



DRONES TO BE USED IN FIRE DETECTION

P2 MACAU



CLOSER WATCH ON PUBLIC COMPANIES' FINANCES

The government has revealed plans to establish new regulations to monitor public companies' financial situations

P7 AL



EXTREMISTS ATTACK UPSCALE HOTEL COMPLEX

Extremists attacked a luxury hotel in Nairobi, sending people fleeing in panic as explosions reverberated through the complex

P15 KENYA



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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'"

WORLD BRIEFS



HONG KONG's former top leader Donald Tsang was released yesterday after serving time in prison for failing to disclose plans to rent a luxury apartment from a businessman granted a government broadcasting license during Tsang's time in office. *More on p11*

CAMBODIA Prime Minister Hun Sen said that if Western countries impose threatened economic sanctions on his country, it would cause the death of the country's political opposition.



INDIA The skies over the confluence of sacred rivers in northern India where millions of Hindu priests and pilgrims have come to wash away their sins at the ancient Kumbh Mela festival are thick with toxic dust, a sign that government officials are struggling to grapple with the country's worsening air pollution.



IVORY COAST Judges at the International Criminal Court yesterday acquitted former Ivory Coast President Laurent Gbagbo and former youth minister Charles Ble Goude of crimes committed following disputed elections in 2010, saying prosecutors failed to prove their case.

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ANALYSTS

Casino revenue could contract in January

P3



China to cut taxes, keep policy flexible to counter slowdown

P10

Increase of 8 percent in fire cases reported

Renato Marques

THE Fire Services Bureau (CB) was called less often to respond to several types of incidents over 2018. The 1.3 percent drop was reported yesterday to the media by Commissioner Leong Iok Sam during the CB annual activities report.

Although the number of cases decreased (by 609 cases) when compared to the previous year, Leong noted that fire-related cases rose by 8 percent during 2018. According to the CB head, the increase in these cases was attributed to “a significant number of reported cases of fire and smoke in electrical boxes,” particularly during typhoons and other weather-related situations.

Leong also explained the registered decline in the total number of cases addressed by the CB in 2018, contrasting the “extremely high number reported back in 2017, with the hit of typhoon Hato. [...] Last year’s Mangkhut did not generate so many cases,” he said.

2018 closed with a total of 47,327 incidents lodged. The number of dispatched ambulance cases grew by 270. The Commissioner noted that “although we had more cases [of ambulance dispatching],

RENATO MARQUES



the growth is by just over 200 cases, which in fact represents a slowdown, since in previous years we were seeing an average growth of over 2,000 cases per year,” Leong noted, highlighting also that this slight increase did not result in an increase in the total number

of ambulance services. That figure decreased by over 2,500 ambulances.

Responsibility for this decrease, according to Leong, lies with the successful campaigns run by the CB, encouraging people to refrain from using ambulance services except in a

real emergency.

Leong foresees some areas in which the services would focus on this year, citing the “learning achieved with the experience from the last few years concerning disaster response.” He noted that the CB has acquired and updated equip-

ment and vehicles in order to effectively face any upcoming situation, as well as provided training for its frontline staff in order to “elevate their capacity during rescue operations.”

Leong said that this year the CB plans to acquire “two to three drones that would be used in fire detection and fast information relay on site in an incident.” He further explained that “[the drones] would be used mostly for the detection of fire outbreaks and for image collection on site so we can have fast relay of information on the situation and can deploy the best equipment to the location.”

■ Drones will be used in fire detection

Questioned by the media, the Commissioner said that the Services personnel currently include 1,362 operatives. He expects that during 2019, those operatives will be joined by another 100 currently in training.

According to Leong, the figure is sufficient but does not fill the Service’s established 1,600 operative quota completely.

CRIME

Mainland man killed in illegal guesthouse

A 47-year-old man from the mainland has been killed in an illegal guesthouse in Taipa at the Edifício Palácio do Sucesso, the Judiciary Police (PJ) reported yesterday.

Initially, the police ruled out murder. Another two mainland men were also involved in the case, but only sustained injuries.

According to the PJ, the case was handed over to the bureau by the Public Security Police Force (PSP) yesterday morning

at around 7:30 a.m. The police believe that the deceased and the other two men first became involved in a verbal fight, which was followed by a physical brawl. During the fight, the now-deceased man called the police to report the incident.

Firefighters were dispatched to the scene after receiving the call, whereupon they sent the man to the emergency room of Conde S. Januário Hospital.

After forensic examination, the deca-

sed was found to have a shallow wound on the right hand and a shallow bruise on the right side of both the face and neck. No other scars were found. The cause of death is yet to be determined. As for the other two injured men, there were knife wounds in the right palm, left side of the chest and right shoulder.

The deceased had been drinking alcohol before the fight.

The case is currently under investigation. the PJ will publicize any future updates.

Guangzhou eyes more cooperation with Macau

GUANGZHOU mayor Wen Guohui said yesterday that the city is seeking to strengthen cooperation with Macau and Hong Kong to expedite construction of the Greater Bay Area.

The capital of Guangdong Province will work with the two special administrative regions to build a world-class urban agglomeration and a tech innovation corridor linking Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Hong Kong and Macau, said Wen Guohui.

Wen made the revelation while delivering the government work report to the annual session of

the city’s people’s congress. During the event, the city also announced its 2019 budget of 19 billion yuan (USD2.8 billion) to boost the joint development of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau.

Wen said the city planned to set up an innovation center for young entrepreneurs in the Greater Bay Area and extend the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link into the center of Guangzhou. The city will also expedite construction of the Guangzhou campus of Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. **MDT/Xinhua**

AP PHOTO



The Canton Tower lit up at night in Guangzhou

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GAMING

Analysts offer gloomy January outlook

BROKERAGE Sanford C. Bernstein has warned that January gross gaming revenue could contract by as much as between 8 and 12 percent year-on-year. If correct, the prediction would mark the first monthly decline in growth since the gaming recession ended in mid-2016.

Gross gaming revenue in January 2018 amounted to MOP26.26 billion, representing a whopping 36.4 percent year-on-year rise. Curiously, the Chinese Lunar New Year - one of the most lucrative weeks in the Macau's gaming calendar - fell in mid-February last year.

Should this month see a decline of between 8 and 12 percent, as suggested by Bernstein, January gross gaming revenue would fall in the range of MOP23 billion to MOP24 billion. That would represent a significant slowdown from the average monthly revenue of MOP26.26

billion recorded during the last quarter of 2018, falling more in line with the average monthly take in the same quarter a year earlier.

Based on the average daily rate for the week of January 7 to 13, Bernstein analysts wrote that revenues at Macau's casino operators were being weighed down by "continued enforcement of the smoking ban; the crackdown of the illegal point-of-sale scheme; and visitation slowdown in anticipation of the Chinese New Year in early February," according to a report from GGR Asia.

With regards to the illegal point-of-sale scheme, Bernstein analysts were referring to an alleged plot to have moved about USD153 million from China to Macau, circumventing the mainland's currency controls.

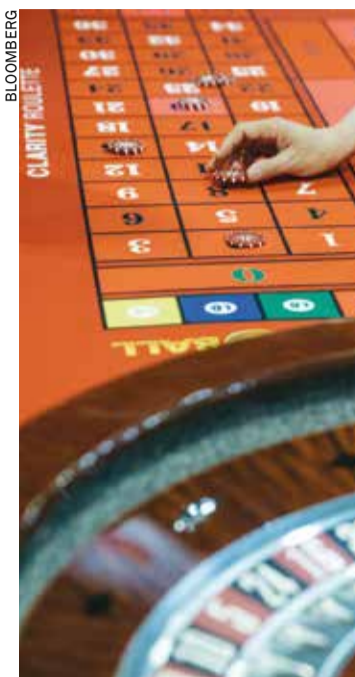
Japanese brokerage Nomura offered an alternative perspective for January gross gaming revenue, suggesting

that it could hold flat or see as much as a 5 percent contraction. According to GGR Asia, the firm said that U.S. operators might be less affected by the point-of-sale issues "as they tend to be stricter enforcers of the regulations."

Gaming analysts previously offered conservative views for the first month of 2019, suggesting that the timing of the Chinese Lunar New Year would shift earnings into early February.

Union Gaming Securities Asia warned that it expected a "slow start" to the year and said it would "not be surprised if January was flattish and February was up in the mid/high single digits."

Meanwhile, JPMorgan said it remained bullish on Macau and recommended holding shares of the city's casino operators even with the expected dip in gaming revenue this year. "Most of the negatives are well-known and already (if not overly) priced-in," it



BLOOMBERG

MGM announces bonus for team members

MGM announced yesterday that a discretionary bonus will be paid to its eligible non-management team members, starting the end of the month. The bonus is equal to one month's salary and will be paid in two equal installments at the end of January and mid-February 2019. Grant Bowie, CEO and Executive Director of MGM China Holdings Limited, said "the bonus is our appreciation and recognition to our team members for their hard work and dedication that strengthen us every day as an organization. 2019 is the year that MGM will continue to be bold for change and to innovate on building our relations with team members, our customers and the community," as cited in a press release.

Wynn Macau bonus applies to 96 percent of staff

Wynn Macau Ltd yesterday announced that a "winter bonus" equal to one month's gross salary will be paid to all eligible Wynn Macau and Wynn Palace employees, excluding senior management. According to a statement released by the company, the bonus will apply to nearly 96 percent of the current 13,500-strong workforce. "This bonus is being awarded to show the company's appreciation to all [employees] for their hard work, commitment and loyalty during what has been a successful second half of 2018," the statement noted.

said, according to investment media, adding that operators demonstrated their resilience to macroeconomic developments on the mainland last year.

However, Bernstein's latest forecast is the most pessimistic since late gaming recovery began in mid-2016. As the Times reported earlier this month, full-year revenue for 2018 amounted to about 84 percent of the MOP360.75 billion brought in at the 2013 peak, up from 74 percent in 2017.

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News At Hand



Chief Executive affirms support for local media role

THE Chief Executive, Chui Sai On, yesterday pledged to support local media during a lunch with representatives of English and Portuguese-language media.

In his speech, Chui said that local media that report in English and Portuguese are an element of Macau's multicultural environment, and therefore crucial in promoting further exchanges between Eastern and Western cultures.

Chui said the government paid great attention to the media's opinions and suggestions regarding the government's work tasks.

The CE said that the government "strictly upheld the principles of the freedom of the press and the freedom to publish." He also reviewed Macau's general economic development in 2018, saying the economy had remained stable with sound public finances, a high local employment rate, and improvement in terms of the overall well-being of Ma-



cau's people.

Chui went on to acknowledge that 2019 marks the 70th anniversary of the People's Republic of China and the 20th anniversary of the MSAR, as well as the year his successor would be elected to the role of Chief Executive.

Chui said the Government would strive to ensure the two anniversaries were celebrated successfully through various activities, and also to ensure a smooth election process and transition to the next administration.

The Chief Executive had also hosted a lunch on Mon-

day for representatives of local Chinese-language media. He mentioned that advances in technology had helped diversify the public's sources of information. He added the government would always help the local media to address the challenges created by new media technology.

Police detain suspect of theft occurred last month

THE Public Security Police Force (PSP) has detained the suspect of a theft which occurred on December 21, 2018 at Rua de Santa Clara in Macau's central district. The suspect, a mainland resident aged over 40 years old who told the police that he is working as an online sales person, was caught while trying to reenter the region over the weekend through the Border Gate checkpoint.

The authorities sought the man after he was identified through surveillance cameras, as he is a suspect in the theft of a car parked on Rua de Santa Clara. According to security camera footage, the man was seen wandering around the area for about two hours, approaching the vehicle several times before managing to steal from its interior two bags containing skin care products valued at MOP23,000.

The suspect denied the crime but the police spokesperson said they have enough evidence in the video footage to prove the theft.

In a separate case, the PSP also reported that they found an illegal immigrant, a man over 40 years old from Vietnam, who was caught in a routine document inspection operation on January 12 around 9 a.m.

At the time, the man failed to provide documents and later he admitted he had illegally entered Macau on November 8, 2018 by swimming from the mainland. He also told the police that he committed the offence with the purpose of finding job. **RM**

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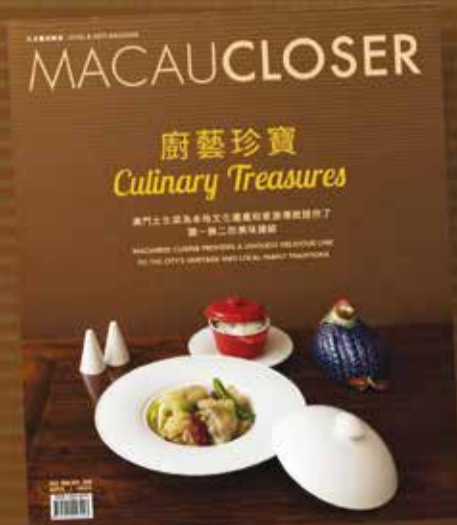
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Gov't plans regulations to watch public companies' finances

Julie Zhu

THE government has revealed to lawmakers that it has plans to establish new regulations to monitor public companies' financial situations, according to lawmaker Chan Chak Mo.

Yesterday, the Second Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly (AL) discussed the enforcement of the government budget for 2019.

The committee members signed their opinions on said enforcement.

After yesterday's discussion was completed, Chan, together with Wong Kit Cheng, reported the proceedings to the media.

According to Chan, the government has already submitted the accounts and reports of four of the city's government wholly-owned companies to the committee.

These four companies are: Macao Investment and Development Limited, Transferência Electrónica de Dados - Macau Edi Van S.A. (TEDMEV), TDM- Teledifusão de Macau, S.A., and the Macao In-



Chan Chak Mo (right)

dustrial Parks Development Co., Ltd.

Although the government submitted financial reports concerning its wholly-owned companies, the accounts of other companies in which the SAR government is an investor were not submitted.

In total, there are nine public companies in which the government has invested.

According to Chan's explana-

tion, all issues concerning these nine companies must be voted upon and passed at the board of the company, on the basis of Macau's business laws and regulations. As such, the government did not submit the accounts.

In addition, as reported by Chan, the committee members expressed their opinions regarding the company's accounts. Some members consider the documents of

these companies that are available to the lawmakers to be insufficient.

The lawmakers believe that under the conditions of low transparency, it is difficult for them and for the public to watch the operations conducted by these companies.

The committee believes that transparency concerning the companies' information needs to be reviewed.

In response to the lawmakers, government representatives promised to establish an internal instruction to regulate the financial situation of companies where public capital was invested, as well as to increase the transparency for the convenience of supervision by society and the AL.

However, the government did not provide a timetable for the establishment of this instruction.

The government also expressed that it will research the establishment of specific laws and regulations to regulate financial arrangements and reports of the financial situations of public-funded companies.

Air Macau transported nearly 3.3 million passengers in 2018

AIR Macau transported 40 percent of the 8.26 million passengers that traveled to the region using the Macau International Airport (MIA) last year, Macau International Airport Co. Ltd. (CAM) announced in a statement this week.

According to the firm, Air Macau has continued to increase the frequency of flights on regional routes to the mainland and Japan, having added passenger travel time options.

The south extension of the MIA Terminal Building will commence construction in the first quarter of this year and CAM is expecting that the capacity of the terminal will reach 10 million passengers per year after completion in 2020.

In order to improve passengers' check-in efficiency in the airport, Air Macau and CAM have reached a



consensus to upgrade e-commerce and online check-in functions, and to study process time control schemes to cater to current travel habits.

For 2019, the airport management pledged to continue expanding in terms of passenger numbers and facilities, such as fully developing long-haul routes, and aimed to change the current passenger market structure.

The airport achieved a new record for passenger traffic in 2018, registering 8.26 million arriving and departing passengers, 15 percent

more than 2017. The infrastructure handled over 65,000 aircraft movements, representing an increase of 12 percent from 2017.

There are currently 27 airlines operating at MIA, connecting Macau to 51 destinations.

Among them, the passenger traffic from mainland China, Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia routes account for 37 percent and 41 percent of the total passenger volume of the airport.

In 2018, the airport added ten new international routes.

G2E to launch FinTech segment to its expo

GLOBAL Gaming Expo (G2E) Asia is launching its new show segment, "Financial Technology Asia," at the 13th edition of the gaming event, which will be held from May 21 to 23 at The Venetian Macao.

"Financial Technology Asia" will be jointly organized by G2E Asia and Blockchain Labs Co., Limited.

The new segment will provide a platform where attendees can meet and explore new partnerships and business opportunities with financial professionals, as cited in a press release issued by G2E.

These professionals range from casino and gaming platform operators to banking and financial institutions, funding and venture capitalists and FinTech system integrators.

The segment will bring together members of FinTech from an exclusively Asian perspective to share insights, and will cover blockchain technology for gaming and lottery, as well as innovations in payments and cyber security.

"We are pleased to be partnering with Blockchain Labs to organize the Financial Technology Asia exhibit segment and high-level forum," said

Josephine Lee, chief operating officer of Reed Exhibitions Greater China.

"G2E Asia's new coverage of the financial aspects of cyber security directly responds to market needs, while providing financial technology and business solutions for the whole of the gaming and entertainment industry."

"Financial Technology Asia" will spotlight Asia-Pacific's FinTech industry, which is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 72.5 percent from 2015 to 2020, reaching USD72 billion.

According to G2E, it will provide a unique opportunity for financial technology and solution providers to showcase the latest solutions and services, including cloud financial solutions, block chain technology, cybersecurity, FinTech and payment solutions.

Jack Liao, CEO of Blockchain Labs, said "We're absolutely delighted to work with G2E Asia to co-organize Financial Technology Asia. [...] It is a great honor [to] join hands in launching Financial Technology Asia as one of the key segments and highlighted features of the upcoming event in May 2019."

Girl in serious condition due to flu

As of Monday night, a one-year-old local girl is in serious condition after she was diagnosed with the influenza A virus, the Health Bureau (SSM) reported. Within the 24 hours of 1 p.m. on Sunday, the SSM received four cases of influenza accompanied by pneumonia. In addition to these four individual cases, the SSM received five cases of group infections, involving a total of 66 students. One of the students, from the Escola De Santa Teresa Macau, had to remain hospitalized but is in a stable condition. The other students' health situations were deemed ordinary.

DSI expands 24-hour self-service area

Following the introduction of round-the-clock self-service applications for the Certificate of Criminal Record, the Identification Services Bureau has extended the self-service application period for the Certificate of Personal Data to 24 hours, and expanded the 24-hour service location to the Government Services Centre in Areia Preta. Round-the-clock self-service facilities to apply for the Certificate of Criminal Record and the Certificate of Personal Data are also available at DSI's electronic services area on the ground floor of the China Plaza in Avenida de Grande Praia, the Islands District Public Services Centre - Seac Pai Van Station and DSI's self-service station in Seac Pai Van. Citizens can also apply for the Certificate of Criminal Record and the Certificate of Personal Data online.

Local woman robbed her own house for gambling

A 22-year-old local woman has been arrested after she robbed her own house and her father, the Judiciary Police (PJ) reported yesterday. The suspect robbed her house together with her ex-boyfriend. In total, the couple stole MOP100,000 in property from her father, having committed the crime in order to raise money for illegal football betting. The police also found that the woman had previously robbed RMB30,000 from her house to pay back her debts, also accumulated from illegal football betting. The PJ seized around MOP4,000 in Anniversary Banknotes.

GAMING | US

Atlantic City casino revenue up, but newbies hurt others

Wayne Parry, Atlantic City

TWO reopened casinos and half a year of sports betting helped push Atlantic City's casino revenue up 7.5 percent in 2018 to nearly USD2.86 billion, state gambling regulators said yesterday [Macau time].

But the news was bad for most of the casinos that existed before the Hard Rock and Ocean Resort casinos opened in June. Of those seven casinos, six won less in 2018 than they had in 2017, the latest of several recent indications that concerns about whether Atlantic City was re-expanding its market to an unsustainable size were valid.

Sports betting saw the casinos and two racetracks take in \$1.24 billion since the first wagers were taken in June. For the less than six months that sports betting was legal last year, it generated just over \$94 million in revenue for casinos and tracks. The state got \$10.4 million in sports betting taxes.

Ocean Resort is the former Revel, which closed in 2014; Hard Rock is the former Trump Taj Mahal, which closed two years later. Both reopened the same day last year, June 27.

After a brutal stretch that saw five casinos shut down between 2014 and 2016, Atlantic City had been doing reasonably well as a slimmed-down market with less competition and a boost from internet gambling. Increased competition from casinos in neighboring states including Pennsylvania and New York cannibalized Atlantic City's casino revenue, helping lead to the shut downs.



People walking on the boardwalk in Atlantic City

When plans were announced for Hard Rock and Ocean Resort to open, elation about the restored jobs, tax revenue and additional weekend hotel rooms was tempered by concern that Atlantic City might be making the same mistake twice in having more casinos than the market can support.

James Plousis, chairman of the New Jersey Casino Control Commission, noted that 2018 was the third straight year that Atlantic City's gambling revenue increased. But he did note the impact on the older casinos from the arrival of the two

newcomers.

"While the city had a good year, market adjustments from competition occurred and will continue into 2019," he said in a news release. "The continuing strength of internet gaming plus a growing sports wagering market will provide the industry with tools to compete."

Of Atlantic City's seven casinos that operated before the two new additions last year, only the Golden Nugget showed a revenue increase for the year. It was up 13.7 percent to \$327.8 million.

Even the Borgata, Atlantic Ci-

ty's perennial market leader, saw its casino revenue decline in 2018. It was down 4 percent to \$771.1 million.

Tropicana was down 2.5 percent to nearly \$381 million, but it remained the city's No. 2 casino in terms of gambling revenue.

Resorts was down 3.3 percent to \$184.2 million; Harrah's was down 8.4 percent to almost \$333 million; Bally's was down 9.1 percent to nearly \$192 million, and Caesars was down 13.5 percent to \$281.3 million.

Hard Rock won \$166.7 million from late June through the end

of the year, while Ocean Resort won \$101.1 million during that same period.

Ocean Resort changed hands last week, with an as-yet unannounced company assuming a majority ownership stake in it in return for making a \$70 million investment to help keep it running. The ownership change was widely seen as another indication that the market was not ready for the kind of expansion it underwent last summer.

While the city had a good year, market adjustments from competition occurred and will continue into 2019.

JAMES PLOUSIS
NEW JERSEY CASINO CONTROL
COMMISSION

Internet gambling took in nearly \$300 million last year, an increase of 21.6 percent over 2017 and one of the true bright spots for New Jersey's gambling market. Of the two internet-only gambling entities in the state, Resorts Digital was up 76.3 percent to \$75.7 million, and Caesars Interactive-NJ was up 5.9 percent to \$45.5 million. The Golden Nugget won \$104 million online last year, about twice what its nearest competitor, the Borgata, did.

Among racetracks offering sports betting, the Meadowlands earned \$31.3 million in sports betting revenue, and Monmouth Park earned \$12.4 million. **AP**

Huawei founder says company would not share user secrets

THE founder of Huawei, in a new effort to allay Western security concerns, said yesterday that the Chinese tech giant would not comply with Chinese government requests to disclose confidential information about its foreign customers and their communication networks.

Ren Zhengfei spoke in a rare meeting with foreign reporters as Huawei Technologies Ltd. counters concerns that threaten to hamper its access to global markets. Telecom carriers are preparing to spend

billions of dollars on next-generation technology.

Ren's comments were the 74-year-old former military engineer's first public response to foreign accusations his company is controlled by the ruling Communist Party or is required to facilitate Chinese spying.

The United States, Australia, Japan and some other governments have imposed curbs on using Huawei technology over such concerns.

Asked how the company would respond to an official demand for confiden-

tial details about its customers and their operations, Ren said, "We would definitely say no to such a request."

Asked whether Huawei might go to court, Ren said it would be up to Chinese authorities to "file litigation" if the company rejected such a request.

Ren said neither he nor the company have ever received a government request for "improper information" about anyone.

Huawei, the biggest global supplier of network equipment used by phone and internet companies,

says it is employee-owned. Ren said no government entity or any other investor who isn't a current or former employee owns "one cent of Huawei shares."

Ren said Huawei has no research cooperation with the ruling party's military wing, the People's Liberation Army. He said the company also has no dedicated unit for military sales and he knew of no purchases of civilian technology by the PLA.

Ren is the father of Huawei's chief financial officer, Meng Wanzhou, who was arrested Dec. 1



Ren Zhengfei

in Canada on U.S. charges related to possible violations of trade sanctions on Iran.

Ren said he misses his daughter but couldn't dis-

cuss her case while it was before a court. However, he said Huawei obeys the law, including trade sanctions, in every country where it operates. **AP**

ANGOLA

Economy contracted by 1.6pct in the third quarter of 2018

ANGOLA recorded a 1.6 percent economic contraction in the third quarter of 2018 and ended the year with an inflation rate of 18.6 percent, the National Statistics Institute (INE) said on Monday in Luanda.

José Calenge, from the National Accounts and Statistical Coordination Department of INE, said that the year-on-year drop in gross domestic product in the third quarter was due to poor performance in sectors such as oil, diamonds and agriculture.

In the period under analysis, the oil sector had a negative performance of -10.6 percent, diamonds (-16.5 percent), agro-livestock (-2.3 percent), fisheries (-18.9 percent), transport (-5.9 percent), telecommunications (-3.5 percent), among others.

This is the third consecutive quarter of recession in the Angolan economy in 2018, after declines of 4.6 percent in the first quarter and of 7.4



Construction cranes operate among new skyscrapers being built in Luanda

percent in the second quarter, according to figures previously announced by INE.

INE figures show that the third quarter of 2017 was the last one in which the economy in Angola grew – by 2.79 percent of GDP – com-

pared with the same period of the previous year.

The 2018 inflation rate, in turn, was 60 basis points higher than the government forecast included in the General State Budget bill for 2019, which was presented

in parliament last October and has since been approved.

Prior to this downward review, the government forecast an inflation rate of 28.8 percent for the full year 2018. **MDT/Macauhub**

More shipping connections between Cape Verde, Portugal

BOLUDA Lines, the shipping company of the Boluda Corporación Marítima group from Canarias, on February 1 will increase the frequency of shipping connections between Portugal, Spain and Cape Verde, the group said in a statement.

In the case of Cape Verde, Boluda Lines will offer a weekly service with stops in Sal, Boa Vista and Mindelo, becoming, according to the statement, the first shipping company to provide this regular transport service on a weekly basis.

The Spanish group justified the boost to the links with the “good results” achieved since it opened the new commercial line with the Cape Verdean archipelago in 2017, from the Canary Islands, as well as the “strong focus” on responding to the needs of the hotels and tourism sector, which is “essential for the development” of the archipelago.

“Since 2017, Cape Verde, through Boluda Lines, has received a diversified offer of fruit, vegetables and other fresh products for the main hotel chains, which offers a unique logistics solution in the market, reducing time and regularity of shipments, backed by its state-of-the-art refrigerated containers,” the report said. **MDT/Macauhub**

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Trade war delaying Chinese automaker's US plans

Jeff Karoub, Tom Krisher

THE U.S.-China trade war has delayed but not derailed Chinese automaker GAC Motor's plans to enter the American market, company officials said Monday.

Company President Yu Jun, speaking at Detroit's North American International Auto Show, said the dispute is a factor in moving its U.S. product launch from the end of this year — as it announced at last year's show — to June 2020. Still, analysts think they might have a longer road to the market.

President Donald Trump imposed tariff increases of up to 25 percent on USD250 billion of Chinese imports over complaints Beijing steals or pressures companies to hand over technology. President Xi Jinping responded by imposing penalties on \$110 billion of American goods.

Washington wants Beijing to change its plans to use government support to make Chinese companies world leaders in robotics and advanced technologies. 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.

A Dec. 1 agreement postponed further tariff increases. Economists say the 90-day postponement of additional tariff increases that had been meant to take effect

AP PHOTO



Jan. 1 may be too short to settle the disputes bedeviling U.S.-Chinese relations.

Yu said the 25 percent auto tariffs would cause prices to rise to the point that GAC's cars aren't competitive. He's optimistic that the trade dispute will be resolved in time for his company to meet its latest goal.

"China and the United States are the world's two largest economies, so their trade tensions will not only affect these two countries but also the entire world," he said through an interpreter. "So we believe the leaders of both countries will show their wisdom and the vision for the common interest of the entire world."

Yu acknowledged GAC's "uphill battle" to entering the U.S. market but he noted the company is making "steady progress." In addition to opening the design centers in Los Angeles, Silicon Valley and Detroit, he said it expects to have its North American sales company running by March. After that, GAC will start to establish a distribution network and build brand awareness in the U.S.

GAC officials visited the National Automobile Dealers Association convention last March, holding an event that attracted 130 dealership companies from 30 states representing 1,100 dealers, he said. He added many expressed a "keen interest" in working

with the company, which has continued discussions with them. GAC plans to attend the convention again this year.

"By entering the U.S. we can examine our own capabilities and challenge ourselves to build even better products," he said.

IHS Markit analyst Stephanie Brinley said GAC's announcement underscores its commitment to launch in the U.S., but stressed the company must jump many hurdles, starting with regulatory and trade, and then consumer awareness and consideration.

It could all "take several years to overcome," she said.

"However, if the company can

maintain its patience and commitment, it is ultimately a question of when rather than if they reach the U.S. market," she added.

At its fifth Detroit show, GAC unveiled a concept called the Entranze. The "hyper family car" comes from GAC's Los Angeles design center and Yu said the sleek, seven-person crossover, is the first to be designed in the U.S. However, GAC's first vehicle in the U.S. is expected to be the GS8, a full-size SUV that will cost about \$30,000.

By entering the US we can examine our own capabilities and challenge ourselves to build even better products.

YU JUN
GAC MOTOR PRESIDENT

GAC sought to tamp down the trade tensions and put on a show for the assembled journalists, featuring dancers who aggressively pulled the tarp off the Entranze and executives who spoke glowingly of the U.S. and a history of commerce between the nations that has benefited consumers.

"We believe American consumers will enjoy our products," Yu said. **AP**

Tax-cut strategy implemented as lending stabilizes

CHINA'S government is turning increasingly to tax cuts as the first line of defense against a slowing economy, as credit data released yesterday showed some vindication of its gradual stimulus strategy.

Further evidence of the dominance of fiscal measures emerged, as senior policy officials pledged that tax reductions on a "larger scale" are in the pipeline, amid worsening output and trade data. JP-Morgan Chase & Co. economists estimate the total impact will be around 2 trillion yuan (USD300 billion), or 1.2 percent of gross domestic product.

That's a departure from the infrastructure binges coupled with massive monetary stimulus that were deployed in the aftermath of global financial crisis. Beijing is trying to put a floor under the eco-

nomic slowdown without another debt blowout, with some success: Credit growth exceeded expectations in December, and the central bank has managed to curb riskier shadow banking throughout the year.

"At the moment the room for monetary policies is limited, and fiscal policies such as tax cuts are the crucial tool," said Cui Li, head of macro research at CCB International Holdings Ltd. in Hong Kong. The high leverage and property prices have limited the chances of massive monetary stimulus, she said. "But as a pro-growth measure, tax cuts will take effects at a slower pace compared to infrastructure binges," she said.

Last May the government cut value added taxes for manufacturing, transportation, construction, telecommunications

and farm produce industries, followed by a cut in personal income taxes and the introduction of more deductions. Earlier this month, the State Council announced a \$29-billion annual tax cut plan for small companies.

The change of approach is being driven largely by China's debt load, which makes funding a splurge on bridges and railways dangerous for financial stability. Against the backdrop of slowing global growth and the trade war with the U.S. though, it's not clear whether the new approach will be enough to stabilize the economy.

The government "has grasped the problem" after years of over-investment led to low efficiency and surging debts," JP Morgan economists led by Zhu Haibin wrote in a report. The impact on growth could be modest

though, they wrote as more vigorous tax collection can dampen the benefit and the transmission of tax cuts to the economy is uncertain.

In all, the reductions may boost gross domestic product growth by 0.46 percentage point, the economists said. The world's second-largest economy is being hit by a confluence of slowing global growth and by uncertainty linked to the trade war - factors that are expected to linger in the near term, at least.

Zhu Hexin, deputy governor of the People's Bank of China, Xu Hongcai, assistant minister of the Ministry of Finance, and Lian Weiliang, vice chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission, briefed reporters on the policy changes yesterday in Beijing, and also pledged to support consumption of cars and household

goods. Chinese vehicle sales fell for the first time in 28 years, data released Monday showed.

Xu said that the government would allow local governments to issue more special bonds in 2019 compared to 2018 to ensure continuous construction of ongoing infrastructure projects, but that this doesn't mean weaker oversight.

"Tax reduction is almost the only way to boost personal consumption and private businesses" which are the main worries in the current slowdown, said Wang Jian, a Shanghai-based economist at Shenwan Hongyuan Group Co. "The government is very reluctant to go back to the big stimulus, and relaxing property policy is unlikely."

The nation's augmented fiscal deficit -- taking into account quasi-fiscal efforts

such as special bonds and land sales - will jump to 11.3 percent of the economic output this year from 10.7 percent last year, JP-Morgan forecast. Bloomberg reported that China will widen its fiscal shortfall earlier this month.

China also announced three rounds of import tariff cuts last year, in an effort to cut costs for consumers, and implement President Xi Jinping's promises to open up further.

Worse-than-expected trade data published Monday underlines the risk to the economy in the first quarter, as its still unclear how much new credit is filtering through to where it's needed. The strategy has also yet to turn around sentiment in the real economy, which could register the slowest growth in nearly three decades in data scheduled for release next week. **Bloomberg**

ANALYSIS

Beijing pulling out all stops in Canada tensions

Christopher Bodeen, Beijing

CHINESE President Xi Jinping's government is sparing no expense to its international reputation in its determination to force Canada to back down over the case of a Chinese telecommunications executive it detained last month.

While Beijing formally denies any connection, the arrest of two Canadians on vague national security charges and the resentencing of a convicted Canadian drug smuggler to death on Monday point to a determined campaign of intimidation and retribution.

And while global perceptions of China's adherence to free trade and rule of law may take a beating, for Xi and other highly nationalistic Communist leaders, the stakes are simply too high.

"The Chinese will stop at nothing because it's a huge loss of face, for both the Chinese government and Xi Jinping in particular," said Willy Lam, an expert on Chinese politics at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Canada detained Meng Wanzhou, chief financial officer of Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei, on Dec. 1 at the request of the United States. The U.S. wants Meng, who is also the daughter of Huawei's founder, extradited to face charges that she committed fraud by misleading banks about the company's business dealings in Iran.

China responded nine days later by arresting former Canadian diplomat Michael Kovrig and businessman Michael Spavor. On Monday, a Chinese court sentenced Robert Lloyd Schellenberg to death, overtur-



Robert Lloyd Schellenberg attends his retrial at the Dalian Intermediate People's Court

ning a 15-year prison term handed down earlier.

The actions fit a pattern of retaliation against nations that offend China, which sometimes extends to their citizens inside the country. Past instances have shown China willing to endure long freezes in relations and subsequent damage to its national image.

China suspended its bilateral trade deal with Norway and restricted imports of Norwegian salmon when the Nobel peace prize was awarded to political prisoner Liu Xiaobo in 2010. Britain and other countries were retaliated against over meetings with the Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, considered a dangerous separatist by Beijing, and in 2014, a Canadian couple was detained in northeastern China and charged with espionage following Canada's arrest of a man accused of stealing U.S. aviation secrets for China.

Analysts say they have little doubt Kovrig and Spavor's cases are related to Meng's, and the

handing down of tougher sentences on appeal is rare enough to arouse suspicion.

"This really hurts China" and its efforts to promote its influence around the world, said David Zweig, a Canadian who directs the Center on China's Transnational Relations at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

"Xi Jinping has been talking so much about promoting soft power [...] I certainly think that it hurts China's soft power and its argument that it supports the rule of law," Zweig said.

Retaliating against Canada, widely seen as a benign influence on the global order, also offers fewer dividends for China than confronting the U.S., which is regarded by many in the international community as at least as much of a bully as China, Zweig said.

"China doesn't win any points by pushing around Canada," he said.

However, Beijing's dismissive attitude toward Canada seems

very much in line with its binary view of the world as divided into "big" or powerful nations that need to be deferred to, and "small" ones which China can afford to push around, said Steve Tsang, director of the China Institute at London's School of Oriental and African Studies.

China is picking on Canada "because they can," said Tsang. "It will have lots of negative effects on China's standing in the world and international perceptions of China."

He said Beijing's handling of the case shows its refusal to recognize the concept of an independent judiciary, something unknown in China, where the ruling Communist Party controls the courts. As the daughter of the founder of Huawei — closely connected to China's powerful military and considered something of a national treasure — Meng is afforded special status, Tsang said.

While he predicts further steps by Beijing to pressure Canada, Tsang said he doubts they will

have any bearing on the result.

"It will have no impact in terms of how the Canadian government deals with the Meng case," he said.

International observers also point to the strikingly different ways in which the cases are being handled by the two countries. While Meng has been afforded a lawyer and released on bail to her Vancouver mansion, Kovrig and Spavor are being held in cells with only minimal consular access. Canada has also complained that as a former diplomat, Kovrig should be accorded a degree of immunity.

The timing and circumstances of Schellenberg's resentencing are also being called into question. While his case was on appeal, the speed with which the new hearing was held, with only four days' notice, drew criticism from Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau — and a subsequent sharp rebuke of him by Beijing.

Underlying China's behavior is the apparent conviction that Meng's detention was a political act that must be responded to in kind. Given the limited information about the cases allowed by government censors, Chinese have "no sense that Ms. Meng was grabbed for anything other than political reasons," Zweig said.

"And if it's completely political, then I guess in their viewpoint, kidnapping people is just tit-for-tat," he said.

On Beijing's frigid streets Tuesday, public opinion seemed to be running strongly in the government's favor.

"It shows China is standing up" to Canada, said teacher Liang Reufen, adding that she hopes the matter will not be "elevated to a political level."

Finance worker Huo Yong said politics were already inextricably tied up in the case.

"We should pressure them since they use politics to contain our economic growth," said Huo. "My attitude is, 'whoever bullies us, we should bully them back.'" AP

HONG KONG

Ex-leader Tsang released after serving sentence

Violet Law, Hong Kong

HONG Kong's former top leader Donald Tsang was released yesterday after serving time in prison for failing to disclose plans to rent a luxury apartment from a businessman granted a government broadcasting license during Tsang's time in office.

The 74-year-old Tsang, who served as Hong Kong's chief executive from 2005 to 2012, is the highest-ranking former or

current official sent to prison for wrongdoing in the Asian financial hub, which prides itself on a reputation for clean governance.

The apartment, which is in mainland China, was for his retirement.

Tsang's 2017 conviction was a stunning downfall for the longtime civil servant whose career spanned both British colonial rule and Hong Kong's return to China in 1997. Last week, Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal accepted his petition to try to get his

conviction overturned.

It also contrasts with the Hong Kong Justice Department's decision late last month not to prosecute former Chief Executive C.Y. Leung for failing to report a 50 million Hong Kong dollar (USD6.4 million) payout from Australian engineering firm UGL Limited in its takeover of a company where Leung was a director.

The decision came after a four-year investigation by the city's anti-graft agency.

After serving one term

as chief executive, Leung was appointed in 2017 to China's legislature as a vice chairman. Tsang turned down an appointment from Beijing.

Political commentator Ching Cheong said that Beijing is suspected of pressuring the Justice Department to drop the case.

"Both men failed to declare their interest before serving the city's highest office, but one was sent to prison the other got off," Ching said. "That's where the injustice lies." AP





Lee Hsien Loong

SINGAPORE

Hackers who targeted PM won't be named

SINGAPORE officials said yesterday that it isn't in the country's interest to nab — or even name — the perpetrator of a cyberattack that breached 1.5 million health records, including those of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

An inquiry into the July 4 breach, believed to be the largest in Singapore's history, concluded that it was likely state-linked. The inquiry called for hearings and considered fac-

tors like the attacker's persistence, resources and advanced tactics.

In a public report released last week, it said "the attacker had a clear goal in mind, namely the personal and outpatient medication data of the Prime Minister in the main." Lee is a two-time cancer survivor.

Minister of Communication and Information S. Iswaran, who is also in charge of cybersecurity, told Parliament yes-

terday that the attacker could not be named for "national security reasons" and the copied personal data has not "emerged in any form" on the dark web.

The country has strengthened its cybersecurity portfolio since the breach, Iswaran said. It will adopt new systems, such as one that can aggregate, analyze and isolate threats in real time.

Iswaran added that actions have been taken against individuals and organizations that

could have "limited or stopped" hackers.

"That is the totality of our response," he said. "I don't think we should reduce whether we have confidence in the sense of justice to just one specific point, that there's no public attribution of the perpetrator."

Pressed by a member of Parliament, Iswaran said naming the perpetrator was "not in our interest."

"And it's not because we lack the legislative capacity to do so, if indeed it is within our jurisdiction," he added.

Around 1.5 million people who visited outpatient clinics in Singapore from May 1, 2015, to July 4 last year had their personal data accessed and copied. This included names, identification card numbers, addresses, race, gender and dates of birth. Of that total, 160,000 had their records of dispensed medicines copied too.

Officials have said that patients' information was not amended or deleted. They also said hackers did not have access to other records, such as diagnosis documents, test results or doctors' notes.

Lee, who has been prime minister since 2004, has said he didn't know what the attackers were hoping to find.

He has been treated for intermediate-grade malignant lymphoma and prostate cancer. In 2015, he underwent surgery to remove his prostate gland and was subsequently given the all-clear sign by doctors.

"My medication data is not something I would ordinarily tell people about, but there is nothing alarming in it," Lee said on Facebook last year after news of the breach broke. **AP**

last week, his first public appearance since his arrest.

Ghosn says the compensation that he allegedly failed to report was neither agreed upon nor paid.

Regarding the breach of trust charges, he said Nissan suffered no losses and the payments were for legitimate services.

Tokyo prosecutors say they have enough evidence for a case, although they won't disclose details until the trial.

On Monday, Ghosn's wife Carole Ghosn appealed for her husband's release in a letter to the group Human Rights Watch, saying the detention was "cruel and inhumane."

Japan's judicial system has long been criticized for long harsh detentions, severe interrogation tactics and the lack of a presumption that suspects are innocent until proven guilty. **AP**



tonari Ohtsuru, one of Ghosn's lawyers, had warned that suspects in Japan often are detained until their trials start. Ohtsuru said the complexity of Ghosn's case means it could take half a year be-

fore it goes to trial.

Ghosn, who led Nissan for two decades, asserted his innocence in court

AUSTRALIA

State to pump oxygen into rivers as fish die



AN Australian state government yesterday announced plans to mechanically pump oxygen into lakes and rivers after hundreds of thousands of fish have died in heatwave conditions.

Up to a million dead fish were found floating last week in the Darling River in western New South Wales state and the state government announced that 1,800 more rotting fish had since been found in Lake Hume in the state's south.

Minister for Regional Water Niall Blair said 16 battery-powered aerators had been bought and would be placed in various drought-affected waterways after they are delivered by Wednesday.

"They are a Band-Aid solution; we admit that," Blair told reporters.

"Nothing will stop this fish kill unless we get proper river flows and water levels in our dams back up to normal. We are doing everything we can to try and limit the damage," he added.

Experts blame heatwave conditions across much of Australia, drought and algal blooms for starving waterways of oxygen.

Blair rejected some criticisms that governments were allowing irrigators to take too much water from the Murray-Darling Basin, Australia's main river system, which winds across four states and is where a third of the nation's food is produced.

Water experts were meeting in Canberra yesterday to decide how the nation should respond to the water quality crisis.

Australian National University water expert Daniel Connell said many more fish would likely die with heatwave conditions forecast to continue until the weekend.

"It's a very predictable crisis," Connell said.

Connell said taking water from the system to irrigate had likely contributed to the poor water quality in rivers as well as the drought which is impacting most of New South Wales.

"By massively reducing the amount of water in the system, you produce much hotter water, you produce conditions that are much more conducive to algal blooms," he said. **AP**

North Korea's nuclear program quietly advances

KIM Jong Un told the world this month that North Korea took steps to stop making nuclear weapons in 2018, a shift from his earlier public statements. The evidence shows production has continued, and possibly expanded.

Satellite-imagery analysis and leaked American intelligence suggest North Korea has churned out rockets and warheads as quickly as ever in the year since Kim halted weapons tests, a move that led to his June summit with U.S. President Donald Trump. The regime probably added several intercontinental ballistic missiles, nuclear proliferation analysts say, with one arms control group estimating that Kim gained enough fissile material for about six more nuclear bombs, bringing North Korea's total to enough for between 30 to 60.

"There is no indication that their nuclear and missile programs have slowed or paused," said Melissa Hanham, the director of the One Earth Future Foundation's Datayo Project and an expert in using satellite imagery and other publicly available data to analyze weapons proliferation. "Rather it has reached a new stage."

Recent reports have shown that North Korea continued to operate two suspected uranium enrichment facilities - one near its long-established Yongbyon nuclear center and another location suspected of being a gas



centrifuge site. In July, U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo acknowledged in Senate testimony that North Korea was still producing fissile material.

Other reports suggest North Korea bolstered its arsenal in the run-up to the Trump summit and still runs a plant believed to have produced Kim's first ICBMs capable of reaching the U.S. homeland. They say the regime recently expanded a factory probably making engines for new, easier-to-hide solid-fuel rockets and enlarged an underground base for long-range missiles.

The reports underline what's at stake as Trump considers holding a second summit with Kim, which the U.S. president says could come "in the not-too-distant future." While Trump has credited Kim's decision to halt weapons tests and dismantle a

few testing facilities with preventing a war in the Western Pacific, those moves haven't prevented North Korea from building new weapons out of sight that could threaten the U.S.

Skepticism remains about Kim's denuclearization pledges, including his assertion in a New Year's speech that he agreed in 2018 to "neither make and test nuclear weapons any longer, nor use and proliferate them." A year ago, Kim ordered the mass production of warheads and ballistic missiles after suspending weapons tests following the launch of an ICBM capable of reaching the entire U.S. - the last of more than 40 conducted in a 24-month span.

Non-proliferation analysts say Kim's strategy appears to be quietly fortifying the arsenal he has while creating the diploma-

tic climate necessary for North Korea to get sanctions lifted and be tolerated as a nuclear state.

The stalled nuclear talks with the Trump administration have given Kim the space to perfect the technologies needed to strike the U.S. Analysts say it's only a matter of time before he acquires a targeting system and a re-entry vehicle capable of delivering a warhead safely through the atmosphere.

"I don't know of a country that has produced an ICBM and found that building a re-entry vehicle to be a substantial barrier," said Jeffrey Lewis, a specialist on proliferation at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in Monterey, California. Lewis and his colleagues produced several reports showing Kim's continued weapons development last year, identifying

the probable site of a covert uranium-enrichment facility north of Pyongyang and an expanded missile base near the Chinese border.

In recent days, Kim has also made clear that any disarmament deal with Trump would also require removing the U.S.'s nuclear-capable planes and warships from the region. He's shown little interest in declaring his nuclear assets as sought by U.S. officials, with state media last month comparing it to handing over a target list.

Without disclosures and inspections, it's impossible to know exactly what weapons North Korea possesses. The secretive regime has for decades relied on deception and a vast network of tunnels and clandestine facilities to hide the components of its nuclear arms program from government spy agencies, let alone commercial satellites.

An analysis of satellite imagery published by the 38 North website on Jan. 9 showed that the Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center, which Kim suggested he might dismantle in exchange for U.S. concessions, remains operational and well maintained.

How many nuclear warheads North Korea holds is unknown. The non-partisan Arms Control Association estimated last year that the regime possessed at least 15 warheads and was churning out enough fissile material to produce six to seven more bombs annually.

"But there is a high degree of uncertainty surrounding these estimates," the Arms Control Association said. By 2020, it could have anywhere from 20 to 100 warheads, potentially exceeding Israel's 80 estimated bombs. **Bloomberg**

THAILAND

Belarus model arrested for sex seminar pleads guilty

A model from Belarus who claimed last year that she had evidence of Russian involvement in helping elect Donald Trump president pleaded guilty yesterday in a Thai court in a case related to holding a sex training seminar and will be deported.

A lawyer representing Vashukevich said she and seven co-defendants were given suspended 18-month prison terms and fines of 100,000 baht (USD3,135), waived in view of nine months already served since the charges of soliciting and conspiracy were filed against them. All were arrested in February last year at a hotel in the seaside resort town of Pattaya, where Vashukevich and Russian self-styled sex



Anastasia Vashukevich

guru Alexander Kirillov, a co-defendant, were giving a class in sexual relationships - fully clothed, at least when police and reporters burst in.

They were initially sentenced yesterday by the court in Pattaya to three-year prison terms, but their sentences were hal-

ved because they pleaded guilty, a standard procedure in Thai trials. The soliciting charge carried a maximum prison term of 10 years, and conspiracy a maximum penalty of seven years.

The lawyer, who asked not to be identified because he feared he might be

breaching court rules, said the group would be freed Tuesday night and deported afterward.

Vashukevich, also known as Nastya Rybka, drew international interest last year by claiming to have recordings of Russian oligarch Oleg Deripaska talking about interference in the 2016 U.S. election but did not make them public.

Deripaska is close to Russian President Vladimir Putin, and also had a working relationship with Paul Manafort, Trump's former campaign manager who was investigated by special counsel Robert Mueller and convicted last year of tax and bank fraud.

In the early stages of their detention, the sex training group sent a note to the

U.S. Embassy via an intermediary seeking help and political asylum. Vashukevich indicated she would turn over the recordings she claimed to have if the U.S. could help secure her release, but later withdrew the offer, suggesting that she and Deripaska had reached an agreement.

Vashukevich's earlier revelation of an alleged affair with Deripaska fueled opposition allegations in Russia of official corruption and enraged the Kremlin. A public scandal erupted in early February last year when Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny published an investigation drawing on her social media posts suggesting corrupt links between Deripaska and a top Kremlin official, Depu-

ty Prime Minister Sergei Prikhodko.

The report featured photos from Deripaska's yacht in 2016, when Vashukevich claimed she was having an affair with him and recorded him.

Thai Immigration Police Chief Lt. Gen. Surachate Hakparn said his office would take custody of the group after they were released by the court in Pattaya and put their names on a blacklist barring them from returning to Thailand.

"Once we've received them, tomorrow I will contact the Russian ambassador in Thailand to arrange a date for it to take them in and buy a plane ticket," he said by phone. He said he expected to deport them by the end of next week. **AP**



Trump's Cuba policy hurts private sector, new figures say

Andrea Rodriguez, Havana

PRESIDENT Donald Trump's Cuba policy is driving millions of dollars from the island's private entrepreneurs to its state-run tourism sector, the opposite of its supposed goal, according to new government figures.

Trump announced in June 2017 that he was tightening limits on U.S. travel to Cuba in order to starve military-linked travel businesses and funnel money directly to the Cuban people.

He restricted Americans' ability to travel to Cuba on their own, rather than with a tour group. At the same time, he allowed U.S. cruise lines to continue to take passengers to Cuba, where they

pay millions to disembark at military-run docks and make quick trips onshore that are generally coordinated by government tour agencies that steer travelers to state-run destinations.

Cuban government figures from the first full year under Trump's policy show occupancy of private bed-and-breakfasts in Havana plunged to 44 percent in 2018 after years at near capacity in the wake of President Barack Obama's start of normalization with Cuba, said Michael Bernal, commercial director for the Ministry of Tourism.

Even as the private sector suffered, U.S. travel to Cuba was growing, from 618,000 in 2017 to 630,000 last year, Tourism Ministry figures say. Most of

those travelers came by ship, avoiding the confusing rules on travel to the island with package tours that are guaranteed to comply with the law.

The shift to cruises meant the average U.S. stay on the island dropped from six days to three, said Jose Luis Perello, a former University of Havana professor who studies Cuba's tourism industry.

That has had a devastating effect on owners and employees of Cuba's 24,185 private bed-and-breakfasts and 2,170 private restaurants known as paladares. They cherished U.S. travelers as heavy tippers who crammed days full of activities like classic car rides and cooking classes that put money into private hands.

David Pajon, a university professor who bought an apartment to rent in Old Havana, said he has had to drop his rates and his income has fallen 40 percent since Trump's new policy went into effect in 2017. He still was a third empty last month, the first time in three years that he wasn't fully booked in December.

"U.S.-Cuba normalization inspired a lot of people who thought this was a good business to invest their savings in," Pajon said. "And all of a sudden you have the U.S. government creating a situation that has an impact on the number of people who came, or changes the way they're coming — on cruise ships!"

The Trump measures, which were backed by Cuban-American Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, ban U.S. travelers from doing business with tourism businesses under the military-linked conglomerate known as GAE-SA, which runs dozens of hotels and a major tour-bus line, among others.

Instead, Americans are going to businesses run by the Tourism Ministry, but there is no reason to believe that Cuba has any difficulty transferring money within its highly centralized single-party government, said Richard Feinberg, a Brookings Institution fellow and University of California, San Diego, professor of international political economy who studies Cuba.

"Trump's policies have reduced on-island, versus cruise ship, tourism and thus harmed B&Bs as well as other private tourism-related firms including paladares and taxistas," Feinberg said. Beyond that, he said, "the only traceable impact of the Rubio sanction is to inconvenience US tourists."

The number of U.S. travelers to Cuba grew from 162,000 in 2015, the year after Obama and then Cuban President Raul Castro announced detente, to 284,000 in 2016 and 618,000 in 2017.

The overall number of travelers grew, too, from 3.5 million in 2015 to 3.7 million in 2016, 4.3 million in 2017 and 4.7 million last year.

Nonetheless, the private sector suffered.

Enrique Nunez, owner of La Guarida, perhaps Havana's best-known restaurant, said he had to cut his employees' hours last year because his revenue fell 40 percent.

"We don't understand the U.S. rules," said Bernal, the tourism official. "We heard the president's speech saying that the U.S. government supports entrepreneurs. However, that's the sector that's suffering most in Cuba." AP

RUSSIA

Two killed, 40 detained in new gay purge in Chechnya

THE Russian republic of Chechnya has launched a new crackdown on gays in which at least two people have died and about 40 people have been detained, LGBT activists in Russia charged this week.

The new allegations come after reports in 2017 of more than 100 gay men arrested and subjected to torture, and some of them killed, in the predominantly Muslim region in southern Russia.

The Associated Press and other media outlets

have interviewed some of the victims, who spoke about torture at the hands of Chechen law enforcement officers. Chechen authorities have denied those accusations, and federal authorities conducted a probe into the earlier reports but said they found nothing to support the charges.

Alvi Karimov, a spokesman for Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, told the Interfax news agency on Monday that the latest reports are "complete lies and don't have an

ounce of truth in them." Karimov insisted that no one has been detained in Chechnya on suspicion of being gay.

But the Russian LGBT Network, which has been monitoring the situation in Chechnya and helping victims, said in a statement Monday that about 40 men and women have been detained on suspicion of being gay since December and that at least two of them have died of torture in detention. The detainees are believed held at the same

facility that was named in the 2017 reports.

"Widespread detentions, torture and killings of gay people have resumed in Chechnya," Igor Kochetkov, program director at the Russian LGBT Network said. "Persecution of men and women suspected of being gay never stopped. It's only that its scale has been changing."

Kochetkov said the new wave of anti-gay persecution started at the end of the year, when Chechen authorities detained the

administrator of a social media group popular with LGBT people in the North Caucasus. Kochetkov said the mass detentions began after the authorities got hold of the contacts on his phone.

LGBT activists in 2017 helped to evacuate around 150 gay men from Chechnya to help them restart their lives elsewhere in Russia. Many of them have sought asylum and resettled abroad.

"News that the authorities have resumed the crackdown is spine-chilling,"

said Marie Struthers, director of Amnesty International's Eastern Europe section. "With lives in jeopardy, there is an urgent need for an international response to protect gay and lesbian people in Chechnya."

Russian authorities have strenuously denied that killings and torture took place in the predominantly Muslim region where homosexuality is taboo, even after one man came forward to talk about the time he spent in detention in Chechnya.



Opposition commander Moses Lokujo



An opposition soldier rides his motorcycle through Panyume town

South Sudan pursues fragile peace, but people remain wary

Sam Mednick

SOUTH Sudan opposition commander Moses Lokujo flipped through his notes, explaining international humanitarian law to an attentive group of senior officers.

"Soldiers are not supposed to kill someone who's not an enemy," he said. "And if a civilian is walking with a goat it doesn't mean you can steal it just because you have a gun."

Just months ago, such training seemed implausible in a country that was embroiled in a five-year civil war that killed almost 400,000 people and displaced millions. Since a fragile peace deal was signed in September, however, South Sudan's previously warring parties have been trying to rebuild trust in some of the areas hardest-hit by the war.

On a trip this month to government and opposition-held territo-

ries in Kajo Keji in Central Equatoria state, The Associated Press met with both sides who said the reconciliation of former rivals President Salva Kiir and opposition leader Riek Machar was the reason peace efforts appear to be working on the ground.

"If these two have united, why can't we?" said John Camillo, deputy commander for government troops in Kajo Keji.

For the first time, 10 opposition soldiers were stationed in the government barracks as part of a makeshift soldier swap. Government soldiers walked through town, unarmed and in civilian clothes, seemingly unconcerned by the possibility of attack.

"There's really been a total change," said Abiggo Manson, field officer for the Support for Peace and Education Development Program, a local aid group. Waving to soldiers on a motorbike, Manson said he never would have done

that in September because suspicions at the time remained high.

The peace efforts continue to be undermined by violence, however. In October, government soldiers attacked the opposition in Kajo Keji. More recently, the opposition has accused the government of not withdrawing its troops from opposition territory as stipulated by the peace agreement.

Renowned as South Sudan's breadbasket, the Equatoria region was devastated by fighting after renewed clashes erupted in the country's capital, Juba, in July 2016. Desolate, damaged houses line Kajo Keji's eerily quiet streets. Vandalized shops, robbed of their windows, roofs and doors, are concealed by overgrown brush.

Kajo Keji county has been cut off from aid for more than two years due to repeated denials of humanitarian access by the warring sides, according to an internal humanitarian report seen by AP.

The county lacks food, shelter and water.

"The government doesn't have resources to bring people back," said Luka Yombek, Kajo Keji's former commissioner who left office in October.

In November, a United Nations-led humanitarian convoy drove from Juba to Kajo Keji for the first time since 2016 to assess its needs. While the U.N. said it plans to provide assistance where needed, it is "contingent on having safe space to operate," said Andrea Noyes, head of the U.N. humanitarian office for the country.

In town, only a handful of people have trickled back, with the majority of civilians too wary to return.

"We're still waiting to see if the peace deal is a real one," said Francis Ladu, one of more than 35,000 people sheltering in the Koriyo displaced persons' camp in

the opposition-held part of Kajo Keji on the Ugandan border.

Life in the camp is hard. With no clean water, people are forced to drink from muddy ponds. Ladu said he walks six hours into Uganda several times a week to work odd jobs to make money to buy food for his family.

Renowned as the country's breadbasket, the Equatoria region was devastated by fighting after clashes erupted in the capital

Intently watching his 2-month-old twin girls, he said it ultimately doesn't matter where they live.

"Going there and staying here is all the same at the moment. The government can't provide for us," he said, hanging his head. "People are suffering, they're just surviving." **AP**

KENYA

Gunfire, blast at upscale complex in Nairobi

Joseph Mwihiya, Nairobi

AN upscale hotel complex in Kenya's capital came under attack yesterday, with a blast and heavy gunfire. Witnesses and police at the scene called it a terror attack.

The complex in Nairobi's Westlands neighborhood includes a large hotel known as DusitD2, banks and offices. Several vehicles were burned. People were being rushed, even carried, from the scene.

"It is terrible. What I have seen is terrible. I have seen a human as I ran out and there is what looks like min-



ced meat all over," said one man who said he ran from the scene, Charles Njenga. He did not give details.

"I have been hiding. My colleagues were running everywhere," said another man, breathing heavily, who did not give an Asso-

ciated Press video journalist his name. He said he hid in an office. "I didn't see an attacker. Yeah, it was a terrorist attack. I think so."

Gunfire continued several minutes after the first reports. Black smoke rose

from the scene.

"We have sent officers to the scene, including from the anti-terrorism unit, but so far we have no more information," police spokesman Charles Owino said.

Ambulances, securi-

ty forces and firefighters rushed to the scene, sirens wailing. A large group of women were hurried out by security forces, one woman still in hair curlers. Other groups of dozens of people were hurried away as plainclothes officers went shop to shop in the complex.

What appeared to be plainclothes security forces inched their way toward the scene, guns in hand. Helicopters could be heard. Other people appeared to be taking cover behind fountains and other features in the lush outdoor complex.

The attack immediately reminded many Kenyans of the Westgate Mall attack in Nairobi in 2013, when al-Shabab extremists burst into the luxury shopping center, hurling grenades and starting a days-long siege that left 67 people dead.

The attack came three years to the day after al-Shabab extremists attacked a Kenyan military base in neighboring Somalia, killing scores of people. The al-Qaida-linked al-Shabab objects to the presence of Kenyan troops in the turbulent Horn of Africa nation. **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

ASSEMBLAGE OF TREASURES - EXHIBITION OF THE MACAU MUSEUM COLLECTION FOR CELEBRATION OF THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY

TIME: 10am-6pm (ticket booth closes at 5:30pm; closed on Mondays)

UNTIL: February 24, 2019

VENUE: Macau Museum

ADMISSION: MOP15 (free admission on Tuesdays and on the 15th of every month)

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2835 7911

LANDSCAPE OF CHANGE - MACAU WATERCOLOUR PAINTINGS FROM THE MAM COLLECTION

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

UNTIL: February 10, 2019

VENUE: Macau Museum of Art

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

Offbeat

POLICE: REPORTER WHO HELPED FOIL ROBBERY FINDS MISSING WOMAN

A reporter who helped police catch a robbery suspect last week followed up with another good deed by finding an 89-year-old suburban Detroit woman with dementia who had wandered away from home in sub-freezing temperatures.

WWJ reporter Mike Campbell was covering Barbara Kasler's disappearance when he spotted her Wednesday morning in her pajamas and slippers along a street in Shelby Township.

Campbell took Kasler into his vehicle and cranked up the heat until police arrived. She was taken to a hospital for observation.

Campbell says he was just "in the right place at the right time," but police tweeted that "We owe you lunch!"

Last week, Campbell helped police apprehend a man suspected of looting a fire-damaged shopping center in the Detroit suburb of Warren.

TV canal macau



13:00 TDM News (Repetição)

13:30 Telejornal RTPi (Diferido)

15:00 Mistura Fina

15:50 Zig Zag

16:05 Os Compadres

16:45 Quem Quer Ser Milionário

17:40 Palcos Agora

18:10 João Semana

19:00 TDM Entrevista (Repetição)

19:35 Os Nossos Dias Sr.2

20:30 Telejornal

21:15 Montra do Lilau

21:50 O Último Reino Sr.1

22:40 LiteraturAqui

23:15 TDM News

23:50 Curso de Cultura Geral

00:45 Telejornal (Repetição)

01:30 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

**1970 GADDAFI TAKES OVER AS LIBYA'S PREMIER**

Colonel Muammar Gaddafi has taken direct control of Libya four months after a bloodless coup that brought an end to the monarchy under King Idris.

Since the military coup of 1 September led by Gaddafi's "Free Unionist Officers", the country has been run by civilian ministers.

But they were obliged to refer to the so-called Revolutionary Command Council on matters of state and twice threatened to resign.

Now the 28-year-old colonel has taken the title of prime minister and appointed four members of his council to his new 12-member Cabinet.

Last month Col Gaddafi thwarted an attempted coup by his Defence and Interior Ministers and took charge of the main ministries single-handedly.

Now he can delegate to ministers he feels he can trust.

An outspoken Arab nationalist, Col Gaddafi set about freeing Libya from what he regards as colonialism by ordering Britain to abandon its military bases in the country.

But in an exclusive interview with the Times newspaper, he denied that defence contracts with the West would be terminated and said Libya was still interested in buying nearly 200 British Chieftain tanks.

However he would not be drawn on whether they would be sent to the Egyptian border - along with 50 Mirage aircraft already ordered - to be used against Israel.

"Until now there has not been any decision that war is to be the only solution to the Middle East conflict," he said. "Therefore since this question has not arisen yet, there is no need to answer it."

Egypt's President Abdel Nasser has been a great influence on the new leader and he has already strengthened ties with his Arab neighbour.

He and his young followers have expressed his hope for a future where all Arab nations would be united under Islam.

Soon after the coup, he began a process of "Libyanisation" of commerce and industry. Non-Libyans were forced out of influential positions and even Latin characters were removed from street signs in the capital, Tripoli, and in Benghazi.

This has had a damaging effect on the economy with skilled expatriates forced to leave the country to look for work elsewhere.

However Libya's oil industry continues to thrive and she remains the fourth largest oil producer in the world.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Col Gaddafi made a name for himself as one of the world's most unpredictable and autocratic heads of state.

His vision of a socialist Islamic Libya led to the nationalisation of all businesses and expulsion of foreigners in his one-party state.

For decades Col Gaddafi tried to portray himself as leader of the Arab world, but after attempts to join forces with Egypt, Tunisia and Syria failed he took up a mission of uniting Africa.

He has supported a various militant groups including the IRA and the Palestine Liberation Organisation. Alleged Libyan involvement in attacks in Europe in 1986 led to US military strikes against Tripoli.

In 1988 Libya was isolated by much of the international community after the bombing of a Pan Am plane above the Scottish town of Lockerbie. But it formally accepted blame for the incident in August 2003.

The move, part of a deal to compensate families of the 270 victims, paved the way for the lifting of UN sanctions.

In December 2003, Libya announced it would abandon its attempts to develop weapons of mass destruction. The US restored full diplomatic relations with Libya in May 2006.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Flesh things out. Being short and sweet is counterproductive, today. The devil is in the details, and so is the profit, so spell things out.

Taurus April 20-May 20
If others wonder why you're not being cautious, it's because they can't read your mind. Your thoughts are racing ahead of you. Don't make any long term plans based on your present state of mind.

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21
Ugh, yet another meeting. What's the point of getting ideas generated if there is no follow-through? Wait until there is something more concrete going on.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Something has you wanting to drop it all and walk on the wild side. Are you overwhelmed by work? Do your projects have too many aspects to get a grip on? Figure it out before you bail.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Socializing with friends gave you an excellent skill -- namely, being good at teamwork. But don't confuse the two. Keep the problems at home and the brainstorming at the office.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22
You know the drill: Work issues require cold logic. But when a hot temper is involved, it's time to rethink your own approach. Be extra-careful when communicating.

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22
Everyone around you is done intellectualizing, but you're still eager to discuss. You'll discover plenty of other colleagues ready to communicate with you, if you widen your circle.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21
Reading the fine print finally pays off when a minor detail is uncovered. Whether it's a diamond in the rough or a deal breaker depends on the strength of your prescription.

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Busy work is boring work. But that's more philosophical than the people around you care to be. Keep the complaining to yourself, and avoid communicating it to others.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Thinking things over is wise but don't go overboard. When the details just swirl and swirl around your head, it's time to call it a day. You'll get clarity of thought tomorrow.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Creativity is useful all across the board, but especially when it comes to communication. You'll have to come up with just the right words to express something sensitive.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20
An office decision is much like breaking up with a partner-in-love. You vow to do it, but once you see them, clarity dissolves. Luckily for you, this is a much less critical decision, so put it off until another day.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

WEATHER

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

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1-Swerve; 5- Bugs bugs him; 10- Delhi dress; 14- ___ girl; 15- Note taker; 16- Colorful Apple; 17- Coup d' ___; 18- Software medium; 19- Canoeing body; 20- Luggage; 22- Doctrine; 23- Once around the track; 24- Bert Bobbsey's twin; 25- Scoffed; 29- Swordplay; 33- Brit's bottle measure; 34- Parroted; 36- Writer Wiesel; 37- Hosp. section; 38- Verbal exams; 39- Photo ___; 40- Relinquish; 42- Bank takeback; 43- Charged; 45- Put up; 47- Soil component; 49- Black gold; 50- Jiff; 51- Pickle juice; 54- Whipping; 60- Eliel Saarinen's son; 61- Abu ___; 62- Intestinal sections; 63- Dutch cheese, wrapped in red wax; 64- Actress Braga; 65- Antidote holder, maybe; 66- Swank; 67- Rubbish; 68- I could ___ horse!;

DOWN: 1- Competes; 2- Caesar's accusation; 3- Lou's "La Bamba" costar; 4- Dangerous snake, familiarly; 5- Get away; 6- Former Fords; 7- A ___ formality; 8- Slaughter of baseball; 9- CD-___; 10- Absence of sound; 11- ___ for All Seasons; 12- Autumn tool; 13- Rapper born Tracy Marrow; 21- Feel concern; 22- Convert into leather; 24- Beatty and Rorem; 25- Pizzeria order; 26- More pleasant; 27- Chopin piece; 28- Ventured; 29- Criminal; 30- Actress Massey; 31- Try to bite; 32- Beau ___; 35- Baby food; 38- Pitcher Hershiser; 41- Thrifty management; 43- Numbered rds.; 44- Where documents are preserved; 46- No-win situation?; 48- Book of the Bible; 51- Borscht ingredient; 52- Make over; 53- Teheran's country; 54- Son of Odin; 55- Mandlikova of tennis; 56- Baseball stats; 57- Hipbones; 58- Tidy, without fault; 59- Festive occasion; 61- Summer hrs.;

Yesterday's solution crossword puzzle grid with filled-in words.

A large crossword puzzle grid with some numbers and letters pre-filled.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Table of useful telephone numbers including Emergency calls, Fire department, PJ (Open line), PJ (Picket), PSP, Customs, S. J. Hospital, Kiang Wu Hospital, Commission Against Corruption (CCAC), IACM, Tourism, and Airport.



AD

Real estate advertisement for JML Property, featuring 'FOR SALE' and 'FOR RENT' sections with details on various properties like Lake View Tower, Ocean Garden Elm Court, Sea View Condo, and Taipa, Nam Long.

MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER

De Boer takes over Atlanta United with big shoes to fill

FRANK de Boer was sacked by Inter Milan after less than three months on the job. He lasted just four Premier League games at Crystal Palace. Now, after two short-lived coaching stints, de Boer has a chance to revive his career with the wildly popular champions of Major League Soccer.

The longtime stalwart of the Dutch national team has taken over at Atlanta United, which won the MLS Cup in just its second season while breaking numerous attendance records.

De Boer said it is a shot at redemption, while also stressing that his chances of success are much greater in Atlanta.

"Of course, you have to learn from your mistakes, but also about organizations that aren't good and organized and structured like Atlanta United," he said Monday during a news conference at the team's suburban training facility.

With his two previous employers, de Boer added, "There was no cohesion between all the



Frank de Boer (right)

departments. Everything was separate. Now, we have a feeling, 'OK, I don't have to look around for the dead body in the closet or behind the closet.' Everything is very clear and structured."

He represented his country 112 times on the field, most notably delivering a towering 60-yard pass that set up Dennis Bergkamp's winning goal against Argentina in the closing minutes of a 1998 World Cup quarterfinal.

De Boer moved into coaching after his playing career ended, leading Dutch powerhouse Ajax to a record four straight Eredivisie titles.

Taking over at Inter Milan in 2016, de Boer failed to match the success he had in his native country. The Italian club struggled in both Serie A and Europa League competitions, which led to his firing on Nov. 1 with the club mired in 12th place. His te-

nure lasted just 85 days.

The following summer, de Boer was hired by Crystal Palace. Despite modest expectations — the team was coming off a 15th-place showing the previous season, finishing just five points above the relegation zone — the coach was quickly fired again after Crystal became the first team in 93 years to lose its first four matches in the top flight without scoring a goal.

Atlanta United is in a much different position, having quickly become MLS' flagship franchise on and off the field. The team has a clear power structure led by owner Arthur Blank, team president Darren Eales and technical director Carlos Bocanegra — a setup that was appealing to de Boer.

"For me, that is so much easier," he said. "The 5 1/2 seasons that I was working for Ajax as a head coach [...] it cost me less energy than the eight months at Inter and Crystal Palace. I was already starting to get gray hairs."

De Boer certainly has some big

shoes to fill. In two years as United's coach, Tata Martino instilled an attacking style of play that was a big hit with the fans and hugely successful on the field. The club averaged more than 53,000 per game this season, easily eclipsing its own record, and thrilled the city by capturing the MLS Cup championship in December. Martino stepped down to take over as Mexico's national coach.

De Boer's team is still a work in progress. MVP runner-up Miguel Almiron was expected to transfer to the Premier League during the January window, but no deal has been reached. He reported Monday for the start of Atlanta's training camp.

Less than six weeks removed from its MLS Cup triumph, Atlanta United reported for camp to begin preparing for its first appearance in the CONCACAF Champions League. The team opens with a home-and-home series against Costa Rican club Herediano late next month, just ahead of the MLS season opener.

Atlanta United is eager to become the first MLS club to win the continental championship since the league format began in 2008. Mexican teams have won 10 straight titles, including Chivas' thrilling victory over Toronto FC last year that came down to penalty kicks. **AP**

BUNNY NIGHTS
EVERY WEDNESDAY

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No admission under 18

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THAILAND'S decision to change coaches continued to prove to be a masterstroke but there was last-minute heartbreak for India at the Asian Cup on Monday. Thailand drew against host side United Arab Emirates 1-1 to qualify for the next round for the first time since reaching the semifinals in 1972.

UAE finished top of Group A and the pair could be joined in the round of 16 by Bahrain, which beat India 1-0 thanks to a last-gasp penalty and will likely progress as one of the best four third-placed teams.

It was a far cry from Thailand's first match in the tournament, a 4-1 loss to India that led to the firing of coach Milovan Rajevac and the appointment of his assistant, Sirisak Yodyardthai, as interim coach.

UAE started strongly and took the lead less than seven minutes in. Ismail Al Hammadi's attempted chip came back off the crossbar but Ali Mabkhout headed home the rebound.

Thailand started to get into the match and leveled four minutes

ASIAN CUP

UAE, Thailand make Asian Cup last 16, heartbreak for India

before the break when Thitiphan Puangjan took advantage of panic in the UAE defense to bundle the ball past goalkeeper Khalid Eisa.

The War Elephants finished second, a point below UAE and above Bahrain thanks to a better head-to-head record, having won the match between them 1-0.

Bahrain, which hit the woodwork earlier in the match, was seconds away from going out of the tournament as India managed to fend off wave after wave of attack.

However, India captain Pronay Halder brought down Hamed Alshamsan in the penalty area and Jamal Rashed converted in stoppage time to send Bahrain into unbridled joy. **AP**



Thailand players celebrate

Takeda corruption probe sullies 2020 Tokyo Olympics and IOC

TSUNEKAZU Takeda, the president of the Japanese Olympic Committee and a powerful IOC member, again denied corruption allegations against him, suggesting on Tuesday that any guilt was with others at the Japanese body.

Takeda read a seven-minute prepared text and then took no questions from hundreds of media.

Innocent or guilty in a bribery scandal that French authorities suspect helped land the games for Tokyo, the scandal has cast a shadow over the upcoming Olympics that open in 18 months. It also underscores failed efforts by the International Olympic Committee to clean up its bidding process with billions swirling around the preparations of every Olympics.

Tokyo is spending about USD20 billion to prepare for the games.

"I am very sorry for having caused concern for those working very hard to prepare for Tokyo's 2020 Olympics and Paralympics," Takeda said, speaking only in Japanese.

The last Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro were tumultuous from start to finish and ended eventually with the arrest of organizing committee



Takeda pictured at a press conference in Tokyo

president — and Brazilian Olympic Committee president — Carlos Nuzman, also in a vote-buying scandal.

The Asahi newspaper reported Olympic Minister Yoshitaka Sakurada as saying at a separate news conference yesterday that the allegations "are not very good for the image" of Japan.

IOC President Thomas Bach, speaking last month in Tokyo, described the games as "the best prepared" in history. They have overcome early problems that included a plagiarized logo design, and a redesign of a new Olympic stadium because of soaring costs. General cost overruns have continued to be an issue for Tokyo, which is now spending three times more than it

said it would when it was selected.

Takeda, a distant member of Japan's royal family — he is great grandson of the Meiji emperor who ruled late in 19th century and into the 20th — gave only courtesy bows before and after his speech, not the low, sustained bows associated with showing deep remorse.

He acknowledged he had signed off on about \$2 million in payments to a Singapore consulting company, Black Tidings.

French investigators have linked Black Tidings to Papa Massata Diack, one of the sons of powerful ex-IOC member Lamine Diack of Senegal.

Lamine Diack had huge influence over Olympic voters in Africa. In 2013, IOC members voted for

Tokyo, eliminating attractive bids from Madrid and Istanbul.

"The contract [with Black Tidings] was reviewed and I did make the final signature," Takeda, the head of the IOC marketing commission, said. He called it a "regular commercial contract procedure" and said "there were several others who signed off before me."

"As for me, I was not involved in the decision-making process for deciding on Black Tidings," Takeda said. "There was no reason for me to question the process on this consultation deal."

Jeff Kingston, who teaches Japanese politics at Temple University in Tokyo, said in the "end this could be known as the Black Tidings Olympics."

"It's a huge black eye for Japan. There is no other way to spin it," he told The Associated Press.

Kingston also blamed the IOC.

"What this does is expose the failure of the IOC to get its house in order," Kingston said.

Dressed in a dark suit and a silver-blue tie to match his hair, Takeda spoke seated without the usual promotional backdrop of the Tokyo Olympics, or the Japanese Olympic Committee. He offered little new, referring often to a 2016 internal report by the Japanese Olympic Committee that essentially cleared him of wrongdoing.

The JOC report concluded the \$2 million was appropriate compensation for consulting work done by Black Tidings. Takeda also said he had no knowledge of links to the Diack family. He said the contact was not "illegal under Japanese law."

"I'd like to clear the allegation against me, and I will cooperate fully with French authorities," Takeda said.

Tokyo's Olympic organizing committee attempted to distance itself from Takeda, who headed the bid committee but is not at the head of the organizing committee.

"The Tokyo 2020 organizing committee has no means of knowing the details of the bid committee's activities, as the organizing committee was

established after Tokyo was selected as the host city," organizers said in a statement. "We believe that the games were awarded to Tokyo because the city presented the best bid."

The preliminary charge against Takeda announced by the National Financial Prosecutors office was first reported by French newspaper Le Monde. The preliminary charge means the investigating magistrate has determined there are serious grounds for suspicion. But no decision has been announced on any prosecution.

Takeda said in early 2017 he replied to questions from the Tokyo district court, but he said the court did not follow up.

The IOC has backed Takeda and says he has the presumption of innocence. Takeda testified by video hookup on Friday with the IOC ethics commission, but gave no details of any action it might take. Emails from the AP asking for details went unanswered.

The IOC has periodically asked other members to resign, or step aside while their conduct was being investigated.

The IOC has about 100 members, and three are suspended on corruption allegations: Sheikh Ahmad of Kuwait, Frank Fredericks of Namibia, and Patrick Hickey of Ireland. Nuzman, an honorary member from Brazil, is also suspended. **AP**

opinion

World Views

The Editors, Bloomberg

DONALD TRUMP SHOULD STOP MISUSING THE MILITARY

With Congress refusing to provide USD5.7 billion for his wall on the Mexican border, President Trump has said he may fund it with money diverted from the Defense Department budget, perhaps by using active-duty troops in the construction.

This is a bad idea for several reasons. One is that it's doubtful a president has the authority to divert funds appropriated by Congress for specific actions by a federal department, even if he declares a bogus "national emergency." If Trump tries, you can expect legal challenges; even some Republicans might decide it's time to draw the line.

An alternative plan to use the Army Corps of Engineers for the job may avoid stepping on Congress's prerogatives, but either way of bringing in the military would take money and manpower away from badly needed construction projects on military bases (126 of which are contaminated with compounds linked to cancer and birth defects).

The third reason is the most dispiriting: This would be the most blatant example to date of Trump using the military as his personal plaything. The president usually professes great respect for the armed forces (while making exceptions for political opponents), but his behavior is more eloquent and says just the opposite.

Upon taking office, Trump referred to "my generals," reducing his role as commander in chief to an opportunity for boasting. Then, over the course of two years, he fired or humiliated defense secretary James Mattis, Homeland Security secretary turned White House chief of staff John Kelly, and national security adviser H. R. McMaster. (McMaster's predecessor, Michael Flynn, left in disgrace).

Now the president is reportedly trying, over Mattis's objections, to force the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joe Dunford, out of the job.

Trump overruled Mattis in pulling out of the Iran deal, ignored his opposition to a new Space Force, and caught him off guard with tweets about banning transgender recruits. The last straw for Mattis was the president's announcement that he would withdraw all U.S. troops from Syria and Afghanistan (exactly what this policy amounts to still isn't clear).

These misguided initiatives and erratic pronouncements are bad in themselves, but they also make it harder for the military to do its job. They leave men and women set to deploy in limbo, those on the front lines uncertain of their role, and commanders on the ground with diminished authority. Most important, they continue the disturbing trend of politicizing the military.

All that's needed to complete this catalog of disrespect is to revive the idea of a great military parade — supposedly to honor the troops, but in fact to glorify the president. Count the failure to see that those two things aren't the same as among Trump's worst derelictions.



THE ABU, MERKEL TOP THE BILL FOR BUZZ 'GLOBALIZATION 4.0' AT DAVOS

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and German Chancellor Angela Merkel will top the list of leaders attending the World Economic Forum's annual meeting next week after the withdrawal of President Donald Trump.

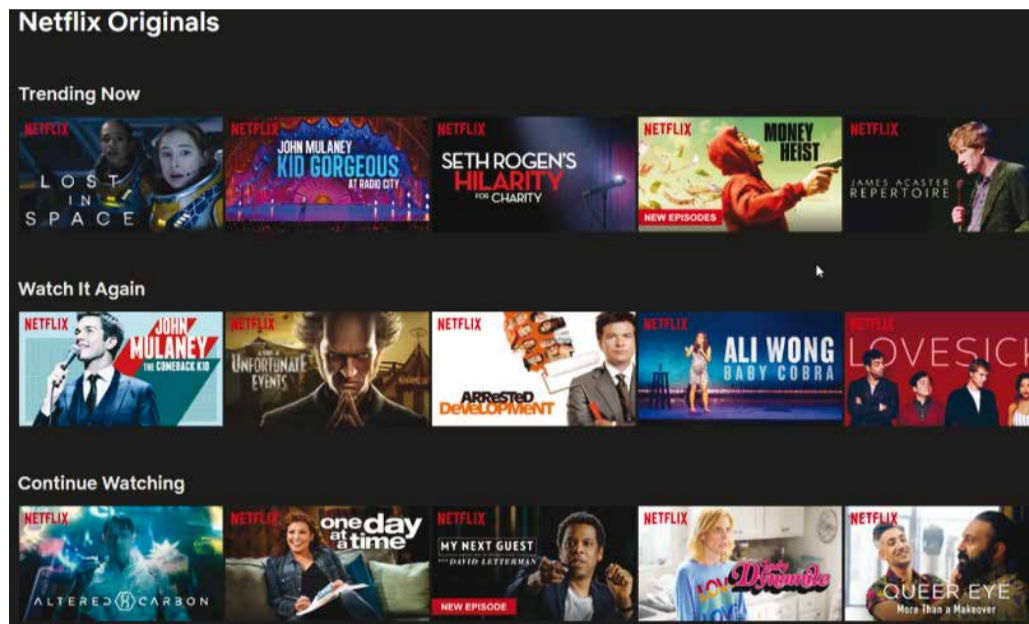
The U.S. president canceled his trip to the annual gathering of global financial elites because of the government shutdown, which is now the longest in the nation's history. The U.S. delegation will include Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Secretary

of State Mike Pompeo.

Brazil's recently sworn-in President Jair Bolsonaro will attend, as will U2 frontman Bono and Britain's Prince William. Goldman Sachs Group Inc. Chief Executive Officer David Solomon and hedge fund billionaire Ray Dalio will also be there.

The gather at a time when investors are questioning the outlook for the world economy and increasingly linking the prospects for its expansion to geopolitical events such as trade wars and Brexit.

Netflix raising prices for 58M US subscribers as costs rise



Michael Liedtke, San Francisco

NETFLIX is raising its U.S. prices by 13 percent to 18 percent, its biggest increase since the company launched its streaming service 12 years ago.

Its most popular plan will see the largest hike, to USD13 per month from \$11. That option offers high-definition streaming on up to two different internet-connected devices simultaneously. Even at the higher price, that plan is still a few dollars cheaper than HBO, whose streaming service charges \$15 per month.

The extra cash will help to pay for Netflix's huge investment in original shows and films and finance the heavy debt it has assumed to ward off rivals such as Amazon, Disney and AT&T.

This marks the fourth time that Netflix has raised its U.S. prices; the last hike came in late 2017. But this is the first time that higher prices will hit all 58 million U.S. subscribers, the number Netflix reported at the end of September.

Previously, Netflix had continued to offer a basic, \$8-a-month streaming plan while raising rates on more comprehensive plans with better video quality and options to watch simultaneously on different devices.

This time, the price for the cheapest plan is going up to \$9 per month. A premium plan offering ultra-high definition will jump to \$16 per

month from \$14.

The new prices will immediately affect all new subscribers and then roll out to existing customers during the next three months. Customers in about 40 Latin America countries where Netflix bills in U.S. currency will also be affected, excepting key international markets such as Mexico and Brazil.

Netflix had nearly 79 million subscribers outside the U.S. as of September.

Higher prices could alienate subscribers and possibly even trigger a wave of cancellations. For instance, Netflix faced a huge backlash in 2011 when it unbundled video streaming from its older DVD-by-mail service, resulting in a 60 percent price increase for subscribers who wanted to keep both plans. Netflix lost 600,000 subscribers after that switch.

The company is now betting it can gradually raise its prices, bolstered by a string of acclaimed hits during that past five years that have included "House of Cards," "Orange Is the New Black," "Stranger Things," "The Crown" and, most recently, the film "Bird Box."

"We change pricing from time to time as we continue investing in great entertainment and improving the overall Netflix experience," the company said in a statement.

Consumers also have an increasing array of other streaming options.

Amazon offers a streaming service as part of its Prime shipping program for \$13 per month, or \$120 for an annual membership. Hulu sells an ad-free service for \$12 per month. AT&T's WarnerMedia unit plans a broader streaming service this year centered on HBO. Walt Disney is gearing up to launch a streaming channel this year.

With Apple also widely expected to join the video-streaming fray, the competition for programming is enabling top directors, writers and actors to charge more for their talents. That has intensified financial pressure on Netflix, which hasn't been bringing in enough money to pay for all its programming and other business expenses.

The company burned through about \$3 billion last year and is expecting to do so again this year. To offset the negative cash flow, Netflix has been borrowing heavily to pay for programming. The Los Gatos, California, company had accumulated nearly \$12 billion in debt before borrowing another \$2 billion in an October bond offering.

Concerns about the stiffening competition and Netflix's ability to sustain its current leadership in video streaming has caused the company's stock price to slide by 21 percent from its peak of \$423.21 reached last June. The shares stood at \$332.94 heading into yesterday's trading session. **AP**

Station	Air quality
Roadside	65-95 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	70-100 Bad
Ambient	50-70 Moderate

SOURCE: DSMG

WORLD BRIEFS

IRAN yesterday conducted one of at least two satellite launches it plans despite criticism from the United States, but the satellite failed to reach orbit.

US-TURKEY President Donald Trump's warning that if Turkey attacks U.S.-backed Kurdish forces in Syria, the United States will "devastate Turkey economically" has drawn a sharp response from Ankara and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.



SPAIN Rescuers in southern Spain are digging a horizontal tunnel in an attempt to reach the bottom of a deep and narrow borehole where they hope to find a 2-year-old toddler, two days after he disappeared.

BRITAIN Lawmakers were preparing to deliver their verdict on Prime Minister Theresa May's divorce deal with the European Union yesterday after more than two years of political upheaval. All signs point to it receiving a resounding thumbs-down from Parliament.



CUBA President Donald Trump's Cuba policy is driving hundreds of millions of dollars from the island's private entrepreneurs to its military-controlled tourism sector, the opposite of its supposed goal, new statistics say. *More on p14*

BRAZIL The sister of slain Brazilian councilwoman Marielle Franco has expressed concern about the conservative new governor's commitment to solving the case.

ANTARCTICA is melting more than six times faster than it did in the 1980s, a new study shows.