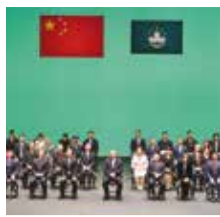




LARGE SCALE REGATTA KICKS OFF

▲ P2



GOV'T HANDS OUT HONORIFIC TITLES

Former lawmaker and businessman Chan Meng Kam was the recipient of the Grand Lotus Decoration of Honor

▲ P10-11 PHOTO SHOP



NEW-LOOK MILITARY DRILLS ANNOUNCED

Taiwan's military yesterday announced a series of newly designed large-scale military drills for this year

▲ P9 CHINA



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WORLD BRIEFS

VIETNAM Facebook was defending itself yesterday against allegations that it allows illegal content in violation of Vietnam's new cybersecurity law. The social media giant said it has restricted illegal content and is in discussions with the government. [More on p13](#)



PHILIPPINES A mammoth crowd of mostly barefoot Filipino Catholics joined a raucous procession yesterday of a centuries-old black statue of Jesus Christ despite terrorism fears and amid the president's attacks on the Catholic faith. [More on p13](#)

AUSTRALIA Several foreign diplomatic missions were evacuated in the Australian cities of Melbourne and Canberra yesterday after they received packages containing suspicious substances. [More on p14](#)



IRAN-US Iran's supreme leader yesterday called U.S. officials "first-class idiots," mocking American leaders as U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo toured the Mideast to promote the White House's tough stance on Iran.

SYRIA Russian military police have started patrolling the surroundings of the northern Syrian Kurdish-held town of Manbij. A representative for the military police told reporters that Russia's mission is to ensure safety in the Manbij area, and monitor moves of militant groups.

[More on backpage](#)

TAIPA SECTION OPENS IN 2ND HALF OF 2019

Light Rapid Transit fares not decided yet

▲ P3



China car sales fall for the first time in 20 years

▲ P8

BLOOMBERG

First edition of the Macao Cup International Regatta kicks off today

Renato Marques

THE first-ever edition of the Macao Cup International Regatta kicks off today and will run until Sunday, with 20 teams divided into two different competitions.

Up for grabs will be prizes for overall winners of HKD20,000, 10,000 and 8,000, respectively for first, second and third in each group. In the first group are ten teams representing ten different countries: Australia, Canada, Estonia, France, Germany, Japan, Philippines, Russia, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates. Teams will be racing in a unified boat category using Beneteau First 40.7 sailing boats.

The second group comprises ten teams from the Greater Bay Area that will race according to International Rating Certificate rules, a system of handicapping different design and size sailboats and yachts for the purpose of racing. In this group, the Macao SAR is represented by two teams (Wanboyu Sailing and Macau Sugram) that will face strong competition from more experienced teams coming from Hong Kong, Shenzhen and Guangzhou.

The four-day event will take place in the waters around Hac Sa Beach in the form of round-the-island and course races. The



start and finish is at the Macao Fisherman's Wharf (MFW) with a fleet parade to be organized on the first and last days of competition so the public can enjoy the sailing action up close from both the Peninsula coastline between MFW and the Macau Tower and from Taipa's Ocean Gardens area.

Concurrent with the competition, a sailing exhibition will be held for the four days of the event between noon and 3 p.m. in the waters of the south section of the Inner Harbor and Macau Tower.

The event, co-organized by the government and a local com-



This is the first time for Macau to host a large-scale international regatta, ushering in a new era for water sports.

CHRISTINE LAM
ID ACTING PRESIDENT

pany, Across Four Oceans Sailing Event Management, is said to have a total budget of around MOP20 million, of which "one-third would be supported by the government through the Sports

Bureau [ID] and that one-third is a little over MOP6 million" according to the head of the Macau Grand Prix and Major Sporting Events Department from the ID, See Lei.

Lei also noted that the idea of organizing the event came from Across Four Oceans Sailing Event Management, and the government and in particular the ID, "thought it was a good idea, as it was a good opportunity to make us of our sea, promote Macau and also promote this sporting activity."

In her opening speech, the acting president of the ID, Christine Lam mentioned, "this is the first time for Macau to host a large-scale international regatta, ushering in a new era for water sports in Macau at an international level," adding, "it also plays an active role to facilitate the development of water sports."

Lam also noted the rich experience of many of the participants, saying that the presence of "some claiming numerous international awards and accolades," is a reason to expect that "the races will be thrilling and exhilarating."

As a piece of advice, Lam said the Fleet Parade would be "a rare sight" that "residents and tourists should not miss."

Among the noted entry list, the highlight goes to French legend sailing captain Lionel Péan, winner of several international sailing events, including the 1986 Whitbread Round the World Race now known as Volvo Ocean Race.

Gaming and hotel employees' skills competition to be held next week

Julie Zhu

THE first Macau Integrated Tourism and Leisure Enterprise Vocational Skills Competition will kick off next Tuesday, the Macao Federation of Trade Unions announced this week.

The event consists of three separate contests: one for gaming entertainment vocational skills, another for hotel integrated service vocational skills, and the third for world gastronomy city vo-

vocational skills.

The competitions are supported by the Institute for Tourism Studies (IFT), by the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) and by the Macao Polytechnic Institute.

The schools will provide spaces and facilities for the competitions, with the schools also sending their representatives to serve as jury members.

The six gaming operators will also be sending a team to each competition.

The competition will kick off with the gaming vocational skills category on January 15 at the workers' stadium. Each team will consist of two members. The participants will be requested to calculate cards, among other gaming table skills.

On January 17, at IFT, the hotel service skills competition will be carried out. Each team will consist of three members, who will be given tasks related to handling hotel room arrangements.

The cooking skills competition will be held on January 18 at MUST's teaching kitchen. Each team will consist of five members. For this competition, teams will be requested to cook an appetizer, a main course and a dessert.

In the first two categories, the organizer will set the third runner-up.

For the cooking skill competition, the third runner-up, best appetizer, best main course, the best dessert and the best

cooking counter will be awarded.

The award ceremony will be conducted at the Fisherman's Wharf on January 23.

At the sidelines of the press conference, president of the Macau Federation of Trade Unions, Chan Kam Meng, hoped that the competition can help Macau's tourism and leisure companies to maintain their world-class services, and that the competition can encourage the gaming employees'

vocational quality.

"Our hotels are world first-class. Macau is the center of the world's gaming industry. Our service level has been continuously improving, which let tourists enjoy Macau's service," said Chan.

"Actually, we are considering [inviting international teams] to participate in the competition. This is the first edition, so we are promoting locals to improve their skills. In the future, for the second or third editions, we will consider ways to invite high-level tourism and leisure teams to compete in Macau in order to enhance our communication and [help] our services improve," said Chan.

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LRT Taipa section to open in second half of this year

THE Transportation Infrastructure Office (GIT) issued a statement on Tuesday announcing that the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) will open in the second half of 2019.

The GIT also clarified that the government has not yet made a final decision regarding the LRT fare, as it is currently conducting studies.

Moreover, the GIT announced that the LRT Barra section and its affiliated transportation hub is expected to be completed in 2024, and thus the Taipa and Barra sections will be connected.

In the first quarter of 2019, the government expects to launch a public tender for the LRT Seac Pai Van line, as reported by the GIT.

On Tuesday, GIT representatives had a meeting with the island advisory council. During the meeting, according to the council members, a GIT representative revealed that LRT operation hours are planned to be between 6 a.m. and 1 a.m.



In total, there will be 11 stations and 55 cars, with each car able to transport a maximum of 100 people.

Furthermore, as reported by the council members, the company responsible for the operations, run by Hong Kong's MTR corporation, has more than 300 employees, more than 200 of whom are Macau locals.

Yesterday, the third Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly (AL) met with govern-

ment representatives, including the Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário, to discuss the LRT system law.

On the sidelines of the meeting, Raimundo do Rosário clarified that the government has not yet decided upon the LRT Taipa section's operation hours and fares. Raimundo further noted that the city's law clearly states that public transportation fares should be decided

upon by the government.

In addition to the abovementioned matters, the government is also open to granting LRT supervisors a certain amount of power while they execute their duties. The government will disclose more information about this matter to the lawmakers during their next meeting. The government will also conduct research on the electronic payment of LRT tickets. **JZ**

IC expects more film applications in 2019

The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) believes that more non-local companies will seek to film in Macau in 2019. On the sidelines of yesterday's Greater Bay Area Film Industry Forum, IC director Mok Ian Ian said she believes that due to the 20th anniversary of the Macau handover this year, there will be more television and film products about Macau, and in view of this, Mok believes that there will be more non-local film industry groups applying to shoot in the city in 2019.

Macau mascot hoped to be as influential as Japanese

The Macau tourism authority is considering inviting local designers to explore products based on the Macau mascot, the black-faced spoonbill Mak Mak. Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) Director, Helena de Senna Fernandes, said she hopes local designers and recreational companies can develop a series of souvenirs based on Mak Mak. She also hopes that these products can reach an eventual outcome similar to that of Japanese mascot Kumamon.

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ANM calls for probe on delayed annulment of Ocean World plot

Lynzy Valles

THE New Macau Association (ANM) handed a petition letter to the Legislative Assembly (AL) yesterday, urging lawmakers to investigate the government's delay in terminating the land concession of Ocean World.

In December, the government announced the annulment of the land concession of the Ocean World land after its utilization expired in 2001.

Although the plot land was leased in 1997, the land was not developed.

ANM recalled that in 2009, the process of reviewing unutilized land finally began, yet only in 2016 was a report submitted to the Chief Executive by the Secretariat for Transport and Public Works.

According to the association, the process has been "strangely long" and lacked transparency.

"During the land recovery procedure, there were many delays, it didn't reasonably use our land, and the land recovery procedure was not transparent, which violates the principle that the public has the right to know," said Chan



Lok Kei, a member of the association.

"It has been 17 years. There was an unreasonable situation in the recovery procedure," Chan added.

The association believes that if the land had been reclaimed earlier, there would have been "public facility, environmental reservation or public housing in

place" by now.

"Why does the CE need two years to officially announce the recovery procedure? There are many problems we don't understand. We hope that the AL can fulfill its duty in monitoring the government, and request the government to explain and publicize the explanation to the public," Chan said.

Chan recalled that in 2017, the AL questioned the government about the case, yet said the only reply was that it was following the case and had no information for the public.

ANM stressed that if irregularities are found after an investigation, the government must be held accountable and measures must be taken to prevent a simi-

lar case from occurring.

In its petition, it also questioned measures the government would take to implement the principle of public knowledge as stipulated in the land law. "Especially, how can the public know whether a land concession is in the process of annulment," it added.

"At this moment, what the government is doing is little, which makes the public not able to know information about current circumstances [regarding] Macau's land resources," said Chan.

"We hope that the AL can review the government's work on whether there were abnormal actions. We think that AL should fulfill bigger duties in handling these problems; the basic laws say that the AL should receive the residents' petition, and the AL should supervise the government and its administration," he added.

Moreover, the association criticized the government's claim that it had never explained the status and the follow-up of the city's idle land, including Ocean World.

"The public has no idea whether the land is considered unutilized, whether an extension of usage period is approved, whether the contractor is fined or whether the process of annulment has started. It is outrageous that the public knows so little about something that matters so much to us," the association noted.

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466 overloaded vehicle cases recorded in 2018

A total of 466 cases involving overloaded vehicles were recorded throughout 2018, according to statistics released yesterday by the Public Security Police Force (PSP).

In 2018, the PSP continued operations against traffic violations across all areas of Macau.

During the same period, 1,168 jaywalking cases were registered, along with 1,364 cases where vehicles failed to give priority to pedestrians.

The number of overloaded vehicles and jaywalking cases registered decreases of 30.13 percent and 18.66 percent from 2017 respectively, whereas the number of vehicles failing to give priority to pedestrians increased 1.57 percent year-on-year. In 2017, the figures for these three types of violations were 667 cases, 1,150 cases, and, 1,677 cases.

In the fourth quarter of 2018, there were 117 cases of overloaded vehicles, 312 cases of jaywalking,



and 298 cases of vehicles that did not give priority to pedestrians.

In 2018, a total of 6,126 taxi offences (compared to 5,491 offences in 2017) were recorded by the PSP.

Among them, 3,846 offences (62.8 percent) were related to overcharging, representing an increase of 20.9 percent year-on-year.

There were 1,336 offences (21.8 percent) related to refusing to carry passengers, representing a decrease of 15.1 percent

year-on-year.

There were 13 cases (0.2 percent) of taxi drivers who did not queue up to pick up passengers, down 73.5 percent compared to 2017.

Some 931 (15.2 percent) cases involved other violations, which represents a 35.3 percent increase year-on-year.

During the same period, the police recorded 165 cases involving unauthorized taxis, none of which were related to mobile taxi hailing services.



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HK buyers exceed local buyers in properties bought in Hengqin

Julie Zhu

FOR the first time, there are more Hong Kong residents purchasing properties in Hengqin than Macau residents, the Centaline Property (Macau) revealed yesterday during a press conference on the Macau and Hengqin property market in 2018.

Some 27.9 percent of Hengqin property buyers are Hong Kong residents, while 27.3 percent are Macau buyers.

This outcome was facilitated by the opening of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge, and is also a result of more Macau single-plated cars being allowed to enter Hengqin, according to Centaline Property analysis.

According to the company, in 2018, a total of 38,486 transactions of Zhuhai property were made, representing an increase of more than 30 percent.

In addition to this increase, Centaline Property (Macau) director Jacky Shek Po Tak expects property prices to increase in 2019 by about 20 percent.

The implementation of the Zhuhai talented people program and the relaxation of talented people's housing purchase policy, among other policies for talented human resources, are believed to attract more talented people to Hengqin, which suggests a likely surging demand for houses in the area across 2019.

The most popular criteria for buyers in Hengqin is the proximity to the Hengqin border gate, as 34 percent of Hengqin's property sales were in the vicinity of the Hengqin border.

Among the property transactions around the border, approximately 49 percent were transactions of commercial properties, followed by office property transactions (38 percent).

Regarding the Macau property market, Shek predicted that, this year, the num-



Jacky Shek

ber of transactions concerning first-hand house purchases will decrease to approximately 8,000, which means that each of the city's real estate agents will deal with an average of 1.5 transactions.

Currently, there are 5,456 real estate licensed agents in Macau.

Pun Chi Meng, Secretary-General of Centaline (Macau), reported that the commissions earned by the company from Hengqin transactions amounted to approximately HKD170 million in 2018, which was a slight decrease compared to the previous year.

"Commissions concerning Hengqin properties increased 10 percent," said Pun, "whereas commissions from the Macau market decreased several percentage points."

Commissions from the entire Asia Pacific market reached HKD5.4 billion, marking a new historical peak for Centaline's commission earnings.

Altogether, Centaline's company branches earned a total of HKD18.9 billion in commissions in 2018.

'Gate of Understanding' revamp to start soon



THE "Gate of Understanding" (Portas do Entendimento), a monument erected in the 1990s in the Sai Van area to symbolize Luso-Chinese relations, will be finally given a major revamp. The revamp will repair the monument and make it available for public visits. A ceremony was held this week to open the public tender process for the rebuilding of the monument.

The 40-metre tall monument was completed in 1993 and closed for safety reasons several years ago, after parts of the structure deteriorated to the point that they fell off.

Now, after the launching of the public tender for proposals to conduct the repair works of the monument, the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT) will soon start the work. So far, it has received a total of 20 proposals with prices ranging from MOP36 million to MOP48 million.

The DSSOPT said the proposed works are intended to support the platform and the connecting dock. In previous inspections, the bureau said that in addition to parts of the granite cladding falling, the pillars supporting the connecting dock were sloped.

The company that wins the tender will undertake works to replace the hooks that hold the walls, and demolish and rebuild the connecting bridge dock between land and the monument. These works will not cause any changes to the structure's exterior appearance, according to the DSSOPT.

In a statement, the bureau noted that the repair works are expected to start in the second quarter of this year and will have a maximum of execution period of 536 working days. **RM**

50m mainland border crossings made by local residents

In 2018, a total of 50.31 million visitor arrivals in mainland China were the result of Macau residents, according to the latest statistics released by the National Immigration Administration. A total of 650 million crossings were recorded across all of mainland China's borders, representing an increase of 9.9 percent year-on-year. Nearly 140 million people crossed the Zhuhai Gongbei border checkpoint. There were 3.3 million crossings recorded across the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge Zhuhai checkpoint.

Entrepreneurship competition open for applications

The Bank of China Trophy One Million Dollar Macao Regional Entrepreneurship Competition, hosted by the University of Macau, is now open for applications. All students currently studying at higher education institutions in Macau and residents studying at overseas tertiary institutions are eligible to apply. The deadline for applications is Feb. 13. The cash prize for the Macau regional competition is MOP120,000. The top three winners of the regional competition will advance to the grand final stage to compete for a cash prize of RMB1 million and an opportunity to win funding in excess of RMB50 million.

Hong Kong, Japan set to enhance arbitration cooperation

The Hong Kong Department of Justice and the Ministry of Justice of Japan yesterday signed a Memorandum of Cooperation to strengthen Hong Kong-Japan collaboration on international arbitration and mediation. The agreement was signed by Hong Kong's Secretary for Justice Teresa Cheng and Japanese Minister of Justice Takashi Yamashita. It provides a framework for the two sides to strengthen communication, collaboration and cooperation on issues relating to international arbitration and mediation and to facilitate the development of services for international arbitration and mediation in the two places, the HKSAR government's Department of Justice said.

Chan Kai Chon appointed as IC deputy-director

CHAN Kai Chon has been appointed the new deputy-director of the Cultural Affairs Bureau, according to a dispatch published in the government official gazette. His term will start on January 12.

Chan was appointed as the replacement to Ieong Chi Kin, whose service as IC vice director ended on January 1.

Chan is the current director of the Macau Museum of Art (MAM), a role which he began in 2017. Chan holds a bachelor's degree from Jinan University, a master's degree from Nanjing Normal University, and PhD from the Central Academy of Fine Arts.

The IC issued a statement yesterday clarifying that it was Ieong's request to end his term. In addition to Ieong, another two senior individuals at the IC have also requested to end their terms: the head of the bureau's organization, administration, finance management department; and the head of the academic and publication department.

New issue of 'Books and the City' launched

THE Macau Public Library launched the 16th issue of "Books and the City." The issue addresses a study on the balanced application of intelligence and manpower in smart libraries, exploring ways of integrating both elements to optimize library services and create a favorable reading environment.

The issue includes the column "Library Portrait," where two staff members from the Department of Information Technology of the Macau Public Library discuss the current and future application of information technology in public libraries in the region. The column "Library Handbook" introduces the highly sought-after program "Library e-lesson" and the

column "Author's Say" invites Macau illustrator Yolanda Kog to introduce her first individual publication, "Home." The column "Library Wonder Why" continues to answer readers' enquiries about libraries, while the column "New Launch" gives readers information about a rich variety of new arrivals, including books, movies, music and magazines. This issue also features ten brief yet insightful book reviews in Chinese, Portuguese and English.

A total of 3,000 copies of "Books and the City" are available free of charge at all libraries under the Cultural Affairs Bureau, tertiary institutions, Tap Seac Gallery and several bookstores.



CHINA

Car sales just fell for first time in over 20 years

THE growth engine for the world's car industry has been thrown into reverse, with China recording the first annual slump in auto sales in at more than two decades and more pain predicted in 2019.

Sales in the world's biggest market fell 6 percent to 22.7 million units last year, the first annual decline in at least two decades, the China Passenger Car Association said yesterday. The unresolved trade war and a slump in Chinese stocks is putting off buyers, signaling more trouble for an industry where warning lights are already flashing worldwide.

The USD12.2 trillion economy is under strain as mainland consumers tighten their belts, as shown by Apple Inc.'s cut in revenue outlook this month because of slowing iPhone demand in China. The car industry - also affected by the rising popularity of ride-hailing services - has been particularly hard hit, prompting the government to prepare for stimulus measures to revive sales.

Manufacturers that spent billions of dollars adding plants and production lines in China in the past decades are now left asking if and when growth will return. A continued aggressive expansion would risk saddling the companies with excessive capacity, while a too cautious approach would hurt the companies' ability to take advantage of a rebound.

"Pressure on automakers is mounting," said Cui Dongshu, secretary general of the PCA. "Declining car sales may speed up the process of squeezing out the incompetent players and we may see some of them exit the market next year."

What's happening in China is a reflection of the situation worldwide, with rising prices, political



upheaval, dislike for diesel and new services such as car-sharing eating into auto demand in markets such as the U.K. and the U.S. With the last great hope - China - also faltering, the global auto industry may already be in recession, according to RBC Capital Markets.

Sales volumes will probably fall 7 percent this year in China as the car market enters an unprecedented multi-quarter decline, Goldman Sachs Group Inc. predicted this week. Volumes may start to recover in 2020, rising 3 percent, the company forecasts.

The China Association of Automobile Manufacturers expects the market to be unchanged in 2019. While demand for gasoline cars wanes, rising sales of electric cars will probably help the overall market to avoid another slump, the association said in its outlook issued Dec. 13.

"Demand for vehicles is still there, yet it may take about three years for the market to pick up pace," the CAAM said. "The overall uncertainties that may undermine car purchases include

volatility in economic development and China's trade relations with the U.S."

The PCA, which tracks the auto retail market, has said it expects sales to rise 1.2 percent in 2019. Car-ownership restrictions in major cities including Beijing have been weighing on demand, and a possible relaxation of such curbs may help boost sales over the coming year, the association said yesterday. In December, retail sales of sedans, multipurpose vehicles and sport utility vehicles plummeted 19 percent - the seventh straight monthly drop.

EXPANSION PLANS

Manufacturers now need to decide whether to go through with costly expansion and modification plans. Ford Motor Co. has said it plans to introduce more than 50 new vehicles by 2025 and increase local production for Ford and Lincoln brands in China. VW, the top foreign brand in China, plans to invest about 4 billion euros (USD4.5 billion) in the country in 2019 together with partners.

demand," said Patrick Yuan, an analyst at Jefferies Hong Kong Ltd. "Continuous growth of the car market comes from consumers' rising disposable income and expectation of that."

ELECTRIC HOPE

Carmakers are now increasingly placing their bets on electric vehicles, which are gaining popularity amid China's environmental policies. Wholesales of electric cars, plug-in hybrids and fuel-cell vehicles may rise by about a third in 2019 to 1.6 million units after topping the 1 million mark for the first time in 2018, the CAAM predicts.

Tesla Inc. is accelerating its push in China with a planned manufacturing presence, and the U.S. company will compete against electric cars by global brands such as Volkswagen AG, BMW AG and GM as well as dozens of local manufacturers seeking a piece of the pie.

While the EV numbers are still small - just a few percent of total car sales - the growth rates are impressive. An early foothold in electric-car sales puts a brand in better position to reap the rewards down the road, when such vehicles are expected to surpass gas guzzlers.

Like in other areas of China's economy, government policies to a large extent dictate the car industry's fortunes. And now the state is putting all its might behind electric vehicles, introducing stringent rules to promote the sale and production of greener cars. Major manufacturers will be punished unless they meet quotas for zero- and low-emission cars or buy credits from other companies that exceed the quotas.

"Electric vehicles will continue to gain share, accelerated by mobility services, car plate restrictions on gasoline-powered cars and the dual-credit scheme," said Bill Russo, founder and CEO of Shanghai-based consultancy Automobility Ltd. "Vehicle sales maybe flat or declining, yet the market is being served more efficiently with shared mobility." **Bloomberg**

corporate bits

BENE PRESENTS CUISINES FROM NORTH ITALY



Bene Italian Kitchen is presenting its Food & Wine Mercato, which enables diners to experience Italy's cuisines across a variety of themes that pay homage to

the country's gastronomical heritage.

Under the direction of executive sous chef Luca Pecorari, the 2019 Mercato series held on a Friday and Saturday in the middle of every month, begins the New Year featuring 'The North' - cuisine from the northern parts of Italy.

The restaurant will feature dishes that reflect the northern Italian landscape - which has a focus on dairy, according to a statement released by the Sheraton Grand Macao Hotel.

Other themes to look forward to in 2019 include a tribute to the Venetian Carnival in February, The Alfafi Coast in March for seafood lovers, and Food from Famous Films in April.

CEM TO HOLD ANNUAL ENERGY FAIR ON SUNDAY



CEM will be holding its Energy Fun Fair this Sunday at Tap Seac Square, from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., in which 12 local secondary schools will take part.

Aiming to enhance the interest and knowledge of the citizens, particularly within the younger generation, regarding electricity and its efficient and safe usage,

this year's edition is themed "Smarter Actions for a Powerful Generation."

The theme seeks to promote smart energy and eco energy usage, the electric company said in a statement.

As part of the day, students will create art pieces by using solely recycled items and stage performances.

They will compete for the "Best Booth Design Contest", "Recycled Art Piece Contest", "Talents Contest", "My Favorite Booth" and "Best Cheering Group" prizes.

Another activity is the "Recycling/Reusing Workshop," where participants can bring along their own plastic bottles and socks to make utensils and toys.

US, China wrap up talks on tariff battle

Joe McDonald, Beijing

THREE days of U.S.-Chinese talks aimed at ending a costly tariff battle wrapped up yesterday in an optimistic atmosphere after President Donald Trump said they were “going very well!”

No details were immediately announced, but Asian stock markets rose after talks planned for two days were extended to three. Hong Kong's main market index closed up 2.1 percent and Tokyo rose 1.1 percent.

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesman, Lu Kang, announced the talks had ended. Lu said he had no details and an official statement would be issued later.

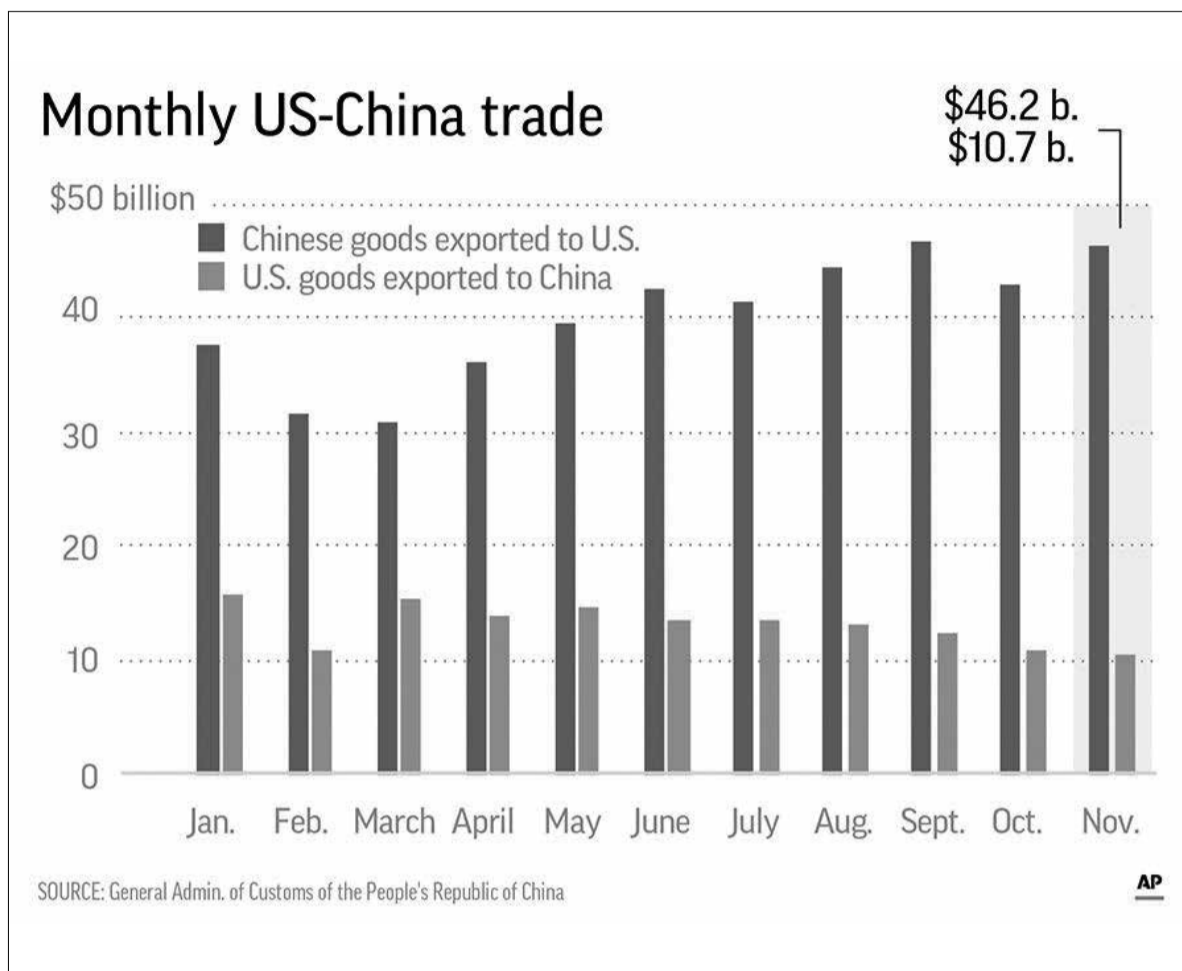
The talks that started Monday were the first face-to-face meeting since Trump and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, agreed Dec. 1 to suspend further punitive action against each other's imports for 90 days while they negotiate over the fight sparked by American complaints Beijing steals or pressures companies to hand over technology.

“Talks with China are going very well!” Trump said late Tuesday on Twitter.

Washington is pressing Beijing for changes including rolling back plans for government-led creation of Chinese global champions in robotics and other fields. Europe, Japan and other trading partners echo U.S. complaints those violate Beijing's market-opening obligations.

Chinese officials have suggested Beijing might alter its industrial plans but reject pressure to abandon what they consider a path to prosperity and global influence.

Neither side has given any indication its basic position has changed. Economists say the 90-day window is too short to resolve all the conflicts between the biggest and second-biggest global economies.



“Even if a deal is cobbled together, the more strident trade hawks in the White House and Trump may not sign off,” said Mizuho Bank's Vishnu Varathan in a report.

Beijing has tried to defuse pressure for more sweeping change by offering concessions including purchasing more American soybeans, natural gas and other exports. That might offer relief to rural areas that supported Trump in the 2016 election and were targeted by Chinese tariffs.

However, the official Trump put in charge of the talks, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, has focused on pressing Beijing to scrap or change rules Washington says block market access or improperly help Chinese companies.

Those include initiatives such as “Made in China 2025,” which

calls for state-led creation of Chinese global champions in robotics, artificial intelligence and other fields. Washington, Europe, Japan and other trading partners say those violate Beijing's market-opening obligations. American leaders also worry they might erode U.S. industrial leadership.

U.S. companies also want action on Chinese policies they complain improperly favor local companies. Those include subsidies and other favors for high-tech and state-owned industry, rules on technology licensing and preferential treatment of domestic suppliers in government procurement.

The U.S. demands strike at the heart of a state-led development model the ruling Communist Party sees as a great success over the past three decades and is re-

luctant to give up.

“These issues are much more difficult to solve immediately but are, frankly, much more compelling to U.S. companies,” said Jake Parker, vice president for China operations of the U.S.-China Business Council, which represents American companies that do business with China.

Beijing also faces pressure over technology from the European Union. The 28-nation trade bloc filed its own challenge in the World Trade Organization in June against Chinese licensing rules it said hamper the ability of foreign companies to protect and profit from their technology.

Companies that have been disappointed by Beijing's failure or delays in carrying out commitments want an enforcement mechanism with “some kind of penalty for not doing what they

promised,” said Parker. “That's not something that's going to be done by March,” said Parker. “It's probably going to take a little longer.”

For its part, Beijing is unhappy with U.S. export and investment curbs, suggesting it might demand concessions. Chinese officials complain about controls on “dual use” technology with possible military applications. They say China's companies are treated unfairly in national security reviews of proposed corporate acquisitions, though almost all deals are approved unchanged.

This week's talks went ahead despite tension over the arrest of a Chinese tech executive in Canada on U.S. charges related to possible violations of trade sanctions against Iran.

The American delegation was led by one of Lighthizer's deputies, Jeffrey D. Gerrish. It included agriculture, energy, commerce, treasury and State Department officials.

Trump imposed tariff increases of up to 25 percent on USD250 billion of Chinese imports. China responded by imposing penalties on \$110 billion of American goods, slowing customs clearance for U.S. companies and suspending issuing licenses in finance and other businesses.

Chinese exports to the United States held up despite the tariff hikes, but that was due partly to exporters rushing to fill orders before any more increases hit. Forecasters expect American orders to slump this year.

Cooling economic growth in both countries is increasing pressure to reach a settlement.

Car and property sales have slumped as Chinese growth fell to a post-global crisis low of 6.5 percent in the quarter ending in September.

The U.S. economy grew at an annual rate of 3.4 percent in the third quarter but surveys show consumer confidence weakening. AP

Taiwan announces new-look military drills

TAIWAN'S military yesterday announced a series of newly designed large-scale military drills for this year aimed at countering China's renewed threat to use force to gain control over the island.

While Taiwan's armed forces regularly hold such exercises, this year's drills are “being drafted based on newly adopted tactics for defending against a possible Chinese invasion,” the official Central News Agency quoted Defense

Ministry planning chief Maj. Gen. Yeh Kuo-hui as saying.

China claims sovereignty over the self-governing island democracy, which split from the mainland amid civil war in 1949.

Chinese President Xi Jinping renewed the threat of force in his Jan. 2 message to the island, saying China reserved that right if necessary to counter interference by external forces and what he called an extremely small number of Taiwanese separatists.

Although Xi didn't mention the U.S. by name, Washington is a key supplier of weaponry to the island and is legally bound to respond to threats against Taiwan.

With its 3 million-member armed forces and the world's second largest defense budget of \$173 billion, China has the overwhelming military edge over Taiwan. Xi has been ratcheting up the military threat to put pressure on independence-leaning Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen.

Tsai responded to Xi's speech by rejecting demands for unification between the sides, saying, “China must face the fact of the existence of Taiwan.”

Taiwan wields a much smaller by technologically sophisticated force that would be relied on to hold off a Chinese assault until outside help arrives.

In recent years, Taiwan's strategy has evolved from defeating a Chinese landing force to repelling an invasion on sea and in the air. AP



In this 2015 file photo, Taiwan's military fire artillery

DECORATIONS 2018

46 individuals and institutions



Medal of Merit – Professions - Xu Aoa



Medal of Merit – Professions - Kuok Cheong U



Medal of Merit – Professions - Maria Paula de Matos Pimenta Simões



Medal of Merit – Professions - Mak Seng Hin



Medal of Merit – Industry and Commerce - Mok Chi Wai



Medal of Merit – Industry and Commerce - Ip Sio Man



Medal of Merit – Industry and Commerce - Wong Kin Chong



Medal of Merit – Tourism - Sai Nam Restaurant (Karen Tong lok Sim)



Medal for Distinguished Service – Medal for Bravery - Civil Protection Operations Centre (Ng Kam Wa)



Medal for Distinguished Service – Medal for Bravery - Emergency Department of the Conde S. Januario Hospital (Wai Seng)



Medal for Distinguished Service – Medal for Bravery - Chao Ka Cheong



Medal for Distinguished Dedication - Chio U L



Decoration of Honour – Silver Lotus- Fong Chi Keong



Decoration of honor - Golden Lotus - Chan Meng Kam



Decoration of Honour – Silver Lotus - Ho Hao Tong



Honoric Title – Prestige - Vitor Sereno



Honoric Title – Prestige - Liu Liang



Medal of Merit – Tourism - Kapok Cantonese Restaurant (Un Kim Kuan)



Medal of Merit – Education - Sou Chio Fai



Medal of Merit – Education - Tang Siu Lan



Medal of Merit – Philanthropy - Stephen



Medal of Merit – Education - Choi Kun Sam



Medal of Merit – Education - Santa Madalena School (Rita Lau dos Reis)



Medal of Merit – Culture - Macao Daily News (Lok Po)



Medal of Merit – Philanthropy - Federation of Trade Unions

s receive honorific titles



Medal for Distinguished Service – Medal for Dedication - Vong Se Peng



Medal for Distinguished Service – Medal for Dedication - Vong Se Peng



Medal for Distinguished Service – Medal for Dedication - Ngou Kuok Lim



Medal for Distinguished Service – Medal for Dedication - Tang Kwong Yui



Medal for Distinguished Service – Medal for Community Service - Lam Wai Wa



Medal for Distinguished Service – Medal for Community Service - Chan Ioi Kong



Medal for Distinguished Service – Medal for Community Service - Marjory Rangel de Faria Vendramini



Decoration of Honour – Silver Lotus - Kwan Tsui Hang



Medal for Distinguished Service – Medal for Community Service - Richmond Fellowship of Macau (Wan Wai I)



Decoration of Honour – Silver Lotus - Huang Junhua



Honorific Title – Prestige - Ma Hok Cheung



Honorific Title – Merit - Lam Oi Man



Honorific Title – Merit - U Choi Hong



Honorific Title – Merit - Pui Ching Middle School team (Ho Man Chon)



Honorific Title – Merit - Leong Ieng Wai



Medal of Merit – Sports - Wong Sok I



Medal of Merit – Philanthropy - Lee Bun Sang



Medal of Merit – Philanthropy - The Women's General Association of Macau (Ho Teng Iat)



Medal of Merit – Sports - Iao Chon In



Medal of Merit – Sports - Sou Soi Lam



Medal of Merit – Philanthropy - Macao Returned Overseas Chinese Association (Chan Kam Meng)



Medal of Merit – Philanthropy - Association of Returned Overseas Chinese Macau (Lao Ngai Leong)



Medal of Merit – Sports - Li Yi



Medal of Merit – Sports - Hoi Long

The Chief Executive, Chui Sai On, yesterday presented honors to 46 individuals and entities for their contribution to Macau and dedication to community service. The 2018 Decorations, Medals and Certificates of Merit Awards Ceremony of the MSAR was held at the Macau Cultural Centre. Former lawmaker and businessman Chan Meng Kam was the recipient of the Grand Lotus Decoration of Honour. The Silver Lotus was granted to Fong Chi Keong, Ho Hao Tong, Kwan Tsui Hang and Huang Junhua. Seven types of Medals of Merit were also awarded.

Beijing allowing 2,000 ethnic Kazakhs to leave Xinjiang region

Dake Kang, Almaty

CHINA is allowing more than 2,000 ethnic Kazakhs to abandon their Chinese citizenship and leave the country, the Kazakh Foreign Ministry said, in a sign that Beijing may be starting to feel a mounting backlash against its sweeping crackdown on Muslims in the far west region of Xinjiang.

The detention of Uighur, Kazakh and other ethnic minorities in internment camps has been a touchy issue in neighboring Kazakhstan, a Central Asian country of 18 million people. China is a major trading partner, and Kazakhstan's state-restricted media had generally avoided reporting on it. But activists say pressure for action has slowly built, following an Associated Press story on the camps in May and other international media coverage.

The Foreign Ministry press office, in an email response, confirmed Kazakh media reports in December that China has agreed to let 2,000-plus ethnic Kazakhs leave. It did not say who could leave or why. They will be allowed to apply for Kazakh citizenship or permanent residency after their arrival in Kazakhstan, the email said.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

Chinese authorities in Xinjiang have launched a massive



Adilgazy Yergazy, a farmer, holds up pictures of his detained younger brothers at his home in a village near Almaty

surveillance and detention campaign that has swept hundreds of thousands and possibly more than a million people into internment camps. Former detainees have said they were forced to renounce their culture and faith and subjected to political indoctrination.

The detentions have sent a chill over a tight-knit community of Chinese-born Kazakhs living in Kazakhstan. Many had left China to pursue business opportunities in trade or educate their children in Kazakh schools as restrictions tightened in Xinjiang.

Hundreds lost contact with relatives in Xinjiang, and many began writing letters and atten-

ding press conferences, hoping that greater publicity would help bring their loved ones home.

Serikzhan Bilash, head of the advocacy group Atajurt, senses a subtle shift in the Kazakh government's position. He said he was warned by officials to halt his activities four times this summer but the warnings have stopped. Last month, he was invited onto a popular Kazakh talk show for an hour, indicating growing tolerance of his work publicizing the plight of detained Kazakhs.

"I said that Chinese officials are dangerous for Central Asia, for Kazakhstan," Bilash said. "They're starting to accept my opinion now."

Though they've avoided criti-

cizing China, Kazakh diplomats have worked to secure the release of their own citizens in Xinjiang. Foreign Ministry officials said in November that China had detained 29 Kazakh citizens, and 15 had since been released and allowed to return to Kazakhstan.

Gene Bunin, an activist who has collected about 2,000 testimonies from relatives of detainees in Xinjiang, estimates that about 20 people, possibly more, were allowed to return to Kazakhstan last year. Bunin has tracked another 70 or so who have been released from camps but confined to their home villages and prevented from leaving the country.

"They've been getting released since September," said Bunin, who lived in Xinjiang until last year. "I suspect it's sort of an appeasement thing going on, where they're trying to satisfy the relatives, to defuse tensions."

Those allowed to return so far have been largely Kazakh citizens or those with spouses or children born in Kazakhstan.

One 23-year-old Kazakh citizen, who asked to be identified by her nickname Guli to protect her family from retribution, was able to return from Xinjiang in July after being separated from her husband and two children for more than two years. She said she broke down in tears after a Kazakh official called to say she might be able to return.

"I thought I'd never be able to go back to Kazakhstan again, that I wouldn't be able to see my kids again," she said. "I had lost all hope."

In recent months, Chinese-born Kazakhs in Kazakhstan have started to hear that their relatives in Xinjiang were being released from the camps. Their joy has turned to anxiety as most of the relatives remain in Xinjiang under unclear circumstances, unable to leave for Kazakhstan.

"I want to find a way to bring my entire family over to Kazakhstan," said Adilgazy Yergazy, who heard one of his younger brothers had been released on Dec. 24 but hasn't been able to leave China. "They're all very scared." AP

Kim heads home via train after 2-day visit

A special train believed to be carrying Kim Jong Un departed Beijing yesterday after a two-day visit by the North Korean leader to the Chinese capital. Kim could not be seen, but he was presumed to be on board the long train as it crossed on elevated tracks over a busy Beijing street and headed toward eastern China and the border with North Korea.

Kim's trip to China — his fourth in the past 10 months — is believed to be an effort to coordinate with his only major ally ahead of a possible second summit with President Donald Trump. It comes after U.S. and North Korean officials are thought to have met in Vietnam to discuss the site of the summit.

Details of his visit have not been released, but Kim reportedly met with Chi-



A traffic policeman shows direction to a Mercedes limousine with a golden emblem, similar to one North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has used previously

nese President Xi Jinping.

Earlier yesterday, Kim's motorcade headed out to an unannounced destination and returned about an hour later. South Korea's Yonhap News Agency said Kim visited a tech-

nology development zone and spent around 20-30 minutes touring a factory run by famed traditional Chinese medicine maker Tong Ren Tang.

North Korean and Chinese state media annou-

nced his visit shortly in advance of his arrival in Beijing, in a break with standard protocol dictating such trips are only confirmed after they happen. However, neither side has provided details of what he has done since arriving aboard his personal armored train on Tuesday morning.

Yonhap said Kim met with Xi for about an hour on Tuesday and later attended a dinner at the Great Hall of the People in central Beijing hosted by Xi and his wife, Peng Liyuan. Kim was accompanied by his wife, Ri Sol Ju, the news agency said.

At Tuesday's daily Foreign Ministry briefing, spokesman Lu Kang said details of Kim's visit would be released "in due course." He said Beijing remains supportive of ef-

forts to end tensions over U.S. demands for a halt to North Korea's nuclear and missile programs.

"We always believe that, as key parties to the Korean Peninsula issue, it's important for the two sides to maintain contact and we always support their dialogue to achieve positive outcomes," Lu said.

Tuesday was Kim's birthday. His visit is also seen as part of an effort to win Chinese support for a reduction of U.N. sanctions imposed over his nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs, which have severely impacted his country's already ailing economy.

While North Korea hasn't conducted any launches or detonations in more than a year, it's displayed no real intention of

abandoning the programs that are seen as guaranteeing the hard-line communist regime's survival.

Kim's visit also came after he expressed frustration in his annual New Year's address over the lack of progress in negotiations with Washington since the Singapore summit with Trump in June, saying that if things don't improve — meaning that if sanctions relief and security guarantees aren't in the offing — Pyongyang might have to find "a new way" forward.

While Trump says he considers Xi key to enticing Kim into taking concrete steps toward denuclearization, the president's own relationship with his Chinese counterpart has frayed over the U.S.-China trade war.

Officially, at least, China says it considers the tariff battle and North Korea's weapons programs to be entirely separate. AP

FACEBOOK was defending itself yesterday against allegations that it allows illegal content in violation of Vietnam's new cybersecurity law. The social media giant said it has restricted illegal content and is in discussions with the government.

"We have a clear process for governments to report illegal content to us, and we review all those requests against our terms of service and local law," the company said in a statement. "We are transparent about the content restrictions we make in accordance with local law in our Transparency Report," it said.

The comments were in response to Vietnamese state media reports that the Ministry of Information and Communication had complained Facebook was allowing users to upload slanderous content and anti-government comments, among other alleged violations of a cybersecurity law that took effect Jan. 1.

The law requires service providers such as Google and Facebook operating in Communist-ruled Viet-

VIETNAM

Facebook rebuts claims over alleged illegal content

nam to store user data locally, open local offices and remove offending content within 24 hours if requested by the authorities.

Facebook has found itself caught between such local requirements in countries like China and Vietnam that restrict political dissent and its identity as a U.S. company that says it strives to give "free expression maximum possible range."

The company's Transparency Report shows the number of items of restricted illegal content skyrocketed in the second half of last year over the previous six months. It said that included items related to illegal sales of wildlife and other products, cases of impersonation of a user to spread false information and alleged defamation of some products and people. **AP**



Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam

JAPAN

Tokyo court turns down Ghosn's appeal of long detention

THE appeal by the lawyers of Carlos Ghosn, Nissan's former chairman, against his prolonged detention since his arrest Nov. 19 was rejected yesterday by the Tokyo District Court.

Ghosn's lawyers filed the appeal a day earlier. Ghosn's detention on suspicion of breach of trust had been approved through Friday. It is unclear what the prosecutors might do next. They can tag on additional allegations and "rearrest" a suspect or might decide to file formal charges on the breach of trust allegations.

The lawyers and Ghosn argued in court Tuesday against the detention. In his first public appearance since his arrest, Ghosn vigorously asserted his innocence and defended himself against each allegation.

The judge rejected the arguments, reiterating concerns Ghosn might flee Japan or tamper with evidence.

Denial of bail for months



This courtroom sketch depicts former Nissan chairman Carlos Ghosn

is common in Japan's criminal system and is often criticized as "hostage justice."

Legal experts say that, once suspects are charged, they can be held until their trials start so that evidence and witnesses can be decided upon and registered with a court, while they are still detained.

Ghosn, who led Nissan Moror Co. for two decades, is charged with falsifying financial reports in underreporting his income by about 5 billion yen (\$44 million) over five years

through 2015.

No trial date has been set. Trial preparation can take months.

The breach of trust allegations center around having Nissan shoulder Ghosn's personal investment losses in foreign exchange transactions, and payments of money from Nissan to a Saudi businessman.

Ghosn and his lawyers say there was a prior agreement Nissan would not suffer any losses on the collateral deal, and legitimate payments went to the businessman for his

services to help with Nissan's dealer problems and investments in the Gulf.

Ghosn has been held at the Tokyo Detention Center, although he has been transferred to a bigger room with a bed.

Until his sudden downfall, Ghosn was a respected figure in the global auto industry. He was credited with rescuing Nissan from near-bankruptcy, reviving the Japanese automaker, allied with Renault SA of France, into one of the world's most successful auto groups. **AP**

PHILIPPINES

Huge Catholic parade held amid Duterte attacks

OVER five million Catholics joined one of the world's biggest annual religious gatherings in the Philippines amid President Rodrigo Duterte's heightened attacks on the Catholic Church.

In one of the biggest annual security challenges in Asia's most Catholic nation, Philippine police was placed on high alert to secure massive crowds joining yesterday's Feast of the Black Nazarene procession that features a black image of Jesus carrying a cross.

Classes and work have been suspended in the capital, Manila, and flights have been banned over the parade route, police said. Mobile phone signals were jammed throughout the procession, which began about 5 a.m. local time.

"We have not received any reports of threats to the procession, but members of our intelligence community are continuously monitoring any possibility," police chief Oscar Albayalde said at a televised brie-

ing Monday.

The religious feast is being held as Duterte steps up his criticisms of Catholic priests and teachings. The President, who last June called God "stupid," recently questioned Christian tenets on Jesus' crucifixion and the Holy Trinity, while telling Church leaders not to meddle with his government.

In response, Monsignor Hernando Coronel, the priest leading preparations for the Black Nazarene procession, urged the public to pray for Duterte. Catholic bishops from the predominantly Catholic nation also earlier told Duterte to respect Church teachings, and called on Filipinos to keep their faith.

Duterte's popularity was sapped by inflation that hit a nine-year high but has since recovered after consumer prices eased for the past two months. He's also dealing with economic growth that is running below his government's target of at least 7 percent in 2018. **Bloomberg**

SOUTH KOREA

Court orders seizure of Japan assets over forced labor

Hyung-Jin Kim, Seoul

A South Korean court said yesterday it has ordered the seizure of local assets of a Japanese company after it refused to compensate several wartime forced laborers, in an escalation of a diplomatic brawl between the Asian neighbors.

Japan called the decision “extremely regrettable” and said it will push for talks with Seoul on the issue.

In a landmark ruling in October, South Korea’s Supreme Court ordered Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal Corp. to pay 100 million won (USD88,000) each to four plaintiffs forced to work for the company when Japan colonized the Korean Peninsula in 1910-45.

But the company refused to follow that ruling, siding with Japan’s long-held position that all colonial-era compensation issues were settled by a 1965 treaty that restored diplomatic relations between the two governments. Japanese officials said they could take the issue to the International Court of Justice.

Yesterday, the Daegu District Court’s branch office in the southeastern city of Pohang said it issued the seizure order for some Korean assets of the Japanese company in early January after lawyers for the plaintiffs filed a request to do so.



Victims of Japan’s forced labor and their family members arrive at the Supreme Court in Seoul

The Japanese company holds 2.34 million shares, or around \$9.7 million, in a joint venture in Pohang with South Korean steelmaker POSCO.

The asset freeze became officially effective later yesterday after a court document was delivered to the joint venture, said Kim Se Eun, one of the lawyers for the plaintiffs. She said an additional legal step is required to sell 81,075 of the 2.34 million shares that the district court ordered to be frozen. She declined to say when that step might be taken.

Only one of the four plaintiffs, a 94-year-old man, is still alive and bereaved family members represent the other three.

The 81,075 shares were frozen for two of the four plaintiffs, including the sole survivor. Lawyers plan to request the district court to order the freeze of

a similar number of shares for the two other plaintiffs, Kim said.

In Tokyo, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said Japan has “grave concern over the development.” Suga was expected to hold a meeting of top officials to discuss how to respond. Seoul’s Foreign Ministry said it has no immediate comment on Suga’s statement.

The asset freeze is likely to further chill diplomatic ties between South Korea and Japan, which are both key U.S. allies in the region. The October ruling was the first of its kind, and in November South Korea’s Supreme Court ordered a second Japanese company, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, to compensate 10 former Korean workers, drawing strong criticism from Japan.

When South Korea and Japan

signed the 1965 treaty, South Korea received more than \$800 million in economic aid and loans from Japan and used the money to rebuild its infrastructure and economy devastated by the 1950-53 Korean War.

In its October and November verdicts, the South Korean Supreme Court said the 1965 treaty cannot prevent individuals from seeking compensation for forced labor because Japanese companies’ use of such laborers was an illegal act against humanity that was linked to Tokyo’s colonial rule and its war of aggression.

Many South Koreans still harbor strong resentment of Japanese colonial rule, when hundreds of thousands of Koreans were mobilized as forced laborers for Japanese companies or sex slaves at Tokyo’s wartime brothels. **AP**

BANGLADESH

Police, garment workers clash in protests



POLICE fired tear gas and swung batons as thousands of garment workers demonstrated for better wages for a fourth day yesterday, shutting down factories on the outskirts of the Bangladeshi capital.

The Daily Star newspaper said one protester was fatally shot and three dozen others were injured in clashes with police.

Police fired tear gas and water cannons to prevent demonstrators from blocking the road leading to Dhaka’s Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport. Workers responded by hurling bricks at police and setting vehicles ablaze.

Bangladesh’s garment industry generates around USD30 billion in exports a year, making it the second largest in the world after China. It makes products for big-name fashion retailers including Zara, H&M and Uniqlo.

For months, workers have been demanding a higher minimum pay than what the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has proposed.

Garment worker Shefali Begum said protesters want at least 16,000 taka, or about \$191, per month.

“They give us nothing. Right now, our salaries are the same as for helpers hired to assist us,” Begum said.

Hasina’s ruling Awami League-led coalition swept a general election on Dec. 28 amid opposition complaints of voter intimidation and vote rigging. Hasina was sworn in Monday for a record third consecutive term as head of government.

The booming garment industry has been a pillar of Hasina’s economic development strategy for Bangladesh, where annual per capita income has nearly tripled since 2009 to \$1,750.

Under Hasina, the level of extreme poverty — classified as under \$1.25 per day — has dropped from 19 percent of the population to less than 9 percent in the last decade, according to the World Bank.

MDT/AP

AUSTRALIA

Authorities examining packages left at consulates

SEVERAL foreign diplomatic missions were evacuated in the Australian cities of Melbourne and Canberra yesterday after they received packages containing suspicious substances.

Police, fire crews and ambulances were seen at a number of foreign consulates in Melbourne, including those of India, Germany, Italy, Spain and South Korea. Officials at the U.S. and Swiss missions in the city said they had also received packages.

The Vic Emergency website, the collective body of emergency agencies in Victoria state, of which Melbourne is the ca-



Hazmat and fire crews work outside the Indian and French Consulate in Melbourne

pital, noted at least 10 “hazardous material” incidents in the city, though by yesterday night none of those incidents was listed as ongoing.

There were no reports

of anyone being injured at the targeted missions in both cities.

Victoria Police said they believed the incidents were targeted and did not impact the gene-

ral community.

Australian Federal Police said in a statement that “the circumstances surrounding these incidents are being investigated.”

The Australian Broadcasting Corp. reported that a worker from the New Zealand consulate in Melbourne had said the packages in question were envelopes labelled “asbestos.” Inside were plastic sandwich bags containing a fibrous material.

The ABC reported suspicious packages were also found at the Melbourne diplomatic offices of Pakistan and possibly those of Greece, France and Hong Kong.

It said the Israeli Embassy in Canberra also received a suspicious package.

It was not immediately clear which other countries’ diplomatic missions in the national capital were affected, if any.

Two firetrucks, a hazardous materials vehicle and police cars were seen at India’s consulate in Melbourne, where staff members had been evacuated, some wearing protective masks.

Staff were later allowed to re-enter the building, which was deemed safe by Vic Emergency.

The incidents come after Sydney’s Argentinian consulate was partially evacuated on Monday after reports of a suspicious substance. The powder, contained in clear plastic bags within an envelope, was subsequently deemed not dangerous. **AP**



Security tight as Congo prepares to release vote results

Mathilde Bousson, David Keyton

ANTI-RIOT police with water cannon and armored vehicles surrounded Congo's electoral commission yesterday ahead of the delayed announcement of the results of the presidential election, while activist groups urged people to "be ready to massively take to the streets" if results don't match "the truth of the ballot boxes."

Residents of the capital, Kinshasa, said the heavy security presence was a bad sign, with some recalling the violence that followed past disputed elections. It "may be a message that the publication [of the results] won't meet the expectations of the Congolese people," resident

John Kabamba said. A statement by more than 300 organizations said people should be ready to protest.

Police installed metal barriers and blocked traffic outside the electoral commission as it continued meetings that began late Tuesday to discuss the results compiled so far.

The preliminary results of the Dec. 30 vote had been expected on Sunday, but the commission indefinitely delayed the announcement, to the frustration and growing suspicion of many Congolese. Some said the delay is allowing manipulation in favor of the ruling party.

"Seeing all these barriers, it proves that [the commission] doesn't need or doesn't want to give us the name of the person

who was elected," said Kinshasa resident Beni Babutu.

The vast, mineral-rich Central African country is choosing a successor to departing President Joseph Kabila, in power since 2001. He backs ruling party candidate Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary, who is under European Union sanctions for a crackdown on Congolese protesting two years of election delays while he was interior minister.

Leading opposition candidate Martin Fayulu, a Kinshasa lawmaker and businessman, has urged the electoral commission to announce the true results as quickly as possible and warned it not to "play with fire, it is very dangerous." He said the delay is to "fudge the results" and warned that his coalition would re-

lease its own figures if the official ones are in doubt.

Spokesmen for both Shadary and the other top opposition candidate, Felix Tshisekedi, have indicated that their candidates won. Tshisekedi's party on Tuesday called him the "presumed winner" and indicated that he has had contact with Kabila "to prepare a peaceful and civilized transfer of power." Kabila adviser Kikaya Bin Karubi, however, denied any such contact.

The government has cut internet service since the day after the election to prevent speculation on social media about who won, and blocked some radio stations.

The United States, African Union, European Union and

others have urged Congo's government to make sure the election results conform to the will of the people. Western pressure likely has little effect, however, as Congo's government has rejected what it calls interference and expelled the EU ambassador days before the vote. Western election observers were not invited.

Many have seen this election as Congo's first chance at a democratic, peaceful transfer of power since independence in 1960. But one Congolese election observer group, Symocel, on Tuesday reported "major irregularities" including the disappearance of envelopes containing results from nearly 120 polling stations in Kinshasa, an opposition stronghold.

Congo's powerful Catholic Church has said it found a clear winner from data compiled by its 40,000 observers deployed to all polling stations. Voting regulations prohibit anyone but the electoral commission from announcing results. The church has urged the commission to announce accurate ones.

Congo's ruling party responded angrily, calling the church's announcement "anarchist," and the electoral commission accused the church of "preparing an uprising." The church replied by saying that only the release of false results would incite an uprising.

Electoral commission president Corneille Nangaa has said authorities were aware that "this process has always been surrounded by distrust."

He blamed the delay on opposition parties' insistence that results be counted by hand and not transmitted electronically via voting machines, which Congo used for the first time. The machines were the focus of much concern, with the opposition and observers saying they could open the door to manipulating results. **AP**

Iran supreme leader calls US officials 'first-class idiots'

Nasser Karimi, Tehran

IRAN'S supreme leader yesterday called U.S. officials "first-class idiots," mocking American leaders as U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo toured the Mideast to promote the White House's tough stance on Iran.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's comments were unusually harsh, reflecting the broader tension between Iran and the United States after President Donald Trump withdrew America from Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers.

Khamenei, speaking to a group from Iran's religious capital of Qom, made the



Ayatollah Ali Khamenei speaks at a meeting in Tehran

remark while recounting a story about a U.S. official once predicting he'd celebrate Christmas in Iran.

"Some U.S. officials pre-

tend that they are mad," Khamenei said. "Of course I don't agree with that, but they are first-class idiots."

The supreme leader

did not name the official. However, U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton told a meeting of the Iranian exile group Mujahedeen-e-Khalq last March that "before 2019, we here [...] will celebrate in Iran." Trump's personal lawyer, former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, has made similar comments before the MEK over the years.

Iran's supreme leader, viewed by Shiite hard-liners as second only to God, typically doesn't make such forceful remarks. However, Trump's decision last year to withdraw from the nuclear deal has seen the 79-year-

old cleric grow increasingly critical.

In 2017, Khamenei dismissed remarks by Trump calling Iran a "terrorist" nation as "idiotic." Last May, after Trump withdrew from the nuclear deal which saw Iran limit its uranium enrichment in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions, Khamenei told Trump in a speech: "You cannot do a damn thing!"

"The body of this man, Trump, will turn to ashes and become the food of the worms and ants, while the Islamic Republic continues to stand," Khamenei said at the time.

Khamenei's comments

yesterday came as Pompeo visited Iraq. On Tuesday, the U.S. top diplomat threatened that America would double down on commercial and diplomatic efforts in the coming weeks to "put real pressure on Iran."

Khamenei's remarks to Qom residents were meant to mark the anniversary of religious riots in 1978 that challenged Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. They would spiral into the nationwide demonstration that saw the shah leave Iran and give rise to the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Iranians will commemorate the revolution's 40th anniversary in February. **AP**

what's ON



SURFACE REVEALED - DRONE PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHAN HIN IO

TIME: 12pm-8pm (closed on Tuesdays)

UNTIL: February 8, 2019

VENUE: Taipa Village Art Space

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2857 6118

MOTIONS OF BRUSH AND INK - CALLIGRAPHY EXHIBITION OF HO LAI SIM AND HER STUDENTS

TIME: 9am-10pm

UNTIL: January 31, 2019

VENUE: Team Building, IFT Main Campus, Mong-Ha Hill

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2856 1252

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

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

3pm-8pm (Monday)

UNTIL: February 13, 2019

VENUE: Albergue SCM

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2852 2550

EXHIBITION OF NEW WORKS IN MAM COLLECTION - CHE HO

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

UNTIL: April 14, 2019

VENUE: Macau Museum of Art

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

Offbeat

A MOOSE WALKS INTO AN ALASKA HOSPITAL AND FINDS A SNACK



A moose wandered into a hospital building in Alaska's largest city and chowed down on some plants in the lobby as workers watched the massive animal in awe.

When a patient mentioned that security staffers were monitoring a moose that got inside the Anchorage building Monday, Stephanie Hupton dashed out and started recording.

"Didn't think we'd have a pet moose," said Hupton, who works in billing at a physical therapy office inside a building attached to Alaska Regional Hospital.

The footage shows the moose browsing around some greenery near an entrance before it stands gazing at the camera's direction. It briefly lingers before sauntering out through an open door.

Hupton said she never felt threatened by the mellow creature. It was an experience she never expected when she moved to Anchorage three years ago from Carroll, Iowa.

"It's definitely different than small-town Iowa," she said.

The moose got inside through doors that were stuck open because of extreme cold in Anchorage, where temperatures hovered around zero Monday, hospital spokeswoman Kjerstin Lastufka said.

The plants in the warm lobby were likely inviting to the animal, who ate some of them before leaving after about 10 minutes, Lastufka said.

The moose caused no injuries or any big problems, other than the snacking.

"It was a pretty calm visit," Lastufka said.

TV canal macau



13:00	TDM News (Repetição)
13:30	Telejornal RTPi (Diferido)
15:00	Mistura Fina
15:45	Zig Zag
16:00	Os Compadres
16:40	Quem Quer Ser Milionário
17:35	Moda Portugal Sr.2
18:05	Os Maias
19:00	Montra do Lilau (Repetição)
19:35	Os Nossos Dias Sr.2
20:30	Telejornal
21:15	TDM Talk Show
21:50	Livros com João Guedes
21:55	Justiça de Chicago Sr.1 - Estreia
22:40	Todas as Palavras
23:15	TDM News
23:50	Macau Sítios: História Que Eu Ta Vai Contar - Taipa
00:15	Telejornal (Repetição)
01:05	RTPi Directo

cinema



CINETEATRO

10 JAN - 16 JAN



MORE THAN BLUE

ROOM 1

2:30, 9:30 pm

Director: Gavin Lin

Starring: Jasper Liu, Ivy Chen

Language: Putonghua (Chinese & English)

Duration: 105min

THE POOL

ROOM 1

4:30, 7:30 pm

Director: Ping Lumpraploeng

Starring: Theeradej Wongpuapan, Ratnamon

Ratchiratham

Language: Thai (Chinese & English)

Duration: 95min

YOU ARE THE APPLE OF MY EYE

ROOM 2

4:30, 7:30 pm

Director: Yasuo Hasegawa

Starring: Yuki Yamada, Asuka Saito

Language: Japanese (Chinese & English)

Duration: 89 min

BUMBLEBEE

ROOM 2

7:15 pm

Director: Travis Knight

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

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 113min



A DOG'S WAY HOME

ROOM 3

2:30, 4:30, 9:30, pm

Director: Charles Martin Smith

Starring: Bryce Dallas Howard, Ashley Judd

Language: English

Duration: 96min

this day in history



1996 KING OF JORDAN IN HISTORIC TEL AVIV VISIT

King Hussein of Jordan has made his first public visit to Israel's largest city, Tel Aviv, in the latest indication of the new warmth between the two countries.

The King, an experienced pilot, flew a Jordanian army helicopter to the Sde Dov air base near Tel Aviv, where he was met by Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

At a ceremony to honour the chief negotiators who brokered the 1994 Israeli-Jordanian peace talks, Mr Peres said: "We still face all kinds of challenges: the greatest of them is not to let the galloping prospect of peace pass us by."

"I would like to say how happy we are to have the opportunity to be with our friends, our partners in building and laying the foundations for a comprehensive peace in this region," replied the King.

Israel and Jordan ended 46 years of war with a peace treaty in 1994 backed by US President Bill Clinton. The deal drew condemnation from Jordanian Palestinians, who make up 60% of the population.

PLO officials were critical of today's visit by the King, saying he should first have visited lands under Palestinian rule.

There was extremely tight security as King Hussein's motorcade made its way through Tel Aviv.

A quarter of Israeli police - 6,000 officers - were deployed to protect him, and central Tel Aviv was paralysed as police closed off roads and diverted traffic.

Thousands of Israelis turned out to watch him go by, giving him an enthusiastic welcome with Jordanian flags and banners greeting the King in Arabic.

King Hussein did hold talks with Mr Peres, but diplomats stressed the main purpose of the visit was symbolic rather than political.

Later, he flew to Beit Gavriel on the shore of the Sea of Galilee for talks with Mr Peres and US Secretary of State Warren Christopher, whose shuttle diplomacy in the region continues tomorrow with a visit to the Syrian capital, Damascus.

Jordan has been largely diplomatically isolated since taking a neutral stand in the Gulf War of 1991.

However, the peace agreement with Israel and King Hussein's increasing opposition to the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, have brought the country back into the international fold.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Shimon Peres lost the 1996 Israeli elections to Binyamin Netanyahu, who campaigned against the Rabin-Peres peace programme.

The Israel-Jordan peace treaty of 1994 continues to hold fast, however, despite its continuing unpopularity with many in the region.

In September 2002, Jordan and Israel agreed on a plan to pipe water from the Red Sea to the shrinking Dead Sea that straddles the two countries.

The project, costing \$800m, was the two nations' biggest joint venture to date.

And 18 months later, in March 2004, the two nations agreed a joint project to build a desert science centre on their shared border.

King Hussein of Jordan died of cancer in 1999.

YOUR STARS

Aries

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Someone needs your help -- but they may not know how to ask you. Make sure that you're really paying attention as you move through the day, as you can score bonus karma points!

Taurus

April 20-May 20

You finally get that one friend or family member who's been so odd lately -- and the explanation is likely simpler than you would have thought. Just reach out and let them know you're savvy.

Gemini

May 21-Jun. 21

You need to really hunker down and focus on communication today -- in all its creative forms. Your energy is better spent on poetry than on drafting that email to get a new job.

Cancer

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You need to enjoy what you've got today -- your energy is terrific, and almost anything you choose to do should make life sweeter and more enjoyable for you and your people. Go for it!

Leo

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Nothing is quite clear today -- you need to take a big step back before you can make sense of anything. That could work to your advantage, though, as you may spot details you'd never have seen otherwise.

Virgo

Aug. 23-Sept. 22

Not much gets done today -- which could mean that you just need to deal with a backlog later. There's nothing wrong with that, especially as fighting too hard against today's pace could result in moving backward!

Libra

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

You need to stay flexible and enjoy life's little treasures -- there's no sense in walling over every little thing that goes wrong today! All should return to balance soon, and no one knows that better than you.

Scorpio

Oct. 23 - Nov. 21

Your artistic license just got renewed -- make the most of it! All this great energy should make you a hit with your colleagues or friends, as long as you're free with your ideas.

Sagittarius

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Try something totally new today -- it could be almost anything! Your personal energy is somewhat restless and seeking new inspiration. A new friend, a random website or even a cloud can give it to you!

Capricorn

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

You have got to make social connections today -- though not necessarily new ones. Reach out to old friends (even old flames, possibly) to see if you've still got anything to talk about.

Aquarius

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Take a chance on that new volunteer opportunity or charity pitch, even if it doesn't quite seem right -- you can always back off later if it falls apart. You need to give back on a day like today.

Pisces

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

You've got to rethink things a bit -- but your great energy helps you do just that with ease. See if you can get your friends to pitch you new ideas for transformative activities. Use them all!

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy

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

Easy+

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

Medium

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

Hard

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

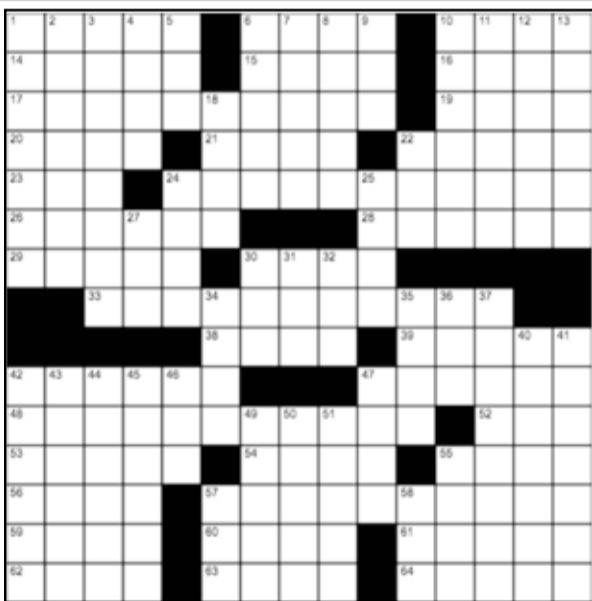
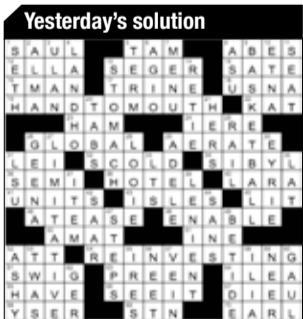
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-9	4	clear
Harbin	-14	-5	clear
Tianjin	-4	5	cloudy
Urumqi	-15	-10	cloudy
Xi'an	-6	2	clear/overcast
Lhasa	-8	4	cloudy
Chengdu	3	7	drizzle
Chongqing	6	8	drizzle/overcast
Kunming	4	17	cloudy
Nanjing	1	5	sleet/drizzle
Shanghai	5	9	drizzle
Wuhan	1	6	drizzle
Hangzhou	4	7	drizzle
Taipei	18	24	cloudy
Guangzhou	15	21	drizzle
Hong Kong	18	21	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	-11	-6	flurry
Frankfurt	1	3	drizzle
Paris	2	4	drizzle/overcast
London	2	6	clear/cloudy
New York	3	5	drizzle

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Remains of a fire; 6- Bunches; 10- German river; 14- Skeptical; 15- Room in a casa; 16- Suffix with exist; 17- Flattered; 19- "All the Way" lyricist Sammy; 20- Tough-guy actor Ray; 21- Pro ___ (proportionally); 22- Desi's daughter; 23- Nothing; 24- Dictatorial; 26- Momentarily; 28- Exact satisfaction for; 29- Choreographer de Mille; 30- Frees (of); 33- Act of deifying; 38- Sunbathers catch them; 39- Partly melted snow; 42- House in D.C.; 47- One of the Furies; 48- Laundry rope; 52- Part of UNLV; 53- Somewhat; 54- Portable shelter; 55- Spanish muralist; 56- Fail to win; 57- Conciliate; 59- Son of Zeus in Greek mythology; 60- Hokkaido native; 61- Chip maker; 62- Take a break; 63- Petty quarrel, ejected saliva; 64- City in West Yorkshire;

DOWN: 1- Republic in S Europe; 2- Marketing; 3- Promontory; 4- Cube maker Rubik; 5- Barrett of Pink Floyd; 6- Indian state; 7- Actress Christine; 8- Upstate New York city; 9- Bit; 10- Safe; 11- Alevi alternative; 12- Sore; 13- Go back on one's word; 18- Camaro model; 22- Monetary unit of Bulgaria; 24- Lucie's father; 25- Toward sunrise; 27- Date; 30- Narrow inlet; 31- Very cold; 32- ___ Kapital; 34- At liberty; 35- Wight, for one; 36- Bullring cheer; 37- Form a sac for DNA; 40- Began; 41- Lodginghouses; 42- Having only magnitude; 43- Author Leonard; 44- Sounds; 45- Bear witness; 46- Definite article; 47- Dissenter; 49- Divest; 50- Hotelier Helmsley; 51- Two cents, so to speak; 55- Trig function; 57- Ballet step; 58- "... ___ the cows come home";



USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



AD

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	<p>Macau Square Office Space, Macau CBD Macau Square Office Space HKD 21,000 / 837 sq ft Ref: 18100691</p>	<p>Va Long, Central Macau Macau Two Bedroom Apartment Partial Sea View HKD 29,900 / 1,750 sq ft Ref: 18100694</p>	<p>Kok Vui Apartment, St. Paul's Ruins Macau Two Bedroom Apartment HKD 10,800 / 622 sq ft Ref: 18110696</p>	<p>Lakeview Mansions, Central Macau Macau 2 Bedroom Apartment HKD 25,000 / 1750 sq ft Ref: 18110697</p>

Inter appeals for children to be allowed in during ban

Inter Milan has asked the Italian football federation and Serie A to allow children into an upcoming home match after being ordered to play in an empty stadium as punishment for fan racism and violence. Regarding the request for the Jan. 19 Serie A game against Sassuolo, Inter says "this is an important initiative that sends a strong and clear message against all forms of discrimination and violence." There was no immediate response from the federation or league. Inter has also been ordered to play an Italian Cup match against Benevento next week in an empty stadium. The measures were taken after a Dec. 26 game at the San Siro was marred by racist chants aimed at Napoli defender Kalidou Koulibaly. Also, an Inter fan died following clashes with visiting Napoli fans outside the stadium before the match.

Bayern signs defender Benjamin Pavard for next season

Bayern Munich has signed France defender Benjamin Pavard from Bundesliga rival Stuttgart for next season. The Bavarian team says the 22-year-old Pavard, who played six games at right back to help France win the World Cup, will join on July 1. Bayern sporting director Hasan Salihamidzic says Pavard has signed "a five-year contract. He's a young player and a world champion. We're very glad and proud to have gained such a player for FC Bayern." Pavard helped Stuttgart to Bundesliga promotion in 2017 after joining from Lille the year before. He has played 69 league games, though he is currently out with a thigh injury.

FOOTBALL | ASIAN CUP

Saudi Arabia routs N. Korea 4-0; Iraq also wins

THIS time, Saudi Arabia was on the right side of a rout in its opening game at a major tournament. The Saudis beat North Korea 4-0 yesterday [Macau time] at the Asian Cup with two well-executed goals in each half, dominating the game even before midfielder Han Kwang-song was sent off in the 44th minute.

At the 2018 World Cup, coach Juan Antonio Pizzi's team lost 5-0 to host Russia in the showpiece first game featuring the two lowest-ranked nations.

Expectations are higher now for the 69th-ranked Saudis — fifth best in the 24-team Asian Cup — who are favored to top a politically charged group that includes Qatar. Earlier Tuesday, Iraq scored in the 90th minute to win 3-2 against Vietnam, which led twice in the first half.

Defender Ali Adnan, who plays in Italy for Atalanta,



Salem al Dawsari (right) shoots the ball to score his side's third goal

sealed the victory with a perfectly placed free kick. The high-quality finish stood out after four goals featuring a variety of ricochets, deflections, and defensive errors.

Saudi Arabia's impressive strikes to overwhelm the North Korean defense began when Hatan Bahbri lashed in an angled shot in the 28th minute. A deft backheel by the leaping Mohammed Al-Fatih doubled the lead in the 37th.

Captain Salem Al Dawsari cleverly created space in the penalty area to shoot and

score in the 70th, and Fahad Al Muwallad beat overmatched goalkeeper Ri Myong-guk in the 87th.

It was the first time Saudi Arabia won its opening Asian Cup game since winning the last of its three titles in 1996, when the tournament was also hosted by the UAE.

The Saudis next play Lebanon and won't face Qatar until the final round of group games, on Jan. 17 in Abu Dhabi. Both could already have qualified for the knockout rounds with third-pla-

ce teams in four of the six groups advancing.

Qatar has been subject to a diplomatic and logistical boycott by regional rivals including Saudi Arabia and the UAE for more than 18 months, putting the tiny emirate's 2022 World Cup hosting under pressure.

The first Qatari in action on UAE soil at this Asian Cup was referee Abdulrahman Al-Jassim, handling the Iraq-Vietnam game in Abu Dhabi.

Iraq, the surprise 2007 champion, twice trailed before half time through an own goal by Ali Faez and a ricochet off Nguyen Cong Phuong's foot from an attempted defensive clearance.

Substitute Humam Tareq leveled in the 60th after a scramble in the Vietnam goalmouth, before Adnan struck a worthy winner.

Iraq is second in Group D behind Asia's top-ranked team Iran, which beat Yemen 5-0 on Monday. AP

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EPL

Man United revitalized with Solskjaer at the wheel

Steve Douglas

THEY'VE quickly created a song for Ole Gunnar Solskjaer at Manchester United. "Ole's at the wheel," the United faithful chant about their new manager. "Tell me how good does it feel."

Much, much better than it did under Jose Mourinho.

The cloud over England's biggest soccer club has been lifted since United fired Mourinho, perhaps its most divisive manager ever, last month and replaced him with its former striker from Norway.

The effect: United has won five straight matches — four in the Premier League and another in the FA Cup — and scored 16 goals in the process.

The team and the fans have their swagger back. Where Mourinho scowled, Solskjaer smiles. Marquee players Paul Pogba and Alexis Sanchez, shunned by Mourinho, already look revitalized under Solskjaer.

So how has the man once known at United as the "Baby-faced Assassin" because of his boyish looks and ruthlessness in front of goal masterminded such a rapid turnaround of fortunes at the club?

ATMOSPHERE

The charm offensive began immediately, although it just feels natural with Solskjaer. On his first day in his dream job, he made an early-morning arrival at United's training ground and gave a bar of Norwegian chocolate to the receptionist, Kath, who was working at the club throughout his time there as a player.

In many ways, Solskjaer accepted a daunting task when approached by vice executive



Manchester United interim manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer

chairman Ed Woodward to take over from Mourinho. United was sixth in the Premier League, 19 points off the lead and 11 adrift of the Champions League qualification positions, after its worst start to a top-flight season. Its squad looked lopsided, the dressing room fractured.

Yet he has taken to one of the most pressure-filled positions in world soccer with ease. Always smiling, always with a cheerful disposition. Just simply enjoying himself.

"They are good players and it's up to them to use their imagination, creativity and just enjoy playing for this club," Solskjaer said, "because that's the best time of your life."

APPROACH

That positivity and joyfulness has been reflected on the field.

Defensive and cautious under the pragmatic Mourinho, United is playing with more freedom now and more akin to its traditions of attacking soccer.

Right from Solskjaer's first match in charge — a 5-1 win at Cardiff — everything about United's play has been forward-looking. The midfielders and wingers appear to be playing 20 yards further upfield and there is less fear about conceding a goal. "It's about us. It's about Man United," Solskjaer said. "We want to see them express themselves."

POGBA

No player has benefited more from the change of managers than Paul Pogba, the World Cup winner from France who joined United for USD116 million in 2016 as the world's most expensive player.

Pogba's relationship with Mourinho had broken down to the extent that he was dropped from the team for Mourinho's final matches in charge.

Solskjaer had previously said he would build United's team around Pogba, who he coached with the club's reserve team a decade ago, if he ever became manager. He has been true to his word, with Pogba playing a central role in United's recovery. He scored four goals and set up three more in Solskjaer's first three games, and had more passes and shots on target than any other United player in those matches.

Another player who appeared to have fallen out with Mourinho, Alexis Sanchez, has set up two goals in two matches under Solskjaer since returning from injury, and is being seen like a new signing after struggling since joining from Arsenal last January.

STRIKERS

Marcus Rashford and Romelu Lukaku, the two strikers in United's squad, have hit the ground running under Solskjaer.

The 21-year-old Rashford has scored in three of the four league games, giving United a new dimension with his pace and directness up front. He already seems to be a favorite of Solskjaer, who talks excitedly of the England international's talent and potential.

Lukaku has responded well to Rashford's challenge, scoring in all three games he has played — twice within minutes of coming on a substitute against Bournemouth and Newcastle. Solskjaer was known as a so-called "super-sub" because of his goal-scoring exploits off the bench and Lukaku is playing in his new manager's image.

Not just that, but Lukaku is playing a different way, stretching defenses and playing on the shoulder of the last defender instead of dropping deeper to link up play. That is surely the Solskjaer effect.

FERGIE TIME

Solskjaer is learning from — and leaning on — the best while reviving a sleeping giant.

Alex Ferguson, the great United manager from 1986-2013, is being regularly contacted by Solskjaer and has been at one of the team's training sessions. It was the first time he had attended United's training ground since suffering a brain hemorrhage in May.

"He had a few nice chats with the staff and he encouraged us," Solskjaer said.

Ferguson signed Solskjaer from Norwegian club Molde in 1996 and has been the biggest single influence on his career, with Solskjaer saying "loads of my management revolves around what I learned from him."

Solskjaer's preferred style of play certainly revives memories of the Ferguson era. As does the frequent sight of him chewing gum on the sideline.

SCHEDULE

The reality is that Solskjaer couldn't have picked a better time to start his interim tenure.

Cardiff (5-1), Huddersfield (3-1) and Bournemouth (4-1) were three of the weakest teams in the Premier League, while a home match against struggling second-tier team Reading (2-0) in the FA Cup also offered an easy route to the fourth round.

Solskjaer's biggest test so far was the match at Newcastle, which United won 2-0 but only through goals in the final half-hour from Lukaku and Rashford.

Still, the true measure of United's progress will come on Sunday when United travels to plays title contender Tottenham.

With a victory at Wembley Stadium, there will be no doubt that United is onto a winner with Solskjaer and may keep its former striker on beyond this season. **AP**

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opinion

Girl About Globe

Linda Kennedy



TINDER FOR SOFAS

You need something soft in your life. Something welcoming at home. For Netflix and chilling. You turn to online options. You swipe. You swipe more. Something catches your eye. It claims to be 180cm long and amply deep. You've already measured your personal space. It's perfect. And it's ready to be picked-up.

Welcome to Tinder for Sofas. If only it existed. I've been moving house recently, and mixing the purchase of second-hand and upcycled furniture with new stuff. This has meant a lot of time going through options on Home Furnishings sites. As I swiped through photographs, making instant judgements on bulk, legs and general upstandingness, it occurred to me: this is a bit like a dating app.

But, as with online dating, there's a lot people could do to improve their chances.

Right now, on Home Furnishings' sites, many items are presented with a solitary, blurred photo. How many pick-up offers is that going to get? People who post their chests, wardrobes and ottomans would do well to put in a decent profile, including several clear photos, and measurements. Size, when it comes to furniture, really does matter.

When I texted the phone number on an appealing table, the first exchange was oddly similar to early dating.

Me: 'Hey. I like your ad. Can you tell me more? What height is it?'

TeakTableAndChairs: (after three hours): 'Sure. Let me measure.'

Silence.

TeakTableAndChairs (after 24 hours): 'Hey. Got let down by someone last night. You still interested?'

At first I thought the obscure furniture photo phenomenon was laziness. Then I wondered if what I was witnessing was the upholstered version of hiding your identity. After all, a sofa can't wear sunglasses or Halloween masks, the usual semi-disguises for people on dating sites who seem to feel there is some kind of stigma being there.

Then I decided it was due to the lack of template. Dating apps all have a format, guiding hopefuls towards sharing relevant details. If this existed on Tinder for Sofas, life might be easier. The FAQ section could include 'tips: best openers and bios.'

Sofa, 5
3 miles away
Me:

A fun easy-going settee. If you want drama, go elsewhere, I'm not a Divan.

My icebreaker:

What's your favourite position? LOL. On the sofa. Are you recliner? A percher? A stretcher-out?

My freak flag:

I know everyone says they're into fitness, but it's not so common when you're a sofa, right? I went to the gym once. Yep, I was a gym sofa for about six months. You know, the ones in the reception area where you slump after a workout, or where they tell you the prices as you join early January. It was a good time, though there were arguments. People got mad about the insistence on long contracts and autopay. Then I ended up here, in this apartment. It's been great but my owner is moving on, and I'm too small to go with him. I'm 165cm long x 48cm deep x 74 cm height. Still very springy!

People on dating apps could also learn something from honest Home Furnishing vendors - the ones who candidly photograph a stain on their item for sale. What if dating profiles did that? Close-up photograph of head: 'This is bald spot'. Brightly lit photograph of hairline: 'These are my recurring roots.' Photograph of a couple: 'This is my former girlfriend who is a blot in my romantic history. Could be patched over, by the right person.'

I write this on the Teak Table, by the way. We got it together. A Tinder for Sofas success story.

THE BUZZ JAPAN HOTTEST DESTINATION FOR CHINESE TOURISTS DURING CNY

Japan is the hottest destination for Chinese tourists from the mainland for the incoming Chinese New Year holiday, according to a report.

The report, released Tuesday by online travel agency Lvmama.com, shows that Japan, Thailand, Hong Kong, Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia, Mauritius, Australia, France, and Turkey are the top ten tourist destinations for overseas travelers during the upcoming holiday. This year's Spring Festival falls on Feb. 5.

Despite the yen's appreciation and Japan's tax on international tourists, demand for travels in the country remains robust, with group tour bookings on Lvmama.com showing solid sales, according to the website.

Zou Qingling, with Lvmama.com, said that easy access to visas and flights, close geographical location, abundant tourism resources such as hot springs and ice and snow entertainment, as well as the impact of Japanese culture, made Japan an attractive destination for mainland tourists.

Hong Kong moves to make disrespecting Chinese anthem a crime



David Tweed, Fox Hu

Hong Kong unveiled legislation to make disrespecting China's national anthem a crime - from internet posts to sporting events - fueling concern about free speech in the former British colony.

The bill calls for prison sentences as long as three years for people who "willfully" alter and insult the anthem, or sing it in a "distorted or derogatory" manner, said Patrick Nip, the city's top constitutional affairs official. The government plans to introduce the bill to the Legislative Council on Jan. 23, where the pro-democracy opposition will struggle to block it.

"The risk is that it becomes a political tool for the administration to persecute lawmakers they don't trust, or even ordinary people who appear to be 'naughty,'" said Alvin Yeung, leader of the opposition Civic Party, which intends to vote against the legislation.

The move is part of a broader crackdown on dissent that democracy advocates say is eroding the financial hub's liberal political and economic system. President Xi Jinping has sought to assert China's dominance in the "one country, two systems" framework intended to protect its independent judiciary and freedom of

expression after British rule ended in 1997.

Last year, Hong Kong issued an unprecedented ban against a political party that advocated independence from the mainland. Before that, six activists were removed from the Legislative Council for insulting China while taking their oaths of office - after the Communist Party exercised a rarely used power to interpret the city law.

The anthem legislation has been expected since 2017, when China's top parliamentary body added a requirement to Hong Kong's charter for it to adopt the law. An addendum to the Basic Law, known as Annex III, also gives China power to apply national laws locally.

The anthem, "March of the Volunteers," was written during China's struggle against the Japanese and later adopted by the People's Republic of China. It was played during the handover ceremony when the Chinese national flag replaced the Union Jack over Hong Kong.

The anthem has become a symbol of Communist Party interference among Hong Kong's democracy supporters, especially its youth. The song has often drawn boos during football matches, mirroring U.S. debate over kneeling at

sporting events.

Nip, Hong Kong's secretary of mainland and constitutional affairs, said that the police were so concerned about the number of cases that would emerge that the bill's drafters extended the prosecution time to at least one year from six months.

The bill lists occasions that the anthem must be played, including swearing-in ceremonies of government officials and lawmakers, National Day cocktail receptions, as well as major sports events. The law will also cover insults of the anthem published on the internet and in schools, including those attended primarily by foreigners.

The plan comes just days after Xi proposed that China and Taiwan unite using the same "one country, two systems" formula. It was rejected by even the island's China-friendly Kuomintang, which said the framework adopted in Hong Kong was unacceptable for democratically-run Taiwan because it lacked public support.

"I can understand if China used Annex III to enact nationwide laws to protect national security," said Craig Choy, a convener of the Progressive Lawyers' Group. "But is it a national anthem law really a matter of PRC or Hong Kong's national security? I don't think so." **Bloomberg**

Station	Air quality
Roadside	40-60 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	35-55 Moderate
Ambient	40-60 Moderate

WORLD BRIEFS



PALESTINE The Palestinian Authority has cut off the salaries of Hamas lawmakers in the West Bank, the latest in a series of recent measures that have escalated tensions between the rival factions.

MALTA Military vessels will soon take ashore 49 migrants who have been stranded aboard private rescue vessels since last month and the asylum-seekers will be distributed among eight European Union nations, Malta said yesterday.



GERMANY A lawmaker from the far-right Alternative for Germany party was attacked and seriously wounded by several men in the northwestern city of Bremen in what police said may have been a politically motivated assault.

BRITAIN Lawmakers have dealt Prime Minister Theresa May her second defeat in two days in battles over the government's plans for Brexit. The House of Commons voted for a motion designed to prevent the government delaying key decisions as Brexit approaches on March 29.

VENEZUELA Law enforcement forces in Venezuela have detained and tortured military personnel accused of plotting against the government of President Nicolas Maduro, according to two prominent human rights organizations.

BRAZIL Ongoing attacks by criminal gangs in the northeastern Brazilian state of Ceara are quickly becoming a first security test for the freshly inaugurated government of President Jair Bolsonaro.