



IPIM EXPANDS SERVICE COUNTERS
The Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute will set up a service center at the HK airport and another at the HKZMB port

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AIRBUS TO SCRAP A380 PRODUCTION

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Extra weekend guide

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ENVIRONMENT

Hac Sa Beach affected by red tide P3

WORLD BRIEFS

PHILIPPINES The head of a Philippine online news site who was arrested by government agents in a libel case accused President Rodrigo Duterte's administration yesterday of acting like a dictatorship and using the law as a weapon to muzzle dissent. *More on p12*



INDIA At least 12 soldiers were killed and 40 others wounded yesterday in a car bomb attack on a paramilitary convoy along a key highway in Indian-controlled Kashmir, security officials said.



YEMEN Asserting congressional authority over war-making powers, the U.S. legislature passed a resolution that would force the administration to withdraw troops from involvement in Yemen, in a rebuke of President Donald Trump's alliance with the Saudi-led coalition behind the military intervention.

More on backpage



Caritas head says some pedestrians disrespect elderly traffic assistants

P5 MDT REPORT

IPIM to set up service counters at two ports to facilitate investors

Lynzy Valles

THE Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) is to set up a service center at the Hong Kong International Airport and at the port of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge to facilitate investors entering the SAR within this year.

Acting president of the bureau, Irene Lau, announced the information yesterday at a talk during the British Business Association of Macau, where she was the guest speaker.

"This service counter will facilitate investors coming in. [...] We can arrange some logistics [such as] when they come in at the port and the airport, they may need some help or data on who to contact and how to work [on investments in the SAR]," Lau told the press on the sidelines of the event.

Although the official did not give further details on when it would operate, Lau said that they are still in need of time to arrange the facility as it would be outside the city's jurisdictions, yet pledged that it would be within this year.

Lau reiterated the city's com-



Irene Lau

mitment to being a platform for lusophone countries to collaborate with businesses in the Greater Bay Area.

According to Lau, the increase in the number of convention spaces in the next two years will indicate that Macau is a destination for mega events.

"We have 190,000 square me-

ters of exhibition area, which is good for Macau and there will be complex [rooms] with exhibition halls coming in two years so I would say for the time being, [...] we would say Macau is good for MICE [meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions] conventions of different sizes," said the bureau's head.

"We can [accommodate] up to about 25,000 in one event, which really indicates that Macau is a destination for mega events," Lau added.

Questioned about how the region is dealing with the lack of MICE specialists, the official stressed that IPIM is continuously holding training courses,

which also invite attendees from the Greater Bay Area cities.

"We definitely have training courses every year and we are open. [...] If we need public relations companies to work with us, we have training courses for them too. We always facilitate and help to organize courses to train [those] in Macau," the official explained.

According to Lau, the city currently has some 200 graduates of the Exhibition Management Degree, a program that trains exhibition industry professionals.

Commenting on how the bureau would contribute traffic to the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge, Lau implied that it would still take some more time for the MICE industry to use the bridge to enter the region.

"I will say that at a later time, the bridge will be more used for different travelers. MICE will be one of them; [...] It takes time and goes step by step," Lau said.

"We have worked with different government officials and departments and we want to see if they can help us. We have always talked with the industry to see what they need [...] and sometimes we have to know that everything has to go step by step, [...] it takes time," she added.

According to the latest data from the Statistics and Census Service, participants in the region's exhibitions and conventions stood at nearly 217,000 by the third quarter of 2018.

GAMING

MGM Resorts CEO: Feds' Wire Act opinion is unenforceable

THE chairman and chief executive officer of casino operator MGM Resorts International yesterday [Macao time] decried a U.S. Department of Justice opinion that is threatening the viability of online gambling and also blamed the recent partial government shutdown for fewer Las Vegas visitors during the Chinese New Year.

The remarks from Jim Murren came during the company's earnings call, when the operator reported a fourth-quarter loss of USD23.3 million, after reporting a profit in the same period a year earlier. The opinion from the Jus-

tice Department that was made public last month could further restrict online gambling.

"This latest missive from the DOJ is perplexing," Murren said. "So, it's just, we think, an absurdly poorly written and unenforceable opinion, and I don't think anyone in the industry, the gaming industry, the sports betting industry, feels any differently."

The opinion interprets the federal Wire Act, which prohibits interstate wagering, to apply to any form of gambling that crosses state lines, not just sports betting. The opinion marks a reversal

for the department, which under the Obama administration in 2011 said online gambling within states that does not involve sporting events would not violate the federal law.

The 2011 opinion opened the door for cash-strapped states and their lotteries to bring online gambling to their residents, as long as it did not involve interstate sports betting.

The Justice Department delayed implementing its most recent opinion until April to allow businesses to adjust their operations.

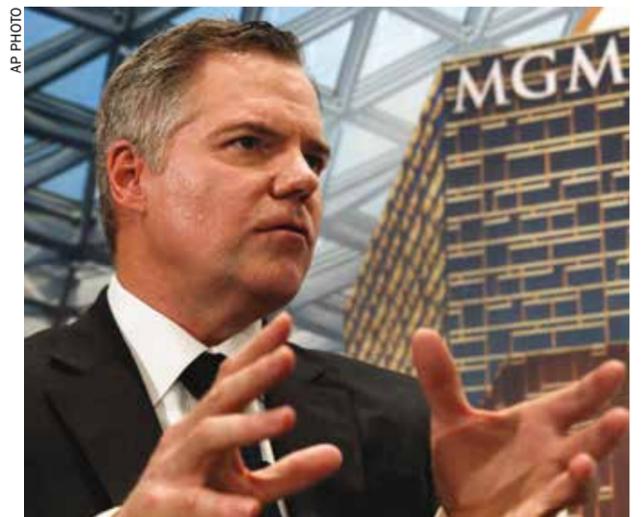
MGM said it had a loss of 6 cents per share. Earnings, adjusted for pretax expenses and non-recurring

costs, came to 14 cents per share.

The results from the Las Vegas-based company beat Wall Street expectations. The average estimate of seven analysts surveyed by Zacks Investment Research was for earnings of 13 cents per share.

The casino operator posted revenue of \$3.05 billion in the period, which also beat Wall Street forecasts. Five analysts surveyed by Zacks expected \$2.95 billion.

For the year, the company reported a profit of \$466.8 million, or 81 cents per share. Revenue was reported as \$11.76 billion.



Jim Murren

As for the current quarter, Murren said he anticipates gambling revenues this Chinese New Year at the company's Las Vegas properties to be lower than in 2018.

"We had a very high hold percentage last year, and we are not holding to that level right now, number

one," Murren said. "And secondly, there are a few players who just did not come to the United States, partly due to the government shutdown, some other logistical issues. We lost some groups to places like Sydney and London. So, we can thank our total government for that." **AP**

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ENVIRONMENT

Red tide appears at Hac Sa Beach

THE Hac Sa Beach is being affected by a red tide. The Marine and Water Bureau is warning the public not to carry out wa-

ter activities at the beach, according to a statement released yesterday by the bureau.

In order to warn the public to stop water activities

at Hac Sa Beach, the bureau posted notices on the scene and also informed the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) about the situation. "Any person who needs

to use the beach or carry out water activities should avoid swimming during the red tide and should avoid exposure to the tide as well," the water authority warned in its statement.

The bureau says that it will continue to pay close attention to the situation and will inform the public of the latest news regarding the beach in due course.

In addition, the bureau noted that presently it is not swimming season. As result, there are no lifeguards on duty at the beach. Red tides can be harmful or harmless depending on their cause. In some cases, they are related to water pollution. In both 2017 and 2018, red tides appeared in Macau.

In 2018, red tides were seen at Hac Sa and Cheoc Van beaches.

In 2017, IAM identified one occurrence at Nam Van lake.

Furthermore, in 2012, 2013 and 2014, red tides appeared in different water areas around Macau.

New SME credit rebounds in late-2018

NEW credit approved for small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) rebounded in the second half of 2018 when compared to the first half of 2018, according to data released by the Monetary Authority of Macao. Also in the second half of 2018, the outstanding balance of SME loans registered growth and the share of SME loans to major industries remained stable.

In the period, new SME credit limits approved by Macau banks totaled MOP13.1 billion, up 23.7 percent from the first half of 2018 or 0.9 percent from the same period of 2017.

The collateralized ratio, which indicates the proportion of credit limit with tangible assets pledged, was 75.8 percent, down 1.6 percentage points when compared with the last survey period, but up 2.6 percentage points when compared with the same period of 2017.

At the end of December 2018, the outstanding balance of total SME loans increased 7.4 percent from end-June 2018, or 13.5 percent from a year earlier, to MOP87.9 billion.

Compared to the last survey period, SME loans to "construction and public works" and "wholesale and retail trade" increased at respective rates of 4.5 percent and 4.1 percent, whereas those to "information technology" and "manufacturing industries" dropped 5.6 percent and 1.8 percent respectively.

The utilization rate, defined as the proportion of outstanding credit balance to the credit limit granted, increased 2.9 percentage points from six months earlier, or 8.7 percentage points from a year earlier, to 80 percent.

At end-December 2018, the outstanding balance of delinquent SME loans dropped 21.8 percent from six months previously, or 12.4 percent from the preceding year, to MOP457.7 million.

The delinquency ratio, a ratio of delinquent loans' outstanding balance to total SME loans outstanding, dropped 0.19 percentage points from end-June 2018 or 0.15 percentage points from end-2017 to 0.52 percent.

Prison reports shortage of psychological assistants

THERE is a big shortage of mental consultants, according to the Advisory Council of the Islands.

The Correctional Service Bureau visited the council and introduced it to the bureau's facilities, equipment and affairs to assist the social reintegration of inmates.

Ho Chong Chun, a member of the council, said that according to the bureau's statistics, there are currently 1,479 inmates in prison.



However, despite this large number, the prison has only about 20 psychological as-

sistants. "The government admits that the ratio [between prisoners

and assistants] is very disproportionate; social workers and psychological assistants face great pressure," disclosed Ho. It was suggested to the government by members of the council that the psychological resources from within the bureau itself should not be the only solution.

Instead, they proposed to the bureau that the government search for additional psychological assistant from

general the population. Associations and religious groups were nominated as two examples of organizations that could provide psychological assistance to the prisoners.

Si Nei Na, deputy coordinator of the Correctional Service Bureau, reported that they have been trying to work with both local and non-local universities in order to enhance the continuing education of inmates. Furthermore, according to Si, the bureau gives inmates a higher chance of being employed by taking them through different types of interviews.

AD

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		JK to Grade 12	March 1 to 14, 2019
	Date of Interview/ Admission Test	PK	March 2, 2019
		JK to Grade 3	March 4 to 27, 2019
		Grade 4 to 12	March 16, 1 pm - 4 pm
	Open House		February 16, 2019
	School Introduction	JK to Grade 6 Secondary School	9:00 am 10:00 am
	Results Notification		April 4, 2019

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Time: 10:00 am (presentation followed by guided tour of the school)
Location: Black Box Theatre

Parent Info Night: Choosing Courses & Future Planning
Date: Wednesday, February 20, 2019
Time: 7:00-8:00 pm
Location: Secondary Library (Gr. 9), Blackbox Theatre (Gr. 10), Learning Lab (Gr. 11)

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(853) 2853 3700 admission@tis.edu.mo www.tis.edu.mo

Gov't rejects AAM's view on Chinese judges proposal

ACCORDING to Vong Hin Fai, Chairman of the Third Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly (AL), the government has refused to accept the Macau Lawyers Association's (AAM) opinions, which oppose excluding non-Chinese judges in cases related to national security matters.

Earlier this week, the committee completed a review on the amendment of the aforementioned bill and signed an opinion book.

The final text submitted by the government has upheld the original proposal, which bans foreign judges from ruling on matters of national security.

As reported by Vong, both the Council of the Judicial



Magistrates and the Prosecutors' Committee agreed with the amendment.

However, AAM opposes the amendment, having deemed the proposal to violate the

principles of judicial independence and justice. AAM also believes the amendment leads to a kind of negative discrimination which harms the judicial system, and the

image of the judges.

The government representative explained to the committee that the law bears no disrespect towards the national judge principle or other provisions of the Basic Law.

According to Vong, the majority of the committee accepted the government's explanation.

Besides the above opposition, the AAM also argues that another amendment may result in distrust of the rulings of the lower courts and the intermediate court, because the Court of Final Appeal's ruling would override the same decision made by the two different judicial tribunals on the same matter.

41 complaints recorded by Consumer Council at CNY

THE Consumer Council (CC) provided a hotline service to consumers between Feb. 4 to 10, receiving a total of 56 inquiries and complaints (of which 41 were complaints) during the one-week Spring Festival holiday.

Among the 41 complaints, 17 were lodged by citizens regarding outbound travel and the prices of products, and 24 were lodged by tourists, according to a statement released this week.

The CC has offered assistance to consumers and followed up with hotline inquiries, referring some cases on to other government departments.

About 30 percent of all complaints involved tourists complaining about taxi services. Six complaints were made about the quality of clothing and apparel, with another six on the customer service of food and beverage outlets.

The majority of the complainants were tourists.

In 2018, the Council received 2,290 complaints and 2,753 inquiries, totaling 5,043 cases, of which 1,299 were lodged by tourists.

The total number of cases in the top 5 complaint categories amounts to 35 percent overall. The top 5 categories relate to jewelry (201 cases), public transportation (166 cases), food and beverage (163 cases), personal care products and services (148 cases), and food services (144 cases).

About 75 percent of the complaints were about public transportation, amounting to 126 cases of overcharging and poor service by taxi drivers. The number of cases in this category has increased by 40 percent compared to 2017.

A 60 percent increase in complaint cases was recorded in 2018 in the food and beverage category compared to that of 2017, while a 70 percent increase in complaints was also recorded in food and beverage services. Among all cases received in 2018 under public services, over 20 cases related to issues with electronic payments.

A 57 percent increase in the number of complaints on personal care products and services was recorded, many of which concerned the aggressive telemarketing strategies used by shops.

The number of complaints on telecommunication services continued to decrease, with only 6 cases lodged in 2018.

Local ice sculpture wins prize in Hokkaido

THE Macau Culinary Association sent a team to participate in the 46th International Snow Sculpture Contest in Hokkaido, Japan, and won second place with a snow sculpture named "Sharing Prosperity."

Sponsored by the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), the snow sculpture team has participated in the competition for four consecutive years (2016 - 2019) and brought home a championship and three second-place prizes.

According to a statement issued by the MGTO, this year's local team had four members, namely Perry Yuen, Tam Kwok Leung,



Lon Hou In and Kou Weng Cheong. Aiming to depict an aspect of local culture, the team created a dragon undulating around the Kun

Iam Statue.

Held in Hokkaido, Japan, the Sapporo Snow Festival is a popular winter festival that attracts over two

million visitors from domestic cities and abroad every year, and is widely covered by media from across the world. A major highlight in the Sapporo Snow Festival, the International Snow Sculpture Contest pitted teams from China, Korea, Finland, Hawaii, Indonesia, Macau, Poland, Singapore and Thailand against each other this year. The teams carved their snow sculptures openly on site from 3-7 February.

The MGTO's sponsorship of the Hokkaido event aims to promote the region and attract more Japanese and international visitors who enjoy participating in events and festivals. At present, Japan is the fifth largest source of visitors to Macau. Japanese visitor arrivals to the region surpassed 320,000 in 2018.

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CARITAS HEAD SAYS

Traffic assistants face disrespect from pedestrians

Julie Zhu

TRAFFIC assistants are facing disrespect from pedestrians, the secretary general of Caritas Macau, Paul Pun, told the Times.

Paul Pun's association won the public tender to provide these assistants, who help conduct the flow of pedestrians in the city.

Talking to the Times, Pun said "it will be best if they [the public] listen to the assistants. One step after another, the public should be aware of traffic safety."

In Pun's opinion, it is difficult to have every single pedestrian listen to the traffic advisor.

Traffic assistants have no authority to prosecute or take other actions against disobeyers, except by verbally warning unruly passengers.

"The traffic assistants have no authority to enforce the law. They only assist the traffic situation," said Pun, adding that some passers-by not only disobey but also insult the traffic assistants.

"Certainly, there are people who insult. Even police officers [can] be insulted by some people, but the police officers can prosecute," said Pun. "There are people who insult them and there are certainly people who respect and obey them."

Currently, Macau has approximately 20 traffic assistants, many of which are elderly.

The traffic assistants are not fixed in terms of their working hours and working location. However, they do work at the busiest roads, especially where



jaywalking occurrences are seen the most.

According to Pun, the schedule of these advisors depends on the arrangement of the transport authority.

It's not some highly-skilled job, but it is a job for the public safety.

PAUL PUN
CARITAS MACAU

"Not everybody is willing to do this kind of job. It's not some highly-skilled job, but it is a job for public safety and the traffic,"

said Pun, adding that "there will be traffic assistants on rainy days because people still come out on rainy days."

Last but not the least, Pun pointed out that Macau is a place that needs the help of traffic advisors.

"They must have their own difficulties, and these difficulties are connected to this society," said Pun, further explaining that "in some countries where I have been, the car stops for me even if it is very far away from me. But in Macau [these situations] never happen."

In 2005, the government introduced the concept of "traffic assistants" to provide greater awareness to the population about the importance of road safety, through directions and warnings offered by traffic advisors to passers-by who do not respect the road code.

ENVIRONMENT

Coutinho asks for reduction of single-use plastic

PEREIRA Coutinho has requested that the government provide him a "clear, coherent and complete" reply regarding his written inquiry on the reduction of plastic use.

The lawmaker recently submitted a written inquiry to the government regarding the reduction of plastic use.

"In view of the fact that Macau is currently doing nothing to reduce the

use of plastics, to reduce the use of single-use plastic shopping bags, plastic water bottle, plastic drinking straws, foamy take-out boxes, cotton swabs, cutlery, dishes, drink stir sticks and [...] use other more sustainable materials to replace the use of these plastics, what emergency measures will the government take?" Coutinho asked.

Coutinho also wants

governmental departments, and large-scale companies, to set a good example to the public in reducing the use of single-use plastics.

"What measures will the government take to make the public departments, autonomous entities, companies in the gaming sector, in the water supply sector, and in the electricity supply sector, set an example in banning the purcha-

se and use of single-use coffee cup and single-use water bottle [...], and reduce the use of paper, as well as promoting the use of more environmentally friendly and sustainable materials?" Pereira Coutinho asked in his inquiry.

The lawmaker also asked the government "whether it will establish laws to ban the import and [sale] of single-use plastic tableware."

ADVERTORIAL

GREAT TIMES

Poppin' Lockin' Breakin' their Way to MGM Theater

FROM California and Las Vegas to Japan and China – and on March 2-31, MGM Theater in MGM COTAI.

Jabbawoockeez have made great strides since their winning performance on MTV America's Best Dance Crew. They have appeared on various television shows including So You Think You Can Dance, Live with Regis & Kelly, The Ellen Degeneres show, The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon, Netflix's Master of None, and more.

The crew have also wowed the crowds at major events such as the 2008 BET Awards with Ne-Yo, the 2009 NBA All-Star Game with Shaquille O'Neal, the MTV Movie Awards, the 2013 Billboard Music Awards with Taylor Swift, the 2016 American Music Awards with Bruno Mars and the 2016 & 2017 NBA Finals' Half-time show.

On the world stage, Jabbawoockeez most recently toured with Bruno Mars on his '24K Magic World Tour' in 2017. The crew also performed for a Vivo launch event with Jackson Wang and also recently worked with Japanese contemporary artist, Takashi Murakami.

In 2010, the Jabbawoockeez opened their first show in Las Vegas, titled "MUS.I.C. (Muse-I-See)." Making its debut at the MGM Grand, and then the Monte Carlo Resort & Casino, the show received an overwhelmingly positive response and became a sold-out success.

In 2013, the Jabbawoockeez premiered their show "PRISM" in a custom-built theater at the Luxor Resort & Casino. This



show was routinely sold out and the production was named the "Best Family Show" two years in a row in Vegas Magazine.

In 2017, Jabbawoockeez crossed the ocean to Beijing and Shanghai to complete their first tour in China with a show titled "PRISM". Their signature hip-hop dance, popping, breaking, locking, LA-style, jazz and other dance moves synced seamlessly with state-of-the-art sound, stage, and light design.

Jabbawoockeez is set to showcase their best routine yet at MGM Theater in MGM COTAI with a new theme "True to Yourself". They promise an amazing choreography that will wow your "sight and auditory senses".





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Fong forecasts extension on gaming concessions to 2022

Renato Marques

APPOINTED lawmaker Davis Fong forecasts that the gaming license concessions that are set to expire by 2020 will be extended to 2022 in order to be fair to all competitors and, at the same time, give enough time for the government to enact changes in gaming laws. According to Fong, who is also a scholar with expertise in the gaming sector, those changes will not just be "small adjustments."

Speaking this week on the sidelines of the Legislative Assembly (AL) Spring Lunch, Fong speculated that "maybe it is a good idea to [extend] the contracts that are to expire in 2020 to 2022, in order to have all the six runners onboard. [...] At the same time, the government should propose the revision of the law, giving more time to the AL as well as to general public to dis-



Davis Fong

Discuss the details of such revision."

In Fong's opinion, since the changes to be enacted are likely to be "major ones" it would be a "good idea to start working on that law from start of the second year of this legislature, that is, from October this year. I think [that] is a good time,"

he said.

The lawmaker observed that this is a law that needs time and proper discussion, noting that this is "very important for Macau as [it reflects] on the economic pillar, and based on [previous] experience we would have a major revision rather than a minor revision [of the law]."

Questioned about whether the two-year extension would provide enough time to produce and discuss such a law, Fong said, "even if it is not [enough time] due to any external factor, actually the Chief Executive has the right to extend."

Regarding whether the changes to be enacted would be related to the number of concessionaires, Fong said, "The industry has been performing well as it is, [and the proof of that] was last year's growth by 14 percent in GGR [Gross Gaming Revenue]." Fong added that the number of visitors is also still growing and the occupancy rate of the hotel industry has

been over 90 percent, figures that, in his opinion, show that the industry is running well.

Still, the current system of concessions and sub-concessions should not be the only topic addressed, Fong said, suggesting also the "junket issue," which proposes to incorporate the junket law into the gaming law to make it more "healthy."

Another of the major points to address would be to specify in legal terms what the concessionaires should or should not do in terms of "non-gaming," as "the government has urged operators to develop more non-gaming avenues. However, based on the old law, there is no such specification on non-gaming requirements."

According to Fong, the new law should also address more clearly operators' corporate social responsibility, which "is the most urgent need from the public and that in the old law there is no such detail."

Tourism buses border gate entry ban extended

Starting from Feb. 22, entry of tourism buses through the east side of the Border Gate plaza will be banned between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. The measure is meant to distribute traffic around the border gate, thereby relieving the transportation pressure in the vicinity. On Dec. 8, 2018, the DSAT implemented a policy which banned the entry of tourism buses in the indicated location between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays. Due to the effective control of traffic since the implementation in 2018, the DSAT made the decision to expand the policy to a daily operation.

Local expressionist to hold latest solo exhibition

The exhibition, "idle hands are the devil's playthings – works by Crystal W. M. Chan", will be inaugurated at the Macau Art Garden on Feb. 26. Organized by the Art For All Society, the exhibition will run until Apr. 2 and is open every day except Sundays and public holidays. Chan's work carries strong influence from expressionism, in which she travels through the distorted lines of Egon Schiele to the color blocks of Edvard Munch. The artist uses melancholic color tones which overlay one another, creating emotional scenes that depict not reality but the "inner state of emotions," according to exhibition organizers. "Her work evokes emotions that resonate with haunting memories and nostalgia," added organizers. Chan has previously exhibited her artwork in solo exhibitions in Macau and New York.

AD

ALBERGUE SCM

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Celebration of the Chinese New Year Moon Lantern Festival
農曆新年己亥元宵慶祝晚會
Celebração do Ano Novo Chinês do Porco
Festividades das Lanternas Lunares

18:30 - 21:30
19 / 02 / 2019 (Tuesday)

Program

- Chinese calligraphy demonstration
- Traditional rabbit lanterns for children
- Snack and drink
- Live music performance
- Bunny balloon twisting
- Lantern riddle solving "Chai Tang Mai"

*Snack boxes with traditional festive selection (Number tag will be distributed from 17:00, Availability Limited. The tag is limited to one per person. One tag is entitled to one box)

Snack box collection period: 19:15 - 21:30
Other snack and drinks: 19:30 - 21:30

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REAL ESTATE MATTERS

Questions to ask before renting an apartment

Juliet Risdon is a Director of JML Property and a property investor.

Having been established in 1994, JML Property offers investment property & homes. It specializes in managing properties for owners and investors, and providing attractive and comfortable homes for tenants.

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JULIET RISDON

Whether you are leasing for the first time, or you are unhappy with your current apartment situation, there are some basic rules that you should keep in mind when renting. Renting a property may seem a minor process compared to purchasing a property, but three years is a long time to live with problems and inconveniences. Apply a little diligence, take the time to prepare your list of questions and you should avoid problems with your tenancy.

What will the lease, or rental agreement include?

Sounds silly, but often times big ticket items that are discussed verbally but not written into the lease, which more often than not ends in an unpleasant situation all round if the apartment comes with a car park, ensure this is noted (including the parking space number). Some apartments come with cable; if this is the case have it written in. Often mentioned verbally, but a bone of contention later if it does not materialize, is usage of club house facilities. If usage is included, insist on it being listed on the agreement. Apart from knowing how much the rent is, understand when the rent is due, to whom and where the rent is to be paid, and how much security deposit is payable.

What is the maintenance policy?

What fixes are included in the rent and which ones are not. Unfortunately, in

Macau there are all too many landlords who are more than willing to rent out apartments but refuse to assist when something goes wrong within the apartment i.e. it is common for landlords to refuse to fix broken appliances such as clothes washing machines. It is vital that you understand who you are leasing from and what commitment they will give you to making good repairs. To whom should problems and repairs be referred - emergency contact as well as a non-emergency line. Agree a reasonable response time.

What is the term of the lease and what /if any is the get out clause?

Most of us know that the typical term of a lease in Macau is 3 years. But what happens if you want to leave the lease early? What about if your blue card isn't renewed and you must leave the country and therefore break your lease? Firstly, it is important that you know exactly what type of lease you are signing and what your commitments to it are. Most agreements are for 3 years, usually with a fixed term of 1 year, allowing 2 months notice to be given after 12 months. When the term of the lease is up and if the owner is willing to continue the lease, you can agree to a month-to-month agreement of course sign a new lease.

Can we sign a property report?

Once a possible home has been found, it is your duty to check it out

completely. You should never rely on the landlord to disclose or assure you that the property is in 100% working order. Your agent should be able to assist you with a checklist to use when inspecting the property. Your checklist should include and sign off: kitchen appliances in working order, water pressure strong, plumbing without leaks, all facets working, (poor plumbing in Macau apartments is notorious), electrical outlets working, walls and ceiling painted or papered without cracks or signs of mould, air conditioning working and all remotes provided, floors and bathrooms in good repair, windows and doors operable and weather-tight (typhoons can be tough on seals!) If the property is furnished, check and write down condition of all furniture.

Can the walls be painted, fixtures changed/removed?

In most cases, owners are flexible about this, but make sure you do check in advance and ascertain what is required at the end of the lease i.e. will they insist you make good the colour of the wall again, or are they happy to leave the walls your chosen colours? Remember that taste is subjective, be warned about going out and spending dollars on things that you consider an improvement and expect your landlord to agree with you - in most cases, you are unlikely to agree!

Airbus abandons

Angela Charlton, Jon Gambrell

EUROPEAN plane manufacturer Airbus said yesterday it will stop making its superjumbo A380 in 2021 for lack of customers, abandoning the world's biggest passenger jet and one of the aviation industry's most ambitious and most troubled endeavors.

Barely a decade after the 500-plus-seat plane started carrying passengers, Airbus said in a statement that key client Emirates is cutting back its orders for the plane, and as a result, "we have no substantial A380 backlog and hence no basis to sustain production."

The decision could hurt up to 3,500 jobs and already cost the plane maker 463 million euros (about USD523 million) in losses in 2018, Airbus said. The company, a European economic powerhouse, is also girding for serious disruption to

its cross-continental manufacturing from a likely chaotic British exit from the EU next month.

The end of the young yet iconic jet is a boon for rival Boeing and an embarrassing symbolic blow for Airbus. A pall of mourning hung in the atmosphere yesterday at its headquarters in the southern French city of Toulouse - but there was also a hint of relief after years of straining to keep the A380 alive.

"It's a painful decision for us," CEO Tom Enders said. "We've invested a lot of effort, a lot of resources, a lot of sweat [...] but we need to be realistic."

It's also sad news for Emirates, which has the A380 as the backbone of its fleet, based out of Dubai, the world's busiest airport for international travel.

Still, Airbus announced yesterday a 29-percent jump in overall profits last year, and analysts said global demand is high enough for

Airbus to weather the loss of its superjumbo.

Among early detractors of the A380 was analyst Richard Aboulafia of Washington-based Teal Group, who said its demise "was inevitable."

"But thanks to the strength of the market right now, and the strength of Airbus's other products, the damage will not have a huge impact on the industry," he told The Associated Press. "For Boeing, it has been a very long time since they needed to worry about the A380 as a competitive factor."

Airbus reported net profit of 3.1 billion euros over last year, up from 2.4 billion euros in 2017. In addition to the A380 loss, Airbus reported a charge of 436 million euros on the A400M, used by several European militaries.

Airbus said it forecasts similar profits in 2019, in line with growth in the world economy and air traffic.

Emirates announced yesterday that it had

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iconic A380 superjumbo, lacking clients

struck a deal valued at \$21.4 billion with Airbus to replace some A380s with A350 wide-bodies and smaller A330 planes.

AP PHOTO



■ The end of the young yet iconic jet is a boon for rival Boeing and an embarrassing symbolic blow for Airbus

“While we are disappointed to have to give up our order, and sad that the program could not be sustained, we accept that this is the reality of the situation,” Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, the chairman and CEO of Emirates, said in a statement. “For us, the A380 is a wonderful aircraft loved by our customers and our crew. It is a differentiator for Emirates. We have shown how people can truly

fly better on the A380.”

Emirates long has been the largest operator of the A380. Before yesterday’s announcement, it had 162 of the jumbo jets on order.

The A380 has been a favorite of Emirates’ passengers, especially those in business and first class, which encompassed the entire upper deck of the airplane and was complete

with a bar in the back.

Airbus had hoped the A380 would squeeze out Boeing’s 747 and revolutionize air travel as more people take to the skies.

Instead, airlines have been cautious about committing to the costly plane, so huge that airports had to build new runways and modify terminals to accommodate it. The

double-decker planes started flying in 2008 and seated more than 500 passengers.

The A380 had troubles from the start, including tensions between Airbus’ French and German management and protracted production delays and cost overruns. Those prompted a company restructuring that cost thousands of jobs.

Industry experts initially expected A380s to long outlast the 747, which is celebrating its 50th birthday this year.

When it started taking on passengers in 2008, the A380 was hailed for its roominess, large windows, high ceilings and quieter engines. Some carriers put in showers, lounges, duty free shops and bars on both decks. **AP**

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GUI MINHAI CASE

Swedish foreign ministry investigates ambassador to China

Yanan Wang, Beijing

SWEDEN'S ambassador to China is under internal investigation, the embassy said yesterday, following a claim that she set up a meeting between the daughter of a detained Swedish publisher and two businessmen that appeared to have gone awry.

Ambassador Anna Lindstedt returned to Stockholm on Wednesday to meet with officials from the foreign affairs ministry, the Swedish Embassy in Beijing said by phone. Lindstedt is not under criminal investigation.

The embassy declined to give further details, but the ambassador's departure comes after Angela Gui, the daughter of detained Swedish book publisher Gui Minhui, published an account this week detailing a "strange" meeting with a pair of businessmen arranged by Lindstedt.

Gui wrote on Medium, an online publishing platform, that the businessmen threatened her after initially offering to help secure her father's release from prison in China.



The gate of the Swedish Embassy in Beijing

Gui Minhui, a naturalized Swedish citizen, co-owned a Hong Kong store which sold gossip books about Chinese leaders.

Gui, 53, went missing in 2015 from his seaside home in Thailand, turning up months later on Chinese television saying he had turned himself in for an alleged 2003 drunk driving accident in

which a female college student was killed.

Several of Gui's colleagues from his Hong Kong publishing house also went missing in quick succession, sparking suspicions that mainland security forces were seeking to snuff out independent voices in the semi-autonomous city.

Gui was released in October after completing a two-year sentence, but committed to remaining in Ningbo, where he was born, until an investigation was completed into charges of running a business illegally.

In January 2018, he was taken off a train by Chinese police while in the presence of two Swedish diplomats with whom he was traveling to Beijing. Sweden said its officials were taking him to seek medical treatment. China said Gui was being investigated for leaking state secrets.

Gui later told pro-Beijing media outlets that he never wished to leave China and that Sweden was using his case to "create trouble" for China's government. The statement from Gui, who spoke in a detention facility flanked by police, was immediately denounced by rights activists as coerced.

Gui's daughter, Angela, is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Cambridge who has become a self-described "accidental activist" for her father. She wrote in her Wednesday post that the role has landed her in a "fair number of bizarre situations," but few of the same magnitude

as her encounter with Lindstedt and the businessmen.

She said Lindstedt convinced her to fly to Stockholm on Jan. 24 to explore a "new approach" to her father's case. During a two-day meeting with the businessmen and Lindstedt, she said, the businessmen told her they could arrange a Chinese visa and job for her and that they had connections within China's ruling Communist Party.

They then told her they had already started to negotiate over her father's case without her prior knowledge, according to Angela Gui. One businessman said it was possible that Gui Minhui would be released, but only if Angela Gui promised to stop publicizing her father's case for a month.

Gui wrote that one of the men told her, "You have to trust me, or you will never see your father again."

She later learned that no one at the Swedish foreign ministry had been informed of the meeting.

"I'm not going to be quiet in exchange for a visa and an arbitrary promise that my father 'might' be released," she wrote. "Threats, verbal abuse, bribes, or flattery won't change that."

Sweden announced last month — prior to the incident described by Gui — that Lindstedt was to take on a new role as ambassador to the U.N. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. She was slated to assume the position in March. **AP**

ANALYSIS

Huawei soft power push raises hard questions

Kelvin Chan & Rob Gillies

CANADA'S national game — brought to you by China's Huawei.

As a nasty diplomatic feud deepens between the two countries over the tech company, involving arrests and execution orders, it hasn't gone unnoticed that Huawei's bright red fan-shaped logo is plastered prominently on the set of "Hockey Night in Canada." TV hosts regularly remind the 1.8 million weekly viewers that program segments are "presented by Huawei smartphones."

The cheery corporate message contrasts with the standoff over the arrest of Huawei Chief Financial Officer Meng Wanzhou on a U.S. warrant. In what looks like retaliation, China detained two Canadians and plans to execute a third — heavy-handed tactics that, because they leave some Canadians with the impression the privately owned company is an arm of the Chinese government, give

its sponsorship a surreal quality.

The TV deal is one of many examples of how Huawei, the world's biggest telecom gear producer and one of the top smartphone makers, has embarked on a global push to win consumers and burnish its brand. It sponsors Australian rugby, funds research at universities around the world, and brings foreign students to China for technical training. It has promoted classical music concerts in Europe and donated pianos to New Zealand schools.

Its efforts are now threatened by the dispute with Canada and U.S. accusations that it could help China's authoritarian government spy on people around the world.

"Huawei's marketing plan up until Dec. 1 [when Meng was arrested] was working very well," said Guy Saint-Jacques, a former Canadian ambassador to China. Now, "public opinion is changing toward China and Huawei."

At stake for Huawei are lucrative contracts to provide new superfast mobile networks called 5G. The U.S. says Meng helped break sanctions and accuses Huawei of stealing trade secrets. It also says the company could let the Chinese government tap its networks, which in the case of 5G would cover massive amounts of consumer data worldwide. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo pressed that point to European allies on a tour this week.

Huawei, which did not respond to requests for comment for this story, has previously rejected the allegations. The Chinese government says Huawei's critics were fabricating threats.

Still, the headlines have been relentlessly negative.

"At some point there could be a majority of Canadians that will say 'We don't think the government should do business with Huawei,'" said Saint-Jacques.

There's no evidence of sinister intentions behind Huawei's marketing, which

isn't unlike that of Western multinationals, although its efforts have been unusually strong for a company from China, where brands have struggled to capture global attention.

Rogers Communications, which broadcasts "Hockey in Night in Canada" and also sells Huawei smartphones, said it has no plans to change its sponsorship deal, which started in 2017 and runs to the end of 2020.

In Australia, the Canberra Raiders rugby team indicated it would renew a Huawei sponsorship deal this year despite a government ban on using its equipment in 5G networks.

Huawei has also ventured into high culture by using its smartphone artificial intelligence to complete the remaining movements in German composer Franz Schubert's "Symphony No. 8," known as the «Unfinished Symphony.» It held a symphony orchestra concert in London this month to perform the completed score.

And Huawei has a vast network of relationships with universities around the world through research partnerships and scholarships.

Some universities have begun to rethink their collaborations, although there's no allegation of wrongdoing by Huawei. Universities point out that companies that fund research don't automatically own any resulting patents.

Faced with these setbacks, Huawei has responded by stepping up its public relations efforts.

Its normally reclusive chairman, Ren Zhengfei, last month held three media briefings, fielding questions from Western, Japanese and Chinese journalists.

The company will be out in force this month at the Mobile World Congress, a major telecom industry gathering in Barcelona, Spain. It's expected to unveil its latest smartphone, a 5G device with a folding screen. Company executives are scheduled to brief analysts

and give presentations on 5G technology.

Huawei is a corporate sponsor of the show and Ren is expected to attend to help win business deals, though U.S. officials are reportedly expected to turn out in force to lobby against Huawei.

The company last week hosted a Lunar New Year reception in Brussels for the European Union diplomatic community, in a ballroom commissioned by Belgium's King Leopold II. There was a piano concert, a jazz performance, a bubble tea bar, and a speech by Huawei's chief EU representative, Abraham Liu.

"We are shocked or sometimes feel amused by those ungrounded and senseless allegations," Liu told the reception guests, adding that the company is "willing to accept the supervision" from governments in Europe, Huawei's biggest market after China. Huawei plans to open a cybersecurity center in Brussels next month, he said. **AP**

TRADE WAR

China, US start talks ahead of March tariff deadline

U.S. and Chinese negotiators began trade talks yesterday that President Donald Trump says will help decide whether he escalates a fight over Beijing's technology ambitions by raising tariffs on USD200 billion of imports from China.

Businesspeople and economists say the two days of talks are unlikely to resolve the battle that threatens to drag on weakening global economic growth. They say Chinese negotiators are trying to persuade Trump they are making enough progress to postpone a March 2 deadline for the duty increase.

The chief American envoy, Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, and his Chinese counterpart, Vice Premier Liu He, shook hands at the start of the meeting at a government guesthouse but said nothing to reporters.

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

Trump agreed in December to postpone more tariff hikes which



U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin (center) is escorted by delegations and security officers as he leaves a hotel to attend a new round of high-level trade talks with Chinese officials in Beijing

le the two sides negotiate. That expires March 1. The following day, a 10 percent tariff imposed in July on \$200 billion of Chinese imports would rise to 25 percent.

On Tuesday, Trump said while he is not inclined to extend the deadline, he might let it "slide for a little while" if talks go well. Earlier, the White House called

March 2 a "hard deadline."

Business groups see the decision by the top trade envoys, Lighthizer and Liu, to take part in person as a sign the negotiations are making progress. Yesterday was their second meeting following negotiations last month in Washington.

The U.S. delegation also included Treasury Secretary Steven

Mnuchin and David Malpass, a Treasury undersecretary who is Trump's nominee for World Bank president.

Companies on both sides have been battered by Washington's tariffs and retaliatory duties imposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping's government. The stakes are rising as global economic growth cools.

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

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

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 disclose trade secrets or share technology with state-owned partners.

Chinese officials also are balking at U.S. pressure to accept an enforcement mechanism to monitor whether Beijing carries out its promises.

Beijing has tried to deflect pressure by emphasizing China's growth as an export market. It has announced 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.

It is unclear whether that will satisfy Washington and other governments that complain the system is rigged to extract technology from foreign companies and to use official industrial standards to shield Chinese enterprises from competition. **AP**

ECONOMY

January exports rebound, imports decline

CHINA'S January exports rebounded from a contraction amid a tariff battle with Washington while Chinese purchases of U.S. goods plunged.

Total exports rose 9.1 percent from a year earlier to \$217.6 billion, an improvement from December's 3.5 percent decline, customs data showed. Imports declined 1.5 percent to USD178.4 billion.

Exports to the United States sank 2.4 percent to \$36.4 billion, squeezed by Trump's tariff hikes.

Imports of American goods plunged 41.2 percent to \$9.2 billion, reflecting retaliatory Chinese duty increases and orders to importers to find other suppliers.

The talks in Beijing



this week may decide whether Trump allows another increase on \$200 billion of imports from China to go ahead March 2.

Weakness in global demand for Chinese goods has increased pressure on the ruling Communist Party to make peace with Washington at a time when Beijing is

trying to reverse an economic downturn. The government has warned Chinese exporters the global environment is "complicated and severe."

"The downbeat outlook for global growth means that this year is likely to be challenging for Chinese exporters, even if the ongoing U.S.-China

trade negotiations culminate in a deal," said Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics in a report.

Imports of American goods plunged 41.2 percent to USD9.2 billion

Chinese trade data early in the year are disrupted by the Lunar New Year holiday, which comes at different times in January or February each year. Factories rush to fill orders and then close for up to

two weeks.

China's global trade surplus for January was \$39.2 billion. The surplus with the United States was \$27.3 billion.

Exports to the United States held up through much of 2018 despite Trump's tariff hikes, but fell 3.5 percent in December as the impact of the increases began to depress demand. Forecasters say American orders should slump this year.

Trump and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, agreed on Dec. 1 to postpone additional tariff hikes by 90 days while they negotiated. But penalties of up to 25 percent already imposed on billions of dollars of each other's goods remain in place, raising the cost for American

and Chinese buyers of soybeans, medical equipment and other goods.

Trump is pressing Beijing to roll back plans for state-led creation of Chinese global competitors in robotics and other tech fields. Washington, Europe and other trading partners complain such policies violate its market-opening obligations.

Chinese leaders are trying to reduce reliance on trade and nurture self-sustaining economic growth based on domestic consumer spending. But their plans call for keeping exports stable to avoid politically dangerous job losses.

Some companies have shifted production of goods bound for the United States out of China to avoid Trump's tariffs. Others are lining up non-Chinese suppliers of industrial components. **AP**



Journalist Maria Ressa

INTERVIEW

Philippine journalist sees threat to democracy

Kiko Rosario, Vicente Gonzales

THE head of a Philippine online news site who was arrested by government agents in a libel case accused President Rodrigo Duterte's administration yesterday of acting like a dictatorship and using the law as a weapon to muzzle dissent.

"What we're seeing [...] is a level of impunity that I frankly haven't seen, and I've been a journalist for more than 30 some odd years," Maria Ressa told The

Associated Press yesterday after posting bail in a Manila court.

Ressa, who was selected by Time magazine as one of its Persons of the Year last year, is the head of Rappler Inc., which has aggressively covered Duterte's administration.

She was arrested Wednesday over a libel complaint from a businessman. Duterte's government has said the arrest was a normal step in response to the complaint and had nothing to do with press freedom.

Rappler said the businessman filed the 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.

Ressa said the complaint had previously been dismissed by the National Bureau of Investigation and then "magically reappeared" under Duterte's Department of Justice.

She said the case was emblematic of the government's mobilization of the legal system against its critics.

Even dictatorships have clearer rules that they follow than where we are today.

MARIA RESSA

"I've called it the weaponization of the law," she said, noting that she was charged retroactively for an article that was published before the cybercrime law took effect. "I can tell you as a journalist I've worked under dictatorship, and even dictatorships have clearer rules that they follow than where we are today."

Since taking office in 2016, Duterte has openly lambasted journalists who write unfavorable stories about him. He has particularly bristled at critical coverage of his anti-drug campaign, which has left thousands of mostly poor suspects dead and drawn international condemnation.

The article that spawned the libel complaint included allegations that a businessman was linked to illegal drugs, human trafficking and a murder case, citing an unspecified intelligence report.

National Bureau of Investigation agents served the warrant against Ressa late Wednesday

afternoon and escorted her from the Rappler office to NBI headquarters, where she stayed overnight.

Ressa called the timing of her arrest "malicious," since she was unable to seek bail the same day.

"It absolutely is part of the big picture of intimidation and harassment," she said. "If the government wanted me to feel that it had power over me, it made that very clear. I couldn't leave."

Duterte previously banned a Rappler reporter from his news briefings after a government agency found that the news site violated a constitutional prohibition on foreign ownership of media when it received money from an international investment firm. Rappler has rejected the ruling.

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.

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 said she didn't consider herself special.

"I'm just one person but I'm a journalist and Rappler is an organization of journalists," she said. "Our power emanates from the people where we help. Well, the pillar of democracy is when you have the freedom of the press that gives every Filipino citizen the right to information, to facts. And that allows us to hold the powerful to account." AP

JAPAN

Same-sex couples sue for equal marital rights

THIRTEEN gay couples filed Japan's first lawsuit challenging the country's rejection of same-sex marriage yesterday, arguing the denial violates their constitutional right to equality.

Six couples holding banners saying "Marriage For All Japan" walked into Tokyo District Court to file their cases against the government, with similar cases filed by three couples in Osaka, one couple in Nagoya and three couples in Sapporo.

Plaintiff Kenji Aiba, standing next to his partner Ken Kozumi, told reporters he would "fight this war together with sexual minorities all around Japan."

Aiba and Kozumi have



Kenji Aiba (left) and his partner Ken Kozumi laugh during an interview with The Associated Press in Tokyo

held onto a marriage certificate they signed at their wedding party in 2013, anticipating Japan would emulate other advanced

nations and legalize same-sex unions.

That day has yet to come, and legally they are just friends even though

they've lived as a married couple for more than five years. So they decided to act rather than waiting.

"Right now we are both

in good health and able to work, but what if either of us has an accident or becomes ill? We are not allowed to be each other's guarantors for medical treatment, or to be each other's heir," Kozumi, a 45-year-old office worker, said in a recent interview with his partner Aiba, 40. "Progress in Japan has been too slow."

Ten Japanese municipalities have enacted "partnership" ordinances for same-sex couples to make it easier for them to rent apartments together, among other things, but they are not legally binding. Japanese laws are currently interpreted as allowing marriage only between a man and a woman.

In a society where pressure for conformity is strong, many gay people hide their sexuality, fearing prejudice at home, school or work. The obstacles are even higher for transgender people in the highly gender-specific society. The Supreme Court last month upheld a law that effectively requires transgender people to be sterilized before they can have their gender changed on official documents.

The LGBT equal rights movement has lagged behind in Japan because people who are silently not conforming to conventional notions of sexuality have been so marginalized that the issue hasn't been considered a human rights problem, experts say. AP

THAILAND

Court accepts dissolution case over princess nomination

A Thai court said yesterday that it will take up the case of whether to dissolve a political party that nominated a member of the royal family as its candidate for prime minister in next month's general election.

Thailand's Constitutional Court made the announcement just a day after the Election Commission recommended the Thai Raksa Chart Party be dissolved over its Feb. 8 nomination of Princess Ubolratana Mahidol.

King Maha Vajiralongkorn issued a royal order just hours after his sister's nomination that deemed the political bid inappropriate and unconstitutional. The then party professed its loyalty to the monarch and accepted his order.

The court said in a statement that the charges are being forwarded to the party, which will have seven days to respond. It scheduled the next hearing for Feb. 27.

Ubolratana's bid to become prime minister was particularly notable because she allied herself with Thai Raksa Chart, which is part of the political machine of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. Thaksin was ousted in a 2006 military coup and is loathed by many royalists and others in the country's traditional establishment, who accuse him of corruption

and disrespect to the monarchy.

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 that overthrew an elected government led by Thaksin's sister.

The unprecedented nomination and the fallout from its failure have reignited longstanding political tensions in Thailand, which has seen more than a dozen years of political strife that has sometimes spilled into street violence. Following the 2014 coup, the junta used strict laws against protests and political activity to keep the tension from bubbling to the surface.

The March 24 election will be the first since the coup.

Prayuth is considered the front runner, largely because election laws enacted under his government skewed the odds against any party running without the support of the military and the con-



Leader of the Thai Raksa Chart political party Preechapol Pongpanich leaves party head-office in Bangkok

servative 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 Constitutional Court is one

of the most conservative institutions in Thailand and has consistently ruled against Thaksin and his allies.

If Thai Raksa Chart is dissolved its board members could be banned from politics for 10

years or more.

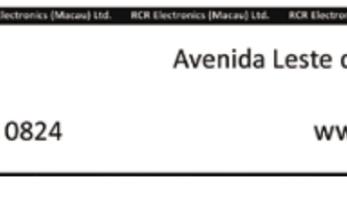
Dissolving Thai Raksa Chart would almost surely cost the Thaksin side much-needed seats in the election. It would also deepen concerns about the fairness of next month's poll. AP

AD



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IRAQ

In heart of Baghdad, IS war museum honors fallen militiamen

Zeina Karam & Qassim Abdul-Zahra, Baghdad

A few steps from Baghdad's cultural heart and its famous book market on al-Mutanabi Street lies the Iraqi capital's latest tourist attraction: a war museum glorifying the sacrifices of thousands of mainly Shiite militiamen who died fighting the Islamic State group.

The museum is meant to honor the fallen but it also underscores the Iran-backed militias' growing clout in the country. Their political and military might soared after they helped the government defeat IS — so much so that they are now accused by some of seeking to build a parallel state within Iraq.

Housed inside Baghdad's historic, Ottoman-era al-Qishla building, the museum displays rocket launchers, drones and can-

nons from the four-year fight with IS. Visitors can browse through the war booty and other memorabilia from the front lines, as well as personal belongings fighters left behind on battlefields across the country.

"I feel the spirits of the martyrs floating around this space. I feel that Iraq exists because of them. [...] They are the pulse of Iraq," said 55-year-old teacher Umm Hassanin al-Oukeily on a visit to the museum this week.

The mainly Shiite militias — known collectively as the Popular Mobilization Forces, or "Hashed al-Shaabi" in Arabic — emerged following a call in June 2014 by Iraq's top Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, for volunteers to fight against IS.

At the time, Islamic State militants had overrun the northern city of Mo-



Commemorative images of militiamen who died fighting the Islamic State group over the past four years and weapons are on display in the Popular Mobilization Forces War Museum on al-Mutanabi Street, Baghdad

sul, Iraq's second-largest, and much of northern and western Iraq, coming dangerously close to Baghdad and Shiite shrines farther

south as Iraq's military and security forces collapsed in the face of the onslaught.

Tens of thousands heeded the cleric's call, enlisting in multiple militia factions, many of which had existed for years and even fought American forces in Iraq. Sanctioned by the Iraqi government, the militias played a key role in the war against IS.

That made the Iran-backed militiamen an indirect ally to the American forces, who returned to Iraq in 2014 at the invitation of the government to help battle IS. A U.S.-led coalition provided crucial air support as Iraqi forces regrouped and drove IS out in a costly campaign.

The militias lost about 7,000 fighters in the war. They included some Christian, Yazidi, and Sunni militias but were dominated by Shiite groups with close ties to Iran. They came out of the war with the image of an almost holy force protecting Iraq's Shiite Muslim majority.

That kind of popular aura has helped enshrine the militias as a major political and paramilitary player in post-IS Iraq. Militia factions are present in almost every Iraqi province, in many cases deeply embedded in local governance and rivaling state institutions. Posters of dead fighters adorn shop windows in Baghdad and elsewhere.

"There are no words to

describe my feelings right now," said al-Oukeily, the teacher, tears in her eyes as she made her way around the museum with her daughter.

Outside, in the al-Qishla garden, families were gathered to enjoy the sun as music played in the background. Inside the building, somber military music accompanied the exhibits.

I feel the spirits of the martyrs floating around this space. I feel that Iraq exists because of them.

VISITOR

In 2018 parliamentary elections — the first after the victory over IS — the militias' coalition won 48 seats, making it the second-largest bloc in Parliament and guaranteeing the militias a say in formal politics. Under the new budget, militiamen are for the first time being paid the same salaries as soldiers.

The mix of arms and

political power is a dangerous dynamic for Iraq, a country with a history of bloody sectarian strife. Iraq's Sunni minority and also some in the military and the government fear the Shiite militias will dominate Iraq the way the powerful Revolutionary Guard does in Iran or the militant Hezbollah group in Lebanon.

The Shiite militias "are building economic empires, taking control of state reconstruction companies and projects, and developing into economic organizations," said a Western diplomat in Baghdad who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss Iraqi politics.

The more than 50 militias in Iraq have up to 140,000 fighters, according to some estimates and the Popular Mobilization Forces itself. They are backed by tanks and weapons, and have their own intelligence agency, operations rooms and court of law.

In an interview with The Associated Press last month, the leader of one of the most powerful of the militias, Qais al-Khazali, said their existence compliments that of the Iraqi military and suggested that disbanding them was not in the cards as long as there's an ongoing military threat to Iraq.

At the museum, images of the fallen militiamen hang down from the ceiling, printed on light bulbs. Boots, watches and eyeglasses are displayed next to flowers that honor the martyrs.

Visitors walk around life-size replicas of militia outposts, complete with real sniper rifles, sandbags and camouflage nets from the field.

They pose for photos next to two mannequins, one depicting a bearded militant in IS black uniform, a knife protruding from his abdomen, lying on the ground. The other, a militiaman towering over the body, has his boot pressed against the militant's head.

"This is the fate of every Daesh traitor in the land of the prophets in the great Iraq," reads the sign next to the exhibit, referring to IS by the group's Arabic acronym.

Museum manager Ali Al Shawky, who was a volunteer doctor with the militias during the war against IS, said the idea behind the museum was to preserve the memory of the fallen and "personify their heroic deeds." AP

AD

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U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said yesterday at a security conference in Warsaw that Iran is the top threat in the Middle East and confronting the country is key to reaching peace in the entire region.

Pompeo met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu before the opening session at the conference and said "pushing back" against Iran was central to dealing with all the region's other problems.

"You can't achieve peace and stability in the Middle East without confronting Iran. It's just not possible," Pompeo said alongside Netanyahu.

The Israeli leader lauded the participation of high-profile Arab dignitaries at the conference, saying it marked a "historical turning point" that signaled a shift in regional priorities.

"In a room of some 60 foreign ministers and representatives of dozens of governments, an Israeli prime minister and the foreign ministers of the leading Arab countries stood together and spoke with unusual force, clarity, and unity against the common threat of the Iranian regime," Netanyahu said before his meeting with Pompeo. "I think this marks a change, an important understanding of what threatens our future."

The U.S. and Poland are sponsoring the conference, which they

POLAND

Pompeo says 'confronting Iran' key to Mideast peace

say is aimed at promoting peace and security in the Mideast but appears to be mainly focused on isolating Iran. Iran has denounced the gathering as an American anti-Iran "circus" aimed at "demonizing" it.

U.S. Vice President Mike Pence is attending along with representatives from numerous Arab countries. But France and Germany are not sending Cabinet-ranked officials, and European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini is staying away.

Russia and China aren't participating, either, and the Palestinians, who have called for the meeting to be boycotted, also will be absent.

For Netanyahu, a longtime opponent of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, the gathering marks a culmination of his call to unite the world against Israel's arch-enemy of Iran. He's long boasted that Israel has clandestinely developed good relations with several Arab states, despite a lack of official ties. On Wednesday, he met with Oman's foreign minister, Yusuf



Falcons: Netanyahu and Pompeo

bin Alawi, and at yesterday's opening session he was seated next to the foreign minister of Yemen, as representatives of Kuwait, Qatar and others looked on.

Israel has signed peace accords with Egypt and Jordan, but other Arab nations have refused to publicly improve relations without significant progress being made toward ending Israel's half-century occupation of lands sought for a Palestinian state. That shunning, though, has begun to ease in recent years as shared concerns about Iran have over-

shadowed the Palestinian issue.

Netanyahu considers Iran to be Israel's greatest threat, citing its frequent calls for Israel's destruction, its nuclear program and support for militant groups across the region. Israel has been active in recent months attacking Iranian targets in neighboring Syria.

The Americans have tried to broaden the scope of what was initially billed as an Iran-centric meeting to include the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the fight against the Islamic State group, and the conflicts in Syria and Yemen.

President Donald Trump's senior Mideast adviser, son-in-law Jared Kushner, has been working on an Israeli-Palestinian peace plan for close to two years, but has not yet released details. U.S. officials say Kushner is expected to make some comments in Warsaw about the conflict, but Netanyahu said he doesn't expect any discussion of the peace plan. The Palestinians have pre-emptively rejected it, accusing the Trump administration of being unfairly biased toward Israel.

"No one country will dominate the discussion today nor will any one issue dominate our talks. Everyone should speak thoughtfully and honestly. Each country should respect the voice of all others. Our hope is that every engagement will entail true back-and-forth dialogue, not just be a chance to recite prepared statements," Pompeo said in opening the meeting. "We want to bring together countries with an interest in stability to share their different views and break out of traditional thinking." AP

AD

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15:00	Mistura Fina
17:10	Quem Quer Ser Milionário
18:05	A Ilha dos Escravos
18:55	TDM Talk Show (Repetição)
19:30	Livros com João Guedes (Repetição)
19:35	Os Nossos Dias Sr.2
20:30	Telejornal
21:15	Sinais de Vida
22:00	Contentor 13
22:30	Motel Bates Sr.1
23:15	TDM News
23:50	Kutama - Destino Lisboa
00:45	Telejornal (Repetição)
01:30	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 & English)

Duration: 91min



INTEGRITY

ROOM 1

4:30, 9:30 pm

Director: Alan Mak

Starring: Sean Lau, Nick Cheung, Karena Lam

Language: Cantonese (Chinese & English)

Duration: 90min



ALITA: BATTLE ANGEL

ROOM 2

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

Director: Robert Rodriguez

Starring: Christoph 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 & 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 & English)

Duration: 88min

this day in history



Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi

1983: HUNDREDS DIE IN ASSAM POLL VIOLENCE

Hundreds of people have died in Assam as fierce fighting rages in the run-up to the election.

Villages have been set on fire and bridges and offices have been burnt amid reports that up to 600 people have been killed in the north-eastern India state.

Hundreds of villagers are reported to have been hacked and speared to death by tribesmen around the area of Nellie.

Anti-government protesters have clashed with police and paramilitary forces as students campaigned against the state assembly election.

They say they are protesting at the inclusion of large numbers of illegal immigrants on voting lists.

The respected newspaper The Hindu has called for the election to be called off amid reports that some Assamese civil servants have refused to do election duty because of fears for their safety.

Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi said that "no one has the right to stop the election".

Fresh polling has been ordered in some districts after booths were taken over, ballot boxes stolen and voters intimidated. Turnout was said to be low as militants warned local people not to go to the polls.

There are reported to be more than 70,000 police and paramilitary forces trying to keep order amid rioting and looting in several districts.

Groups of Assamese have been fighting immigrants from Bangladesh with machetes, petrol bombs and stones.

Some people died in these communal clashes between Hindus and Muslims while others were killed when security forces opened fire on crowds.

Many women and children are thought to have died in the rice growing area, with bodies found in streams.

Sixteen villages were burnt down and up to 6,000 people have been left homeless, with thousands living in a refugee camp.

Thousands of people are fleeing from Assam to the neighbouring state of West Bengal and to the north-eastern area of Arunachal Pradesh to escape the violence.

Courtesy BBC News

Offbeat

A VERY PROMPT MARC JACOBS WELCOMES BACK A '90s SUPERMODEL

AP PHOTO



Christy Turlington Burns walks the runway in Marc Jacobs collection during Fashion Week in New York

Marc Jacobs didn't waste a second before starting his runway show yesterday [Macau time]. Literally.

The designer, whose high-profile show traditionally closes out Fashion Week, was clearly determined to make amends for a September show that began 90 minutes late, leaving fashion editors tapping their heels and checking flight schedules. This time he started his show the very second the clock struck the appointed hour of 6 p.m.

Besides his trademark showmanship, he had a surprise up his sleeve: the return of famed '90s supermodel Christy Turlington, a month after turning 50, to close the show in a voluminous black-feathered dress with a matching feathered fascinator. Karlie Kloss and Gigi Hadid were on hand, too.

As for the show itself, it was classic Jacobs at his best — high drama and fairytale whimsy, with big shapes and signature touches like oversized ruffles and flounces and bold florals, and deliciously roomy coats that beckoned, especially given the weather outside.

To live orchestral music — "Aheym," by Bryce Dessner, performed by the American Contemporary Music Ensemble — each model emerged into a lone spotlight from pitch-black darkness. The show began with a classic look: an A-line leopard coat, paired with striped trousers and a ruffled floral blouse.

A series of big coats and elegant capes followed, in stripes or solids, plaids or tweeds, with Kloss in a charcoal-colored tweed with a bow at the neck, paired with a feathery fascinator (the headgear was, as usual, by master milliner Stephen Jones.)

The coats revealed flouncy bright dresses underneath, like a shiny shocking pink number under a red tweed, or a blue-and-white floral with an exaggerated ruffle at the neck under a gray tweed. One light blue cape over a lavender skirt looked like it had just emerged from a fairytale forest — Little Blue Riding Hood, perhaps.

IN CONTEXT

Eyewitnesses reported that 1,000 people died in the election violence although communications in many areas were poor and it was difficult to estimate the final number of dead. According to unofficial figures, nearly 3,000 Muslims died in the riots, massacred by the ethnic Assamese and Lalungs who wanted to evict them as part of protests against so-called foreigners.

The movement ended in 1985, six years after it started, when Delhi signed an agreement with the protest leaders, promising to deport illegal immigrants.

Indira Gandhi, the Indian Prime Minister, ordered a grant of £330,000, after touring areas where hundreds of people died in attacks by tribesmen.

Mrs Gandhi's Congress Party won the Assembly election with a two-thirds majority.

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FOOTBALL | CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Son becoming indispensable for Spurs, inspiring Dortmund win



Tottenham midfielder Heung-Min Son (right) scores the opening goal

Rob Harris, London

SON Heung-min has every reason to be constantly smiling, and Tottenham has many reasons to be thankful.

For a footballer so understated, so seemingly undemanding, the forward has become indispensable for Tottenham.

Borussia Dortmund was reminded of that in the Champions League yesterday [Macau time], when Son scored the opener to spark a 3-0 victory in the last-16 first leg. It was Son's ninth goal in 11 games against Dortmund, including his time in Germany playing for Hamburg and Bayer Leverkusen.

In his fourth season at Tottenham, the 26-year-old South Korean has emerged as one of English football's most influential players. In the 13 games Son has scored this season, Tottenham has gone on to win.

"Next time when Son scores, I go to the dressing room and shower," Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino joked, "and wait for the game to finish."

There was little for Pochettino to laugh about a month ago when top-scorer Harry Kane damaged ligaments in his left ankles. But Son is helping to dispel suggestions Tottenham is overly reliant on Kane, inspiring this commanding lead over Dortmund that was secured by late goals from

Jan Vertonghen and Fernando Llorente.

Son's contribution — 11 goals in his last 12 games — is even more remarkable considering he started the season at the Asian Games and took a couple of weeks out in January to go to the Asian Cup with South Korea.

"Son is a player that of course has a lot of quality and is a very talented player," Pochettino said. "But he is always available to learn, improve and listen to what you expect from him. He is capable of adapting the quality in different situations."

He proved that right at the start of the second half after Tottenham had been run ragged in the opening 45 minutes and was on the

back foot after an error-strewn performance.

In the dressing room, Pochettino got the video clips out during the break.

"We showed a few actions defensively and positions in the offensive situations," Pochettino said.

Within two minutes of the restart, Tottenham was in front after Dortmund left Son unmarked to volley into the net to make it four goals in as many games since returning from the Asian Cup.

"I just had to touch the ball," Son said, praising Jan Vertonghen, who provided the cross.

Son celebrated with a trademark Tottenham handshake, but went over to Serge Aurier rather than Vertonghen.

"I feel sorry," Son laughed after the game alongside Vertonghen, "because I didn't run to him and I ran to the other side."

Vertonghen got his own chance to celebrate as Tottenham scored two late goals inside three minutes.

Vertonghen raced into the penalty area and arrived at the back post to volley in Aurier's cross in the 83rd minute.

"Technically he's just unbelievable," Son said of Vertonghen, who was playing at left wingback rather than in central defense. "He can play every position. He deserves a goal and an assist."

With Dortmund struggling, Llorente scored the third in the 86th when he got a slight touch with his head to turn in Christian Eriksen's corner.

It was a night to forget for United States international Christian Pulisic, who will be playing in London for Chelsea next season, and Jadon Sancho, the 18-year-old former Manchester City attacker who faded in the second half.

"We lost focus," Sancho said. "Son is a good player but hopefully we can handle him better in the second leg."

It is the third setback in a week for Dortmund, which was knocked out of the German Cup by Werder Bremen and then drew with Hoffenheim in the league.

"There are periods of a season when things aren't top, top, top," Dortmund manager Lucien Favre said. "We need to analyze and work hard to avoid and correct these errors."

But Dortmund has a five-point lead in the Bundesliga over Bayern Munich, while Tottenham is five points off the pace in the Premier League in third. This is first time the London team has made the knockout phase in Europe's elite competition in successive seasons. Unlike Dortmund, Tottenham has never lifted the European Cup.

In the night's other game, Real Madrid scored a later winner to beat Ajax 2-1 in Amsterdam. **AP**

SAILING

High-tech SailGP series hits the water on Sydney Harbour

BOATS skippered by Australian Olympic gold medalists Nathan Outteridge and Tom Slingsby are among the favorites in the inaugural SailGP races starting on Sydney Harbour today.

A fleet of six super-charged F50 catamarans capable of reaching speeds up to 90 kilometers per hour will represent different nations in the two-day, six-race event, with Slingsby leading the Australian boat and Outteridge the Japanese entry.

"Nathan is the favorite but I'm confident in our team and I think we can

beat him if we do our job," Slingsby said yesterday.

SailGP is the sailing league founded by tech billionaire Larry Ellison and five-time America's Cup winner Russell Coutts. It features many of the world's top sailors racing 50-foot, wing-sailed catamarans that fly across the top of waves on hydrofoils. Teams will compete at five tour stops, with the finale being a winner-take-all, USD1 million match race between the top two teams to crown the 2019 champion.

Unlike in the America's Cup, all the boats are

identical. Crews won't be allowed to make changes without approval of the measurement team.

The boats will meet in five races in Sydney with the two highest-scoring boats facing off against each other in tomorrow afternoon's final.

"I love how everyone keeps saying were the favorites, all of the guys up here have got incredible talent," Outteridge said at the skipper's media conference.

New Zealander Phil Robertson, skipper of the Chinese entry, said no one is sure what to expect.

The other three teams

will be skippered by nationals: Britain by 49er class world champion Dylan Fletcher, France by Nacra 17 world champion Billy Besson and the United States by Rome Kirby of Newport, Rhode Island, who also sailed with Oracle Team USA in the 2013 America's Cup.

After Sydney, the tour stops in San Francisco on May 4-5; New York on June 21-22; Cowes, England, on Aug. 10-11; and Marseille, France, on Sept. 20-22 for the finale that will include the winner-take-all \$1 million match race. **AP**



SailGP USA Team (left) and SailGP Australia Team practice side to side in Sydney

opinion

Kapok
Eric Sautede



THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE

Elections are in the air — it has become palpable.

Just a few days ago, Judge Song Man Lei was for the second time appointed as the president of the electoral affairs committee for the election of the Chief Executive (CE). She is joined by Victor Chi Ping Chan, the Director of the Macau SAR Government Information Bureau and the government spokesperson, who is himself sitting for the fourth time on the committee. Gone is José Chu, the former director of the Administration and Public Administration Services who retired in 2014, but in his successor Kou Peng Kuan as well as Assistant Prosecutor-General of the Public Prosecution Office Chan Tsz King and Court of Second Instance Judge Tong Hio Fong.

Elections are about law, due administrative processes, order and timely communication in Macao, and clearly about continuity as well.

During the taking of her oath, judge Song Man Lei pledged that the election of the CE would be “open, fair and honest,” and refused to make any assumption regarding a candidate in particular. Even though the exact date of the election is not yet decided, we now know that the 400-member strong electoral college that will ultimately select the new CE will itself be “elected” — for 344 of them — on June 16.

Votes are cast, but in effect the end result is highly predictable as this college is made of seven very stable functional constituencies representatives to which are added six religious figures (whose stability depends on unearthly powers), 22 of our legislators (not all of them, why would that be?), the 12 representatives of Macao to the National People’s Congress and the 16 representatives of the SAR to the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference.

A quick check at the college members back in 2009 and 2014 indicates pretty identical lists of people — I would say at least 80% alike. Then, the college is vastly dominated by businessmen, and not only in the first constituency made of 120 heavyweights from the industrial, commercial and financial sector. Obviously, people whose idea of competition is quite narrowly defined too: in this first constituency, everybody was elected in 2014 with support varying between 74.11% and 89.55% of the mere 689 valid votes.

And then, ultimately, who will they (s)elect? In 2004, 2009 and 2014, there was only one contestant for the position — quite a heavy machinery for a non-competitive election with a process extending over more than six months! Why would the 2019 edition be any different?

Yet, the talk of the town is again of two candidates. In a recent article discussing the latest decline in casino revenues, an international news agency noted that “the two likely contenders are Ho Iat Seng, president of Macao’s Legislative Assembly, and Lionel Leong, the secretary for economy and finance, which oversees the gaming industry.” Why two and not three or four, coming from security or culture?

Scarcity might have to do with the risk of being a contender: the former Secretary for Transport and Public Works — in jail for 29 years on corruption charges — was once dubbed “Mr 10%” for the score he could potentially commend in such an election. And then the most serious challenger to the sitting CE back in 2009 was Prosecutor General Ho Chio Meng — once viewed as Mr Clean — who was later convicted of hundreds counts of diverse forms of corruption and traffic of influence and then thrown in prison for 21 years.

Now, Mr Ho has openly declared that he is “prudently considering” being a candidate. Mr Ho is from an old Macao family — his father started their business empire and his sister, Ho Teng Iat is also in politics. He is the president of the Legislative Assembly. He has been a member of the National People’s Congress since 1998 and is today the only one among the 12 representatives from Macao to the standing committee of that Congress. Moreover, Mr Ho is also one of the vice-presidents of the Macao Chinese Chamber of Commerce — the true king-maker institution of the SAR. So, let’s not kid ourselves: there can be only one.

THE BRITISH IS SCHOOLGIRL ‘WANTS TO RETURN HOME’ - REPORT

One of three schoolgirls who left east London in 2015 to join the Islamic State group says she has no regrets, but wants to return to the UK.

In an interview with the Times, and quoted by BBC, Shamima Begum, now 19, talked about seeing “beheaded heads” in bins - but said that it “did not faze her”.

Speaking from a refugee camp in Syria, she said she was nine months pregnant and wanted to

come home for her baby.

She said she’d had two other children who had both died.

She also described how one of her two school friends that had left the UK with her had died in a bombing. The fate of the third girl is unclear.

Bethnal Green Academy pupils Ms Begum and Amira Abase were both 15, while Kadiza Sultana was 16, when they left the UK in February 2015.

Papua New Guinea on hunt for 275 cars missing after APEC

Nick Perry, Wellington

A Papua New Guinea police superintendent yesterday was hot on the trail of one of the many high-end cars he’s trying to recover after an international summit.

About 275 cars are missing or overdue in the impoverished Pacific nation since it hosted the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in November. Many denounced the country at the time for buying 40 expensive Maseratis to ferry around world leaders, cars which it later planned to sell.

Although the Maseratis are accounted for, other cars are not.

When The Associated Press spoke to police superintendent Dennis Corcoran by phone, he said he was heading to pick up one of the missing cars, which somebody had tried to sell.

The thief had disappeared. “The driver absconded,” Corcoran said. “But we got the vehicle.”

Corcoran wasn’t eager to elaborate much on his operation due to the “delicate” sensitivities around his work, referring further comment to Finance Secretary Ken Ngangan, who couldn’t be immediately reached.

Since the summit finished, soldiers and police have blockaded government buildin-



A selection of Maserati cars, part of the 2018 APEC forum transportation, are seen in Port Moresby

gs and stormed Parliament in an ongoing pay dispute over APEC security work.

With so many pressing needs in the nation of 7 million people, many were dismayed at the amount of money spent on the summit, hosting leaders that included U.S. Vice President Mike Pence and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Corcoran is heading a new unit in the police tasked with recovering all the state assets purchased for APEC in the three years leading up to the summit.

In a statement this week announcing the formation of the unit, Corcoran said he would address “the ongoing misuse and abuse of state assets that were bought using the people’s money.”

He said the goods had been purchased by government

agencies and then “claimed by certain individuals through unlawful means.” He asked people to return the cars and other assets immediately and for the public to provide information to help the police.

Police also announced this week that they’d arrested one APEC officer who had used his position to enter the Port Moresby wharf to pry open the fuel caps of parked APEC cars and siphon gasoline from them.

Port Moresby, the capital, has been described by the World Bank as among the world’s most violent cities due to high unemployment and brazen criminal gangs known as “raskols.” Basic medicines are scarce in Papua New Guinea and polio, eliminated from most countries, has returned. AP

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

Xinhua/Cai Yang



Snowy weather in Beijing: A visitor poses for photos in snow at the Palace Museum.

Station	Air quality
Roadside	45-65 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	25-45 Good
Ambient	40-60 Moderate

SOURCE: DSMG

WORLD BRIEFS

IRAN A suicide car bomber claimed by an al-Qaida-linked group attacked a bus carrying members of Iran’s elite Revolutionary Guard paramilitary force, killing at least 27 people and wounding 13 others, state media reported.

SYRIA U.S.-backed Syrian forces are clearing two villages in eastern Syria of remaining Islamic State militants who are hiding among the local population, and detaining others attempting to flee with the civilians, the U.S.-led coalition said yesterday.



EGYPT Lawmakers voted overwhelmingly yesterday to extend term limits for President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi until 2034, part of a package of constitutional amendments also set to further enshrine the military’s role in politics that will now face a national referendum.

ROMANIA Prosecutors applying for the post of European chief prosecutor must be treated fairly, the European Commission said yesterday, after Romania moved to block one of its own nationals.

FRANCE A former French boxer who was filmed attacking riot police officers during the yellow vest protests has been convicted of assault and given a one-year prison sentence.



VENEZUELA’s opposition-controlled National Assembly appointed a transitional board of directors for the state oil company, in a bid by congress chief Juan Guaido (pictured) to gain control of an industry that is the economic backbone of the country.

BRAZIL’s justice minister says police will investigate reports that President Jair Bolsonaro’s party gave money to so-called “front” candidates during last year’s elections.