station	Air quality
Roadside	60-80 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	40-60 Moderate
Ambient	60-80 Moderate

SOURCE: DSI/MG

**WORLD BRIEFS**

**BANGLADESH**'s main opposition alliance has demanded the resignation of the chief election commissioner, accusing him of bias, ahead of Sunday's elections while violence worsens, officials and news reports said.

**AFGHANISTAN** A separatist leader blamed for masterminding last month's attack on a Chinese Consulate in Pakistan has been killed in a bombing in Afghanistan, Pakistani officials and the separatist group said yesterday. **More on p10**



**SYRIA** An Israeli security official has confirmed responsibility for overnight airstrikes in Syria, saying the air force had hit a series of targets involved in Iranian arms transfers to the Hezbollah militant group. **More on p15**

**SAUDI ARABIA**'s King Salman issued a wide-ranging overhaul of top government posts yesterday following international fallout from the killing of writer Jamal Khashoggi nearly three months ago.



**CONGO** Police in eastern Congo fired live ammunition and tear gas yesterday to disperse more than 100 people protesting a presidential election delay, blamed on a deadly Ebola outbreak, that means more than 1 million votes will not count.

**ICELAND** An SUV carrying seven members of a British family plunged off a high bridge yesterday in Iceland, killing three people and critically injuring the others, authorities said.

**VENEZUELA** A strong earthquake jolted Venezuelans from their sleep early yesterday, forcing residents in the capital to evacuate buildings in their pajamas before sunrise. There were no immediate reports of casualties.