



### GREYHOUND ADOPTIONS UNDERWAY

Adoptions of greyhounds from the former Macau Canidrome will likely conclude by the end of March, Albano Martins said

P2



### PROPOSED UPDATE ON EXTRADITION LAW

Hong Kong's Security Bureau suggests allowing, for some cases, extraditions to Macau, Taiwan and mainland China

P4



### CHINESE FILM DROPPED FROM BERLIN FESTIVAL

P11

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## WORLD BRIEFS

**EAST TIMOR** An American missionary who was a hero in East Timor for founding children's shelters that have operated for more than two decades has been expelled from his Catholic congregation after admitting to sexual abuse of minors.



**KOREA-JAPAN** The speaker of South Korea's parliament said he had no intention to apologize for his comments about Japan's emperor, suggesting the issue could continue to stoke tensions between the neighbors. [More on p12](#)

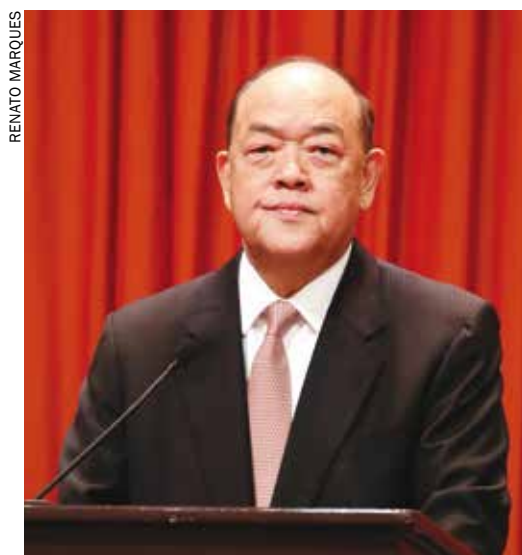
**AUSTRALIA** The government said it would reopen a mothballed island detention camp in anticipation of a new wave of asylum seekers arriving by boat after Parliament passed legislation that would give sick asylum seekers easier access to mainland hospitals.

**INDIA** Two managers of a New Delhi budget hotel where a fire killed 17 people have been arrested on suspicion of culpable homicide, police said yesterday. [More on p13](#)



**ISRAEL** The Mideast conference in Poland offers Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu an opportunity to flaunt in public what he has long boasted about happening behind the scenes — his country's improved relations with some Gulf Arab nations.

[More on backpage](#)



RENATO MARQUES

# Ho Iat Seng admits CE candidacy

P7

AP PHOTO



# Thailand on course to disband party that nominated princess

P13



## Wong calls for transport arrangement in northern area

Lawmaker Wong Kit Cheng has asked the government to disclose the progress of transportation arrangements at the 'Pearl of the Orient' area. Wong remarked that the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge Macau port and the Border Gate are both located in the northern district of Macau, where transportation is poor. Wong wanted to know whether the government had other transportation arrangements for the area, and expressed hopes that the tourism authority and Alibaba could build a tourism database to better manage the flow of tourists.

## New book receives academic awards

A book written by Professor Wang Di, a scholar at the University of Macau's Department of History, recently received the Academic Excellence Award from the Chinese Historians in the United States and the Best Book Award from the Association for the Studies of Chinese Secret Societies. The book also entered various best book rankings in 2018. In "Violence and Order on the Chengdu Plain: The Story of a Secret Brotherhood in Rural China, 1939-1949," Professor Wang uses a murder case that took place in 1939 in rural Chengdu to examine the history, culture, and organization of the Gowned Brothers, and reveal the structure of local power during that time. By studying the complex relationship between the Gowned Brothers and the Chinese Communist Party, Wang offers a unique perspective on China's transition to socialism and how new movements and ideologies helped shape contemporary China.

## GBA plan will not include substantial measures

The governments of Hong Kong, Macau, and Guangdong will hold a public meeting in Hong Kong this week regarding the framework of the Greater Bay Area (GBA) development plan, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, Carrie Lam, revealed. The Central Government will announce the plan soon. Senior officials of the National Development and Reform Commission of China will announce the details of the plan. According to Lam, while the plan will not include substantial measures that can be implemented immediately, it will outline general policies and the collaboration between the three places.



Albano Martins



A cat at the association's facilities

# Greyhound adoptions set to complete by end-March

Renato Marques

THE process that aims to provide a solution for all the greyhounds from the former Macau Canidrome, will likely conclude by the end of next month, the president of Anima - Society for the Protection of Animals in Macau said this week during an event promoted by the association.

According to Martins, there are only 190 remaining dogs from the 532 that were in need of adopters, in Macau or abroad, after the Canidrome closed.

Martins said that there are already very concrete plans for such greyhounds and it is just a matter fulfilling of the bureaucratic procedures be-

fore the animals can fly to the final destination.

## At the end of 2018, Anima facilities hosted around 400 dogs and 300 cats

Questioned by the Times, Martins acknowledged that the process was in fact much faster than initially planned due to the "good will" of the Yat Yuen Company that provided the financial resources for the process to run

smoothly.

"Our original plan would take about three years to complete as we would need to find financial support to move the plan forward and just that part would take us over one year," Martins said. "With the agreement achieved with Yat Yuen, in which they pay for all the expenses, the process will be able to be completed in only seven months, which is a great relief for all of us and for the Macau government."

At the same occasion, Anima presented the results from the year of 2018 in which the association gathered more support but also had to cope with an increase in the number of abandoned animals and several misfortunes and

damages caused by natural catastrophes.

At the end of 2018, the total number of animals in Anima facilities was 692, from which over 400 were dogs and almost 300 cats.

Presented at the event, which was held at the association's cats fostering facilities in Coloane, "Cats Paradise", was also the budget for the year of 2019, amounting to MOP11.6 million.

The president of the association also took the opportunity to thank the private companies, namely the Venetian Macau and Galaxy Entertainment Group, for the help and sponsorship in fixing the facilities damaged by last year's major typhoon.

## EDUCATION

# UM appoints two new vice rectors

THE University of Macau (UM) has appointed Ge Wei, an expert in reproductive biology, as its vice rector for Research, and the historian Billy So as its vice rector for Student Affairs, for a five-year term and a three-year term, respectively.

They will both assume office on February 18, the university announced in a statement yesterday.

Ge has over 20 years of experience in research, teaching, and university administration and management, as well as achievements in reproductive endocrinology, particularly comparative endocrinology.

He joined UM in 2013 as a chair professor and interim dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, and was later promoted to associate dean of the

same faculty. Currently, he is the head of the Centre of Reproduction, Development and Aging, and interim dean of the Graduate School at UM.

Prior to joining UM, Ge was a professor in the School of Life Sciences at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, where he founded the Cell and Molecular Biology Program.

So specialises in Chinese legal and business history in global perspective, with experience in university administration and student affairs. Prior to joining UM, So held various senior positions at several universities in Hong Kong, including chair professor of humanities and head of the Division of Humanities at the Hong Kong University

of Science and Technology.

He was a visiting scholar at Toyo Bunko, Fudan University, the University of Oxford, the University of Cambridge, and Harvard University.

According to UM, it is confident that So will assist the university in the implementation of the '4-in-1' model of education.

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# Electoral Commission head commits to open election

Julie Zhu

**T**HE Chairman of the Electoral Affairs Commission for the Chief Executive (CE) Election, Song Man Lei, has pledged that the fifth CE election will be "open, fair and honest."

Yesterday, members of the commission took an oath during an inauguration ceremony held at the government headquarters. Song made the remark on the sidelines of the ceremony.

According to Song, members of the commission will meet regularly every week to discuss electoral affairs and make decisions regarding election matters, after which they will report to the public regarding its work.

The meetings will be held regularly each Friday, and their schedule will be pre-announced to the public and the media.

"We will report to the media and the public as soon as



Judge Song Man Lei (middle) is sworn in

possible after each meeting," Song said, adding that the commission's goal is to hold the election "effectively, openly and fairly."

Questioned by the media, Song remarked "I want to reiterate that, in regards to any election-related illegal situations and crimes, we have the responsibility and obligation to report them to the relevant council."

Song also noted that she will not make assumptions regarding whether the Chairman of the Legislative Assembly Ho Iat Seng will run for the posi-

tion of CE (more on p7).

"According to the law, he must be nominated, and he must participate in the election campaign," said Song.

Regarding the exact date of the CE election, Song only said that the election will be held within 60 days following the election of the members to the CE election committee.

"We don't have a date yet. It will be announced by the CE," pointed out Song.

The Electoral Affairs Commission is responsible for coordinating the process to choose the 400-member

Chief Executive Election Committee, and thereafter to coordinate the actual election of a new Chief Executive. This must be determined by June 16.

The members of the commission are: the judge from the Court of Final Appeal, Song Man Lei; the Assistant Prosecutor-General of the Public Prosecutions Office, Chan Tsz King; the Judge of the Court of Second Instance, Tong Hio Fong; the Director of the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau, Kou Peng Kuan; and, the Director of the Government Information Bureau, Chan Chi Ping.

The commission will define the place and the opening hours of the election, and will also provide clarification on issues relating to the election of members of the election committee, and the election of the CE.

The commission will be dissolved 150 days after publication of the result of the CE election.

## Melco announces additional rest day for non-management staff

Melco Resorts & Entertainment has announced that effective from July 1, all non-management operational employees whose mandatory rest day falls on a statutory holiday will be granted an additional rest day, to be utilized within 30 days before or after the statutory holiday, at a date designated by the company. "In the Chinese New Year, we are pleased to announce the new arrangements [for] additional rest days for our non-management operational colleagues who are, together with all Melco employees, highly valued and appreciated," said Lawrence Ho, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Melco Resorts & Entertainment.

## Eligible Galaxy staff to receive pay rise ranging from 2.5 to 7.5 percent

Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) today announced that all eligible team members will receive a pay rise between 2.5 and 7.5 percent of their monthly salary, effective from April 1, 2019. According to a statement issued by the gaming operator, around 98.5 percent of GEG's workforce will receive the pay rise. All eligible team members at senior manager level and below who joined GEG on or before January 1, 2019 will enjoy the salary adjustments. Team members with a monthly salary of MOP16,000 or below will receive an increment of MOP600, while those with a monthly salary above MOP16,000 will be granted a 2.5 percent salary increase.

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## Illegal football betting trial commences

The trial involving a group of 15 people, including Malaysian businessman Paul Phua, known for his connections to the gambling underworld, commenced earlier this week following a previous postponement. One investigator from the Judiciary Police (PJ) was called to the court to give his testimony. According to the witness, in the hotel room where the suspects were arrested, the PJ seized computers, mobile phones and other valuable items. Information retrieved from the computers indicated that the group of suspects were indeed bookmakers. The witness also said that the betting was settled in RMB, and that the computer data contained the betting information of other people, which ruled out the possibility that the suspects were gambling among themselves.

## 90pct of business space in Taipa Ferry Terminal occupied

Taipa Ferry Terminal business space management and operation company plans to work with the local government toward the goal of hosting more shops at the terminal. Yesterday, the owner of the company, Cheang Chi Kam, noted that the ferry terminal currently has approximately 60 restaurants and retail shops, which means that 90 percent of the business space at the ferry terminal is occupied by shops. The company plans to have cultural and creative shops operating at the premises through collaborations with the local government.

## Lawmaker wants effective noise control

Lawmaker Leong Sun Iok has urged the local government to control noise coming from households and tourism, as well as from construction work at night. Leong proposes that the government encourage residents to use wireless headphones (particularly middle-aged residents who sing and dance in gardens). He also asked the government whether it would introduce other noise-proofing equipment into governmental engineering projects. Leong finally asked the government how it will regulate large-scale entertainment activities in public spaces after 10 p.m.

# HK's pro-democracy lawmakers fear proposed update on extradition law

**H**ONG Kong's Security Bureau has proposed to allow extraditions to Macau, Taiwan and mainland China on a case-by-case basis, following a high-profile murder in Taiwan.

Hongkonger Chan Tong Kai allegedly strangled his pregnant 20-year-old girlfriend Poon Hui-wing during Valentine's Day in Taiwan last year and returned home to the SAR. Poon's body was found dumped on the outskirts of Taipei. Currently, Chan is facing trial in Hong Kong for theft and money laundering linked to his alleged possession of Poon's bankcard.

However, since Hong Kong has no extradition agreement with Taiwan, there is still no possibility of him being deported back to Taipei, where he is wanted for murder.

According to media reports, the region's Security Bureau has proposed allowing extraditions on a "case-basis" and said prosecutions based on "race, religion, nationality or political opinions" would be refused.

The proposal will be debated tomorrow and according to the bureau, the case of Chan demonstrates a need for current extradition laws to "be amended promptly to plug their loopholes and to protect public safety."

The bureau has expressed its hope that the extradition law will be amended before the Legislative Council's summer break in July.

Currently, when a foreign country makes an extradition request in Hong Kong, its Chief Executive will be the one to decide whether to issue



an arrest warrant.

Once issued, the fugitive is allowed to oppose the order in a Hong Kong court.

The HKSAR currently provides criminal legal assistance to 32 countries – which excludes Macau, China and Taiwan.

Some Democratic Party lawmakers fear that the proposed law could affect how the 20 countries which currently have extradition agreements view Hong Kong, claiming that the move would only allow Beijing to tighten regulations on critics.

"We're terribly worried. This could prove a Trojan horse," lawmaker Claudia Mo told AFP.

"I know the Hong Kong government has implied that political cases will not be entertained, but we all know Beijing could always package ideological crimes in the form of economic offenses," she added. Another pro-democracy lawmaker, Eddie Chu, warned

that such a proposal could "open Pandora's box."

"The Security Bureau's proposal has far-reaching consequences and must not be casually accepted," he posted on Facebook. Pro-democracy lawmakers believe that Hong Kong should pursue a separate extradition agreement with Taiwan that doesn't include the mainland.

However, Simon Young, a law professor at the University of Hong Kong, pointed out that the proposed change could be a breakthrough, as cited in a report issued by South China Morning Post.

As long as a fugitive receives legal protection before being handed over, Young noted, the proposed law could strengthen cooperation with Taiwan and Macau in combating commercial and financial crime.

He said that other existing extradition arrangements could apply in cases that happened before the law is revised, noting that once laws are changed, Macau could request the extradition of fugitive Joseph Lau.

However, such a request does not mean Lau would be jailed if he was handed over to Macau. "Under the existing Fugitive Offenders Ordinance, you cannot send someone to serve a sentence if he was convicted without being present at the trial. You would only send a person back to face trial," Young said.

According to the former deputy director of public prosecutions, John Reading, the major obstacle in reaching an agreement with the mainland is the death penalty, as other signatories have assured in their agreements that the death penalty would not be imposed on extradited individuals. "I really can't believe that China would agree to give an undertaking not to impose the death penalty if somebody is to be extradited to China," Reading said.

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## Business Luncheon

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Acting President of IPIM  
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## Macao's MICE Overview

The MICE industry in Macao has been growing rapidly in recent years. Conferences and exhibitions bring business opportunities to different sectors and boost local economy, together with the opening of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge as well as the development of the Greater Bay Area will open up new business opportunities for Macao. In this session, Mrs. Irene Va Kuan Lau (Acting President of Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute) will give you more insights on Macao's MICE industry and the new opportunities that it will bring.

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12:30 Drinks  
12:55 Lunch  
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Speaker: **Prof. Glenn McCartney**, Associate Dean of Faculty of Business Administration, UMAC

FMCC Breakfast Meeting

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Date: **Wednesday, February 27th, 2019**

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

# Ho Iat Seng 'prudently considers' CE candidacy

Renato Marques

**T**HE president of the Legislative Assembly (AL), Ho Iat Seng, acknowledged yesterday to be "actively considering" his candidacy to be the next Chief Executive when the successor of Chui Sai On will be chosen later this year. Changing the tone of previous speeches, in which he noted several times that he had no intentions to run for the position, Ho said yesterday that he is "considering prudently" a candidacy, on the sidelines of the AL's Spring Lunch.

Questioned further, Ho said that he is now "actively considering" his candidacy, although he did not want for the time being to publicly announce his candidacy, further noting that he has not advised the Central Government of such an intention.

Ho explained that he does not need to resign from his current duties before assuming the candidacy, in the instance that he decides to move forward: "We don't need to quit first in order to apply to another position, the rules do not state that."

The president of the AL also said that, in order to draft a

RENATO MARQUES



Ho Iat Seng

strategy for a new government, it is always necessary to "take lessons from the work done by the previous government," noting that this rule applies not only for the "position of the top leader of the MSAR, but to any other duties."

Ho said he was not aware of any support group being formed in society regarding his candidacy, saying, "I haven't done any lobby work or any other work [of campaign or pro-

motion]." He pointed out that opinions always diverge in relation to whether a certain task is

being properly handled or whether it needs improvement, and the same goes for people, no-

ting that it is "difficult to please everyone."

Questioned as to what he thinks should be a priority to improve, Ho said, "essentially the social wellbeing," noting that the high number of debates undertaken and enquiries to the government made at the AL are proof of that the need to work towards the wellbeing of the population.

Asked to comment about whether he thought Ho would be a suitable candidate for CE, lawmaker Sulu Sou said, "I don't believe that any Chief Executive [coming] from a small circle of election and that only represent this small circle would be a good Chief Executive for the whole society."

He added that independently of who assumes the position, it will always be a "non-meaningful" CE and "it's not meaningful also to discuss who could be a better or worse person in a limited circle of options that would be elected by an even smaller group of people."

If Ho runs and becomes the new CE, Sou believes, "he will of course promote some changes [due to the change of roles] but either way his election would not change anything in the political environment of Macau."

## Vong Hin Fai says 'secret meeting' was political decision by Kou Hoi In

**L**AWMAKER Vong Hin Fai admitted that holding meetings that were not disclosed to all lawmakers happened before in the past. Asked to comment on the latest and controversial case, which involved lawmaker Sulu Sou, Vong said it was a political decision by the president of the Committee, Kou Hoi In.

"I remember that when I was president [of the Committee of Rules and Mandates] there were sometimes cases where meetings were not publicized," Vong said, noting that this is a decision under the competence and discretionary power of the president of the committee.

RENATO MARQUES



Vong Hin Fai

In the case in discussion, Vong had no doubts that was "a political decision of the president [Kou Hoi In]." The lawmaker said that in his opi-

nion, not all meetings require information disclosed to all lawmakers and in cases where the tasks to be performed are "preparatory" such "information disclosure should not be mandatory."

A similar opinion is also shared by the president of the AL, Ho Iat Seng that when questioned on the topic said, "if the presidents [of any committee] believe that the meeting should be notified [to all lawmakers] then this should be done. But this depends on the decision of each committee," Ho remarked.

On the topic, lawmaker Sulu Sou, reaffirmed the opinion that such decisions lack legality.

### SOU TO MEET MIGRANT WORKERS ASSOCIATIONS SOON

**SULU SOU** said that he aims to have a meeting with representatives of the migrant workers Associations as soon as possible. The lawmaker noted that the meeting has the purpose to hear the wishes of the associations, namely on the establishment of the minimum wage system for domestic workers. Sou said that he presented last November a proposal for the establishment of a universal system of minimum wage with an exception for domestic workers. He added

that the meeting had initially been scheduled to occur last month and was postponed after it became public that such associations would have a meeting scheduled with the government this week. Sou decided it was better to meet with the representatives of the migrant workers after that meeting. According to Sou, the proposal of the New Macau Association plans to propose two minimum wage schemes, one of them only for domestic workers.

## Approvals of residential and commercial loans increase

**A**PPROVALS of both residential mortgage loans (RMLs) and commercial real estate loans (CRELs) in Macau rose in December 2018, the Monetary Authority of Macao revealed yesterday.

According to a statement

issued by the monetary watchdog, new RMLs approved by Macau banks in December increased 2.2 percent month-to-month to MOP3.7 billion (about USD459 million).

The monthly average of new RMLs approved be-

tween October and December 2018 was MOP3.5 billion, down 36.1 percent from the previous period (September to November 2018).

New CRELs rose 96.7 percent month-to-month to MOP5.5 billion. New

CRELs to residents, which accounted for 99.1 percent of the total, surged by 107.2 percent, mainly driven by new enterprise loans with a high denomination.

The monthly average of new CRELs approved between October and De-

cember 2018 was MOP3.9 billion, up 23.5 percent when compared with the previous period (September to November 2018).

At the end of December 2018, the outstanding value of RMLs was MOP215.7 billion, up 1.1 percent from a month earlier or 13.9 percent from a year ago. Residential loans made up 92.7 percent of the total.

The outstanding value of CRELs was MOP198.3

billion, up 2.2 percent month-to-month or 11.0 percent from a year earlier.

At the end of December 2018, the delinquency ratio for RMLs was 0.16 percent, unchanged from the preceding month, but down by 0.02 percentage points compared to a year earlier. The ratio for CRELs stayed at 0.15 percent from a month ago but was up by 0.01 percentage point compared to the end of December 2017.



# Dancing Water show suspended for refurbishment

**M**ELCO Resorts and Entertainment has suspended performances of its long-running show The House of Dancing Water (HODW) until April 24 for refurbishment and facility upgrades, according to a report from GGRAsia.

The two-month suspension, which began on February 12, is only a brief hiatus for Macau's longest-running resident entertainment show. According to the gaming operator, more than 5 million people have seen the show since its 2010 inception at the City of Dreams integrated resort.

"To continue delivering the most dynamic and entertaining world-class production, we will temporarily suspend the show after the Chinese New Year holiday until late April for refurbishment and upgrade of our facilities," noted a Melco Resorts spokesperson, as cited by GGRAsia. "We will



be back to deliver the most premium, pioneering and exceptional experience to our audience very soon."

The House of Dancing Water was troubled by a series of mid-show closures and

cancellations in late-2017, explained by organizers as "technical difficulties." The water-based entertainment show was also accused of eliminating some of the most iconic parts of

its acrobatic show without prior notice to attendees.

In November 2017 the show temporarily closed for one week while "special maintenance work" was carried out.

## Residential property price index up 8.5pct in 2018

**T**HE overall residential property price index of Macau rose by 8.5 percent year-on-year to 265.5 in 2018, a slowdown from the 11.6 percent growth seen in 2017.

According to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC), the indexes for existing residential units (285.0) and pre-sale residential units (274.2) increased by 8.9 percent and 11.5 percent respectively year-on-year in 2018.

In the fourth quarter of 2018, the overall residential property price index decreased by 0.6 percent over the previous period (September-November 2018) to 268.8. The indexes for the Macau Peninsula (270.9), Taipa and Coloane (259.9) both fell by 0.6 percent.

Analyzed by quarter, the residential property price index in the fourth quarter declined by 0.6 percent (268.8) compared to the third quarter (270.4). The indexes for existing residential units and pre-sale residential units fell by 0.7 percent and 1.4 percent respectively.

The indexes for residential units with a usable floor area of less than 50 square meters and for those with an area between 50 to 74.9 square meters decreased by 2.3 percent and 1.5 percent respectively quarter-to-quarter, while the index for those with a floor area between 75 to 99.9 square meters increased by 1.2 percent.

AD

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## INDONESIA

# Instagram removes gay Muslim comics after warning

Stephen Wright, Jakarta

**I**NSTAGRAM has removed an account that published comic strips depicting the struggles of gay Muslims in Indonesia following a frenzy of moral outrage online in the world's biggest Muslim nation.

The Ministry of Communications said yesterday that the account under the username Alpatuni was pornographic, which violated the law on information and electronic transactions. It was closed after the communications minister wrote a warning letter to Instagram, the ministry said.

The comics depicted gay characters facing discrimination and abuse, which has become increasingly common in Indonesia since late 2015 when conservative politicians and religious leaders began a campaign of portraying lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people as a threat to the nation.

An account of the same name on Facebook, which owns Instagram, was also no longer accessible.

Facebook's regional office in Singapore said its Instagram arm was preparing a response to the controversy.

The social media company is regularly in the crosshairs of regulators, rights groups and the public as it unsuccessfully tries to balance what CEO Mark Zuckerberg has called "giving people a voice" and demands for censorship of content posted on the Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp platforms.

Human Rights Watch's Indonesia researcher Andreas Harsono said Instagram should defend its own guidelines, which published in In-



doneasian say the service is a mirror of the diversity of the community, instead of "kowtowing" to the government.

## The comics depicted gay characters facing discrimination and abuse, which has become increasingly common in Indonesia

"That account describes mostly the problems of gay individuals in Indonesia. It's no secret that many LGBT individuals are arrested, their houses raided, some are sentenced to prison terms," he said. "The Indonesian government does not help them in demanding the removal of that account."

The communications ministry said it appreciated that members of the community reported the gay Muslim account, which "accelerated" its removal.

Some Indonesian netizens in turn congratulated the ministry. On Twitter, Fahmi Alfansi Pane, a policy analyst at the Indonesian parliament, thanked officials for "acting decisively" to protect public morality but also told The Associated Press he had never seen the comics.

Local media, quoting the communications minister, reported the ministry would block Instagram in Indonesia if the Alpatuni account wasn't removed.

The government frequently threatens to block Western social media and internet companies for content deemed illegal but has never taken such measures, possibly fearful of a public backlash due to the huge popularity of the services with Indonesians.

In 2017, it briefly and partially blocked the Telegram messaging app because of its failure to remove groups linked to violent jihad. **AP**



Motonari Ohtsuru, defense lawyer of former Nissan chairman Carlos Ghosn

## Lawyers leading defense of Nissan ex-chairman Ghosn resign

Yuri Kageyama, Tokyo

**M**OTONARI Ohtsuru, the lawyer heading the defense for Nissan Motor Co.'s former chairman Carlos Ghosn, has resigned.

Ohtsuru's office and a statement submitted to the court confirmed that Ohtsuru had quit yesterday. It was the latest twist in Ghosn's legal battle after he was arrested in November. He has been charged with falsifying financial reports by under-reporting his compensation and with breach of trust. Ghosn has repeatedly said he is innocent.

It was unclear why Ohtsuru was no longer representing Ghosn or if Ghosn had dismissed him. Another attorney chosen to represent the auto industry star executive also resigned as of yesterday.

Japanese media said that Junichiro Hironaka, a defense lawyer famous for winning innocent verdicts in a legal system where 99 percent of the cases result in convictions, has been hired to defend Ghosn. The reports cited unnamed sources as is customary with Japanese media and could not immediately be confirmed.

Hironaka's office said the attorney was out. It declined

comment until his return.

Ohtsuru is a former star Tokyo prosecutor. In Japan, lawyers who are former prosecutors, are reputed to be good because they know how prosecutors work.

But Ohtsuru and Ghosn seemed to be at odds over his defense, with Ghosn strongly asserting his innocence from the start through his own statements, as well as those of his other lawyers, family members and representatives.

Ghosn has tried without success to gain release on bail, offering to wear an electronic monitoring tether.

Ohtsuru seemed more accepting of Ghosn's prolonged detention since his arrest on Nov. 19. In a news conference at the Foreign Correspondents' Club in Tokyo, Ohtsuru said prosecutors might detain Ghosn for months more.

The Tokyo District Court, prosecutors and lawyers for Ghosn were scheduled to meet Thursday to work on preparing for his trial, meaning that Ghosn's new lawyer will be headed to that meeting.

Trials in Japan take much preparation and the meeting does not mean it will start soon. **AP**

## corporate bits

### SANDS CHINA ORGANIZES TRAINING TRIP TO SHENZHEN



Sands China Ltd. recently led a delegation to Shenzhen as part of the company's professionalism training initiatives.

The second "Guangdong-Hong

Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area Visit" was co-organized with the National Conditions Education (Macau) Association to deepen employees' understanding of na-

tional development and the Greater Bay Area, the gaming operator announced in a statement.

The delegation was comprised of nearly 60 senior management team members. The visit to the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone was aimed at encouraging cooperation and exchange between industry professionals from Macau and their counterparts in the Greater Bay Area.

The Sands China delegation toured to the Seafront Towers - the headquarters of Tencent Holdings Limited - the OCT Loft Creative Culture Park, and Qianhai Free Trade Zone.

"Sands China Ltd. is very pleased to have taken this trip to Shenzhen to visit the Special Economic Zone to observe its rapid development first-hand," said Wen Hongyan, senior vice president of human resources for Sands China Ltd.

### JAM HSIAO PERFORMS AT MGM COTAI



Mandopop singer Jam Hsiao performed his "Jam Hsiao Music Show" at MGM Cotai on Sunday at the MGM Theater.

With the audio-visual and stage effects of the MGM Theater, he entertained his enthusiastic fans with his vocals and theateric performance, the gaming operator said in a statement.

In addition to his popular hits such as

"Empress" and "Missing You Forever", Jam also performed his latest debuts, "Pinang" and "A Love Song for You".

"The revolutionary theater transforms the entertainment experience for the audience with an up-close-and-personal performance alongside MGM Theater's state-of-the-art audio, visual and lighting technology," the statement read.





# Tesla rushes Model 3s to China before trade war truce expires

Dana Hull

At least three ships roughly the length of two football fields are slated to arrive at ports in China by the end of this month, each carrying precious cargo from Elon Musk.

Tesla Inc. is loading as many Model 3 sedans as it can onto vessels destined for the People's Republic ahead of March 1, when a trade-war truce between presidents Donald Trump and Xi Jinping is scheduled to expire. Musk fears the two countries could ratchet tariffs back up, which would make the chief executive officer's electric cars more expensive in China and boost costs of key components the country sends to his U.S. assembly plant.

Other carmakers are at risk of seeing expenses rise again if the Trump-versus-Xi dispute flares back up. But Musk is in perhaps the most precarious position in the industry. Global giants such as BMW AG and Daimler AG can wiggle around the tariffs to an extent by boosting production at

existing China factories, but Tesla's manufacturing presence there was merely a muddy field as of last month. It won't be assembling any vehicles in China until the end of 2019 at the earliest. "They're uniquely exposed," said Robin Zhu, an analyst at Sanford C. Bernstein.

Musk, 47, said getting cars to China before a potential increase in tariffs was a key priority when Tesla reported a smaller-than-expected profit on Jan. 30. Higher duties would combine with already elevated transport and labor costs to make the company's vehicles much pricier than competitors'. Plus, imported electric cars aren't eligible for local tax credits.

"Our car is just very expensive going into China," Musk said on the earnings call. "The demand for Model 3 is insanely high. The inhibitor is affordability."

Trump and Xi agreed to a 90-day detente in December. The U.S. said it would delay a planned tariff rate increase—to 25 percent from 10 percent—on almost

half the goods it buys from China, worth some USD200 billion. While officials have been negotiating since then, Trump has said he and Xi won't meet again before March 1.

On Tuesday, Trump said he's open to extending the deadline if the two sides are near an agreement. China has said its suspension of an additional 25 percent tariff on U.S. autos and parts will apply through the end of March. For months before the truce, China had slapped American-built cars with 40 percent levies.

In recent days, a steady stream of trucks hauling Tesla models has arrived at the gates of Pier 80 in San Francisco, where workers can be seen unloading them into a parking lot packed with thousands of cars. The vehicles then are loaded onto ships for the roughly two-week journey to Asia.

The vessel Glovis Symphony docked at the port of Tianjin early this week and was due to arrive in Shanghai yesterday. Two more carriers, Morning Cindy and Emerald Ace, are at sea and sche-

duled to reach China's shores on Feb. 19 and 24, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. Other ships being loaded at Pier 80 are headed to Europe.

The Model 3 is the linchpin of Tesla's effort to appeal to a wider global audience, with Musk promising for years that a version eventually will be available for \$35,000 before incentives. That's generally in line with the average selling price of a vehicle in the U.S.

But following through on that vow has bedeviled Musk. The cheapest version available now—almost three years since he first showed a concept of the car—is \$42,900. In Europe, where deliveries are just getting underway, prices vary by country, with customers in Belgium paying a base price of 58,800 euros (\$66,600), compared with 55,400 euros in Germany and 53,500 euros in France.

In China, the Model 3 starts at 433,000 yuan (\$63,900). Some of the best-selling electric cars in the market—the world's biggest

for battery-powered vehicles—can be had for less than a sixth of that price. Beijing Electric Vehicle Co.'s EC Series and Chery Automobile Co.'s eQ are listed at 65,800 yuan after subsidies.

The U.S.-China trade war risks making the Model 3 costlier worldwide. In addition to the possibility that Xi's administration could reimpose higher tariffs on American autos, Trump's levies could make it more expensive for Tesla to source key parts.

Tesla asked the Trump administration for a tariff exemption on the Model 3's computer, which is made in China and essentially acts as the brain of the car, overseeing everything from the touch-screen display to the advanced driver-assistance system known as Autopilot.

The U.S. Trade Representative's office has been reviewing whether the product is available only from China and whether higher tariffs would severely hurt the company or U.S. interests. Tesla argued as much in its request, filed in August.

Musk has a case to make that Tesla punches above its weight on trade. While researcher Autodata Corp. estimates the carmaker's U.S. market share was only about 0.7 percent last year, U.S. Census Bureau data suggests the company may account for almost 16 percent of vehicle exports by value.

In 2017, California shipped \$1.37 billion worth of electric vehicles to China, according to the bureau's foreign-trade statistics. Through October 2018, the figure was \$936 million. Virtually all of those cars were Teslas.

If the trade war escalates further, Tesla could shift part of its supply chain to other countries in Asia, or to Mexico where it already has several established suppliers. The company also is working closely with government officials in Shanghai to build a vehicle and battery factory. Musk said he expects to make several trips to China this year.

"We're thinking about demand almost zero right now," Musk said during the earnings call. Getting cars to China before there's a potential rise in tariffs is "really on top of mind." **Bloomberg**

# Sci-Fi writer sparks debate on slack in state economy

CHINA'S most prestigious science fiction novelist revealed that a lot of his work was written during work hours at a state-owned power plant, sparking debate about the level of slack in the nation's vast state sector.

The comments from Liu Cixin, seen as China's equivalent to Arthur C. Clarke, come from a 2015 interview that began circulating widely on social media recently

after the film Wandering Earth, which is based on one of his novellas, took in 2 billion yuan (USD300 million) in just a week.

"Everyone was sitting in front of a computer, and nobody knew what anyone else was doing," Liu said in the interview. "You have to be in the office. But when you're there, you are free to write."

Re-posted more than 3,000 times in hours on

Weibo, China's answer to Twitter, Liu's comments prompted a response from the national department in charge of SOEs at 9:26 p.m. on Monday.

**You have to be in the office. But when you're there, you are free to write.**

"Mr. Liu, this phenomenon you mentioned - more workers than available work - is exactly why we are deepening reforms," the State-owned Assets Supervision and

Administration Commission said via Weibo. "The reforms are good, so the enterprises can focus on their business, and you can focus on writing novels."

In the 1990s, China laid off millions of workers from state businesses, which were criticized for their inefficiency, massive debt and rampant corruption. In 2013, the government unveiled aggressive new plans to shake up the sector, yet China wa-

tchers such as Nicholas Lardy say there's been a resurgence of the state in business, with President Xi Jinping encouraging local leaders to prop up ailing enterprises.

Liu has published more than a dozen novels since the 1990s. He worked as a software engineer at a power plant in Shanxi province from the 1980s and identified himself a worker there in interviews until as late as 2014. **Bloomberg**

LIU CIXIN



## TRADE WAR

# US, China envoys hold last talks before March 1 deadline

Joe McDonald, Paul Wiseman

U.S. and Chinese negotiators are meeting this week for their final trade talks before President Donald Trump decides whether to escalate a dispute over technology with a March 2 tariff hike on USD200 billion of imports from China.

The two days of talks starting today allow too little time to resolve the war over Beijing's technology ambitions that threatens to drag on weakening global economic growth, businesspeople and economists say. They believe China's goal is to make enough progress to persuade Trump to extend his deadline.

There are few signs of movement on their thorniest issue: Washington's demand that Beijing scale back plans for government-led creation of global champions in robotics and other technology. China's trading partners say those violate its market-opening obligations and some in America worry they might erode U.S. industrial leadership.

This week, Beijing wants "to see the threat of additional tariff imposition being removed for as long as possible," with minimal conditions attached, said Louis Kuijs of Oxford Economics.

Trump's December agreement to postpone more tariff hikes while the two sides negotiate expires March 1. The following day, a 10 percent tariff imposed in July on \$200 billion of Chinese imports would rise to 25 percent.

Companies on both sides have been battered by Washington's tariffs and retaliatory duties imposed by Beijing. The stakes are rising as global economic grow-



US representative Gilbert Kaplan (right) leaves the hotel in Beijing yesterday

th cools.

Trump hiked tariffs on Chinese goods in July over complaints Beijing steals or pressures companies to hand over technology. The dispute spread to include Chinese technology plans, cyberspying and the countries' lopsided trade balance.

Chinese leaders have offered to narrow their multibillion-dollar trade surplus with the United States. But they have balked at making major changes in development plans they see as a path to prosperity and more global influence.

"China will continue resisting U.S. demands in certain areas, such as changes to its industrial strategy and the role of the state in its economy," said Eswar Prasad, a Cornell University economist who was head of the China division at the International Monetary Fund.

Chinese officials reject complaints that foreign companies are required to hand over technology. But business groups and foreign governments point to rules they say compel companies to share technology with state-owned local partners or disclose trade secrets.

Chinese officials also are balking at U.S. pressure to accept a mechanism to monitor whether Beijing carries out its promises, said Kuijs. "They feel that it is humiliating for China if another country does this," he said.

The U.S. delegation is led by Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, who has said his priority is Chinese industrial policy, not the trade gap. He is accompanied by Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin.

The Chinese side is led by Vice Premier Liu He, President Xi Jinping's top economic adviser.

It will be his second meeting with Lighthizer following last month's talks in Washington.

Business groups and economists say the decision by the top trade envoys to participate suggests the talks might be making enough progress to require higher-level political decisions.

**China will continue resisting U.S. demands in certain areas, such as changes to its industrial strategy and the role of the state in its economy.**

ESWAR PRASAD  
CORNELL UNIVERSITY ECONOMIST

Their deputies have met since Monday to make preparations. On the American side, that includes Jeffrey Gerrish, a deputy trade representative, and David Malpass, a Treasury undersecretary who is Trump's nominee for World Bank president.

Even if negotiators produce an agreement, it run might into opposition from within the Trump administration, said Prasad.

"The hardliners seem loath to settle for a deal that represents any-

thing less than total capitulation by China on all U.S. demands," he said.

Beijing has tried to deflect pressure by emphasizing China's growth as an export market. It has announced a series of changes over the past year to open finance and other fields, including allowing full foreign ownership in its auto industry for the first time.

Regulators have announced plans to improve protection of foreign patents and copyrights. But it is unclear whether that will satisfy Washington and other governments that complain the system is designed to extract technology from foreign companies and to use official industrial standards to shield Chinese enterprises from competition.

"There's been notably less progress" around such issues, said Jeremie Waterman, president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's China Center and a former U.S. trade official.

Negotiators have said any final agreement will have to be made by Trump and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping. Trump said last week they plan to meet, but not before the March 1 deadline.

"When the time is right, the hope would be that the personal chemistry that exists [between Trump and Xi] will pay dividends," said Erin Ennis, senior vice president at the U.S.-China Business Council.

The South China Morning Post reported Monday the meeting could take place in late March on the southern Chinese island of Hainan.

Other possible sites include Beijing or Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, where the two met in April 2017, the U.S. news website Axios reported, citing Trump administration officials.

And what if Trump goes ahead with a March 2 tariff hike to step up pressure on Beijing?

"We certainly hope not," said Waterman. "It would be a terrible cost for American consumers and a terrible hit to the global economy." **MDT/AP**

## Zhang Yimou's 'One Second' dropped from Berlin film festival

THE latest film from famed Chinese director Zhang Yimou has been dropped from the Berlin film festival for what the festival described as technical reasons.

A notice on the official Weibo microblogging service account for the movie "One Second" apologized but gave no details other than to say it was not possible to show the film at Berlin.

The festival said the film was pulled because of "technical difficulties encoun-

tered during post-production." It said the movie would be replaced at its scheduled Friday and Saturday showings with Zhang's action epic "Hero," which premiered in 2002 at the Great Hall of the People, the seat of China's legislature in the heart of Beijing.

Possibly China's best-known filmmaker, Zhang has oscillated between big-budget extravaganzas favored by the ruling Communist Party and edgier fare touching on sensitive political and social topics.

His well-known releases include "Shadow," "House of Flying Daggers," and "Raise the Red Lantern."

"One Second" is set amid the chaos and violence unleashed by Mao Zedong during the 1966-76 Cultural Revolution, a period rarely discussed in history books or portrayed on film. It's slated for release in China next year.

The party is hyper-sensitive to all direct or implied criticism and its control over the arts includes deciding what films are released

based on largely secret criteria. Regulators routinely order what can and can't be shown, with special scrutiny for content pertaining to sex, criminal activity, social dislocation, and perceived questioning of the authority or reputation of the party.

Another Chinese film had also been pulled for Berlin for similar reasons. "Better Days," which portrays alienated youth was "withdrawn for censorship reasons," the trade magazine Variety reported, citing unidentified sources. **AP**



Chinese director Zhang Yimou



## NORTH KOREA

# K-pop and fancy sneakers: Kim Jong Un's cultural revolution

Eric Talmadge, Pyongyang

**D**ANCERS in hot pants. Factories pumping out Air Jordan lookalikes. TV dramas that are actually fun to watch. North Korean pop culture, long dismissed by critics as a kitschy throwback to the dark days of Stalinism, is getting a major upgrade under leader Kim Jong Un.

The changes are being seen in everything from television dramas and animation programs to the variety and packaging of consumer goods, which have improved significantly under Kim. Whether it's a defensive attempt to keep up with South Korea or an indication that Kim is willing to embrace aspects of Western consumer culture that his predecessors might have viewed as suspiciously bourgeois isn't clear.

"The most important thing for us is to produce a product that suits the people's tastes," Kim Kyong Hui of the Ryuwon Shoe Factory told The Associated Press recently in the facility's showroom, which is filled with dozens of kinds of shoes for running, volleyball, football — even table tennis. "The respected leader Kim Jong Un has instructed us to closely study shoes from all over the world and learn from their example," she added, pointing to a pair of flame-red high-top basketball shoes.

To be sure, North Korea remains one of the most insular countries in the world. Change comes cautiously and anyone who openly criticizes the government or leadership or is seen as a threat can expect severe repercussions. But there appears to be more of a willingness under Kim to experiment around some of the edges.

The most visible upgrades are on television and its normal menu of propaganda programs and documentaries in praise of the leaders.

Viewers of the main state-run TV network — the only channel that can be seen anywhere in the country — are now stopping their routines to watch the latest episodes of "The Wild Ginseng Gatherers of the Imjin War," a historical drama set in the late 16th century, when Korea was struggling against a Japanese invasion.

## The most visible upgrades are on television and its normal menu of propaganda programs

The anti-Japan, nationalistic theme is nothing new. A similar theme was used for Kim Jong Un's first big contribution to the television lineup, an animated series reviving a popular comic from his father's era called "The Boy General" that made its debut in 2015. The animation, set in the Koguryo period when Korea was fighting off Chinese incursions, was such a hit that people would stop whatever they were doing to watch it. A Boy General game was created for mobile phones. New episodes are believed to be forthcoming.

What the TV drama, first aired last July, and the Boy General animation share that's new is their high production values.

The acting in the movie is grittier and more compelling, the



A guide stands near a basketball shoe display in a product exhibition room

plots more engaging and the sets and costumes are decidedly more elaborate than previous projects. Even the dialogue spoken in Japanese by the villains, played of course by North Korean actors, is generally accurate, though delivered with a heavy North Korean accent. The Boy General, meanwhile, makes skillful use of computer effects and is visually on par with some of the best animation in the world.

The improvements reflect awareness within Kim's regime that the North Korean public is increasingly familiar with foreign pop culture despite severe restrictions that make it impossible for most to travel abroad or freely experience foreign movies, music or books.

That familiarity is particularly true of the North Korean elite, who are accustomed to seeing brand name products from Dior to Sony on the shelves of upscale stores in Pyongyang, the capital. Cheap knockoffs from China are common in marketplaces around the country.

Watching South Korean movies or listening to South Ko-

rean music is illegal. But a lot makes its way over the border and, even for those who would never dream of taking that risk, the officially approved cultural fare isn't entirely void of foreign treats.

Bollywood films are popular in state-run cinemas — 2009's "Three Idiots" with Aamir Khan, for example, was recently shown in a cinema just across the street from Kim Il Sung Square. North Korea's educational channel regularly features long clips from foreign documentaries, and dog-eared Harry Potter books are among the most popular items at the People's Grand Study House, North Korea's biggest library.

North Korea's "approach to the influx of foreign media has been to 'modernize' media production to provide an attractive and competitive product that caters to younger generations for whom older productions are no longer attractive," said Geoffrey See, the founder of the Choson Exchange, a Singapore-based non-profit that supports change in North Korea through exposure to knowledge and information

in business, entrepreneurship and law.

"For consumer goods, it also ties into a state policy to encourage more domestic production and import substitution," he said.

Kim's first attempt to update the pop culture scene started almost as soon as he assumed power in late 2011 with the creation of the Moranbong Band, an ensemble of female vocalists and musicians who are the "soft face" of his regime.

Although the members all belong to the Korean People's Army, they are known for performing in miniskirts and wearing their hair fashionably short. They have released dozens of songs, all of which get lots of exposure through concert tours, DVDs and airtime on television.

They are beginning to look a bit passe, however.

In February last year, North Korea sent some of its top musicians, including a female quintet that performed in black shorts and red tops, south of the Demilitarized Zone to perform during South Korea's Pyeongchang Winter Olympics. Two months later, Kim was in the audience as the South Korean girl group Red Velvet put on what is believed to be the first real K-pop show ever held in Pyongyang. The North Korean act that performed in South Korea was so well received that Kim sent them to Beijing last month for another goodwill tour.

Still, military orchestras and classically trained vocalists who perform in traditional "Chosonot" gowns remain the mainstay of the Pyongyang musical scene. The girl band's performance in Beijing was backed up by the state's military chorus and orchestra, all in full uniform.

More importantly, there has been no effort to delink the arts from politics.

When the musical group returned to Pyongyang, Kim urged them to continue to "conduct original artistic activities pulsating with the party's ideology" and act "courageously as mouthpieces of the party," according to state media. **AP**

## SOUTH KOREA

# Lawmaker won't apologize for Japan emperor remarks

**T**HE speaker of South Korea's parliament said he had no intention to apologize for his comments about Japan's emperor, suggesting the issue could continue to stoke tensions between the neighbors.

National Assembly Speaker Moon Hee-sang said there was no reason to show contrition for calling on Emperor Akihito to personally apologize to women forced to work in colonial-era Japanese military brothels, the Yonhap News

Agency reported. Moon was responding to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who called the comments "extremely inappropriate" as his government demanded an apology and retraction.

"I don't know why this is becoming such a big issue," Moon told reporters during a visit to Washington on Tuesday, according to Yonhap. He said he was only seeking an apology for the former sex slaves — euphemistically called "comfort

women" — and that he found Abe's response "incomprehensible."

"I really cannot understand why they're doing this," Moon said, adding that he's "been saying the same thing for 10 years." Moon's office couldn't immediately confirm the remarks when asked for comment.

Moon's comments about the emperor came during a Bloomberg interview last week, in which he was asked how the two sides could re-

solve their long-running disagreements over Japan's 1910-45 occupation of the Korean Peninsula. Moon said an apology from the emperor before his planned abdication in May would be most meaningful, since he was "the son of the main culprit of war crimes."

Japan's foreign ministry declined to respond to the Yonhap report and said there was no change to the country's request for a retraction. "Speaker Moon's comments were extremely

inappropriate and it is most regrettable that he has repeatedly made similar remarks," the ministry said.

The two countries, who are each other's third-largest trading partners, have been sparring over a host of disagreements stemming from the colonial period. The friction between the two U.S. allies raises new questions about Washington's efforts to build tighter bonds between its regional partners to counter North Korea and a rising China.

Most South Koreans believe Japan hasn't sufficiently apologized for its actions during the occupation, while many Japanese argue past statements of regret, which include official apologies to the comfort women, should've been sufficient.

"For the comfort women issue, there is only one issue at hand, which is a heartfelt apology," Moon said, according to Yonhap. "I don't know why they're dragging it out for so long." **Bloomberg**



Kaweewit Kaewjinda, Grant Peck

THAILAND

**T**HE Thai political party that took the unprecedented and ultimately unsuccessful step of nominating a member of the royal family as its candidate for prime minister was fighting for its political life Wednesday, while the princess herself appeared to criticize the fallout.

The country's Election Commission said yesterday that it recommended the Thai Raksa Chart Party be dissolved because its prime minister candidate was "in conflict with the system of rule of democracy with king as head of state." The recommendation was forwarded to the Constitutional Court, which said it would consider today whether to accept the case.

The party on Feb. 8 named Princess Ubolratana Mahidol its candidate for prime minister for the March 24 general election. But King Maha Vajiralongkorn just hours later issued an edict effectively banning the action because it was inappropriate and unconstitutional.

What made Ubolratana's bid particularly notable was her allying herself with a party that is part of the political machine of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who was ousted in a 2006 coup and is loathed by many royalists and others in the country's traditional establishment.

The whirlwind events have reignited longstanding political tensions in Thailand, which is still run by a military junta that seized power in a 2014 coup and ousted the government of Thaksin's sister. Since the coup, the junta had used strict laws against protests and political activity to keep the tension from bubbling to the surface.

Ubolratana, who is active on Instagram with more than 100,000 followers, late Tuesday posted a message reflecting on

AP PHOTO



Preechapol Pongpanich (center) leaves the party head-office in Bangkok

the events.

"I am sorry that my honest intentions to help work for the country and all Thais have resulted in a problem that should not arise in this day and age. #how-come-it-the-way-it-is," said her message.

After the king overruled its candidate, Thai Raksa Chart avowed its fealty to the king and acceptance of his order, but its opponents urged its dissolution.

Before the Election Commission made its recommendation, the party leader Preechapol Pongpanit called for the body to hear its defense.

"If they don't let us tell our side, it'd be as if we were tied by our hands and feet," he said. The party said its legal team would

submit a letter to the Constitutional Court on Wednesday.

The court, which is one of the most conservative institutions in Thailand and has consistently ruled in favor of the royalist point of view during Thailand's political unrest of the past decade, later said it would consider Thursday whether to formally accept the recommendation in order to rule on it.

Ubolratana's candidacy could have pitted her against the preferred candidate of the pro-royalist military, junta leader and Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, who led the 2014 coup.

Prayuth was considered the frontrunner, largely because election laws enacted under his government skewed the odds

against any party running without the support of the military and the conservative royalist establishment. Under the military-drafted constitution, the junta appoints all of the upper house, which along with the lower house gets to vote for prime minister.

The changes were the latest attempt at quashing the influence of Thaksin, whose allied parties have won every national election since 2001 and remain popular with the rural majority for their populist policies such as universal health care.

## ■ Dissolving Thai Raksa Chart would almost surely cost the Thaksin side much-needed seats in the election

Three pro-Thaksin parties running in this year's election were seen as posing the greatest challenge to Prayuth and pro-military parties, and recruiting the glamorous 67-year-old Ubolratana to their cause was initially seen as boosting their odds. They appear to have assumed that since she lost her formal royal titles in 1972 when she married a foreigner — an American whom she has since divorced — that the strictures against royal involve-

ment in politics would not apply to her.

The action against Thai Raksa Chart could strengthen both the pro-Thaksin and anti-Thaksin sides, said Titipol Phakdeewani, a political science professor at Ubon Ratchathani University. Thaksin's base could be energized by the perception that their side is facing unfair persecution, he said, while royalists might be stirred to carry on the long-running fight against him.

However, dissolving Thai Raksa Chart would almost surely cost the Thaksin side much-needed seats in the election. It would also deepen concerns about the fairness of the March poll, the first since the coup.

Those concerns were heightened Tuesday when the country's telecoms regulator suspended the operating license of a TV station linked to Thaksin, citing national security concerns. The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission said two news programs on the station spread information that caused public confusion and divisiveness.

Voice TV's chief executive officer, Makin Petplai, said go to court to challenge the suspension of its over-the-air broadcasts for 15 days. Voice TV, which also maintains an online presence, is owned by Thaksin's son and has faced several previous suspensions.

Human Rights Watch said the suspension of broadcaster was unjustified censorship and raises doubts about how free the media is to report ahead the election. **AP**

INDIA

## Short circuit likely caused deadly hotel fire

Chonchui Ngashangva

**A** fire at a budget hotel in India's capital that killed 17 people was likely caused by a short circuit, police said yesterday.

No foul play is suspected in the early morning fire Tuesday that also injured four people, New Delhi Police Commissioner Amit Sharma said.

The Press Trust of India news agency reported that police arrested the general manager and a manager of the Arpit Palace Hotel on homicide charges.

Sharma declined to confirm the report.

Most of the deaths at the

hotel in Karol Bagh, an area in central New Delhi full of shops and budget hotels that make it popular with tourists, were caused by suffocation, according to the Delhi government minister of health and urban development, Satyendar Kumar Jain.

A friend of a family of 13 who had traveled to Delhi from southern India to attend a wedding said three members of the family had died from burn injuries.

The hotel developer had a permit from the fire department to build up to four stories. But the building appeared to have six

floors, including an unauthorized kitchen Jain said was built from sheets of fiberglass on top of the roof.

A video shot by a witness showed the roof consumed by flames.

Fire authorities said wood-paneled hallways and stairwells fed the fire and cut off escape routes. A video provided to The Associated Press by fire officials showed a firefighter carrying a person over his shoulder through an unlit, charred stairwell.

Firefighters rescued about three dozen people by breaking windows to access those trapped inside.

The injured, including a woman from Myanmar who authorities say sustained spinal injuries after jumping from an upper floor to escape the flames, were taken to hospitals for treatment.

Their conditions were not immediately known.

Relatives of Lal Chand, a longtime kitchen supervisor at the Arpit Palace Hotel, were waiting outside a mortuary after looking for him at three hospitals.

"We have checked so many bodies, but could not find him. Till now we cannot trace him," said Chand's brother, Satish Kumar. **AP**

AP PHOTO



A vehicle drives past Hotel Arpit Palace



## IRAN

# Supreme leader says any talks with US can only 'harm'

Amir Vahdat, Tehran

IRAN'S supreme leader said yesterday that any negotiations with the U.S. "will bring nothing but material and spiritual harm" in remarks just ahead of an American-led meeting on the Mideast in Warsaw that's expected to largely focus on the Islamic Republic.

The comments from Ayatollah Ali Khamenei were part of a seven-page statement read out word-for-word on Iranian state television and heavily promoted in the run-up to its release. They also come two days after Iran marked the 40th anniversary of its 1979 Islamic Revolution amid heightened tensions between Tehran and Washington.

"About the United States, the resolution of any issues is not



Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

imaginable and negotiations with it will bring nothing but material and spiritual harm," Khamenei said.

The supreme leader went on to describe any negotiations as an "unforgivable mistake." He also said negotia-

tions would be like "going on your knees before the enemy and kissing the claws of the wolf."

That tone is a long way from 2015, when Khamenei approved of talks between Iran and the United States that resulted in the nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers. The deal saw Iran limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

However, that deal came under the administration of former President Barack Obama.

President Donald Trump, who campaigned on a promise of tearing up the accord, withdrew the U.S. from the deal last May. In the time since, the United Nations says Iran has kept up its side of the bargain, though officials in Tehran

have increasingly threatened to resume higher enrichment.

Amid the new tensions, Iran's already-weakened economy has been further challenged. There have been sporadic protests in the country as well, incidents applauded by Trump amid Washington's maximalist approach to Tehran.

However, some have suggested Iranian leaders meet with Trump in a summit, much like North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. Amir Mousavi, a former Iranian diplomat, has claimed that Trump sent a message to President Hassan Rouhani last week requesting direct talks. Mousavi, speaking with Lebanese television station al-Mayadeen, said Trump is ready to visit Tehran and had sent several messages through intermediaries in Oman.

There has been no acknowledgment of such a request from Washington.

The Warsaw summit, which started yesterday, was initially pegged to focus entirely on Iran. However, the U.S. subsequently made it about the broader Middle East, to boost participation. **AP**

## Dutch fishermen try to avert EU ban on electric shocks

DUTCH fishermen protested Tuesday outside parliament in a last-ditch attempt to avert a European Union ban on the practice of using electric shocks to stun fish before scooping them up in nets.

The Dutch fishermen argue that the technique, known as electric pulse fishing, is environmentally friendly because it allows trawlers to use far less diesel and doesn't damage the seabed. Opponents call it industrial fishing that is wiping out fish stocks.

Dozens of pulse fishers and their families visited parliament to call for protection while acknowledging that talks this week between European parliamentarians and EU member states will very likely lead to a ban.

Jacob Bakker, who sails a pulse fishing trawler out of the small Dutch port of Urk, said he doesn't want to abandon pulse fishing because "it is proven that it is a more sustainable way of fishing."

Dutch fishers say pulse trawlers use half as much diesel as their old fishing technique, which involved dragging chains



along the seabed to dislodge fish. Bakker called on Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte to intervene. He "is the only one who can help us by talking to [French President Emmanuel] Macron" before the meeting in Strasbourg, Bakker said.

The Dutch fishing industry has invested heavily in the practice, although it is only supposedly being carried out on an experimental basis under special EU exemptions. Going back to old techniques will cost the fleet millions, according to research commissioned by the Dutch fishing industry.

Nearly 80 of the Dutch fleet's 137 trawlers are equipped for pulse fishing. The pulse trawlers caught 75 percent of the total catch of sole in 2016, according to figures released by the country's fishing groups.

Environmentalists and fishers in France and Britain insist that the technique amounts to industrial fishing that could empty the seas of certain species. Environmentalists also warn that it could have damaging consequences for marine ecosystems and say more study is needed into the possible effects.

"There is much con-

trovery about the environmental impact of the electric pulses which needs to be further assessed by independent scientific bodies," marine environmental group Seas At Risk said in a statement.

Jerry Percy, director of an association of small-scale fishers in Britain, said he had repeatedly heard from local fishermen that not only fish but even worms that live in the sands off the coast disappeared after pulse trawlers passed by.

"Commercial fishers were coming to me and saying, 'this is like fishing in a graveyard,'" Percy said.

Carola Schouten, the Dutch minister for agriculture, nature and fisheries, said in Parliament that "it doesn't look good" for pulse fishers, but defended the method.

"It is sustainable. It is good for the seabed. It is good to counter overfishing and it generates fewer emissions. And the fishers can earn a good living," Schouten told lawmakers in parliament as the protesting fishers looked on from the public gallery. **AP**

## BRAZIL

## Slow-going restoration at fire-gutted museum



FIVE months after fire gutted Brazil's 200-year-old National Museum, the site that once held some of the nation's greatest treasures remains a ruin of scorched walls, twisted metal and piles of ash.

Museum director Alexander Kellner said Tuesday that plans to rebuild the structure have just gotten underway, starting with a contract to restore the facade. Financial help is being provided by the Brazilian government as well as U.N. cultural agency, which is helping with restoration efforts and building repairs.

"We are very excited about the great prospect of reconstruction", Kellner said outside the museum.

But the scale of the task was evident as authorities gave journalists a tour through the ruins.

Teams of volunteers are still using large sieves to

sort through ash and other debris to hunt for fragments that might have survived the Sept. 2 blaze, working in summer heat with the roof burned away to leave just the sky.

Researchers said in December that they had recovered more than 1,500 surviving pieces, including indigenous arrows, a Peruvian vase and a pre-Colombian funeral urn.

In October, researchers recovered skull fragments and a part of the femur belonging to "Luzia," the name that scientists gave to a woman who lived 11,500 years ago.

But those are just a tiny fraction of the more than 20 million pieces, including irreplaceable historical documents, that were in the museum when the fire ravaged the building. A large meteorite sits almost intact in the otherwise bare lobby. **AP**



## SPAIN

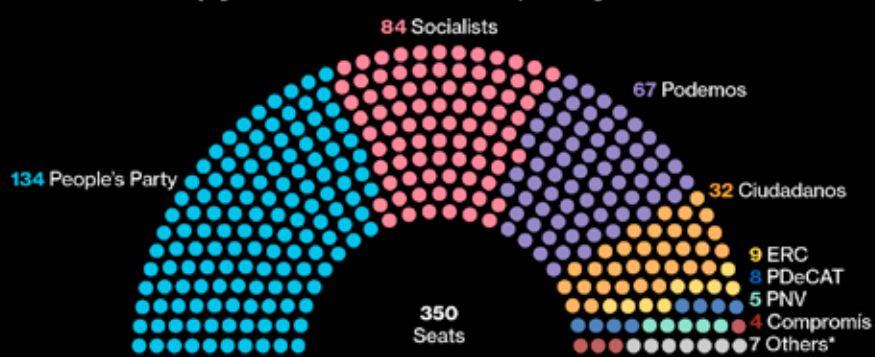
# Budget defeat puts center-left government on ropes



Pedro Sanchez

## Spain's Divided Parliament

Sanchez's minority government needs allies to pass legislation



Bloomberg

Aritz Parra, Madrid

CATALAN separatist and right-wing lawmakers in the Spanish parliament's lower house rejected yesterday the ruling Socialist government's 2019 budget plan, likely paving the way for Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez to call an early election.

The 191-158 vote, with one abstention, opened a new crisis in Spanish politics. Members of Sanchez's Cabinet had signaled that a defeat in the budget vote would lead to a fresh general election.

The only other time a Spanish government lost a budget vote, in 1995, the Socialists were forced to dissolve the parliament and call an election.

The prime minister's office said Sanchez plans to announce his decision after the weekly Cabinet meeting Friday.

Opposition leader Pablo Casado, head of the

conservative People's Party, said yesterday's vote was "a de facto confidence vote against Pedro Sanchez."

Catalan deputies from pro-independence parties had demanded to open talks on the northeastern region's self-determination in exchange for supporting Sanchez's spending proposal, but the center-left minority government rejected the demand.

The socialist party holds only 84 seats in the 350-seat lower house. Its votes and those of the anti-austerity Podemos party weren't enough to counter a majority of center-right, conservative and smaller parties voting in favor of six blanket objections.

Sanchez became prime minister in June when the Catalans joined the anti-austerity Podemos and other smaller parties in backing a no-confidence vote against his conservative predecessor, Mariano Rajoy.

Without parliamentary support, Sanchez's go-

vernment can't pass significant legislation and would need to prolong Rajoy's 2018 spending plan. That leaves the center-left administration without funds for social policies that are key to retaining Podemos' support.

Sanchez rushed out of the lower house's chamber shortly after the vote, dodging questions by reporters.

His finance minister, Maria Jesus Montero, said it made sense for Sanchez's term in office, which normally would end next year, to shorten with the budget rejection — but that it was up to the prime minister himself to decide if and when to call an election early.

"We want elections now," Albert Rivera, leader of the center-right Citizens party, said after the vote.

Talks between Sanchez's government and a new separatist coalition that took power in Catalonia after 2017's failed independence push

broke down last week when the government refused to accept self-determination talks.

"Sooner or later we will have to negotiate a solution, a democratic solution," said Joan Tarda, a prominent Catalan pro-independence lawmaker.

The People's Party and Citizens party, along with members of the emerging far-right party Vox, have urged Sanchez to step down for relying on support from separatist Catalan lawmakers to remain in government.

The trial of a dozen politicians and activists who drove a breakaway attempt in Catalonia in the fall of 2017 opened Tuesday. Their prosecution has angered many supporters of the region's independence from Spain.

On the second day of the politically charged trial, a Supreme Court prosecutor criticized what he said were defense lawyers' attempts to turn the proceedings into an examination of the Spanish state and judiciary.

Prosecutor Javier Zaragoza called the arguments made a day earlier "ridiculous" and "unjustified." Defense lawyers said Tuesday the case was politically motivated and an attempt to eliminate dissent in Catalonia.

The 12 Catalan politicians and activists face years behind bars if they are convicted of rebellion or other charges for having pushed ahead with a unilateral independence declaration that opened an unprecedented political crisis in Spain. AP

## Swiss set quotas for UK citizens in event of no-deal Brexit

British citizens hoping to work in Switzerland will face immigration quotas, just like people from countries such as Canada or Japan, in the event of a cliff-edge Brexit. The government in Bern has allotted 3,500 permits for U.K. citizens for 2019, if the U.K. leaves the European Union without a deal at the end of March, according to a statement published yesterday. Britons have until now been able to take up work and residence in Switzerland freely. Some 40,000 called the country home at the end of 2017. The quotas apply only to those newly arriving.

## 40 countries agree cars must have automatic braking

Forty countries led by Japan and the European Union — but not the U.S. or China — have agreed to require new cars and light commercial vehicles to be equipped with automated braking systems starting as soon as next year. The regulation will require all vehicles sold to come equipped with the technology by which sensors monitor how close a pedestrian or object might be. The system can trigger the brakes automatically if a collision is deemed imminent and if the driver doesn't appear set to respond in time.

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## what's ON



## MICRO VIEW – A COLLECTIVE EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS

TIME: 12pm-7pm (closed on Wednesdays)

UNTIL: March 2, 2019

VENUE: At Light, Pátio do Padre Narciso nº 1, R/C

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 6595 7203

## THE SHANGHAI SCHOOL OF PAINTING – COLLECTIONS OF THE PALACE MUSEUM

TIME: 10am-7pm (no admittance after 6:30pm; closed on Mondays)

UNTIL: March 10, 2019

VENUE: Macau Museum of Art

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

## NO WHERE THERE – WORKS BY TANG JING

TIME: 11am-1pm &amp; 2pm-6pm (closed on Sundays)

UNTIL: March 16, 2019

VENUE: 1844 Macau Photography Art Space

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 6311 1390

## Offbeat

## GUCCI CREATIVE HEAD BREAKS SILENCE OVER 'BLACKFACE' SWEATER

AP PHOTO



Gucci's creative director broke his silence Tuesday over an USD890 sweater that resembled blackface, saying racism was never his intention. Alessandro Michele, a design force at the Italian fashion house, lamented in a letter to employees both his own pain and "that of the people who saw in one of my creative projects an intolerable insult."

The black sweater with a pull-up neck featured a cutout surrounded by cartoonish red lips. Michele wrote that it was not inspired by blackface but by the late Leigh Bowery, a performance artist, club promoter and fashion designer who often used flamboyant face makeup and costumes.

Regardless, Michele said, he takes "full accountability" for the sweater, which was pulled last week amid widespread criticism.

Gucci has apologized, saying in a previous statement posted on Twitter that it was committed to diversity and considered it a "fundamental value to be fully upheld, respected and at the forefront of every decision we make."

The balaclava-style sweater that covered the nose above the cutout was ridiculed on social media as insensitive and racist. It emerged as attention in the U.S. was focused on old photos showing politicians with their faces blackened.

Other fashion brands have made similar missteps.

In December, Prada said it was no longer selling a line of accessories that featured a character with brown skin and exaggerated red lips after complaints they resembled blackface.

Michele's internal letter was reported by the site Fashionista.com and Women's Wear Daily.

Marco Bizzarri, Gucci's president and CEO, told WWD, "The lack of knowledge of diversity and the consequent understanding are not at the level we expected, despite all the efforts we did inside the company in the last four years."

The company is now "evaluating all the processes" to ensure "the right level of awareness and visibility," he said.

## TV canal macau



13:00	TDM News (Repetição)
13:30	Telejornal RTPi (Diferido)
15:00	Mistura Fina
15:50	Zig Zag
16:10	Os Compadres
16:55	Quem Quer Ser Milionário
17:50	Tempo Final
18:30	Montra do Lilau (Repetição)
19:05	China - Portugal: 40 Anos Relações Diplomáticas (Repetição)
19:35	Os Nossos Dias Sr.2
20:30	Telejornal
21:15	TDM Talk Show
21:50	Livros com João Guedes
22:00	China - Portugal: 40 Anos Relações Diplomáticas
22:25	Justiça de Chicago Sr.1
23:15	TDM News
23:50	Resumo Liga dos Campeões 2018/2019
00:10	Macau, Quatro Séculos de Aventura - Ópio
00:40	Telejornal (Repetição)
01:25	Linha da Frente
01:55	Liga Europa: Galatasaray - Benfica (Directo)
04:00	Liga Europa: Sporting - Villarreal (Directo)
06:00	RTPi Directo

## cinema



## CINETEATRO

14 - 20 FEB

## THE NEW KING OF COMEDY

ROOM 1

2:30, 7:30pm

Director: Stephen Chow

Starring: Wang Baoqiang, E Jingwen, Zhang Quidan

Language: Cantonese (Chinese &amp; English)

Duration: 91min

## INTEGRITY

ROOM 1

4:30, 9:30 pm

Director: Alan Mak

Starring: Sean Lau, Nick Cheung, Karena Lam

Language: Cantonese (Chinese &amp; English)

Duration: 90min



## ALITA: BATTLE ANGEL

ROOM 2

4:30, 7:30, 9:30 pm

Director: Robert Rodriguez

Starring: Christopher Waltz, Mahershala Ali

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 122min

## MARY POPPINS RETURNS

ROOM 2

4:30pm

Director: Rob Marshall

Starring: Julie Andrews, Meryl Streep, Colin Firth

Language: English

Duration: 130min

## THE LEGO MOVIE 2

ROOM 3

4:00, 7:45 pm

Director: Mike Mitchell

Starring: Chris Pratt, Elizabeth Banks, Will Arnett

Language: Cantonese (Chinese &amp; English)

Duration: 106min

## MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM NT (NARRATIVE)

ROOM 3

4:15, 9:30 pm

Director: Toshikazu Yoshizawa

Starring: Junya Enoki, Tomo Muranaka

Language: Japanese (Chinese &amp; English)

Duration: 88min

## this day in history



## 1945 THOUSANDS OF BOMBS DESTROY DRESDEN

British and US bombers have dropped hundreds of thousands of explosives on the German city of Dresden. The city is reported to be a vital command centre for the German defence against Soviet forces approaching from the east.

Last night, 800 RAF Bomber Command planes let loose 650,000 incendiaries and 8,000lb of high explosives and hundreds of 4,000lb bombs in two waves of attack. They faced very little anti-aircraft fire.

As soon as one part of the city was alight, the bombers went for another until the whole of Dresden was ablaze. The Dresden trip took 12 hours. On this trip, I could still see the fires 500 miles away from Dresden.

"There were fires everywhere with a terrific concentration in the centre of the city," said one Pathfinder pilot. RAF crew reported smoke rising to a height of 15,000 ft (4,572 m). This was followed by another attack in daylight by 311 US heavy bombers.

The Americans sent 450 B-17 Flying Fortress long-range bombers which arrived at 1230 local time. The pilots witnessed fires still blazing from the night before. The same number of bombers flew to the city of Chemnitz, south-west of Dresden, to attack railways and factories and yet more attacked Magdeburg. A major road bridge across the Rhine at Wesel was also hit.

The Times newspaper reports 19 German planes destroyed along with 98 locomotives and 185 railway cars. Dresden is regarded by the Allies as the centre of its rail network linking eastern and southern Germany with Berlin, Prague and Vienna. Last night, the RAF also hit oil plants at Nuremberg, Bonn and Dortmund.

Fighter Command Spitfires also pinpointed V weapons sites in the Netherlands that have launched hundreds of flying bombs against England in the last year.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Altogether 2,600 tons of high explosive and incendiary bombs were dropped creating a huge firestorm that destroyed Dresden.

With the city's population swollen from refugees fleeing the Soviet advance from the east, the death toll from fire and suffocation is unknown, but probably lies between 25,000 and 100,000.

The Dresden raid raised moral concerns about the bombing campaign. Even Winston Churchill, who had urged Bomber Command to attack east German cities, tried to dissociate himself from it. On 28 March 1945, he drafted a memo to the British Chiefs of Staff in which he denounced the bombing of cities as "mere acts of terror and wanton destruction".

The attack was authorised by British Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris, known as "Bomber Harris" for his enthusiastic support of the area bombing strategy.

The idea was to target large urban areas to whittle away at German public morale, cut off relief supplies to the eastern front and give support to the approaching Soviet armies.







## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

## PSG inflicts Solskjaer's 1st United loss

WHEN the reality check came for Ole Gunnar Solskjaer at Manchester United, it wasn't even handed out by a full-strength Paris Saint-Germain.

A 2-0 victory in the Champions League — consigning Solskjaer to the first loss 12 games under his caretaker command — was produced by PSG on Tuesday without two of the French club's fearsome forwards.

Neymar was already ruled out with a broken foot when Edinson Cavani hurt his left thigh at the weekend to join the world's most expensive player on PSG's injury list.

"They were a level above us," Solskjaer said after the first leg of the last-16 contest which saw United's record-signing Paul Pogba sent off.

Old Trafford instead became a stage for Kylian Mbappe to shine in tandem with Angel Di Maria, who relished the revenge mission on his return to his former club.

By the time Di Maria responded to the torrent of abuse by picking up a bottle of beer hurled at him and taking a sip,



PSG's Presnel Kimpembe (left) celebrates a goal

PSG was already leading thanks to academy graduate Presnel Kimpembe's first PSG goal in the 53rd minute.

Di Maria, who struggled in his only season at United before being offloaded to PSG in 2015, sent in the corner that Kimpembe raced into the penalty area unchecked to meet with a volley.

The second goal, on the hour, was the culmination of an elec-

tric counterattack. As Di Maria sent in a cross, Mbappe darted between center backs Eric Bailly and Victor Lindelof and clipped the ball under goalkeeper David de Gea for his 23rd goal of the season.

"It was a perfect pass for Kylian," PSG coach Thomas Tuchel said. "It was a nice comeback for him." Less so, initially. "In the first half it was a bit hard for him playing right

in front of me and losing many easy balls," Tuchel said. "Maybe he was a bit nervous and a bit overused because he plays all the time for us. I'm happy he stayed confident. He's always super reliable."

Without two of its usual front three, the French league leaders commanded the midfield instead, with Marco Verratti often the orchestrator.

"It was a new system and we weren't really used to it," Mbappe said. "We had a lot of midfielders and not many forwards. We needed time to adapt."

United was forced to adapt, too, after losing Jesse Lingard and Anthony Martial to injury for the second half. Substitute Alexis Sanchez struggled to impose himself up front.

"I can't do anything about Alexis Sanchez," Solskjaer said. "When he plays, he needs to find himself because we know there's a quality player there."

Solskjaer is capable of transforming the fortunes of players — just look at Pogba.

United will be without its French playmaker in the second

leg on March 6 in Paris after he received a second yellow card in the 89th minute for a lunge on Dani Alves.

"I know Paul wants to just shield the ball so he's unlucky that he hits [Alves] on the knee," Solskjaer said.

Not only was it a first loss for Solskjaer since replacing Jose Mourinho, but the heaviest-ever home defeat for United in Europe, having previously only been beaten by one-goal margins.

United's lackluster performance was a continuation of the European form under Mourinho in the group stage. United has only scored one goal at home in four Champions League games this season, a 1-0 victory over Young Boys.

"It was one of those experiences that can go either way," Solskjaer said. "It's not going to be a season-defining one for us. It has to be one that we are going to learn from."

In the night's other last-16 game, teenager Nicolo Zaniolo scored twice to lead Roma to a 2-1 victory over FC Porto.

MDT/AP

AD

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# In France, footballers fight workplace bullying in court

John Leicester, Paris

**A**S it does with many footballers, the day finally came when Anatole Ngamukol's club told the attacker it was time for him to move on.

Embarking on a new season in the French league, Reims decided it had no further use for the player who had helped the French side climb out of the second division. He'd turned 30 a few months earlier and hadn't been scoring many goals. The club in northeastern France's Champagne region wanted out of the contract.

Ngamukol, however, had other ideas. Without attractive job offers from other teams, with a family to feed and another kid on the way, the player who'd previously plied his trade in Spain and Switzerland decided he would rather stay in Reims to see out the last year of the two-year contract the club had signed with him less than 12 months earlier. And that, he says, is where things got nasty.

Rather than let him try to play his way back into the side, Ngamukol says Reims packed him off to purgatory, sending him to train with its reserve team, where he was banned from playing any matches and sometimes made to practice alone, running loops around the pitch while coaches worked with his erstwhile teammates, honing their skills and tactics. This cold shoulder was the team's way, he suspects, of managing him out — applying pressure to get him to quit, thus avoiding honoring a deal that no longer suited the club.

In France, footballers use an English word to describe such treatment: "le loft." Evoking an image of being locked in an attic, it refers to the no-man's land where clubs park players they no longer want but cannot get rid of immediately or who, for one reason or another, have fallen out of favor with coaches and club officials.

Excluded from the first team, distanced from teammates, players subjected to the most extreme forms of "lofting" have described themselves as being suddenly ostracized, ordered to train with youth teams, the reserves or alone, and subjected to petty humiliations including the loss of access to lockers, parking places, showers and other facilities.

Speaking in an Associated Press interview, Ngamukol says Reims officials told him: "You'll not get a single minute, no playing time at all, you won't even be part of the pro team."



Reims' Anatole Ngamukol

The complete disappearance of the player who had made 29 appearances for Reims the previous season, when the club topped Ligue 2 to win promotion to France's top flight, didn't pass unnoticed. His son wanted to know why daddy was no longer appearing on television. People stopped him during his grocery shopping in Reims to ask why he wasn't playing.

"It's a tough experience, especially knowing that I'd done nothing to merit being demoted to the 'B' team," the 31-year-old says. "It's a punishment."

Often, players suffer their exclusion in silence and quietly agree to leave the club with a payoff, the French players' union says. It says "lofters" are often fearful that complaining publicly will dissuade other clubs from hiring them.

"Most of all, they're scared that if they sue their club then all of football will say, 'We're not taking this player because he's not compliant and wants to defend his rights, and he won't roll over if we have a problem with him.' They prefer to take more malleable players," says David Terrier, vice president of the National Union of Professional Footballers.

"So players don't dare stand up to the clubs, because they are scared that they'll be impriso-

ned by the football system and blacklisted," he says.

Not Ngamukol. He and another more famous former "lofter," ex-Paris Saint-Germain star Hatem Ben Arfa, are both turning to French courts for redress. In both cases, their lawyers are arguing that in excluding the players from first-team action, Reims and PSG subjected Ngamukol and Ben Arfa, respectively, to workplace bullying.

Ben Arfa's suit was filed Feb. 1 with a Paris labor tribunal. Considered one of the most talented French players of his generation, Ben Arfa joined PSG, France's star club, in 2016. But after scoring twice in a French Cup quarterfinal in April 2017, he never played for PSG again to the end of his contract in June 2018, an exile of nearly 70 matches.

Why? Seemingly because the midfielder offended PSG's president by criticizing him in front of the club's owner, says Ben Arfa's lawyer, Jean-Jacques Bertrand.

"It was very banal, especially since it was said without malice," Bertrand said in an AP interview. "Apparently, the president took it very badly."

Outwardly, Ben Arfa put on a brave face. After the first 12 months without playing, he

posted a photo of himself posing with an anniversary cake and the caption: "A year in the cupboard must be celebrated." But inside, his lawyer says, Ben Arfa was suffering.

"The aim is to make him crack," Bertrand said. "The club did everything to push him to leave."

## Often, players suffer their exclusion in silence and quietly agree to leave the club with a payoff

The suit seeks 7 million to 8 million euros (USD8 million to \$9.1 million) from PSG in lost earnings and a symbolic 1 euro in damages for workplace harassment, he said.

Contacted for comment, PSG said it expects to be vindicated and "regrets" what it called the "stubbornness" of Ben Arfa and his attorney.

Ngamukol's suit, backed by the players' union, was filed Tuesday with a Reims local court. It argues that by parking him in

the reserves, the club sought to exert "psychological pressure" to make him agree to an early end to their contract. It accuses both the coach and general manager of Reims of workplace harassment, which is punishable in France by up to two years imprisonment and 30,000 euros (\$34,000) in fines.

The club declined to comment on the case to the AP. The Reims newspaper L'Union quoted the club president, Jean-Pierre Caillot, as saying, "We wanted to free him from his contract so he could continue on his path elsewhere. He didn't understand that. We don't harass or discriminate against anyone."

The club fired Ngamukol in circumstances both sides dispute in October 2018. After three months without a team, he found a new club this January, signing with German third-division side Fortuna Cologne until the end of the season.

The rules that govern French football, signed by the players' union, the French league and others, allows clubs to temporarily, but not permanently, send first-team players off to train in separate groups, for example if they're not needed for upcoming matches or are recovering from injury. And coaches, of course, can field, or not field, who they want in first-team matches.

But the players' union says French clubs are abusing the system and have growing numbers of "lofters" on their books. By its count, 145 players in Ligue 1 and 2 — more than 10 percent of the total player workforce in France's top 40 clubs — have been parked, more or less permanently, on clubs' sidelines this season.

Some simply aren't playing well enough to be in their clubs' first teams, the union says. But there also are others being punished because of contract wrangles or other disputes with their clubs, and young players on their first professional contracts that clubs have parked while waiting to sell them.

The highest-profile player in the doghouse this season is PSG's Adrien Rabiot. Reportedly because he has refused to sign a new contract, the Paris club hasn't fielded Rabiot since December, punishing itself as well as him, because the 23-year-old's skills and presence have been sorely missed in PSG's vulnerable midfield.

"Unfortunately, a lot of players find themselves in 'lofts,'" Terrier, the union vice president, told the AP. "The impression, once again, is that football is a legal no-man's land."

Ngamukol hopes his suit might change that. "It's a collective issue. There are many other players going through this and we have to say, 'Stop!'" he says. "It is not easy but I want my kids to be proud of me and you have to uphold your dignity. When you are trampled on every day, it hurts psychologically." **AP**



opinion

Girl About Globe

Linda Kennedy



How CHINA COULD END RAIN AND SNOW - AND AVOID TYPHOONS

William is one of the top three names for newborn boys in the USA. Under Trump, it seems more and more people are making a Will.

But might a Typhoon be born this year, there or elsewhere? If naming fashions continue, maybe.

Baby names chosen by parents in the United Kingdom were announced by the Office of National Statistics. Amongst them were some enjoyable choices. Hello to lots of Princesses. Some Skylars. A few Junipers. There were also girls named Storm, Rain and Snow. After the worst storm in memory hit Asia last September, might there be embryos with a late spring 2019 due date heading for the name Typhoon? Or, can we believe it, Mangkhut?

Oh dear. A few years ago, state media CCTV issued a set of guidelines for Chinese people choosing English names. It sought to steer especially young people away from designating themselves Dumbledore, or Vampire. 'Stripper' names like Lolly or Pussy were also advised against.

Loathe though I am to encourage Europe towards Chinese-style instruction to its people, I wonder if British parents wouldn't benefit from a similar set of christening clues. Please no Sunshines. No Rain. No Snow. The weather is for small talk not small children.

In the detail of the naming statistics, there's another development: the name Jane is falling out of popularity. This, despite one of the world's most popular Janes being Jane Austen. Her books are beloved and her most famous leading man is still the hero of many women's hearts. Notwithstanding all that, are we seeing the end of Jane?

Let me reach for the smelling salts. Jane Austen was one of the sharpest satirists of her era, and were she here today, she'd surely be wickedly referencing naming fashions with her leading ladies. Elizabeth Bennet could actually be Storm Bennet. Jane Bennet, Juniper Bennet. Lydia Bennet Princess?

Mr Darcy, instead of being Fitzwilliam, might be Grayson or Jaxon (a couple of the popular boys names). There were also a few boys named Diesel. Mr Diesel Darcy? Just think, his forefather might have included Horse-Power Darcy.

And would the book 'Emma' actually be called 'Skylar'? Or probably worse for lovers of Austen, might the novel be reset in America where Emma currently is the most popular name for a new baby girl.

But regarding the wider point - the decline of the name Jane - does China, here too, have a role to play, by being ready to take over Jane Austen worship and give renewed fashion status to the name 'Jane'?

Austen has already been translated into Chinese, and the conditions exist for her books to become yet more popular in the PRC. There's a growing female interest in eras bygone with debutante culture, in particular, reemerging. Etiquette is now a serious business in China.

And Chinese women, according to a recent report, also want their future husbands to earn three times as much as them. It's a reminder of the financial candour of Jane Austen's characters when discussing eligibility. Mrs Bennet (the first Tiger Mother, though she didn't know it) said: 'My dear, he has five thousand a year.' Chinese Tiger Mother would say: 'My dear he has quite three times her salary'.

Greater popularity of Austen in China could mean more Chinese women choosing Jane as a Chinese name, if they were so inclined. Across the planet, I'd much rather have more Janes than Junipers.

But I leave you with yet more of Britain's naming choices. Global-warming may be upon us but there's still Winter. She is a girl. There are also Autumns, Winter-Roses, Autumn-Roses and Summers.

THE PURSE LOST IN SCHOOL IN THE 1950S TO BE REUNITED WITH OWNER

A purse containing a prom invitation, photos and other items from 1950s America will be returned to its now 82-year-old owner after workers found it while demolishing part of an Indiana high school.

Martha Everett lost the black stitched purse more than six decades ago. Workers found it in January behind science classroom cabinets in the old Jeffersonville High School, where Everett was a senior in 1955.

Greater Clark County Schools spokeswoman Erin Bojorquez says the district was able to track Everett "thanks to the power of social media" after one of her relatives saw a Facebook post about the purse. The district plans to mail the purse to Everett's home in Florida.

The News and Tribune reports it contained a wallet, a letter inviting her to the prom, lipstick, photos and Juicy Fruit gum wrappers.

PHILIPPINES

Agents arrest journalist critical of president

AP PHOTO



Maria Ressa

Bullit Marquez, Manila

THE award-winning head of a Philippine online news site that has aggressively covered President Rodrigo Duterte's administration was arrested yesterday by government agents in a libel case.

Maria Ressa, who was selected by Time magazine as one of its Persons of the Year last year, was arrested over a libel complaint from a businessman which Amnesty International condemned as "brazenly politically motivated." Duterte's government said the arrest was a normal step in response to the complaint.

Duterte has openly lambasted journalists who write unfavorable stories about him, including his anti-drug campaign that has left thousands of mostly poor suspects dead.

Rappler Inc., the news site which Ressa heads, said National Bureau of Investigation agents served the warrant late yesterday afternoon, making it difficult for Ressa to apply for bail, and escorted her from the Rappler office to NBI headquarters.

"We are not intimidated. No amount of legal cases, black propaganda, and lies can silence Filipino journalists who continue to hold the line," Ressa said in a statement. "These legal acrobatics show how far the government will go to silence journalists, including the pettiness of forcing me to spend the night in jail."

Ressa and a former Rappler researcher, Reynaldo Santos Jr., were indicted recently, the Department of Justice said.

Rappler said the businessman filed the libel complaint five years after the article appeared in 2012, and the law under which Ressa was charged by the government, the Cybercrime Prevention Act, did not go into effect until months after the article's publication.

The article included allegations that the businessman was linked to illegal drugs and human trafficking, and that a car registered in his name had been used by the country's chief justice.

Amnesty International Philippines said Ressa's arrest was based on a "trumped up libel charge."

"This is brazenly politically motivated, and consistent with the authorities' threats and repeated targeting of Ressa and her team," it said.

Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra said the arrest was "merely part of any criminal procedure." Duterte's spokesman said the charge against Ressa was based on facts which she should simply answer and had "nothing to do" with press freedom.

Rappler is one of several news agencies deemed critical of Duterte's policies.

Duterte had already banned a Rappler reporter from his news briefings after the government's corporate watchdog found that the news site violated a constitutional prohibition on foreign ownership of media when it

received money from an international investment firm. Rappler, founded in 2012, rejected the ruling.

Ressa has also posted bail on tax evasion charges which she denies and says were politically motivated.

The International Press Institute, a global network of media personnel, strongly condemned Ressa's detention.

"The arrest of Maria Ressa is an outrageous attempt by the Philippines government to silence a news organization that has been courageously investigating corruption and human rights violations in the country," IPI director of advocacy Ravi R. Prasad said in a statement.

"The manner in which Ressa has been pursued by the government by slapping legal cases against her is not only shameful but also a gross and willful violation of press freedom."

In its selection of Ressa as a Person of the Year, Time magazine cited her and several other journalists as "guardians" in what it said was an effort to emphasize the importance of reporters' work in an increasingly hostile world.

Ressa, who has worked with CNN, also was the winner of two prestigious journalism awards last year, a Press Freedom award from the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists, and the International Center for Journalists' Knight International Journalism Award. AP

Station	Air quality	
Roadside	50-70 Moderate	
High Density Residential Area	35-55 Moderate	
Ambient	40-60 Moderate	

SOURCE: D5M6

WORLD BRIEFS

**IRAN** A suicide bombing in the country's southeast has killed at least 20 elite Revolutionary Guard personnel and wounded 20. The IRNA news agency reported the toll in the bombing yesterday in Sistan and Baluchistan province. No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.

AP PHOTO



**NIGERIA** In Nigeria fake news can be so outlandish, yet widely believed, that the president recently felt compelled to declare that he had not died and been replaced by a Sudanese body double.

NETHERLANDS

Fisherman protested outside parliament in a last-ditch attempt to avert a European Union ban on the practice of using electric shocks to stun fish before scooping them up in nets.

More on p14

AP PHOTO



**SPAIN** It's being billed as Spain's "trial of the century": A dozen politicians and activists are in in the Supreme Court facing charges including rebellion and sedition from their involvement in Catalonia's push for independence in 2017. It is being televised live and is expected to last at least three months.

More on p15

**US** The national debt has passed a new milestone, topping USD22 trillion for the first time. It stood at \$19.95 trillion when President Donald Trump took office in January 2017.

AP PHOTO



**BRAZIL**'s president has been released from a hospital after 17 days of treatment related to a stabbing he suffered during the campaign.