

MORE VICTIMS OF INVESTMENT SCHEME

The number of reported victims of the case involving businesswoman Isabel Chiang has risen to 48

P2 CRIME



MACAU'S ROLE PRAISED

Interview with UNESCO representative Denise Bax, who praises Macau's role in the Creative Cities of Gastronomy

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GENE-EDITED BABIES DOCTOR ACTED ON HIS OWN

P11 CHINA



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Lotus Checkpoint to relocate to Hengqin.

P5

WORLD BRIEFS



PHILIPPINES Muslims in the southern Philippines voted yesterday in a referendum on a new autonomous region that seeks to end nearly half a century of unrest, in what their leaders are touting as the best alternative to a new wave of Islamic State group-inspired militants.

US-N. KOREA President Donald Trump said that "things are going very well with North Korea" and he plans a second summit with leader Kim Jong Un to try to broker a deal that would entice the North to give up its nuclear weapons.



PAKISTAN A health official says the country has kicked off its first nationwide polio vaccination campaign for the year in efforts to eradicate the crippling disease by the end of 2019.

More on backpage



China's population, economy growth slows in 2018.

P10,11

Trial on illegal football betting postponed

The trial involving a group of 15 people, including the Malaysian businessman Paul Phua, known for his connections to the gambling underworld, has been postponed to Feb. 12, the Court of First Instance announced yesterday. The charges against the defendants relate to running and exploiting a scheme of illegal betting during the 2014's FIFA World Cup that, according to the prosecution, profited about HKD5 billion in just one week of operations. According to the reports at the time of the scheme's discovery, the group was running the illegal betting scheme from Phua's luxury Villa at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas.

Office in talks with school over use of Zone A

The Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Alexis Tam, said yesterday that his office is discussing the use of land at the Zone A of the new urban zone with Escola Dos Moradores de Macau. According to Tam, the school is willing to implement the "Blue Sky Project" in the new area. He added that the new urban zone will have a future population of 100,000, and that several schools are interested in building premises in the new zone. Separately, the secretary said that the SAR government is targeting tourists to stimulate the region's economy, particularly European tourists. "We have to attract better tourists who come to Macau to appreciate our world heritage, our culture and gastronomy, come to consume, to stimulate the economy," he said.

Woman killed by falling glass window in HK

A mainland woman was killed in Hong Kong by a falling glass window from Mira Hong Kong Hotel at Tsim Sha Tsui. The fatal accident took place yesterday morning. The Hong Kong police authority arrested one woman. The arrested woman is a cleaning worker of the hotel. She was opening the window when it suddenly fell. The window fell from the 16th floor of the hotel. The window was 144 cm by 30 cm. The victim is a 24-year-old mainland visitor. Another pedestrian was also hit by the window, however he only sustained light injuries.

CRIME

More victims of investment scam, amount rises to HKD219m

Renato Marques

THE number of reported victims in the case of real estate agency owner Isabel Chiang has risen to 48, the Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesperson said yesterday during a press conference.

According to the PJ, the total number of victims in the fraud case as reported yesterday by the Times is now 18 more than last week, and the total amount of money lost is HKD219 million.

Although the PJ did not disclose many details about the case, saying that the process is still under investigation, the spokesperson acknowledged to the Times that, for the time being, Chiang is the only suspect under investigation.

The PJ also refused to comment on whether or not the authorities knew if the suspect had left the region.

The businessman and former lawmaker Chan Meng Kam is among the victims, having reported a loss of HKD96 million.

Several staff members of the real estate agency led by Chiang are also reportedly among the victims. Through



Company Number 81 developed the area around Rua dos Ervanarios

company Number 81, Chiang invested over MOP100 million to develop the area around Rua dos Ervanarios since 2015, buying shops there and offering tenants free rent and other benefits if they joined the investment project.

In an unrelated case, the PJ acknowledged the detention of a suspect in another fraud case regarding currency exchange during September last year.

The suspect of this case was caught on Jan. 20 while trying to reenter Macau at the border gate checkpoint.

According to the police, at the time, the suspect offered

to exchange HKD to RMB to a casino player in a Cotai casino.

After accepting the deal, the two entered one of the casino

restrooms to perform the trade. The victim handed HKD 98,000 to the suspect, expecting to receive RMB 86,730 in exchange. The suspect promised to transfer the money to the victim's account via bank-to-bank transfer.

Instead, the suspect took an opportunity of distraction to run away and become unreachable on his phone, leading the victim to file a complaint.

After being intercepted by the police and taken for questioning, the suspect denied the crime, but the PJ says that there is enough evidence to prove his guilt. The case has been forwarded to the Public Prosecutions Office under the charge of fraud.

NO UPDATES ON MDT STAFFER ACCIDENT, CASE UNDER INVESTIGATION

ACCORDING TO the Public Security Police Force (PSP), there are currently no further updates on the traffic accident that killed the Macau Daily Times staffer, Lam Kun San. However, the PSP noted that the case is still under investigation. Lam passed away when the motorcycle she was

riding was involved in an unexplained traffic accident with a taxi at Amizade Bridge in the early hours of Friday when she was on duty. Police information on the case only confirms that she died due to multiple fractures, after her body was dragged under the taxi.

Council for Medical Affairs aims to negotiate with insurance companies

THE Council for Medical Affairs has gathered in a plenary meeting last week to discuss the evaluation of the implementation of the Medical Error Act that came into force almost two years ago, the Health Bureau (SSM) advised in a statement.

Several topics were discussed such as the compulsory Professional Liability Insurance for Healthcare Providers that was established by the aforementioned law, where 58 members represented 47 medical associations, academic institutions,

as well as students.

At the meeting, health professionals expressing particular concerns about the insurance premium, which was considered too high and which does not give consideration to reducing premiums under circumstances where insurance companies have no medical incident liability. The professionals also raised concerns regarding the health sector's current lack of negotiating power when facing insurance companies and called for amendments to the law.

During the plenary, the

Secretary General, Leong Pui San, also presented the current status of insurance uptake during the past year as well as statistics relating to cases of medical litigation involving private clinics.

In addition, some of the council members proposed the establishment of a judicial actions' fund, which could be funded by deposits of 10 to 20 percent of annual insurance premiums in order to cover the costs of legal action and compensatory fees.

Other topics addressed in the meeting included the suspension or cancella-



tion of licenses, including during the validity of transitory provisions of the Legal Regime of Qualification and Regis-

tration of Health Care Professionals, as well as the conditions for the resumption of activity for retired physicians.

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

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

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ADMINISTRATOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

SECRETARY Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com

ADDRESS Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84

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Q&A DENISE BAX
UNESCO REPRESENTATIVE

'It's important to continue to pursue cooperation between cities'

Lynzy Valles

REPRESENTATIVES from the UNESCO Creative Cities of Gastronomy gathered in the city as Macau celebrate its third edition of the International Gastronomy Forum, welcoming representatives from 20 Creative Cities of Gastronomy.

Senior program specialist of Cultural Policies and Development of Culture Sector for UNESCO, Denise Bax, told the Times that the SAR's efforts in gathering these creative cities play a significant role in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network.

Speaking to the Times on the sidelines of the opening ceremony of the forum, Bax said that the event serves as an example that members of the UNESCO network are boosting efforts in promoting sustainable development – particularly in gastronomy.

Macau Daily Times (MDT) - With your observations on Macau's culture and gastronomy, how can Macau further advance its role to make significant contributions to the network?

Denise Bax (DB) - Now I fully understand what the city of Macau is. We received Macau's applications [to be part of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network] and so we only had the application form before, but now with my visit here in Macau, I can see the potential of this UNESCO creative city and its assets.

Macau is a very interesting place because it has a combination of different cultures and so there is a collabora-



tion of different dishes and cuisine. In organizing this international forum, I think Macau has given a signal for the future in terms of our way of working. This is what UNESCO is working on, together with the other designated creative cities, to be able to share their ideas and good practices to be able to achieve the 2030 agenda.

MDT - The network is currently made up of 180 creative cities in different fields, where does Macau place in this and how can

it differ from the offerings of the other cities?

DB - Each city is different depending on the country and its size and each has their own assets. This is why it [is important to] follow a procedure and have evaluations until the time the city is designated. We evaluate each component of the city. Macau was designated in 2017 and submitted a very interesting proposal. [...] It is important how the city is contributing to the UNESCO network and how they are helping achieve the sustainable development goals.

MDT - So in line with the sustainable development goals of UNESCO, is Macau on par?

DB - Yes, Macau is also closely working with all the cities. For example, it is specifically working on the Sustainable Development Goal 11.4, which specifically pledges to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Macau perfectly understood the goals and reasons why it's important to continue to pursue cooperation between cities, not only in the field of gas-

tronomy but with the [seven creative fields] that include Craft and Folk Art, Design, Film, Literature, Media, Arts and Music. I think this is also why Macau is so fascinating, because while having the opportunity to taste the city's flavors, at the same it [features] music, films and videos, and I think that is interesting.

MDT - Can we confidently say that Macau plays a significant role in reaching the UN's goal by 2030?

DB - Yes, definitely.

MDT - This forum is a celebration of diverse gastronomic culture, such as the event that was held over the weekend. How can these events further such as food enthusiasts from outside the city to promote local food?

DB - These kinds of events are for tourists, but it is also [...] a way for local people to be proud of its culture and to be able to have an exchange and demonstrate [local cuisines] with people from around the world.

I have had discussions with different people this morning and many of them say that it is fascinating that the city has some common dishes with other countries.

So, these kinds of experiences held in one place and being offered to visitors from other countries is really the art of this program.

MDT - Any recommendations or proposals that you could give on how we could use our place in the network to bring out the best gastronomic experience for tourists and local residents?

DB - I think Macau is really involved in this network and I think that organizing and participating in events like these are really important for the network. There are a lot of preparations and documentations that are needed to be able to hold these kinds of events but it is important to nurture the network.

THE "International Gastronomy Forum, Macao 2019" kicked off yesterday, featuring panel sessions and exchanges on how each city within the network is embracing the opportunities as Creative Cities of Gastronomy to formulate new development models and forge international cooperation.

According to the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Alexis Tam, this year's forum has welcomed a record number of representatives from the Creati-

Gastronomy forum discusses new ways to boost collaboration

ve Cities of Gastronomy. "They come from cities of different creative fields as well as from several potential candidate cities in the next call for UNESCO Creative Cities Network application. We hope overseas guests could make use of this forum in Macau as a platform to forge exchanges with their Chinese

counterparts," said Tam. Under the theme of "The Possibilities of Gastronomy and Creativity," the forum also featured a keynote presentation by chef André Chiang, the first Chinese origin chef bestowed with the Lifetime Achievement Award at Asia's 50 Best Restaurants Awards in 2018.

The forum sessions came to an end with a National Geographic special session focused on sustainable practices of the food and beverage sector, specifically concerning food waste reduction. Meanwhile, the Macao Government Tourism Office launched its new promotional video na-

med "Macau designated as UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy" yesterday during the opening ceremony. Inspired by the cinematic language of classic movie trailers, the video showcases the city's gastronomic culture and its people and places, to depict Macau as a Creative City of Gastronomy.

For the first time this year, the International Gastronomy Forum included a Creative Cities of Gastronomy Cooking Show, where chefs from 20 different cities prepared their culinary creations. The show was open to the public.

First launched in 2016, the International Gastronomy Forum aims to be an annual gathering to provide a platform for exchange and exploration of joint initiatives between Macau and other Creative Cities of Gastronomy. **LV**

Ng wants explanation for IAM office budget

LAWMAKER Ng Kuok Cheong has asked the government to explain the budget surge for the project of the office of the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM).

In his written inquiry to the government, Ng first pointed out that the expenditure of large-scale public works of the local government has been repeatedly and dramatically increased without explanation, and that this action has been criticized by the public.

In the government budget for investment and development expenditure for 2019, there is a big surge in the cost of the IAM laboratory project.

“The IAM office and lab at the new



wholesale market increased largely, without a public explanation, from MOP72 million to MOP161 million for research, exploration, physical engineering and quality controls. The increase is 1.25 fold. What is

the reason for the need to significantly increase the cost? Is there any serious waste?” Ng wrote in his inquiry.

“The responsible entity for the proposal and implementation of the project which substantially increased its initial budget has been transferred from the previous Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau to IAM. Can IAM fully explain the background of the substantial over-expenditure to the public? Can it be determined that the project of the lab in the wholesale market, IAM hygiene office and food safety center, can be completed under the existing budget in 2020?” Ng asked.

Hong Kong man paid to set cars on fire

A 26-year-old Hong Kong man has been transferred to the prosecution authority after deliberately setting two cars on fire, according to the Judiciary Police (PJ).

On Sunday, around midnight, the Hong Kong resident showed up at the Windsor Arch parking lots, where he left burning substances on top of two cars, setting them alight.

Prior to this attempt, the suspect had previously tried to set the cars on fire by pouring flammable liquid onto the vehicles, but he was unsuccessful.

On Sunday, he broke one of the car’s windshields with an object, burned the cars and left the scene.

The suspect’s actions were witnessed by the residence’s security guard, who later extinguished

the fire. This security guard also caught the suspect, although he sustained light injuries during the confrontation. The guard was later sent to the hospital for these injuries.

Damage to the two cars amounted to a total of HKD800,000. According to the PJ, the two vehicles are owned by the same person.

The suspect was paid HKD20,000, in Hong Kong, to perform the crime in Macau.

The police are still investigating the reasons behind the case.

The PJ also found a video recording on the suspect’s mobile which shows the cars burning.

The police believes the video was filmed by the suspect, who intended to show it to the person who hired him.

NO BUDGET DISCLOSED FOR REBRANDING

THE IAM refused to disclose a budget for the development of its new logo and the replacement of branded items with the Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau (IACM) logo. The Times asked how much the bureau’s budget was to rebrand and the expected time for the rebranding to be completed. However, no official statement was given. Ac-

ording to a spokesperson, the bureau is not able to provide the data as the bureau is only “making urgent changes to some important items.” The spokesperson added that the bureau has no current calculations available and that it is not in a hurry to replace its branded articles and items as most remain useable. LV

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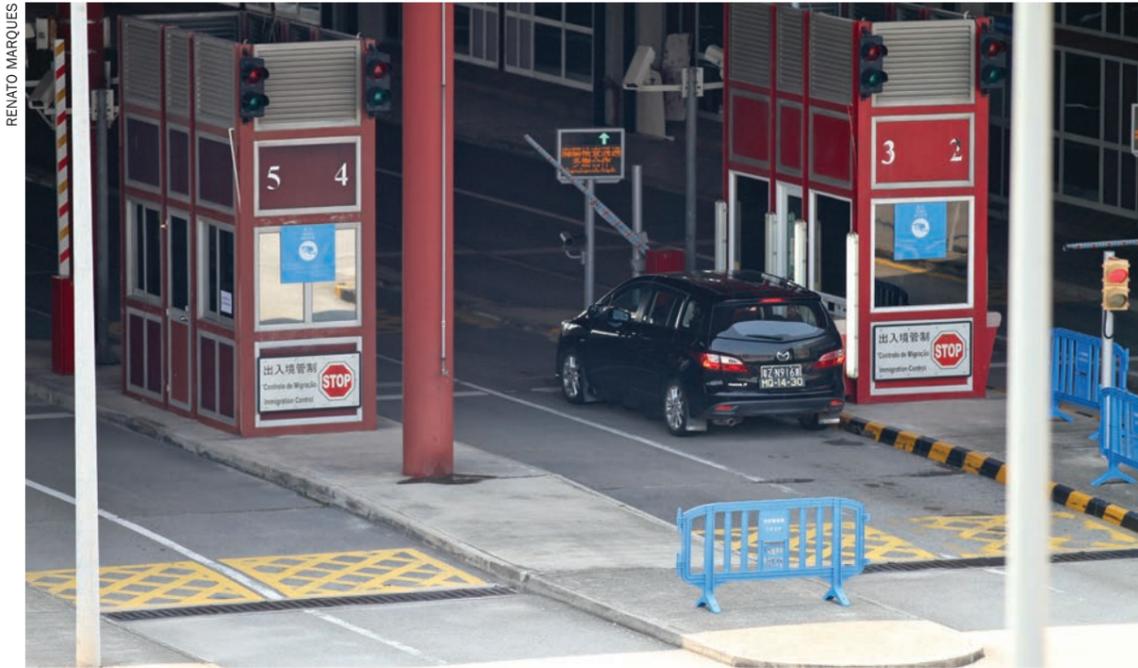
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Cotai border to relocate to Hengqin



THE local government and the mainland Chinese government have reached a preliminary consensus regarding moving the Lotus Border Checkpoint to Hengqin, according to a statement released yesterday by the Public Security Police Force (PSP) and the Macau SAR Identification Department (DSI).

At the invitation of the Bureau

of Exit and Entry Administration of China, the DSI and PSP jointly organized a delegation of eight people to visit Beijing between Jan. 16 to 18.

In addition to holding an annual work meeting, the delegation visited Beijing's exit and entry department, with both Macau and Beijing exchanging technical applications and convenience measures on matters

relating to document issuing on both sides.

"At the meeting, the two sides reported on the work of 2018. [Both sides] exchanged opinions and reached a consensus regarding strengthening exchange and cooperation, setting up a special task force for the inspection of Guangdong and Macau ports, relocating Lotus Border Checkpoint and verifying do-

cuments of mainland residents who resettled in Macau," the statement reads.

Regarding the Lotus Border Checkpoint, which currently links Macau to Hengqin island, there is another matter involving the location of the port: the Light Rapid Transit.

Previously, Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raimundo do Rosário said that the location of the extensive

section of the LRT, in particular, the Hengqin port stop, will depend on the relocation of the border.

Currently, Lotus Border Checkpoint is connected with the Hengqin port via bridge. Individual passengers (but not group tours) must take a shuttle bus after crossing the Lotus port on the Macau side. The shuttle bus takes passengers to the Hengqin port and costs MOP6.

ONE SHOT NEWS



Lantern decorations are placed at Senado Square to welcome the upcoming Chinese Lunar New Year, which falls on Feb. 5 this year and marks the Year of Pig in the Chinese calendar.

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UM requested to submit report for student house rental

THE Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Alexis Tam has requested that the University of Macau (UM) submit a report regarding illegal accommodation at its postgraduate house.

On Sunday, a media report revealed that one student living at the postgraduate house of UM had placed the school's available dormitory on Airbnb for rental.

The student was ordered to move out from UM's postgraduate house, with the school providing assistance to the student.

Yesterday, Secretary Tam confirmed that the student had been ordered to move out from his dormitory. Tam also said that he had asked UM to submit a report on the case as soon as possible.

Tam believes that the incident is related to the school's manage-

ment issues, which he requested UM to improve.

As of yesterday noon, UM was still investigating the case. Tam believes that UM will announce the results as soon as possible.

In addition to this case, Tam said that the government has been paying attention to illegal guesthouse situations and that the Secretary for Administration and Justice Sonia Chan already has a working group devoted to the possibility of amending the law on illegal accommodation.

He said that his sector has asked UM and its colleges, as well as other schools, to be very cautious in their management.

In Tam's opinion, UM has administrative, financial and scientific autonomy and UM should do a better job in its management.

AustCham Macau founded from 'business network'

THE Australian Chamber of Commerce in Macau (AustCham Macau) has been officially established with the aim of focusing on issues of specific interest to Australians and Australian-connected people in Macau.

Having begun as the "Macau Business Network" of the Australian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong and Macau, the decision to establish a Macau-specific Chamber will "allow for greater promotion of economic, commercial, business and person-to-person connections between Australia and the Macau SAR," according to a statement from AustCham Macau.

AustCham Macau and its Hong Kong counterpart have signed a memorandum of understanding to cooperate across a number of operational areas, including the Greater Bay Area initiative.

The founding members of AustCham Macau, as per the Official Gazette, are Michael Keen, Liviano Laccia, Patrick Liu, Andrew W Scott and Michael Usher. They have since been joined by Janet McNab and Lloyd Robson to form the current Board of Directors.

In its statement, the Board ack-



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nounced the efforts of Martin Darveniza, who was a major force in leading the drive for the establishment of AustCham Macau before sadly passing away in 2018 shortly before its official establishment. The Board also acknowledged the efforts of Vincent Kelly who, although no longer residing in Macau, "remains a great friend to the Chamber."

To celebrate the establishment of the organization, AustCham Macau will host an official launch and membership drive BBQ on Australia Day, January 26, on the patio of Galaxy Macau's Terrazza restaurant.

"I am proud to announce the official establishment of AustCham Macau, which will work to further strengthen the business and person-to-person connections between Australia and Macau," said Chairman Patrick Liu, according to the statement. "All are welcome to join us to celebrate the launch of the Chamber on Australia Day as we embark on our journey and begin our membership drive."



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EU's antitrust cop lays groundwork for more tech scrutiny

Kelvin Chan, Copenhagen

SILICON Valley's notorious nemesis, Margrethe Vestager, plans to end her term as the European Union's antitrust enforcer this year with a bang, laying out a long-term plan to intensify scrutiny of the world's big tech companies.

As the EU's competition commissioner, Vestager is arguably the world's most important tech regulator. Since 2014, she has slapped Google with eye-popping multibillion-dollar antitrust penalties, ordered Apple and Amazon to pay back taxes and fined Facebook over its WhatsApp acquisition — flagship enforcement cases that have struck fear into Silicon Valley while drawing attention in Washington.

Now, in her final year in office, the 50-year-old Danish politician is laying the groundwork for a new phase of regulation beyond the end of her term in October.

She's planning a report meant to guide EU competition policies in the era of digitization. Feedback from companies, business groups and experts shows many see the need for more regulation and when it's published in March, the report by three expert advisers will reflect the need for new or tougher rules, she told The Associated Press in a recent interview.

"The most important thing is that the majority of input is pro-enforcement," Vestager said during one of her frequent visits to Copenhagen from her Brussels base. The digital technology industry can no longer be allowed to shape itself, she added. "We are way beyond that."

It's unclear yet what shape the new enforcement will take but it may not bode well for the big



Margrethe Vestager

U.S. technology companies that have landed in Vestager's crosshairs.

Vestager has cultivated a down-to-earth image — she likes to knit elephants during meetings — that belies her formidable powers of enforcement.

She opened three antitrust cases against Google, including one that resulted in a record 4.3 billion euro (USD5 billion) fine for forcing cellphone makers to use the internet giant's software on Android phones. Another 2.4 billion euro (\$2.8 billion) penalty was punishment for manipulating shopping search results. She aims to wrap up a probe before her term ends of whether Google blocked rivals from its AdSense ad service.

Vestager ordered Apple to pay back up to 13 billion euros (\$15 billion) in back taxes from Ireland. Apple CEO Tim Cook called it "total political crap" and President Donald Trump referred to her as the "tax lady" who "really hates the U.S."

The EU competition commissioner, with a 900-strong staff, is

unusually powerful in the Brussels bureaucracy because it can enforce bloc-wide rules, giving it the power to take on countries and companies. Other departments typically share regulatory duties with national governments. Vestager's job includes approving or rejecting mergers and investigating cartels and antitrust behavior. She also makes sure EU states don't give tax breaks to individual companies that are not available to other corporations — legitimate business strategy in the U.S. but illegal in Europe.

A lot of attention is now falling on data, the commodity that drives the digital economy.

Information collected by web browsers, apps, smartphones and other devices can be enormously valuable to companies because they can provide insight about, for example, an individual's buying habits and movements. Data can power artificial intelligence or be used to show targeted advertisements. Vestager is concerned that a small group of com-

panies could corner the market and abuse their power.

She started confronting the problem with an informal probe launched last year into whether online shopping giant Amazon is using data to gain an edge on third party merchants, who are both its customers and rivals. She hopes to decide within six months whether to open a formal investigation.

Many people still aren't sure how to take control of their personal information. New European privacy rules introduced last year were a start, obliging companies to be more transparent with customers about what they do with people's data. But consumers are often still overwhelmed by detailed consent forms for third-party tracking on each new site they visit or the fine print of an app's service terms.

The digital technology industry can no longer be allowed to shape itself. We are way beyond that.

MARGRETHE VESTAGER
EUROPEAN UNION COMPETITION
COMMISSIONER

Vestager, a member of a small left wing political party who believes in free markets, said the private sector can play a role in finding solutions.

"I think you need products that will help you exercise your righ-

ts. Independent digital assistants that will make sure that your privacy settings are maintained no matter where you go. That kind of stuff," she said.

Vestager, whose party was founded by her great-grandfather, was Denmark's deputy prime minister and economy minister before taking up her post in Brussels in late 2014. She reportedly keeps a sculpture of a hand with an extended middle finger in her office, a gift from a Danish trade union angered by her welfare cuts. She's said to be one of the inspirations for the lead character in the Danish TV show "Borgen," about an ambitious minor politician trying to become the country's first female prime minister.

Although Vestager's term runs out in October, she's hoping for a second stint, an unlikely prospect because her party is out of power in Denmark and its prospects look uncertain in upcoming elections. The EU's executive commissioners are nominated by their country's governments.

"Sometimes things are unlikely but not impossible," Vestager said. "I'm in the middle of something and we're not done yet," she added, referring to the new era of digital regulation.

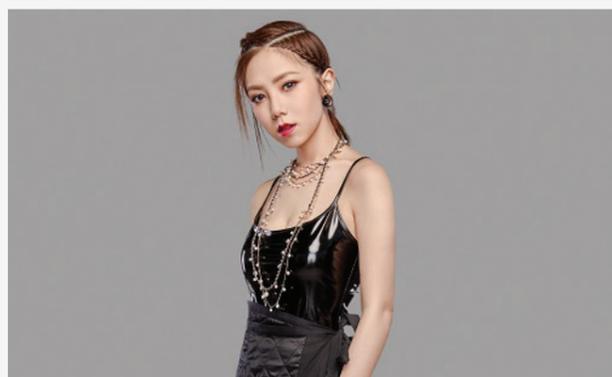
Vestager brushes off criticism that she's stifling innovation by targeting U.S. companies to help prop up European firms. She has also taken on Starbucks, McDonald's and this month opened an investigation into Nike's tax arrangements. But other targets have included Italian automaker Fiat and Russian gas giant Gazprom.

"When you look at our cases you'd see that what they have in common is not nationality. It's the fact that they're multinationals," she said.

Her aim, she says, is to keep competition fair. "That was the idea before the world became digital," Vestager said. "And it becomes an even more important idea when the world becomes digital because things are so fast moving." AP

corporate bits

HONG KONG SINGER G.E.M TO RETURN TO THE COTAI ARENA



Hong Kong singer-songwriter G.E.M. will return to The Venetian Macao's Cotai Arena on March 9 with her "G.E.M. Queen of Hearts World Tour Concert in Macau."

The local concert will be staged by Moment Factory, one of the leading production companies, which has worked with singer Ed Sheeran, rock band Muse

and other international superstars, according to a statement provided by Sands China.

Kevin Maher, who has worked on routines with Madonna, Jennifer Lopez, Nicki Minaj and Britney Spears, will provide choreography for the Macau show.

Renowned for her powerful voice and emotive delivery, G.E.M.'s ability to reproduce her records live has earned her the nickname the "Living CD".

For her latest tour, she will introduce new songs, and promises to bring the audience into "her inner world, experiencing a journey of love and encouraging her fans to freely express and embrace love."

Tickets go on sale tomorrow at all Cotai Ticketing box offices.

MELCO HOLDS TALK ON CHINA'S CULTURE, POLICIES



Melco Resorts & Entertainment hosted the "Splendors of China" series yesterday, a program about mainland China's culture, economic policies and social systems

and values.

According to the gaming operator, the event is part of the "Whole Person Development" to strengthen the knowledge and capabilities

beyond technical skills.

Melco invited Dr. Zhu Andong from Tsinghua University, lectured on China's economic opportunities, challenges and future development trajectory.

Almost 800 management and non-management colleagues attended, including some community members. Lawrence Ho, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Melco Resorts & Entertainment, said, "the Splendors of China program is very important to our company. We want our colleagues to have pride in their Chinese heritage, to have a deeper understanding of China's culture and history. We will continue to provide more programs."

Paul Panckhurst

'Stealth easing' spreads in China property as debt risks mount

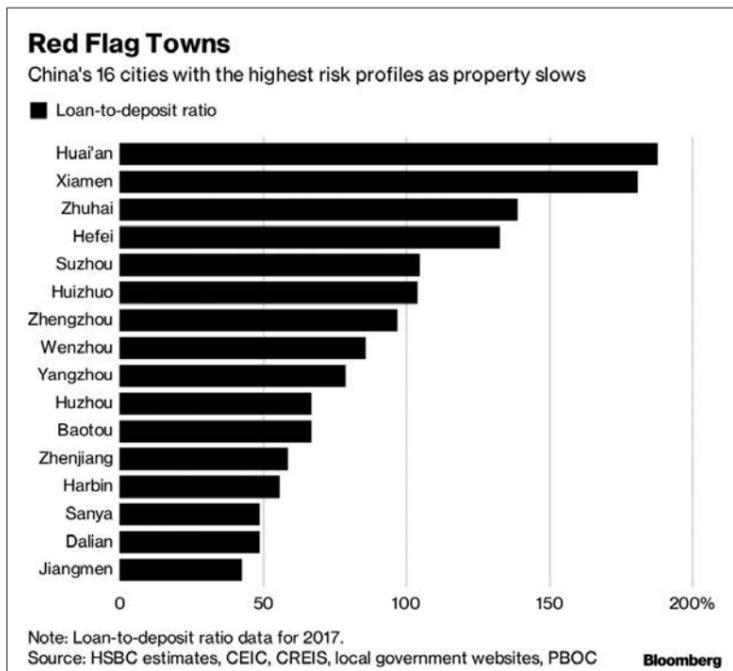
STEALTH easing is Nomura Holdings Inc.'s description of measures rolled out in some Chinese cities in recent months to counter a faltering property market.

In one of the latest cases, Beijing's city government offered two residential land plots for sale without specifying maximum prices for the apartments to be built on them, the South China Morning Post reported last week.

Nationwide, officials have put so much effort into a campaign against property speculation - one of President Xi Jinping's signature policies - that they may seem unlikely to start unwinding it now. However, a deepening economic slowdown could force just that at the end of the second quarter, according to Nomura economist Lu Ting.

The smallest gain in home prices in eight months in December was reported last week, adding to slowdown signs. Here are some of the recent loosening measures in individual cities.

Bloomberg Intelligence



analyst Patrick Wong sees wider easing as possible next quarter, but cautions that officials will be wary of fueling speculation in the biggest cities, where homes are beyond the

reach of many. Nomura forecasts "major" easing, especially in tier-one and tier-two cities, including scrapping price controls and purchase and resale restrictions.

HSBC Holdings Plc is focused on a clutch of cities such as Zhuhai, across the border from Macau, which seem especially vulnerable to home-price declines after their household debt blew out. For the nation as a whole, outstanding mortgages grew 823 percent since 2007 to hit 24.9 trillion yuan (USD3.7 trillion) in September, the bank said.

The biggest slide in home prices this year may be a 5 percent decline in the smaller, tier-3 cities, HSBC analyst Michelle Kwok said in a report this month. National sales may tumble 10 percent. However, the residential market is "far from entering a severe

downturn," she wrote.

Developers can mitigate their risks by investing in cities with strong, migration-driven housing demand and less leverage, Kwok said. The builders with the biggest exposures to cities with "high risk profiles" include industry giant Country Garden Holdings Co.

For its part, JPMorgan Chase & Co. expects "modest cooling" in China's real-estate market this year, while BNP Paribas SA said the government may relax property-tightening measures in second half.

"As cities in China developed, they became more and more reliant on land sales, so in short, a lot of the cities will have to quietly relax the tightening policies in order to stimulate sales this year," Wee Liat Lee, a managing director at BNP said during a briefing in Hong Kong last week. Bloomberg

IMF warns of no-deal Brexit risks as UK's time runs short

THE International Monetary Fund renewed its warning about the risks to the U.K.'s economic outlook if Britain leaves the European Union without a deal.

The Washington-based lender held its 2019 growth forecast at 1.5 percent, saying the fiscal stimulus announced in the Oct. 29 budget would likely help offset the damping effect which Brexit fears are having on the world's fifth-biggest economy.

However, "substantial uncertainty" surrounds the estimate, and a no-deal scenario could knock between five and eight percentage points off long-run GDP, according to IMF chief economist Gita Gopinath.

"As of mid-January, the shape that Brexit will take remains highly uncertain," the IMF said in its World Economic Outlook Update yesterday. "This baseline projection assumes that a Brexit deal is reached in 2019 and that the U.K. transitions gradually to the new regime."



The forecasts were published on the eve of the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland. U.K. Prime Minister Theresa May isn't attending this year as she deals with the unfolding political drama at home.

With less than 10 weeks before the U.K. is due to leave the EU, time is running out for May to get a withdrawal deal through Parliament after lawmakers emphatically rejected her blueprint last week.

If the U.K. falls out of the bloc with no alternate arrangements and moves straight to WTO rules, the reduction in

output would be "significant," Gopinath told reporters in Davos. "It is absolutely essential that this uncertainty is resolved sooner rather than later."

A chaotic departure would also threaten the global outlook, according to the IMF. Global growth is set to slow to 3.5 percent in 2019, though it could be weaker if a no-deal Brexit or a larger-than-anticipated slowdown in China materialize, it said.

The IMF sees the U.K. economy expanding 1.6 percent in 2020, little changed from the 1.5 percent it forecast in October. Bloomberg

Nintendo rebounds as optimistic signs emerge after a brutal year

NINTENDO Co. investors, battered by slower-than-anticipated sales of the Switch and a steep share decline last year, are starting to feel optimistic again.

The possibility of price cuts for the machine, an improving software pipeline and the upcoming launch of Nintendo's biggest mobile game in two years are all boosting confidence. That's helped to fuel a 22 percent stock jump since a December low, following a peak-to-trough slump of 44 percent in 2018.

It's not that Nintendo has suddenly solved its biggest challenge: expanding Switch's user base. But concerns over last year's missteps - fewer game releases, the flop of cardboard toy accessory Nintendo Labo, and falling short of its goal for Switch shipments - are fading away. With software sales for the last three months of 2018 showing strength, profits should stand up despite weaker hardware revenue when Nintendo reports results on Jan. 31, according to Pelham Smithers, who runs Pelham Smithers Associates Ltd. in London.

"We favor the stock now," Smithers said. "I have a real problem thinking where the disappointment will come from this year."



He's not alone. Following a steady stream of downgrades since May, analysts have settled on an estimate for about 18 million Switch shipments for the fiscal year that ends in March, according to the average of more than a dozen projections tracked by Bloomberg. While that's short of Nintendo's target of 20 million, the impact is already partially reflected in the current share price.

Of the 22 analysts tracking the Kyoto-based company, 19 have given it a buy rating, at an average 12-month target price of 49,313 yen, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. That suggests a potential 46 percent return from Friday's closing price of 33,850 yen.

One key question is whether Nintendo will revise its forecasts when it reports results next week. Switch hardware sales during the quarter - which accounts for about half of annual revenue - are seen clim-

bing 22 percent from a year earlier to 8.7 million units, according to the average of six estimates compiled by Bloomberg. Sales of holiday titles Let's Go Pikachu/Eevee and Super Smash Bros. Ultimate could also help lift operating profit by 27 percent to 151 billion yen (\$1.4 billion), according to the average projection.

A stronger Switch game lineup is in store for 2019, including highly-anticipated sequels to Pokemon, Luigi's Mansion and Animal Crossing. Third-party publishers are also boosting output with the re-release of old blockbusters from the Final Fantasy and Resident Evil series. Then there's Mario Kart Tours, the mobile debut of what is arguably the world's most popular racing game, which Nintendo has promised to release by the end of March. That may also help Nintendo regain lost ground in an industry that's migrated to smartphones. Bloomberg

AP PHOTO



TAIWAN

Chinese accuse McDonald's of supporting island independence

Chinese nationalists are accusing a McDonald's advertisement in Taiwan of supporting independence for the self-ruled island. The advertisement for a breakfast sandwich, broadcast only in Taiwan, shows a two-second glimpse of a woman's identity card that lists her nationality as "Taiwan." Comments on internet bulletin boards yesterday accused McDonald's of violating Chinese law by supporting independence for Taiwan, which Beijing claims as part of its territory. Some called for a boycott of the restaurant chain. Others said McDonald's, whose mainland franchises are owned by a group that includes the Chinese Cabinet's investment arm, should be expelled from China. "McDonald's this is what you want to do? Help Taiwan independence?" said a posting on the Sina.com portal signed "Good Knife Still." Phone calls to McDonald's China headquarters were not answered.

AP PHOTO



2018 economic growth sinks to three-decade low

CHINA'S economic growth hit a three-decade low in 2018, adding to pressure on Beijing to beef up stimulus measures and settle a tariff war with Washington.

Growth slowed to 6.6 percent from 2017's 6.9 percent as both the world's appetite for China's exports and domestic consumer spending weakened, official data showed yesterday.

Forecasters said they expect Beijing to try to shore up growth by making credit cheaper, raising government spending and adopting measures to encourage sales of autos and consumer goods.

Communist leaders want to steer China toward slower, more self-sustaining growth driven by consumer spending instead of trade and investment. But the slowdown has been sharper than expected, prompting Beijing to boost spending on construction of roads and bridges and to order banks to lend more, especially to the entrepreneurs who generate most of China's new jobs and wealth.

"Downward pressure on the economy is increasing," the commissioner of the National Bureau of Statistics, Ning Jizhe, said at a news conference. He cited import controls, volatile financial markets and declining invest-

ment spending as factors.

Still, Ning insisted China can resist shocks, saying "the long-term trend of stability will not change."

Economic growth in 2018 was the lowest since 1990's 3.9 percent following the violent crackdown on pro-democracy protests centered on Beijing's Tiananmen Square.

Growth in the last quarter of 2018 dipped to 6.4 percent — the lowest quarterly level since the 2008 global crisis — from the previous quarter's 6.5 percent.

"The government is expected to implement more fiscal and monetary stimulus measures to support economic growth," Yanjun Lin of IHS Markit said in a report.

Growth in investment, retail spending and factory activity all declined, though analysts pointed to a flicker of improvement in manufacturing in December. It grew by 5.7 percent over a year earlier, up 0.3 percentage points from November.

Production of plastics, metals and specialized industrial machinery accelerated, "suggesting warming expectations for a pick-up in investment," Chaoping Zhu of J.P. Morgan Asset Management said in a report.

The trade dispute

with the U.S. is proving costly.

Exports held up through most of 2018 despite President Donald Trump's tariff hikes on Chinese imports in a fight over Beijing's technology ambitions. But they contracted in December as the penalties began to depress U.S. demand.

The two sides have imposed tariff hikes of up to 25 percent on tens of billions of dollars of each other's goods in the fight over U.S. complaints that Beijing steals or pressures companies to hand over technology. Washington wants China to roll back plans for state-led industry development that its trading partners say violate its market-opening obligations.

The trade dispute, and reports of job losses and tumbling sales of autos and real estate, have unnerved Chinese consumers that Beijing is counting on to drive growth. As pocketbooks snap shut, the downturn could worsen.

China's top trade envoy, Vice Premier Liu He, is due to visit Washington for talks Jan. 30-31.

Business groups and economists said a decision by Liu and his American counterpart, Robert Lighthizer, to get directly involved would suggest earlier talks by lower-level officials made progress.

Trump said Saturday that trade relations with China were "going very well" and "a deal could very well happen."

Forecasters expect Chinese growth to bottom out this year as Beijing's stimulus efforts gain traction. However, they have pushed back the time frame for that due to weakening exports.

Public works spending "is shaping up to be the engine for 2019," Iris Pang of ING said in a report. "However, non-infrastructure business activities will be dismal this year. And debt will grow."

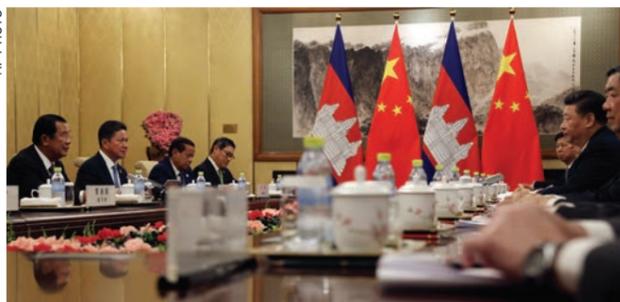
A meeting of Communist Party leaders in December promised tax cuts, better access to bank lending for entrepreneurs and other steps to help the private sector.

Chinese leaders have been warning that any recovery would be "L-shaped," meaning that companies and investors shouldn't expect growth to rebound to the previous decade's double-digit levels.

Forecasters expect growth to decline further this year to 6.3 percent or lower.

"China's economy is likely to weaken further before growth stabilizes in the second half of the year on the back of expanded policy stimulus," Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics said in a report. AP

AP PHOTO



BELT & ROAD

Cambodia's Hun Sen meets Xi Jinping on Beijing visit

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen has met with Chinese President Xi Jinping during a visit to Beijing that reinforces ties between China and its closest ally in Southeast Asia. Hun Sen also is to meet Premier Li Keqiang and other leaders during his four-day visit, which started yesterday. Cambodia has grown increasingly close to China in recent years as Hun Sen's government has become estranged from the United States, which is critical of his long-running authoritarian rule. China is Cambodia's most important political and economic ally, providing millions of dollars in aid and investment, writing off debts and granting the country tariff-free status for hundreds of items. Cambodia in turn has done Beijing's diplomatic bidding in the region, especially regarding China's claims to most of the South China Sea.

AP PHOTO



BUSINESS AS USUAL

Trump granted five trademarks amid trade talks

The Chinese government has granted Ivanka Trump's company preliminary approval for another five trademarks this month, as her father's administration pushes ahead on trade negotiations with China. Four trademarks, including child care centers, sunglasses and wedding dresses, were approved on Sunday. A fifth, covering brokerage, charitable fundraising and art valuation services, was approved on Jan. 6, according to online trademark office records. The applications were filed in 2016 and 2017. If no one objects, they will be finalized after 90 days. Ivanka Trump's expanding intellectual property holdings have long raised ethical concerns, particularly in China, where the courts and bureaucracy tend to reflect the will of the ruling Communist Party. Ivanka Trump's lawyers in China did not respond immediately to a request for comment.

CHINA'S population growth rate continued to slow in 2018, spelling possible trouble ahead as a swelling number of retirees pushes up against a shrinking labor pool.

Numbers released yesterday by the National Bureau of Statistics put the population at 1.395 billion in 2018.

That marked a growth rate of .381 percent, an addition of 15.23 million people, the bureau said. That's nearly 2 million fewer than the year before.

China for decades sought to slow its population growth, seeing a massive population as a drag on development, and it now joins Japan, South Korea and other East Asian nations in seeing a radical drop in its birthrate.

Yet the pace at which population growth has slowed has become a concern in recent years as the country's seemingly inexhaustible supply of ready labor has declined. Better educated young Chinese face more complicated but also more varied job prospects and are less inclined than their parents to marry and start a family.

"Many of us grew up as only children and we're a little selfish about putting our own satisfaction above having kids," said Mina Cai, 26, a Beijing office worker.

The government estimates China's population will peak at 1.442 billion in 2029 before beginning to decline the year after. That's after decades of regulation seeking to hold most Chinese to one or two children.

India, the world's second most populous nation, has also been experiencing slower population

REPORT

Population expansion continued to slow in 2018



growth. Its total population stood at 1.362 billion this month based on United Nations estimates.

Yet China also faces a unique dilemma: Its 2018 population total included 30 million more men than women, considered a long-time outcome of the recently abandoned one-child policy under which boys were favored over

girls for cultural reasons.

China added more than 17 million people to its population in 2016 and 2017 following the scrapping of the one-child policy, but the effect hasn't endured.

Care for the elderly is a rising government concern as the working-age population continues to fall as a percentage of the total.

Chinese increasingly enjoy better living standards, education and health care, but a yawning gap between the wealthy and poor has experts saying the country will grow old before it grows rich.

Also yesterday, the government announced China's 2018 economic growth fell to a three-decade low, adding to pressure on Beijing to settle a

tariff war with Washington.

The world's second-largest economy expanded by 6.6 percent from a year earlier, down from 2017's 6.9 percent, official data showed.

China marked a growth rate of .381 percent, an addition of 15.23 million people

China's ruling Communist Party is trying to steer China to slower, more self-sustaining growth based on consumer spending instead of trade and investment.

But the deceleration has been sharper than expected, prompting Beijing to step up government spending and order banks to lend more to shore up growth and avoid politically dangerous job losses.

For young Chinese like Cai, the country's leaders may need to step in if they want to encourage further population growth.

"The financial pressure of life in the city makes the idea of having a child almost impossible," Cai said. "I think more needs to be done by the government." AP

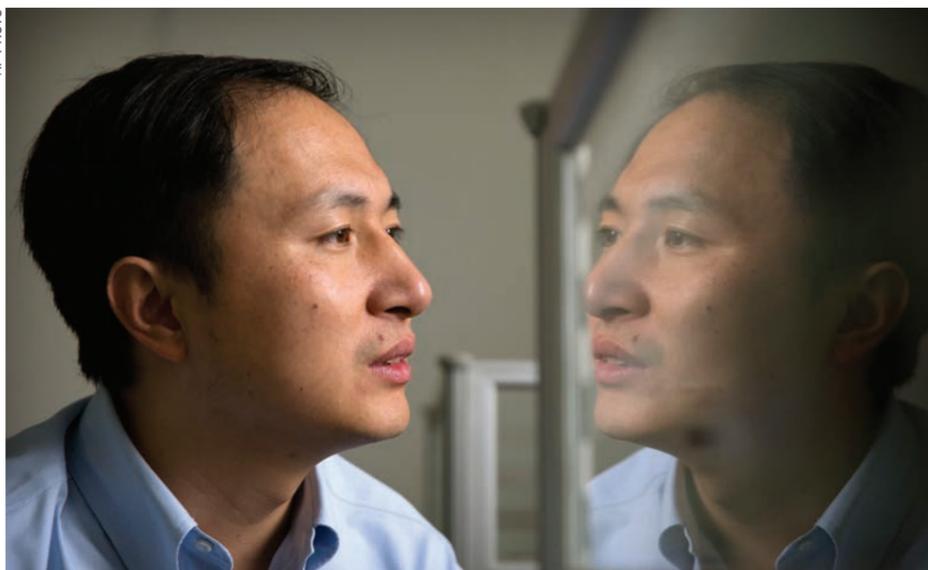
GENETICS

Investigators say doctor behind gene-edited babies acted on his own

CHINESE investigators have determined that the doctor behind the reported birth of two babies whose genes had been edited in hopes of making them resistant to the AIDS virus acted on his own and will be punished for any violations of the law, a state media report said yesterday.

Investigators in the southern province of Guangdong determined Dr. He Jiankui organized and handled funding for the experiment without outside assistance in violation of national guidelines, the Xinhua News Agency said.

Along with the birth of the twins, another embryo yet to be born reportedly resulted from He's experi-



He Jiankui is reflected in a glass panel as he works at a computer at a laboratory in Shenzhen

ment. All three will remain under medical observation with regular visits supervi-

sed by government health departments, Xinhua said. It didn't say which laws

He might have violated but said he had fabricated an ethical review by others.

"This behavior seriously violates ethics and the integrity of scientific research, is in serious violation of relevant national regulations and creates a pernicious influence at home and abroad," the report said.

Then little-known, He attended an elite meeting in Berkeley, California, in 2017 where scientists and ethicists were discussing a technology that had shaken the field to its core — an emerging tool for "editing" genes, the strings of DNA that form the blueprint of life.

He embraced the tool, called CRISPR, and last year rocked an international conference with the claim that he had helped make the world's first gene-edited babies, despite a clear scientific consensus that making genetic changes that could be passed to future generations should not be attempted at this point.

China called an immediate halt to He's experiments following his announcement.

Gene editing for reproductive purposes is effectively banned in the U.S. and most of Europe. In China, ministerial guidelines prohibit embryo research that "violates ethical or moral principles."

The chief of the World Health Organization said last year his agency is assembling experts to consider the health impact of gene editing.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said gene editing "cannot be just done without clear guidelines" and experts should "start from a clean sheet and check everything."

"We have a big part of our population who say, 'Don't touch,'" Tedros told reporters. "We have to be very, very careful, and the working group will do that." AP

SOUTH KOREA

More sexual abuse claims rock national skating

Kim Tong-Hyung, Seoul

MORE South Korean female skaters are accusing their coaches of sexually abusing them, a group representing the athletes disclosed yesterday following claims by two-time Olympic champion Shim Suk-hee that her former coach had repeatedly raped her.

The announcement came amid a growing #MeToo movement in South Korea's elite sports scene, which has been notorious for a brutal training culture and highly hierarchical relationships between coaches and athletes.

In addition to Shim, female athletes in judo, taekwondo and wrestling have also accused their male coaches of sexually abusing them. Members of the country's silver medal-winning Olympic curling team, cheered as the Garlic Girls for their hometown's famed produce, have accused their former coaches of verbal abuse and holding back prize money.

In a news conference at South Korea's parliament, a group called Solidarity for Young Skaters said five other skaters had been sexually abused by their coaches. The group didn't reveal any names, citing privacy worries.

Lawmaker Sohn Hye-won, who appeared in the same news conference, said one of the alleged victims said she was repeatedly groped as a teen by a coach while training at the Korea National Sport



Two-time Olympic champion Shim Suk-hee

University, a powerhouse in producing Olympic athletes. The skater said the unidentified coach would forcibly hug and kiss her and verbally abused her after she rejected his advances, Sohn said.

Sohn also called for an investigation into former national team coach Jeon Myeong-gyu, who is somewhat of a godfather figure in South Korean skating. Currently a professor at KNSU, Jeon has long been accused of nepotism for favoring athletes and coaches from the school in international competition and is now under suspicion of pressuring victims in order to cover up sex crimes committed by coaches he taught.

"There has been frequent sexual abuse in the skating scene, but the offenders in most cases did not receive punishment; that's because the coaches were members of the KNSU circle led by Professor Jeon Myeong-gyu," said Sohn, adding that the victims are afraid they'll face retaliation if they come forward with their claims.

Jeon later said at a separate news conference that he feels sorry for Shim and didn't know she was abused. He denied that he attempted to cover up abusive conduct by his students.

"There's no way for me to know about every act of sexual

violence that takes place. I am not in a position to know that much," he said.

Sohn and the skaters' group also urged Korean Sport and Olympic Committee President Lee Kee-heung and other officials to step down for failing to safeguard athletes. The committee said it plans to launch a special committee to investigate abuse across sports and create new rules to protect athletes.

Experts say abusive treatment of female athletes has long been a problem in South Korean elite sports, which are often run by men. Athletes must live in dormitories, where coaches often exercise

overbearing control, and they skip school from a young age in order to perform well at athletic events, leaving them with less education and career choices, which makes it harder for them to resist unjust treatment, critics say.

South Korea has associated Olympic achievements with national pride, and the problems regarding training cultures have often been overlooked as long as the athletes succeed.

But the pressure for change is now coming from a younger generation of athletes, led by Shim, who won two gold medals in women's short-track speed skating in the 2018 and 2014 Winter Olympics.

Shim earlier this month accused her former coach, Cho Jae-beom, of repeatedly raping her since she was 17.

Cho was fired as the national team coach shortly before the Pyeongchang Olympics last year and is now serving a 10-month prison term for physically assaulting athletes, including Shim. Cho's lawyers said he denies sexually assaulting Shim.

Shim's claims have encouraged other female athletes to speak up about the alleged abuse they suffered from their male coaches. Shin Yoo-young, a former judo athlete, has also accused her former high school coach of repeatedly raping her. Lee Ji-hye, a former taekwondo athlete, told a television interview that she had been sexually abused by her former coach for five years, starting when she was a sixth-grader.

The Korea Wrestling Federation is also investigating claims that a coach groped some female members of the national team while they were training for the Jakarta Palembang Asian Games last year. **AP**

SINGAPORE

Actor Aloysius Pang injured in military exercise

SINGAPOREAN actor Aloysius Pang sustained serious injuries to his chest and abdomen during a military training exercise in New Zealand, Singapore's defense ministry said yesterday.

The 28-year-old actor was injured Saturday while he was carrying out repairs inside a Singapore Self-Propelled Howitzer, a motorized piece of artillery that looks similar to a small tank.

The ministry said in a statement the actor, also known as Pang Wei Chong, was participa-

ting in Exercise Thunder Warrior at the Waiouru training area on New Zealand's North Island.

Pang underwent several hours of abdominal surgery at Waikato Hospital in Hamilton on Saturday and had follow-up surgery yesterday, the ministry said. Pang's mother arrived in New Zealand and spoke with him in the hospital and his father and brother were due to arrive soon afterwards.

Singapore has a policy of mandatory conscription of young men into the armed forces, police force or civil defense for-

ce. Most serve full time for two years, followed by annual training obligations.

The ministry described Pang as an "Operationally Ready National Serviceman" indicating that he had completed his full-time service. It described him as an armament technician and his rank as corporal first class.

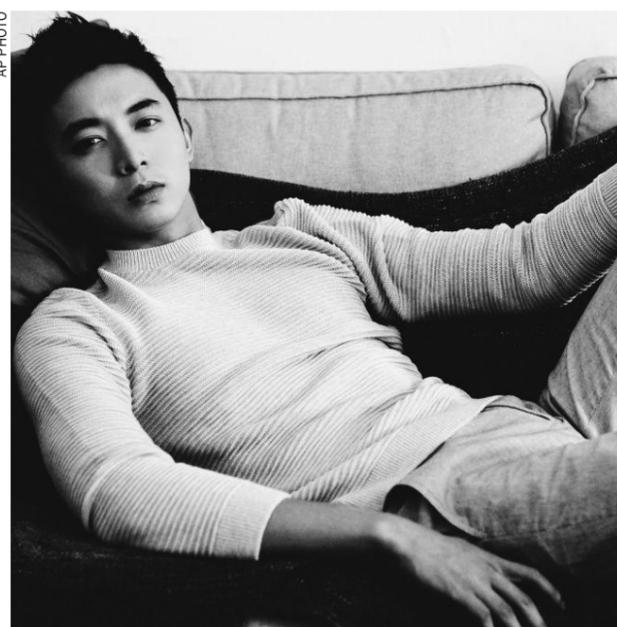
Pang's Singapore-based agency, NoonTalk Media, wrote on Facebook that it was waiting for more information on the actor's condition from the military and his family.

"Please bear with us and join us in praying for his swift recovery," the agency wrote.

New Zealand's defense force said a member of Singapore's military was injured during a live-firing exercise that New Zealand's military hosts each year.

Singapore's defense ministry said it was investigating the incident to determine the cause.

Pang is known for his work on the movie "Young & Fabulous" (2016) as well as television series that include "The Truth Seekers" (2016) and "C.L.I.F." (2011). **AP**



ADVOCATES for the protection of refugees and asylum seekers lauded a commitment by Thailand yesterday to release children held in its immigration detention centers.

The U.N. refugee agency, UNHCR, said Thai government ministries involved with the issue signed a memorandum of understanding providing a framework to meet a 2016 pledge by Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha to end the practice of detaining migrant children.

The document is an agreement in principle and does not ensure how such children will be taken care of.

The UNHCR and international and Thai advocacy groups are urging Thailand to take the commitment a step further and release mothers with their children in order not to separate families.

Giuseppe De Vincentiis, UNHCR's representative in Thailand, called the agreement "a positive example of Thailand's humanitarian approach to refugees and asylum seekers."

"The framework only covers the release of children detained in immigration detention," UNHCR said a statement. "However, mothers have also been released together with their children in their capacity as legal guardians. All over the world, UNHCR ad-

AP PHOTO

[[It's] a positive example of Thailand's humanitarian approach to refugees and asylum seekers.

GIUSEPPE DE VINCENTIIS
UNHCR, THAILAND



THAILAND

Gov't commits to policy of not detaining migrant children

vocates that the child's right to family life must be respected and that children should not be separated from their families except when such separation is necessary to protect the best interests of the child."

Seven private advocacy groups also welcomed the agreement but said "further efforts are ne-

cessary to protect the best interests of the child and to bring Thai policy and practice in line with international standards."

The memorandum "doesn't address the separation of families, and detained refugee mothers are still required to pay exorbitant bail fees simply to reunite with their children, whi-

le fathers remain in detention," said Amy Smith, executive director of Fortify Rights, one of the seven groups that jointly issued a statement calling for further action.

The statement said that "migrant mothers are only granted release from immigration detention following a cash bail

payment of 50,000 Thai baht (USD1,500) to reunite with children in holding shelters." It called the bail payment "exorbitant for most migrants and, particularly, refugees, who are prohibited from working in Thailand," and added that the provision of bail does not extend to fathers of migrant children. **AP**

AD



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VENEZUELA

National guard unit puts down mutiny

Fabiola Sanchez, Caracas

VENEZUELA'S government said yesterday it put down a mutiny by a National Guard unit in a poor neighborhood a few kilometers from Venezuela's presidential palace.

The uprising triggered protests in the same neighborhood that were dispersed with tear gas.

The armed forces in a statement said that it had captured all those involved in what it described as "treasonous" acts motivated by "obscure interests tied to the far right."

It said at around 2:50 a.m. (06:50 GMT), a small group of guardsmen took captive a captain in charge of a police station in western Caracas and then moved across the capital in two military trucks to the poor neighborhood of Petare, where they stole a cache of weapons from another outpost.

They met resistance and were

caught hours later at a national guard outpost 3 kilometers from the Miraflores presidential palace.

The armed forces said all the weapons had been recovered and the mutinous troops captured.

A few hours earlier, a group of heavily armed national guardsmen published a series of videos on social media saying they won't recognize President Nicolas Maduro's government, which has come under increasing domestic and international pressure over a newly launched second term that the opposition-controlled congress and many nations consider illegitimate.

In one of the videos, a man identifying himself as 3rd Sgt. Figueroa, addressing the "people of Venezuela," urges his compatriots to take to the streets to show support for their rebellion.

"You asked to take to the streets to defend the constitution, well here we are," he said in a video shot at night in which several hea-



vily armed men and a national guard truck can be seen in the background. "You wanted us to light the fuse, so we did. We need your support," he added.

In the adjacent neighborhood of Cotiza, a small group of residents could be seen banging pots and pans, burning trash and throwing rocks at security forces stationed

near the national guard post.

"We must defend our homeland," Maria Fernanda Rodriguez, a 36-year-old manicurist, told The Associated Press, her eyes welling from the tear gas.

Juan Guaido, president of the congress, said the incident is a sign of growing discontent within the armed forces.

"Our military knows that the command chain is broken by the usurpation of the presidency," Guaido said in a message on Twitter in which he reiterated a promise to support all members of the armed forces working to restore Venezuela's democratic order.

Pressure has been mounting on Maduro to cede power after he began as second, six-year term this month. The U.S. and dozens of other foreign governments consider it illegitimate, in part because he banned several leading opponents from running against him.

While discontent among Venezuelans is rising amid widespread food shortages and hyperinflation, Maduro is believed to have the loyalty of his top military command. In the past troops have easily put down small uprisings.

Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino Lopez said on Twitter that those responsible for the incident would be punished with the full force of the law. **AP**

GREECE

After violence, parliament debates deal with Macedonia

GREECE'S government submitted a controversial agreement to parliament yesterday aimed at normalizing relations with neighboring Macedonia, a day after violent demonstrations against the deal erupted in Athens.

The agreement would see Macedonia change its name to North Macedonia and allow the country to join NATO later this year.

Left-wing Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras' government is struggling to secure the majority needed to back the deal and may need the support of as many as six opposition lawmakers.

On Sunday, tens of thousands of people gathered outside Parliament to protest the deal, and at least 25 police officers were injured during extensive clashes.

More protests are expected this week, including plans by farmers' associations to use tractors to block roads on the Greek-Bulgarian border on the final day of the parliamentary debate.

Lawmakers are expected



ted to vote on the agreement late Thursday.

The deal is aimed at ending decades of hostility between the two Balkan countries. Greece wants its neighbor to change or modify its name, arguing that it currently poses a potential threat to the territory and ancient heritage of Greece's own region of Macedonia.

While the proposed compromise has been ratified by Macedonia, it remains deeply unpopular in Greece — with more than two-thirds of the public opposed to it, according to recent opi-

nion polls.

The government narrowly survived a no-confidence vote last week after its right-wing coalition partner quit in protest at the proposed deal, leaving Tsipras' reliant on opposition support.

Yesterday, a potential ally, the centrist Potami, lost its party status in parliament, falling below the minimum representation requirement after a lawmaker declared himself an independent.

The government spokesman, Dimitris Tzanakopoulos, bla-

med Sunday's violence on "extreme right elements," but added that opponents of the agreement should be respected.

"Many of the objections are reasonable, but the government has its policy ... and a patriotic duty to secure the national interest," Tzanakopoulos told private 24/7 Radio.

Strongly backed by the U.S. and Western European leaders, the Greek government argues that the deal would boost stability in Balkans and improve trade in the region. **AP**

FRANCE

Macron to promote foreign investment at Versailles

FRENCH President Emmanuel Macron hosted 150 international business leaders at the Palace of Versailles yesterday in hopes of producing support for his agenda as yellow vest protesters keep up their demonstrations to his government's economic policies.

The CEOs or top executives of Microsoft, Uber, General Electric, Procter & Gamble and Coca-Cola are among those expected at the evening event, where Macron wants to promote tax changes and other measures intended to attract foreign investors.

The foreign executives arranged to stop in France while en route to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Several companies used the Versailles event to announce planned investments in France worth a total of 600 million euros (USD682 million), Macron's office said.

Chinese group Microport, which specializes in medical devices, plans to put 350 million euros (\$398 million) over the next five years toward developing pacemakers and defibrillators in France.

U.S. food manufacturer Mars said it would invest 120 million euros (\$136 million) on work at eight locations in France.

Microsoft and IBM announced the development of centers focusing on artificial intelligence.

American technology group Cisco has a 60-million euro plan (\$68 million) to further develop its Paris innovation and research lab by 2022.

State statistics agency Insee last month lowered its 2018 growth estimate for France to 1.5 percent, down from 2.2 percent in 2017.

Macron was elected in 2017 on a pro-European, pro-business platform, arguing that economic policies would make France stronger for globalization. He has started cutting taxes on business revenue and is planning other similar cuts by 2022.

Citizens wearing the yellow vests French motorists are required to carry in their vehicles started weekly protests of a fuel tax increase in mid-November. Anger over the president's policies that were seen as favoring the wealthy swelled the demonstrations swelled into a broader anti-government movement.

Macron launched a "national debate" last week to solicit ideas from citizens and to help assuage the anger. Thousands of people nevertheless turned out in Paris and several other cities Saturday, the 10th consecutive weekend of demonstrations. **AP**

Aron Heller, Jerusalem

MIDDLE EAST

Israel says its jets struck Iranian military sites in Syria

THE Israeli military said its jets struck a series of Iranian military targets in Syria yesterday, an announcement that was a rare departure from Israel's years-long policy of ambiguity regarding activities in neighboring war-torn Syria.

The military said the targets included munition storage facilities, an intelligence site and a military training camp.

The strikes were in response to a surface-to-surface rocket that Iranian forces fired toward Israel on Sunday that was intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system over a ski resort in the Golan Heights. That followed a rare Israeli daylight air raid near the Damascus International Airport.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said yesterday's pre-dawn strikes lasted for nearly an hour and were the most intense Israeli attacks since May. It said 11 were killed in the strikes. The Russian military said four Syrian troops were among those killed in airstrikes that targeted three different locations and damaged unspecified infrastructure at Damascus airport. There were no further details on the casualties or their nationalities.

Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus, an Israeli military spokesman, said



Missiles flying into the sky near the international airport, in Damascus, Syria, yesterday

the Iranian missile attack that prompted the strong Israeli response was "premeditated." Iranian forces in Syria fired the mid-range surface-to-surface missile toward Israel from the Damascus area — a missile he said had been smuggled into Syria specifically for that purpose. Conricus declined to further identify the type of missile but said it hadn't been used in any of the internal

fighting of the civil war and had "no business" being in Syria.

In Iran, the chief of Iran's air force, Gen. Aziz Nassirzadeh, said his forces are "impatient and ready for a fight against the Zionist regime to wipe it off the Earth," according to a news website affiliated with Iran's state television, YJC.ir.

Iranian officials have repeatedly threatened to annihilate Israel.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel "pounded" the Iranian sites in response to the missile attack and would not hesitate to respond again.

"We don't allow such acts of aggression to go unanswered as Iran attempts to establish itself militarily in Syria and in the face of Iran's explicit statements that it intends to destroy Israel," he said at a ceremony dedicating a

new airport in southern Israel.

"Whoever tries to harm us, we will harm them. Whoever threatens to destroy us will bear the full responsibility," Netanyahu added.

Israel has only recently acknowledged carrying out hundreds of strikes against Iranian and Hezbollah targets in Syria in recent years. It previously typically offered only general warnings against allowing Iran to establish a military foothold in Syria and refrained from commenting directly for fear of triggering a reaction and being drawn into the deadly fighting.

Israeli political and military leaders have been far more verbose of late, and Monday's announcement went a step further, reporting the strikes in real time and detailing the targets.

Conricus would not confirm whether the measures marked an official abandonment of the policy of ambiguity, merely saying that it was a "retaliatory strike against active aggression by Iran." AP

AD



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what's ON



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

SPARKLING GARDEN - GUAN HUAI BIN WORKS
TIME: 10am-7pm (last admission 6:30pm; closed on Mondays)
UNTIL: February 24, 2019
VENUE: Macau Museum of Art
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

DISCOVER MACAU: MUSEUM OF TAIPA AND COLOANE HISTORY
TIME: 10am-6pm daily (last admission at 5:30pm; closed on Mondays)
ADDRESS: Rua Correia da Silva, Taipa
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 8988 4000

LA PARISIENNE CABARET FRANCAIS
TIME: 8pm (except on Mondays)
 5pm (Sundays)
UNTIL: February 3, 2019
VENUE: The Parisian Theatre
ADMISSION: MOP188, MOP388, MOP488
COTAI TICKETING: (853) 2882 8818
KONG SENG TICKETING: (853) 2855 5555

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

Offbeat

COMMUTER'S 'DELAY SCARF' BOUGHT BY GERMAN TRAIN COMPANY



Germany's biggest rail company, under fire for its unpunctual service, is trying to mollify one disgruntled commuter by buying her "delay scarf."

Deutsche Bahn, which last week announced plans to hire 22,000 more staff, bought the hand-made scarf in an online auction for 7,550 euros (USD8,600). The money is being donated to a charity for the homeless.

According to her daughter, Sara Weber, the Munich commuter had knitted the grey, pink and red scarf last year, with each color reflecting the amount of time her journey had been delayed. Weber's social media post about the scarf drew widespread attention this month, reflecting Deutsche Bahn customers' frustration at the company's persistent delays.

Less than three quarters of Deutsche Bahn's long-distance trains arrived on time last year, debunking cultural assumptions about German punctuality.

TV canal macau



13:00	TDM News (Repetição)
13:30	Telejornal RTPi (Diferido)
15:00	Mistura Fina
15:45	Zig Zag
16:05	Os Compadres
16:45	Quem Quer Ser Milionário
17:40	João Semana
18:30	TDM Desporto (Repetição)
19:35	Os Nossos Dias Sr.2
20:30	Telejornal
21:15	TDM Entrevista
21:50	O Contrato Sr.1
22:35	Viajante da Música
23:15	TDM News
23:50	Filhos da Nação Sr.2
00:25	Telejornal (Repetição)
01:10	RTPi Directo

cinema



CINETEATRO

17 JAN - 23 JAN



GLASS

ROOM 1

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

Director: M. Night Shyamalan

Starring: Bruce Willis, James McAvoy, Samuel L. Jackson

Language: English

Duration: 112min

INSTANT FAMILY

ROOM 2

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

Director: Sean Anders

Starring: Mark Wahlberg, Rose Byrne, Isabela Moner

Language: English

Duration: 92min

A DOG'S WAY HOME

ROOM 3

7:30pm

Director: Charles Martin Smith

Starring: Bryce Dallas Howard, Ashley Judd

Language: English

Duration: 96min



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

this day in history



1980 SOVIET DISSIDENT SAKHAROV BANISHED

One of the Soviet Union's most outspoken critics, nuclear physicist Dr Andrei Sakharov, has been ordered into internal exile.

Officials in Moscow were angered by an interview Dr Sakharov gave American television last week, in which he called for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

It was the final straw after the Nobel peace prize winner had escaped arrest during more than 13 years of dissident activity.

In the interview, Dr Sakharov also told American viewers he supported plans to boycott the summer Olympics in Moscow.

He said he was in favour of the US sanctions ordered by President Carter in retaliation for the invasion.

The scientist and his wife, Yelena Bonner, were seized by officers of the Soviet secret service, the KGB, while walking in a Moscow street.

Dr Sakharov was stripped of his official honours.

The couple were given two hours to pack before being sent to Gorky, an industrial city 250 miles east of Moscow and off limits to foreign reporters.

Dr Sakharov was credited with creating the first Soviet hydrogen bomb - but later became involved in campaigning for nuclear disarmament.

He won the 1975 Nobel Peace Prize because of his fight for human rights.

In a recent interview with the BBC, Dr Sakharov spoke about the need for change in the Soviet Union.

He said: "Our country, like every modern state, needs profound democratic reforms. It needs political and ideological pluralism, a mixed economy and protection of human rights and the opening up of society."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Dr Sakharov spent nearly seven years in exile in Gorky where he continued to write letters and appeals in support of human rights activists.

He staged three hunger strikes protesting at his own persecution and seeking permission for his wife to go to the United States for medical treatment for eye and heart problems.

In 1983, Yelena Bonner was charged with slander against the Soviet state as she was about to board a plane to fly to the US. Dr Sakharov claimed it was a trumped-up charge to prevent her travelling abroad. She, too, was ordered to remain in exile in Gorky.

After President Mikhail Gorbachev ordered his release in 1986, Dr Sakharov became a leading member of the pro-democracy movement.

He also helped to lead the opposition in the new Soviet parliament in 1989 and was involved in drafting a new constitution. He died on 14 December 1989 of a heart attack.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Get out there and take in a museum or a performance — your energy demands cultural exposure, and there's just no denying it this time. You may have to create your own event.

Taurus April 20-May 20 You've got a lot going on in your head today — so much so that it may get kind of confusing! Try not to read too much into the frenzy of ideas, as this is just your mind defragging itself.

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 This is a bad time to hang onto old ideas — you need to look forward if you want to get anywhere. It's one of those days when you may be tempted to go it alone, but you need others by your side.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 You need to deal with a service issue — it may be a utility that's out of whack, or possibly your own service to someone else is in need of maintenance. Think it through and take care of business!

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Your generosity is almost limitless today — and you've got the energy to back it up! Try not to dip into your retirement fund, but the more you give, the better off you'll be in the future.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 You are your own drill sergeant today — and you may find that you start to resent how responsible you can be! Just tackle the important stuff and you can kick back and have fun soon.

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 Philosophical meanderings are good for the soul — so your soul should be in excellent shape by the end of the day! Your mental energy is engaged with the biggest issues facing humanity.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 Don't be too sure of yourself today — cockiness is a serious risk for you. Things may get a little weird later in the day when you're tempted to make a bigger play than you can really afford.

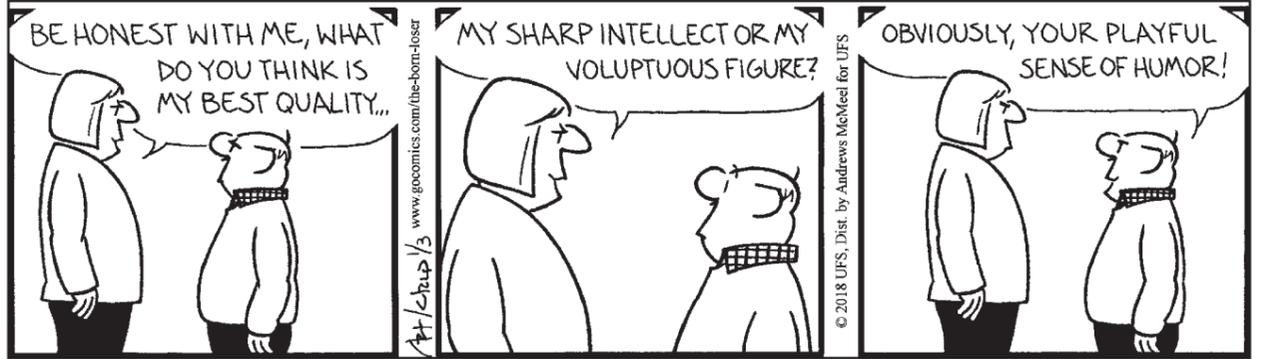
Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 You either make a new friend or take a current friendship to a new level today — your energy is undeniable, and others are drawn to you. Romance may be in the air, but it's not your sole focus.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 Nothing seems to be working out for you today — but you still believe, don't you? If not, look elsewhere for inspiration, as you need to stick it out this time. Success is almost upon you!

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 You are feeling the social vibe today — and you ought to be able to get your people to go along with you. It's a good time for you to throw a party or celebrate something small but wonderful.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 Your supervisor at work (or teacher at school) doesn't seem to listen today — so you may be better off keeping your opinions to yourself. This is short-lived, so take notes and get them at a better time.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy

Easy Sudoku grid with numbers 1-9 in various positions.

Easy+

Easy+ Sudoku grid with numbers 1-9 in various positions.

Medium

Medium Sudoku grid with numbers 1-9 in various positions.

Hard

Hard Sudoku grid with numbers 1-9 in various positions.

WEATHER

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

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- "The Thin Man" dog; 5- La ___ Tar Pits; 9- Salsa singer Cruz; 14- Tax experts: Abbr.; 15- Long fish; 16- Out of order; 17- Antitoxins; 18- Sports figure?; 19- Eliot's Marnier; 20- Process of capitalizing; 23- Tractor-trailer; 24- Windy City trains; 25- Basic monetary unit; 29- Globes; 31- '60s campus gp.; 34- Eastern; 35- Duo; 36- Home furnishings chain; 37- In spite of; 40- Stout relatives; 41- Pro ___; 42- Eagle's nest; 43- Auction ending?; 44- Rude dwellings; 45- Old Testament book; 46- Bandleader Brown; 47- Neptune's realm; 48- Add lurid details to a story, e.g.; 56- Bellowing; 57- Teen follower; 58- Makes lace; 60- Cancels a dele; 61- Narrate; 62- Blame; 63- "Steppenwolf" author; 64- Hard to hold; 65- Harness part;

DOWN: 1- Cooling units, for short; 2- Job detail, briefly; 3- Skater Lipinski; 4- Quickly, briefly; 5- Rouse to action; 6- Label anew; 7- Airline to Israel; 8- Italian wine center; 9- Cellist Pablo; 10- Gives off; 11- Leslie Caron role; 12- Golfer Aoki; 13- Org.; 21- Teheran native; 22- Horselike African mammal; 25- Mother of Perseus; 26- ___ Mio; 27- Unit of volume; 28- Rules; 29- Brewery kilns; 30- Meter maid of song; 31- Sound of a bagpipe; 32- Jeans material; 33- Wise ones; 35- Excellent, slangily; 36- Brain wave; 38- Confidence; 39- Twangy, as a voice; 44- Last car?; 45- Like heaven's gates; 46- Atty.-to-be exams; 47- Fishhook line; 48- Cumberbund; 49- Harper's Bazaar illustrator; 50- Refusals; 51- Must've been something ___; 52- Arch type; 53- Like ___ not; 54- Writer Grey; 55- Ornamental case; 59- Nine-digit ID;

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

Large crossword puzzle grid with numbers 1-65.

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' listings for Lake View Tower, Ocean Garden Elm Court, Sea View Condo, Taipa, Nam Long, Nova Taipa Gardens, Two Shops for sale, One Central Tower, and F Unit, Manhattan Taipa.

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No admission under 18

Friday, 1:00am
China v Iran
H 10, D 4.3, A 1.44

FOOTBALL

China to play Iran in Asian Cup quarterfinals

IRAN and China will face off in the Asian Cup quarterfinals on Thursday after they both won their last-16 games, while Vietnam scraped through in a penalty shootout.

Iran, Asia's top-ranked team, had to save an early penalty against Oman, but rarely looked in danger after that on the way to a routine 2-0 win on Sunday. Earlier, Marcello Lippi's China had to recover from a goal down to beat Thailand 2-1 in a result which highlighted China's struggles to live up to its ambitions of becoming a football superpower.

Iran nearly went behind right at the start when Seyed Majid Hosseini brought down Oman forward Ahmed Al Mahajiri in the penalty area with a desperate lunge.

However, goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand displayed superb reactions to push Al Mahajiri's penalty wide of the post.

Brighton winger Alireza Jahanbakhsh gave Iran the lead when he muscled an Oman defender off the ball and calmly slotted the ball past goalkeeper Faiyz Al Rusheidi.

Iran made it 2-0 from the penalty spot with captain Ashkan Dejagah sending the ball down the middle of the goal after Oman's Saad Al Mukhaini bundled Mehdi Taremi to the floor. Iran could have scored more but missed several late chances.

Iran hadn't won an Asian Cup knockout game since



China's forward Xiao Zhi (second right) scores his side's opening goal against Thailand

2004. It's won the Asian Cup three times but the last of those titles was in 1976.

Supachai Jaidee put Thailand ahead against China in the 31st minute, turning and shooting despite being surrounded by three defenders, before Chinese striker Wu Lei missed a string of good chances.

World Cup-winning coach Lippi brought veteran Xiao Zhi off the bench in the 64th and three minutes later he scored the equalizer, knocking the ball into the net on the rebound from his own saved header.

Gao Lin quickly added a second from the penalty spot

after he was fouled by Chalermpong Kerdkaew. China goalkeeper Yun Junling averted extra time when he stopped Chalermpong's fierce shot in stoppage time.

"The players need to be more focused and keep their concentration during the game," Lippi said of his

team. "This is a psychological aspect of the game that needs improvement. It's very important to have the same intensity, the same determination, right from the very first minute."

Thailand, which got out of the Asian Cup group stage for the first time in 47 years, had caretaker coach Sirisak Yodadthai in charge after firing Milovan Rajevac following its opening group-stage 4-1 loss to India. As has often been the case at the Asian Cup, the crowd was sparse and the stadium less than a third full.

Vietnam surprised an on-form Jordan team 4-2 on penalties to reach the quarterfinals following a 1-1 draw after extra time.

The 20-year-old midfielder Bui Tien Dung stroked the winning penalty into the bottom-left corner after Jordan's Baha Seif hammered a penalty onto the crossbar and Vietnam's Russian-born keeper Dang Van Lam leapt to palm away Ahmed Salah's shot.

Jordan, which had beaten reigning champion Australia in the group stage, took the lead from a rare indirect free kick inside the penalty area. After the slightest of touches from a teammate, Baha Abdel-Rahman blasted the ball into the net from a tight angle.

In the 51st, Nguyen Cong Phuong flicked teammate Nguyen Trong Hoang's cross high into the net.

Vietnam next plays either Japan or Saudi Arabia on Thursday.

It's the first time the Asian Cup has had a last-16 round after expanding to 24 teams.

AP / Oddschecker.com

TENNIS

Serena Williams ousts No. 1 Simona Halep at Australian Open

AS Serena Williams made her way out to the Australian Open's main court during pre-match introductions, the voice booming over the stadium's speakers implored spectators to welcome "the world's No. 1 player — from Romania, Simona Halep."

Oops. Williams, wearing headphones, quickly pivoted and retreated back into the tunnel she'd just emerged from, making way for her fourth-round opponent yesterday night. A couple of hours later, when Williams wrapped up her 6-1, 4-6, 6-4 victory over Halep in a contest filled with momentum swings and fantastic

play by both, it was clear which woman really is No. 1, regardless of what the current rankings say.

"It was a really intense match, and it was some incredible points," said Williams, who improved to 9-1 against Halep and now meets 2016 U.S. Open runner-up Karolina Pliskova in the quarterfinals. "I love playing tennis and I love to play here and I love to be back out here."

The 37-year-old American sat out last year's Australian Open after giving birth to a daughter months earlier and dealing with health complications. Since returning to the tour, Williams has reached

the past two Grand Slam finals, losing both — and leaving her still one shy of equaling Margaret Court's record of 24 major singles titles.

Halep offered up the first real test Williams has faced at this year's Australian Open, where she is bidding for an eighth trophy, pushing her throughout a back-and-forth matchup that was a fascinating mix of power, court coverage and shot-making.

It wasn't until Williams saved three break points in a monumental game to hold for 3-all in the third set that she gained control.

"I was unlucky a little bit," Halep said.

Williams then broke for a 4-3 lead and finally was on her way.

"In order for me to stay out there, I had to play a little like I knew I could," said Williams, who is seeded 16th on account of all the time she took away from tennis while becoming a mother. "I'm such a fighter. I just never give up. It's definitely something that's innate. I just work so hard for every point."

That she does. She also makes abundantly clear just how much every point means to her.

Against Halep — who beat Serena's older sister, Venus, in the third round — Williams frequently pumped her fists or yel-



led "Come on!" after key exchanges. When Halep hit one shot that caught the net tape and barely trickled over for a winner, Williams looked pained and complained, "I mean, it's not fair."

Pliskova advanced earlier yesterday with a 6-3, 6-1 victory over two-time major champion Garbine Muguruza.

The other quarterfinal on that side of the women's bracket features No. 4 Naomi Osaka against No. 6 Elina Svitolina. Osaka, who beat Williams in last year's U.S. Open final, edged No. 13 Anastasija Sevastova 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 in the fourth round, while Svitolina got past 2017 U.S. Open finalist Madison Keys 6-2, 1-6, 6-1. AP

opinion

Our Desk

Julie Zhu



**HOW TO NOT FAIL WITH A
 TAobao ORDER**

For internet users who, in addition to living in Macau, do not understand Chinese, Taobao might be difficult to use as a shopping tool. However, even the many who are only slightly familiar with Taobao shopping - those who know Chinese (namely the Macau local Chinese) - always seem to have had bad experiences when shopping on the platform.

This not only happens to the Macau local Chinese, but also happens to mainlanders who use Taobao.

"Taobao has bad quality," someone says. Indeed, this is probably what most people complain about regarding Taobao. However, I have not researched whether quality is the biggest point of complaint for Macau users.

If you happen to be one of the complainers about Taobao's quality, I'm sorry. But, of course, if you want to criticize Taobao in the same way you criticize human development, then I will say that there are plenty of things you should, and can, complain about when it comes to Taobao.

If you are a customer who wants to do little to get a lot, then I do not suggest you use Taobao anymore. If you are not, I will just propose you to become smarter at placing orders on Taobao.

First of all, for Macau users, try your best to access Taobao through the mainland Chinese website. In mainland China, people joke about big data. They often say: "I have once again been 'big-data-ed' because Taobao is suggesting to me to buy this and that again." If you use Taobao's world website, the recommendations might not be as many as you would get if you were using the mainland website, even if the listed products are often of better quality.

If you have already seen branded items in Macau, then you should always search for that particular brand on Taobao. This way, you have the chance to buy the same product, but cheaper. Pay attention to which official website you are looking at, because franchises have their own stores on Taobao as well.

Check the pictures. Some pictures make the products look fancy, but that is a result of photoshop. Checking pictures that look as though you might have taken them yourself is always better than referring to the fancier ones. Never, ever, ever believe in pictures you suspect are photoshopped. Pictures should always be the actual photos without any major edits.

Pictures are really important for most buyers, especially those living in Macau. But you should always remind yourself that Taobao is applicable to the mainland's law, not Macau's.

After checking the pictures, it is time to check the comments. Now, here comes the question: if you cannot read Chinese, how can you read product reviews? Well, if you really do not read Chinese at all, then, in order to be safe, you could at least check how many reviews there are for the product you have selected.

Sometimes, one product can have more than ten thousand reviews, although this is most likely a fake chain of comments. This is a similar situation to some mainland singers who manage to attain the first spot of iTunes for weeks in a row. It is fake.

Then, you can check the reviewers' pictures.

In Taobao, always remember: the buyers' pictures are the most important ones, whereas sellers' pictures are just for you to grasp a bit about the vague shape and characteristics of a product.

THE BUZZ GERMANY TRANSFERS MORE ASYLUM SEEKERS TO OTHER EU COUNTRIES

The German government says that in a first, more asylum-seekers were transferred to other European Union countries than Germany took in last year.

Interior Ministry spokesman Steve Alter said Germany relocated 9,209 people in 2018 under the EU regulation that requires asylum applications to be handled in the first country a person seeking protection reached in Europe.

Germany took in 7,580 people from other EU

countries under the same rule last year.

The sending-receiving was disproportionately reversed in 2016, when Germany assigned 3,968 asylum-seekers elsewhere in the EU but accepted 12,091 from other countries.

More than 1 million migrants have applied for asylum in Germany since 2015, but the country has toughened its asylum laws and tried to deport more people than it did previously.

China plans major cut in number of Everest climbers



CHINA will cut the number of climbers attempting to scale Mount Everest from the north by one-third this year as part of plans for a major cleanup on the world's highest peak, state media reported yesterday.

The total number of climbers seeking to summit the world's highest peak at 8,850 meters (29,035 feet) from the north will be limited to less than 300 and the climbing season restricted to spring, the reports said.

The cleanup efforts will include the recovery of the bodies of climbers who

died at more than 8,000 meters (26,246 feet) up the mountain, they said.

Parts of Everest are in China and Nepal. Each year, about 60,000 climbers and guides visit the Chinese north side of the mountain, which China refers to by its Tibetan name, Mount Qomolangma.

China has set up stations to sort, recycle and break down garbage from the mountain, which includes cans, plastic bags, stove equipment, tents and oxygen tanks.

On the Nepalese side, mountaineering expedition organizers have begun

sending huge trash bags with climbers during the spring climbing season to collect trash that then can be winched by helicopters back to the base camp.

Everest claims multiple victims each year, often in the "death zone" above 8,000 meters (26,246 feet), where the air is too thin to sustain human life.

In 2017, 648 people summited Everest, including 202 from the north side, according to the nonprofit Himalayan Database. Six people were confirmed to have died on the mountain that year, one of them on the north side. **AP**

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/J. David Ake



Blood Moon. A total eclipse of the moon exceeded three hours yesterday [Macau time], here seen from Washington. The eclipsed, or blood moon, turns red from sunlight scattering off Earth's atmosphere.

Station	Air quality
Roadside	45-65 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	45-65 Moderate
Ambient	40-60 Moderate

SOURCE: DSI/MG

WORLD BRIEFS

SYRIA The Israeli military said its jets struck a series of Iranian military targets in Syria early yesterday, an announcement that was a rare departure from Israel's years-long policy of ambiguity regarding activities in neighboring war-torn Syria. **More on p15**

ZIMBABWE's capital is returning to normal, after a week of turmoil in which Zimbabweans protested dramatic fuel price hikes and government security forces launched a crackdown in which 12 people were killed.

CYPRUS Police say they are seeking two men who are missing with a baby girl that they allegedly tried to adopt after a domestic worker purchased the child in the Philippines on their behalf.



BRITAIN Police in Northern Ireland said they suspect Irish Republican Army dissidents were behind a car bombing outside a courthouse in the city of Londonderry. Two men in their 20s have been arrested over the attack, which caused no injuries.

MEXICO People in the town where a gasoline explosion killed at least 85 people say the section of pipeline that gushed fuel has been a habitual gathering site for thieves, repeatedly damaged and patched like a trusty pair of jeans.



COLOMBIA Thousands of Colombians dressed in white poured into the streets to repudiate terrorism after a car bombing at a Bogota police academy killed 21 people and left dozens more wounded.

NICARAGUA The European Union says it stands ready to use all peaceful means available to help prevent further human rights abuses in Nicaragua, where hundreds have died in a crackdown on protests since last year.