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ALVIN'S MILLIONS TROUBLES
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MACAU'S KIM MURDER TRIAL

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WORLD BRIEFS

CHINA's top trade and monetary policy officials delivered a subtle push-back against trade demands made by Washington, giving Beijing's own interpretation of progress made in talks over the enforcement of any deal and the role of currencies. More on p10



HONG KONG Over 7,000 new microbial species in the oceans were discovered by researchers from the HKUST. The new species shed light on human's understanding of microbial biodiversity in the oceans and brought hope to the development of new drugs. More on P7



NORTH KOREA Kim Jong Un is showing signs he might fire his first rocket in 15 months. Long-time observers suspect he is bluffing. More on p12

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AVIATION TRAGEDY

Flight recorders found in Ethiopian jetliner crash

P11, 20

The plane's flight data and cockpit voice recorders were found, Ethiopian Airlines said. An airline official, however, said one of the recorders was partially damaged and "we will see what we can retrieve from it." 157 were killed.

A 10-year-old international child celebrity, Singapore-born but of mixed Chinese-Portuguese descent, was recently appointed as the Republic of Palau's honorary goodwill ambassador for tourism by the western Pacific nation's president, Tommy Remengesau.

Fondly known as "Wonder Boy", Emiliano Cyrus is a singer, musical actor, model and gymnast who leads – even after just 10 years – a vibrant international life, having performed in China, the U.S., Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines. He is also a professional kart racer who has raced in competitions on international tracks in Sri Lanka, France, Italy, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore – and Macau.

Now the child celebrity – who might be considered 'Macanese' via his mixed Chinese and Portuguese heritage – has been appointed as a goodwill ambassador for Palau tourism.

The idea is for Cyrus to promote tourism exchange between Palau and Singapore, as well as other countries in the Asia-Pacific region, as he continues to travel around performing.

"I am very pleased that Emiliano is the ambassador of Palau's Honorary Goodwill Ambassador for Tourism," said the President of the Republic of Palau, Tommy Remengesau, according to a

Macanese 'Wonder Boy' made Palau tourism ambassador



Emiliano Cyrus

press release. "He is a talented and passionate individual who is actively involved in charity and has a positive and wide-ranging influence internationally. We are very good friends and I am very touched by his love for Palau. He is most deserving of his appoint-

ment."

Excited by the appointment, Cyrus said he would perform a song for Palau that would incorporate several unique features of the country.

"I always believe in the power of song and its ability to connect

people and there's no better way to express my love for Palau but through a song," the child star said, according to the same statement.

Cyrus, who kickstarted his artist career at the age of 9, has previously been involved in promi-

nent Chinese television productions, including the CCTV Spring Festival Gala 2018, broadcasted to millions during the festive period in China. This year, he was invited back to perform on four other spring festival programs on prominent Chinese stations. **DB**

GAMING

Suncity, Imperial Pacific issue profit warnings ahead of 2018 results

MACAU junket operator Suncity Group has said it expects to record a loss for the year in its upcoming financial results to be released later this month.

In a filing to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, the company said that it is expecting to rack up losses of approximately RMB864 million (MOP1.03 billion) based on a preliminary valuation of the board.

Suncity explained in the filing that about half of the loss was due to the change in fair value of derivative financial instruments, while a further RMB289 million was needed for litigation purposes.

The full-year 2018 results mark a steep drop from a year earlier, when Suncity recor-

ded profit of about RMB128 million (MOP153 million).

Suncity group has been rapidly expanding its interest in casino operations across Asia, including projects in Vietnam, Cambodia and, most recently, upping its stake in the company that controls the Tigre de Cristal casino outside Vladivostok in Russia.

The announcement comes as Saipan casino operator Imperial Pacific International also issued a profit warning, saying that it expects to record a net loss when it publishes its 2018 financial results at month-end.

The company attributed the expected loss to falling revenue and the impairment of

trade receivables – otherwise considered uncollectable gambling debts from high rollers either unwilling or unable to honor their loans.

But other pressures on the firm may also have contributed to the poor 2018 posting, including high turnover rates in the company's senior management ranks, labor unrest over payroll disputes and typhoon-induced interruptions to its under-construction integrated resort in Saipan.

In November last year rumors circulated on social media suggesting that the company was insolvent. Imperial Pacific denied the rumors and said that it would sue those "spreading slanderous fake news." **DB**

GAMING

South Korea could raise age for casino entry

YOUNGER South Korean gamblers might be out of luck if a bill being considered by the country's parliament finds enough support. Last week, legislation was submitted to the South Korean National Assembly that would raise the minimum age for entry into casinos from its current level of 19 to 21.

Kim Kwang-soo of the country's Party for Democracy and Peace, along with nine other lawmakers, are backing the bill, which they say is necessary to help curb gambling addiction. It

seeks to make changes to two articles of the Tourism Promotion Act (TPA) – Articles 22 and 28 – and would, if approved, apply to all casinos that are licensed under the TPA.

The changes don't have wide-reaching implications for the nation's youth, but could cause frustration among international gamblers, reports Calvin Ayre. South Korea has 17 casinos, of which one, Kangwon Land, is open to South Korean gamblers. The others are strictly foreigner-only casinos.

Supporters of the bill assert that the

changes are needed because there has been a rise in gambling addiction among South Korea's youth. They point out that an age limit of 21 is similar to what is seen in Macau and Singapore, as well as in other popular gaming destinations throughout Asia.

The Korea Casino Association is reportedly considering trying to fight the bill and could introduce an opposing opinion to the country's National Assembly in order to try to prevent the minimum age from being raised. **DB**

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF (DIRECTOR) Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com
ACTING MANAGING EDITOR Daniel Beitler daniel@macaudailytimes.com
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS Eric Sautedé, Leanda Lee, Severo Portela

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

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

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ADMINISTRATOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

SECRETARY Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com

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

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MURDER TRIAL

Indonesian woman freed 2 years after killing of Kim Jong Nam



AN Indonesian woman held for two years on suspicion of killing North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's half brother was freed from custody yesterday after Malaysian prosecutors unexpectedly dropped the murder charge against her.

Siti Aisyah cried and hugged her Vietnamese co-defendant, Doan Thi Huong, before leaving the courtroom and being ushered away in an embassy car, according to a report from the Associated Press. She told reporters that she had only learned yesterday morning that she would be freed.

"I feel very happy," she said later at a news conference at the Indonesian Embassy. "I didn't expect that today will be my freedom day."

The two young women were accused of smearing VX nerve agent on Kim Jong Nam's face in an airport terminal in Kuala Lumpur on Feb. 13, 2017. They have said they thought they were taking part in a prank for a TV show. They had been the only suspects in custody after four North Korean suspects fled the country the same morning Kim was killed.

Kim, the eldest son in the cur-

rent generation of North Korea's ruling family, had been reportedly living in Macau for around a decade before his assassination. Photos published by South Korea's Yonhap news agency showed that Kim lived in a new high rise building in Macau's Taipa neighborhood across from a public park.

According to those familiar with his lifestyle in Macau, the elusive Kim Jong Nam developed a reputation for living low-key despite being well-endowed financially.

Notwithstanding his quiet lifestyle, as the elder half-brother of the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Nam represented a threat to the regime's stability with the ever-present possibility he might one day be parachuted into power.

The High Court judge discharged Aisyah without an acquittal after prosecutors applied to drop the murder charge against her. They did not give any reason.

The trial will resume Thursday, with prosecutors expected to reply to a request by Huong's lawyers asking the government to similarly withdraw the charges against her.

Indonesia's government said its continual high-level lo-

bbing resulted in Aisyah's release. The foreign ministry said in a statement that she was "deceived and did not realize at all that she was being manipulated by North Korean intelligence."

It said Aisyah, a migrant worker, believed that she was part of a reality TV show and never had any intention of killing Kim.

The ministry said that over the past two years, Aisyah's plight was raised in "every bilateral Indonesia-Malaysia meeting," including at the president's level, the vice president's level and in regular meetings of the foreign minister and other

ministers with their Malaysian counterparts.

Aisyah's release comes just a month before Indonesia's general election and is seen as a boost to President Joko Widodo, who is seeking re-election.

Aisyah thanked Widodo and his government for helping secure her release. Officials said she was expected to fly back to Jakarta.

Wearing a red headscarf and a black flowery traditional dress, Aisyah was composed during the news conference. She said that she was well treated in prison and received plenty of encouragement, but that she was eager to meet her

family again.

Prosecutor Iskandar Ahmad said that the discharge not amounting to acquittal means Aisyah can be recharged if there is fresh evidence, but that there are no such plans for now.

Meanwhile, Huong said she was shocked by the development.

"I am in shock. My mind is blank," a distraught Huong told reporters through a translator after Aisyah left.

Huong's lawyer Hisyam Teh Poh Teik said Huong felt Aisyah's discharge was unfair to her as the judge last year had found sufficient evidence to continue the murder trial against them.

"She is entitled to the same kind of consideration as Aisyah," he said. "We are making representation to the attorney general for Doan to be taken equally [...] there must be justice."

Co-defendant Huong, who has not been acquitted, said she was shocked by the development

A High Court judge last August had found there was enough evidence to infer Aisyah, Huong and the four missing North Koreans had engaged in a "well-planned conspiracy" to kill Kim Jong Nam. The defense phase of the trial had been scheduled to start in January but was delayed until yesterday.

Lawyers for the women have previously said that they were pawns in a political assassination with clear links to the North Korean Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, and that the prosecution failed to show the women had any intention to kill. Intent to kill is crucial to a murder charge under Malaysian law.

Malaysian officials have never officially accused North Korea and have made it clear they don't want the trial politicized. **DB**

Jakarta says its lobbying led to release

INDONESIA'S government says its continual high-level lobbying resulted in the release of the Indonesian woman who was charged with the murder of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's half brother in Malaysia.

The foreign ministry said in a statement yesterday that Siti Aisyah was "deceived and did not realize at all that she was being manipulated by North Korean intelligence."

It said Aisyah, a migrant worker, believed that she was part of a reality TV show and ne-

ver had any intention of killing Kim Jong Nam.

The ministry said Malaysia's attorney general used his authority under Malaysia's criminal procedure code to not continue the prosecution.

It said Aisyah's plight was raised in "every bilateral Indonesia-Malaysia meeting, both at the President's level, the Vice-President and regular meetings of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and other Ministers with their Malaysian partners."

SAR to hold civil defense drill next month

THE government is set to hold a large-scale civil defense exercise in April, partly to test the integrated command system for the management of public emergencies, Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak announced.

According to the official, the drill will involve not only personnel from the SAR's civil protection system, but also members of community associations, aiming to optimize the efficiency of the city's overall capability in responding to real emergencies.

Wong told the press that members of the public who wish to participate in the exercise will have to register with the relevant authorities.

Speaking to the press, Wong said that it is anticipated that the second phase of construction regarding the redevelopment of the Civil Protection Action Centre will be completed by September.

A portion of the space at the center has been reserved for running a radio service, which will be used for broadcasting information during public emergencies.

Wong added that the police were striving to finalize the preliminary planning phase for the service within the current year, and that the radio service would not be ready for operation prior to the anticipated start of this year's typhoon season. **LV**

CRIME

Sai Van road rage incident

Renato Marques

A local male in his twenties is being accused of negligence and the abandonment of a traffic accident victim over a road rage episode that occurred last Thursday on Sai Van Bridge, the Public Security Police Force (PSP) disclosed at a press conference yesterday.

The incident, which occurred on Thursday around 8:45 p.m., took place when the suspect, driving his car on the Sai Vai Bridge in the direction from Taipa to Barra, was hit by another vehicle driving in the lane to his right. The vehicle had collided with the car as its owner tried to exit the Sai Van area by cutting in front of him.

Both vehicles were immobilized for a few moments on the bridge, but when the driver of the second vehicle tried to get out of his car to protest, the suspect drove his car into the other vehicle, hitting it from the back in a fit of rage. He then abandoned the area, driving in the direction of Barra.

After attending to the accident, the authorities began a search for the suspect driver, locating him not long after the incident.

He was tested for alcohol and the

result was negative. Although the suspect did not provide many details to the police, it is believed that he reacted emotionally to the incident.

The case has been forwarded to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) with the driver accused of the crimes of negligence and the abandonment of a traffic accident victim as he did not check the physical safety of the people involved in the crash and he did not call the authorities to report the accident, PSP spokesperson Cheong Heon Fan noted.

TEENAGER CRASHES BORROWED CAR

In a separate case also concerning a traffic incident, a 17-year-old Macau resident has been accused of shirking his responsibilities during a traffic incident.

The case, reported to the police on Sunday morning around 10 a.m., allegedly occurred about three hours earlier that morning when the teenager was driving a car that he had borrowed from a friend on Avenida dos Jogos da Asia Oriental in Taipa and lost control of the vehicle, crashing it into a fence separating the road lane from the sidewalk.

According to the police, at the time of the arrival of the first officer, the car had sustained significant dama-

ge to its side and was tilted and spilling gasoline.

The police then found that the suspect, who admitted to driving the vehicle, was driving without a driver's license, as he is under the legal age to obtain such a document.

SEPTUAGENARIAN HIRED IN CASINO SCAM

The Judiciary Police (PJ) reported yesterday that a 71-year-old man from Hong Kong has allegedly been hired by a third person to perform a fraudulent casino chip scam.

The case was reported to the PJ by the staff of a casino in Cotai last Friday, when the man approached the cashier of the casino to exchange a gaming chip with the face value of HKD100,000 into cash.

After a brief inspection, the cashier noted that besides the chip being an old model, not in use by the casino since 2015, it was also forged.

Questioned by the PJ, the elderly man was revealed to have been hired by a third person in Hong Kong to come to Macau and try to exchange the chip for cash. He said that if the trade had been successful, he would be compensated with HKD20,000.

He also said that the man who hired him in the neighboring region is

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RENATO MARQUES



Public Security Police Force spokesperson Cheong Heon Fan (right) and his Judiciary Police counterpart

said to have many of those chips, with a total value of approximately of HKD5 million.

The suspect was transferred to the MP under the accusation of high-value fraud.

WOMAN SAYS GAMBLER RAPED HER

A woman from the mainland has filed a complaint with the Judiciary Police, saying she was raped by a man also from the

mainland with whom she had travelled to Macau to gamble.

The case, filed with the PJ on December 31, had allegedly occurred on December 10, when the woman traveled to Macau in

the company of the man.

According to the victim's report, they had arrived in Macau on December 10 and were lodged in a hotel in Cotai.

The man suggested that they should go to the room first to store their belongings there and rest before going to the casino. The woman accepted the suggestion but said that after arriving in the room, the man showered, exited the bathroom completely naked and raped her.

After that, she said they went to the casino together to gamble before heading back to the mainland the following day.

Only when returning to Macau on December 31 did the woman decide to press charges over the rape case, having been submitted to a medical examination where she showed several bruises on both her arms and legs.

Last Friday, when the suspect was trying to reenter Macau via the Outer Harbor Ferry Terminal, he was detained by the police.

He has denied all of the accusations, but the PJ believes that there is enough evidence to forward the case to the Public Prosecutions Office under the accusation of rape.

TOUR BUS DRIVER ADMITS TO DRUG ABUSE

A 24-year-old tour bus driver is being accused of drug consumption and possession of drug para-

phernalia, the PJ spokesperson informed.

The case started with an anonymous tip-off to the PJ that informed the force someone was consuming drugs in an apartment located at Rua dos Pescadores.

The PJ deployed officers to the site and found the 24-year-old in the apartment. No drugs were found at that time but an instrument used for the consumption of methamphetamines was found and the man admitted to having consumed the drug.

He also said that he had bought the drugs in the NAPE area from a mainland man for the price of MOP1,200.

MAN JUMPS FROM STARWORLD HOTEL

A 36-year-old mainland man jumped to his death from one of the floors of StarWorld Hotel on Sunday, being discovered by the hotel's security. The case was reported to the police authority at approximately 3 a.m. on Sunday.

According to hotel security, the man is suspected to have jumped from the hotel's area of refuge, a location designed to hold occupants during a fire or emergency when an evacuation may not be possible.

His death was confirmed at the scene by medical professionals and fire fighters.

The case has been forwarded to the investigation department of the Judiciary Police.

AD

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BROADWAY MACAU

Three injured in fight over child

Two women and one little girl have been injured as a result of their involvement in a physical fight, according to a message released by the Public Security Police Force. The incident was reported to have taken place in a stairwell on the fifth floor of a residential building located at the Av. do Alm. Lacerda. All three people became involved in a quarrel and fight because one woman was unhappy with the child making noise while on the stairs. One of the women is the mother of the 5-year-old girl. They sustained light injuries to their faces and heads.

Galaxy: no comment on gaming concession

The Deputy Chairman of Galaxy Entertainment Group, Francis Lui Yiu Tung, has stated that Galaxy will respond to the gaming concession issue at a later date, after the Macau SAR government announces its intentions regarding the renewal of gaming concession, according to a report by TDM. Lui's short response came during his visit to Beijing amid the 13th Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. According to the report, Lui remarked that the success of Galaxy Phase 1 and Phase 2 comes from its non-gaming aspects, which will be increased in the future during Phase 3 and Phase 4.

SSM plans to increase nurse numbers by up to 15 percent

The Health Bureau (SSM) has revealed that the bureau has plans to increase the number of nurses each year by 10 to 15 percent, according to the SSM's reply to lawmaker Wong Kit Cheng's inquiry. Besides hiring more nurses, SSM Director Lei Chin Ion said that it will continue establishing special subsidies and organizing talks, as well as increasing the number of nursery classes and quotas of nurses in nursing institutes, therefore encouraging local youth to join the nursing profession. Lei also noted that the SAR government will continue to pay attention to salary and social welfare issues in both public and private medical organizations.

ARTS

AF kicks off exhibition from first artist-in-residence project

A photo exhibition that seeks to capture the stories of the city began at the Rui Cunha Foundation yesterday, showcasing 24 photographs of the region through the perspective of a first-timer in the SAR.

The Alliance Française de Macao (AF) invited Christophe Charpenel, a photographer in the world of jazz to create the exhibition, titled "First Impressions".

According to AF, he is known for his ability to capture moments in the fast-paced language of improvisation. He has worked with many jazz artists previously.

"The idea of this project was to have him jump out of his comfort zone, to switch roles, acting as the improvisers that he usually works with," AF noted.

Charpenel was invited to Macau for a one-week residency to complete the project, yet no specific instructions or suggestions were given to him.

Sa Ng, manager of the cultural affairs of AF, explained that the organization only took him on a tour of the city for a day in October, showing him the streets and atmosphere of the whole city.

After nearly a week, the photographer had captured a series of photographs that tell the story of local residents, places in the SAR and general happenings.



Sa Ng, manager of the cultural affairs of AF, talk about the photographs on display

"Christophe has been mainly [active] in the jazz scene in Europe and America. He has the ability to capture the soul of that moment, so we gave him a challenge to come to Macau and instead of him shooting [...] the improvisers, we want to see what he can come up with if he is the improviser," Ng explained.

"[The exhibition] sums up that [Macau] is not just what outsiders would usually see, but Christophe was really able to capture some

soulful moments," he added.

According to Ng, the association has further plans of showcasing art in Macau to connect the city to France and Europe through the platform.

The current exhibition, which will run until March 19, will also be showcased at local institutions and universities.

AF is in discussions with the University of Macau and City University of Macau, amongst others.

"First Impressions" will also be showcased in France after exhibiting in the city.

"We will bring this to France and show them a side of Macau. For us, we're really not just into bringing France to Macau, but we want to bring Macau to France as well," Ng explained.

Ng said that AF is continually working to strengthen the connection between the two regions, which includes bringing European artists to the SAR. LV

DSAL to re-examine illegal employment punishment

YESTERDAY, on the sidelines of the meeting of the Standing Committee for the Coordination of Social Affairs, the Director of the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL), Wong Chi Wong, said that the bureau will re-examine the administrative punishments for the illegal employment of drivers who are not allowed to drive in Macau.

Wong further revealed that the bureau had been commanded by the Secretary for Economy and Finance to do so.

When asked whether the punishment is too light, Wong did not answer directly, stating that the bureau will consider regulations regarding the employment of non-local workers.

According to Wong, the employer behind the most

recent fatal accident, which killed a 22-year-old local girl, will be banned from applying for a quota of non-local workers in the next two years.

In addition, during yesterday's meeting, the government proposed an increase in the basic amount of compensation for unreasonable dismissal of employees from MOP20,000 to MOP21,000. The employers' representatives agreed with this increase. The employees' representatives, however, thought that the compensation limit should be abolished.

The employees' representatives suggested that if employees are unfairly dismissed, the compensation should be calculated on the basis of their actual monthly salary and the length of their service. JZ

MACAU INC

Chau sheds light on further Suncity expansion

SUNCITY Group founder Alvin Chau has stated that the group will strive to develop a comprehensive and diversified business this year, which includes opening its own resorts and expanding its global presence, as cited in the March issue of Macau Inc., which is out now.

Chau said that the group would utilize its local advantages to explore "special tourism and catering hotspots, and tailor unique travel experiences" for its customers.

He further disclosed that the group is set to launch a new smartphone app that will offer travel information, including recommended travel itineraries in Macau, Manila, Da Nang, Phnom Penh, Sydney, Melbourne and Incheon.

Meanwhile, this month's issue of Macau Inc. also highlights the Greater Bay Area master plan, as well as the development of Henqin as a strategic center.



The issue also tackled Four Seasons' debut of nine new hotels and resorts around the globe, along with the continued expansion of its residential portfolio.

The luxury brand continues its steady portfolio expansion with openings in new markets and the much-anticipated debut of its first-ever standalone Private Residences in London.

HONG KONG

Researchers discover over 7,000 new marine species



OVER 7,000 new microbial species in the oceans were discovered by researchers from the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST), which made the results public yesterday.

The new species found including acidobacteria, a natural medicinal phylum with the CRISPR gene editing system discovered at sea for the first time, shedded new light on human's understanding of microbial biodiversity in the oceans and brought hope to the development of new drugs.

Led by Qian Peiyuan, a professor of the Department of Ocean Science at HKUST, the research team collaborated with peers from the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology in Saudi Arabia, University of Georgia in the United States and University of Queensland in Australia on sourcing water samples across Pacific, Atlantic and Indian Oceans.

Over a span of eight years, the team developed biofilms with the water samples on different materials, eventually discovering more

than 7,000 new biofilm-forming species and 10 new bacterial phyla, breaking the existing belief that the world has only 35,000 marine microbial species and 80 bacterial phyla.

Acidobacteria, one of the new marine phyla identified in this research known to only exist in terrestrial soils previously, has been used for developing novel antibiotics and anti-tumor drugs due to its high level of biosynthetic gene clusters.

This is the first ocean species found to contain gene-editing system CRISPR, which is a family of DNA sequences found within the genomes of bacterial organisms like Escherichia coli. It confers resistance to foreign plasmids or phages and contains gene-editing capabilities.

The CRISPR technology is widely used in agro-industrial and pharmaceutical genetic engineering to improve yield for soybeans, corn and rice, for instance, through enhancing the resistance of crops to pollution and natural disasters.

"The discovery of new marine microbial species has not only improved our understanding of ocean biodiversity, but more importantly, these species have big potential, both in terms of facilitating our understanding of lives and offering new clues to our search of new treatments for diseases," said Qian.

The finding was published in the scientific journal Nature Communications. **MDT/Xinhua**

MACAU

Si Ka Lon proposes Zhuhai's Ladrões Islands could house Chinese naval base

DURING the 13th Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in Beijing, lawmaker Si Ka Lon proposed that Macau and Zhuhai should cooperate in developing the Ladrões Islands, which belong to Zhuhai.

Si suggests that the islands could also be used to build a naval training base for the Chinese navy. In addition, Si wants the first training ship of the Chinese navy to be named "Macau" as this year marks both the 70th anniversary of the new China and the

20th anniversary of the Macau handover.

Along with Si, three other CPPCC members, Sio Chi Wai, Lau Ngai Leung and Kou Hoi In, made a joint proposal in Beijing. The four proposed that mainland China should establish a green pass card for

the Greater Bay Area's (GBA) government officials and businessmen, so that they may enjoy fast immigration channels.

They also believe that logistics is the core of the development of the GBA. As such, they propose a singular recognition for

logistics in the GBA in order to reduce immigration time.

In addition, CPPCC member Zhang Mingxing voiced, in Beijing, that Mandarin and simplified Chinese should be promoted among the Macau youth.

Moreover, yesterday, the head of the Ministry of Science and Technology of China, Wang Zhigang, stated that his Ministry has completed a large number of works contributing to the development of Macau's science and innovation. These works include opening mainland China's financial sponsorship for science research to Macau, and building four State Key Laboratories in Macau, according to a TDM report. **JZ**

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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

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Hong Kong tightens liquidity with USD192 million peg defense

Richard Frost, Tian Chen

HONG Kong faces the likelihood of rising borrowing costs after the city's de facto central bank intervened to defend its currency peg for the first time since August.

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority bought HKD1.51 billion (USD192 million) of local dollars during London and New York trading hours after the currency fell to the weak end of its trading band, it said in a statement Saturday. The move will reduce the aggregate balance, a measure of interbank liquidity, to a decade low of HKD74.8 billion.

While the size of the buying was small relative to some of the HKMA's interventions last year, continued weakness in the currency may prompt the central bank to drain more liquidity. That would intensify pressure on home values in the world's most expensive property market, and weigh on the city's economy. Just 11 months ago the aggregate balance stood at about HKD180 billion.

"The Hong Kong dollar will remain under pressure in the near term, so the local authorities will intervene further to defend the peg," said Irene Cheung, a senior strategist at Australia & New Zealand Banking Group. "Interbank borrowing costs will rise gradually due to the liquidity drainage, but they won't spike as the scale of interven-

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tion will be smaller compared with last year."

The Hong Kong dollar was little changed at HKD7.8497 per greenback as of 5:18 p.m. local time. The three-month interbank borrowing costs on the currency, known as Hibor, climbed the most since December, while the one-month tenor rose to the highest since Jan. 10 on Monday.

So far, the government - which spent years unsuccessfully trying to cool the housing market as the U.S. held borrowing costs near zero - appears sanguine about the prospect of

tighter liquidity.

The outflow of funds from the Hong Kong dollar is an "inevitable process" as the monetary environment normalizes, HKMA Deputy Chief Executive Howard Lee said in the statement. He said it wouldn't be surprising if the Hong Kong dollar again weakened to the bottom of its trading band, and the HKMA "stands ready" to defend it.

Hong Kong effectively imports U.S. monetary policy thanks to the currency peg, even if local rates don't always track those across the Pacific.

While last year's interventions helped the one-month Hibor climb to a decade-high of about 2.4 percent in December, the cost of borrowing has tumbled recently. The rate fell to as low as 0.91 percent in February, compared with 2.49 percent for U.S. Libor. The gap makes it profitable to short the Hong Kong dollar, which has been near the weak end of its band for weeks.

Abundant liquidity in the currency market, weak demand for loans and a lack of large-scale initial public offerings in Hong Kong have contributed to the

rate gap, Lee said.

More intervention is possible, though the security of the peg isn't in doubt, said Bipan Rai, head of North American foreign-exchange strategy at Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce.

"Reserve levels have been built up significantly over the past decade and the HKMA still has an ample amount of reserves to defend the USD/HKD range for now," Rai said. "It'll likely be tested a few times, which may see further intervention. But any talk of the peg giving way is an extreme long shot." **Bloomberg**

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Portugal's Prime Minister António Costa

EUROPEAN UNION

Portugal's Costa opposes strategy of creating European champions

Joao Lima

PORTUGUESE Prime Minister António Costa said he opposes a strategy of creating large European corporate champions at the expense of competition within the region.

"We can't accept it when some large member states say it's essential to create big champions at the global scale, merging European companies, sacrificing competition in the internal market and sacrificing the development potential of companies from countries that need to make a greater poten-

tial development effort," Costa said at a Portuguese Socialist Party meeting on Saturday, according to a party website.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron have argued that European companies need to bulk up in order to better compete with Chinese giants, and Merkel plans to raise the issue at a European Union summit next week. Margrethe Vestager, the EU antitrust chief who last month vetoed plans for a Franco-German trainmaker, has countered that you can't build European cham-

pions by undermining competition or you remove the pressure to keep prices low and improve the quality of products and services.

Costa, who leads the Socialists and faces a general election in October, also spoke against European protectionism in the area of technological innovation and called for investment, according to the website.

"We don't have to complain about the innovation that others do," Costa said. "We have to complain about the innovation that Europe hasn't done, and so it's been losing the

race in relation to other economic areas. We have to respond positively, investing in innovation."

Chinese investors are major shareholders in Portugal's biggest energy companies as well as in financial firms. China Three Gorges Corp. and CNIC Co. Ltd. hold 28 percent of utility Energias de Portugal (EDP) SA. State Grid International of China is the biggest shareholder in power and gas grid operator Redes Energeticas Nacionais (REN) SA. Fosun Group is the biggest investor in Banco Comercial Portugues SA and controls insurer Fidelidade. **Bloomberg**

Courtrooms to canola fields: Huawei-US tensions span globe

Joe McDonald, Beijing

CHINESE tech giant Huawei's tensions with Washington, which says the telecom equipment maker is a security risk, stretch across four continents from courtrooms to corporate boardrooms to Canadian canola fields.

In the latest twist, Huawei Technologies Ltd. is asking a court in Texas to strike down a legal ban on the government using its equipment or dealing with any contractor that does.

Washington is trying to persuade European and other allies to shun the biggest maker of network technology as their phone carriers invest billions of dollars in upgrading to next-generation communications.

The company denies accusations it might facilitate Chinese spying or is controlled by the ruling Communist Party. Chinese authorities say the United States is exaggerating security concerns to block a potential competitor.

Meanwhile, U.S. prosecutors are trying to extradite Huawei's chief financial officer from Canada to face charges she lied to banks about dealings with Iran.

SECURITY CONCERNS

U.S. authorities say Huawei might facilitate Chinese spying by installing "backdoors" in its equipment for eavesdropping or sharing secrets about customers. The company's U.S. sales plunged after a congressional panel in 2012 labeled Huawei and Chinese rival ZTE Corp.



security risks and told phone carriers to avoid them. Huawei denies it is a risk and complains Washington has released no evidence or details of its accusations. Australia, Japan, Taiwan and some other governments have imposed curbs on use of Huawei technology over security concerns. The company operates testing centers in Britain, Canada, Germany and Belgium for governments to examine its technology.

US LAWSUIT

Huawei is asking a U.S. federal court in Texas to strike down part of this year's military appropriations bill that bars the government from using the Chinese vendor's equipment or dealing with any contractor that does. The company says the measure improperly singles out Huawei for punishment without trial and amounts to a

"death sentence." American legal experts say Huawei's claims will be hard to prove but the company has few other options.

US ALLIES

American officials are lobbying European and other allies to avoid Huawei, with limited success. That threatens to block Huawei, a leading developer of fifth-generation technology, from major markets where carriers are preparing to invest billions of dollars in upgrading networks. European governments have balked at banning Huawei outright. Germany says it won't exclude any suppliers in advance and instead will set "data protection" standards vendors must meet. Despite U.S. pressure, Huawei has announced contracts with American allies including the United Arab Emirates to supply network technology.

CHINA-CANADA

Huawei's chief financial officer is fighting U.S. efforts to extradite her from Canada to face charges of lying to banks about dealings with Iran in violation of trade sanctions. Meng Wanzhou, who is the daughter of Huawei's founder, was arrested Dec. 1 at the Vancouver airport. The arrest strained Chinese-Canadian relations. Beijing has arrested two Canadians, a former diplomat and a businessman, in what is widely seen as an effort to pressure Canada to release Meng. She is free on bail and living in a Vancouver mansion she owns, while the Canadians arrested in China are barred from seeing relatives or lawyers. Chinese authorities have meanwhile slowed imports of Canadian canola, an oilseed crop, by imposing more stringent inspections. A court in Vancouver is to set a date on

May 8 for an extradition hearing. Meng has filed a lawsuit accusing Canadian authorities of violating her rights by questioning and searching her before telling her she was under arrest.

CRIMINAL CHARGES

Huawei is accused of stealing technology behind a robot T-Mobile USA, Inc. uses to test smartphones. The Chinese company pleaded not guilty this month in federal court in Seattle. Two Huawei subsidiaries face 10 counts including theft of trade secrets and conspiracy. Prosecutors say a Huawei employee removed a robot arm from T-Mobile's lab and sent measurements and photos to China. Huawei says the employee acted on his own and was fired. A federal jury in Seattle awarded T-Mobile USD4.8 million in damages in 2017.

TECHNOLOGY COMPETITION

Huawei is at the center of U.S.-Chinese tension over Beijing's technology ambitions and complaints the communist government steals or pressures foreign companies to hand over know-how. The United States and other trading partners complain Chinese support for technology development violates Beijing's market-opening obligations.

BUSINESS IMPACT

Huawei says the U.S. criticism so far has had little impact on sales outside the United States. The company's global revenue forecast for 2018 is \$100 billion and its founder, Ren Zhengfei, says this year's target is \$125 billion. However, Huawei's chief legal officer, Song Liuping, says the American legal restrictions are hurting the company's reputation abroad. **AP**

TRADE WAR

Officials push against US demands on enforcement, yuan

CHINA'S top trade and monetary policy officials this weekend delivered a subtle push-back against trade demands made by Washington, delivering Beijing's own interpretation of progress made in talks over the enforcement of any deal and the role of currencies.

People's Bank of China governor Yi Gang said the two sides have reached consensus on many crucial issues, and have discussed previous commitments made by

Group of 20 nations on avoiding competitive devaluation of currencies. They also talked about respecting the "autonomy" of each other's monetary policy, he said.

While Yi's comments address U.S. concerns over China's potential depreciation of the yuan in order to blunt the impact of tariffs imposed by the Trump administration, they evaded any mention of a one-sided pledge by Beijing to hold its currency stable. That issue has been a key sticking

point in talks in recent weeks, as President Donald Trump pushes for a deal.

By playing down the chances of a currency commitment solely by China, Yi aligned with Vice Commerce Minister Wang Shouwen, who on Saturday said that any enforcement mechanism for a prospective trade deal must be "two way, fair and equal." Former high ranking officials have said that the deal will be seen as lopsided unless it also binds the

U.S. to address China's own grievances.

RESPECT AUTONOMY

Asian stocks kicked off yesterday mixed following the worst week for global equities since mid-December. The dollar nudged up after Friday's retreat.

"The two sides discussed issues on the yuan including the need to abide by previous commitments made by the G-20 nations including not to engage in competitive depreciation and

to communicate closely on currency issues," Yi said at a press conference during the annual National People's Congress legislative meetings.

"The negotiators discussed the necessity to respect the autonomy of each other's monetary policy, a market-oriented foreign exchange mechanism and the disclosure of information according to International Monetary Fund standards," Yi added.

The yuan has surged 2.3 percent against a basket of trading partners' currencies this year amid optimism China and the U.S. are edging toward a resolution of their trade dispute.

Trump has previously accused China of gaming its currency to gain a

competitive advantage, though his Treasury Department has repeatedly declined to name Beijing a manipulator in its semi-annual reports on foreign-exchange markets.

While the U.S. has considered continuing to use the threat of tariffs in order to hold China to the terms of an agreement, such an arrangement risks raising the perception among the Chinese public that the nation is being bullied by the U.S.

"China will not simply fall in line," said Katrina Ell at Moody's Analytics Inc. in Sydney. "While it is willing to make changes to its industrial policies, it also needs to not be seen as bowing to the U.S. demands."

Bloomberg



AVIATION TRAGEDY

Beijing grounds Boeing 737 Max 8 planes after Ethiopia crash

Christopher Bodeen, Beijing

CHINA'S civilian aviation authority ordered all Chinese airlines to temporarily ground their Boeing 737 Max 8 planes yesterday after one of the aircraft crashed in Ethiopia.

The Civil Aviation Administration of China said the order was issued at 9:00 a.m. yesterday and would last nine hours.

It said the order was "taken in line with the management principle of zero tolerance for security risks," because the crash was the second after another of the planes fell into the ocean off the coast of Indonesia in similar circumstances on Oct. 29, killing all aboard.

Further notice would be issued after consultation with the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration and Boeing, the administration said.

Eight Chinese nationals were among the 157 people aboard the Boeing 737 Max 8 operated by Ethiopian Airlines when it went down shortly after takeoff from the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa Sunday, leaving no survivors.

The crash in Ethiopia could renew safety questions about the newest version of Boeing's popular 737 airliner since the plane was new and the weather was clear at the time. Finding something

wrong, the pilots tried to return to the airport but never made it.

In those circumstances, the accident is eerily similar to the October crash in which a 737 Max 8 flown by Indonesia's Lion Air plunged into the Java Sea minutes after takeoff, killing all 189 people on the plane. But safety experts cautioned against quickly drawing too many parallels between the two crashes.

William Waldo, an aviation-safety professor at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, said suspicion will be raised because the same type of plane appeared to crash the same way — a fatal nose-dive that left wreckage in tiny pieces.

"Investigators are not big believers in coincidence," he said.

Waldo said Boeing will look more closely at the flight-management system and automation on the Max. But he noted that it is very early, and more will be known after investigators find and analyze the Ethiopian plane's black boxes.

Alan Diehl, a former National Transportation Safety Board investigator, said the similarities included both crews encountering a problem shortly after takeoff, and reports of large variations in vertical speed during ascent, "clearly suggesting a potential controllability problem" with the Ethiopian

jetliner.

But there are many possible explanations, Diehl said, including engine problems, pilot error, weight load, sabotage or bird strikes. He said Ethiopian has a good reputation, but investigators will look into the plane's maintenance, especially since that may have been an issue in the Lion Air investigation.

■ The order was 'taken in line with the management principle of zero tolerance for security risks'

By contrast, the Ethiopian Airlines CEO told reporters that a maintenance check-up did not find any problems with the plane before Sunday's flight, "so it is hard to see any parallels with the Lion Air crash yet," said Harro Ranter, founder of the Aviation Safety Network, which compiles information about accidents worldwide.

"I do hope though that people

will wait for the first results of the investigation instead of jumping to conclusions based on the very little facts that we know so far," he said.

Boeing representatives did not immediately respond for comment. The company tweeted that it was "deeply saddened to learn of the passing of the passengers and crew" on the Ethiopian Airlines Max airplane.

The Chicago-based company said it would send a technical team to the crash site to help Ethiopian and U.S. investigators.

A spokesman for the NTSB said the U.S. agency was sending a team of four to assist Ethiopian authorities. Boeing and the U.S. investigative agency are also involved in the Lion Air probe.

Indonesian investigators have not stated a cause for the Lion Air crash, but they are examining whether faulty readings from a sensor might have triggered an automatic nose-down command to the plane, which the Lion Air pilots fought unsuccessfully to overcome. The automated system kicks in if sensors indicate that a plane is about to lose lift, or go into an aerodynamic stall. Gaining speed by diving can prevent a stall.

The Lion Air plane's flight data recorder showed problems with an airspeed indicator on four flight-

ts, although the airline initially said the problem was fixed.

Days after the Oct. 29 accident, Boeing sent a notice to airlines that faulty information from a sensor could cause the plane to automatically point the nose down. The notice reminded pilots of the procedure for handling such a situation, which is to disable the system causing the automatic nose-down movements.

Pilots at some airlines, however, including American and Southwest, protested that they were not fully informed about the new system. Boeing Chairman and CEO Dennis Muilenburg said in December that the Max is a safe plane, and that Boeing did not withhold operating details from airlines and pilots.

Diehl, the former NTSB investigator, said the Ethiopian Airlines pilots should have been aware of that issue from press coverage of the Lion Air crash.

The 737 is the best-selling airliner in history, and the Max is the newest version of it, with more fuel-efficient engines. The Max is a central part of Boeing's strategy to compete with European rival Airbus.

Boeing has delivered about 350 737 Max planes and has orders for more than 5,000. It is already in use by many airlines including American, United and Southwest.

The Lion Air incident does not seem to have harmed Boeing's ability to sell the Max. Boeing's stock fell nearly 7 percent on the day of the Lion Air crash. Since then it has soared 26 percent higher, compared with a 4 percent gain in the Standard & Poor's 500 index. **AP**



NORTH KOREA

Kim Jong Un seen losing more than gaining if he tests missile

By Youkyung Lee

NORTH Korean leader Kim Jong Un is showing signs he might fire his first rocket in 15 months. Long-time observers suspect he is bluffing.

Two days after Kim's summit with U.S. President Donald Trump broke down over sanctions relief and disarmament steps last month, satellite images showed that North Korea was rebuilding a long-range rocket site it recently dismantled. The activity suggests that the country could be preparing to launch a missile or satellite that would push back against Trump while providing valuable data to improve his weapons capability.

"It is a big gamble," said Jenny Town, managing editor for the North Korea-focused 38 North website. "If North Korea does

launch a satellite, it could derail all of North Korea's diplomatic goodwill built up over the past year."

Besides potentially angering Trump, North Korea must avoid undercutting support for sanctions relief from China and Russia. Both nations, which wield vetoes on the United Nations Security Council, approved the penalties after the country tested nuclear bombs and ballistic missiles in defiance of international prohibitions.

Any launch would be the first since Kim fired off an intercontinental ballistic missile in November 2017 capable of reaching any U.S. city and declared his weapons program complete. Just prepping a potential launch site sends a pointed message to Trump, who has repeatedly cited Kim's decision to refrain from

weapons tests to justify his controversial decision to engage the North Korean leader one on one.

'PERMANENTLY STOP'

North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho told a rare news conference after the Hanoi talks that Kim had pledged to not to restart testing. "During this summit, we expressed intent to give commitment in a paper form that we permanently stop nuclear tests and test-launch of long-range rockets, to ease the U.S. concerns," Ri said March 1.

Images released last week by Beyond Parallel - part of the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies - showed that North Korea was rebuilding a long-range rocket site at the Sohae Launch Facility. The site was dismantled in an apparent show of goodwill

after Trump's first summit with Kim in June and the U.S. president said he would be "very disappointed" if it was being rebuilt.

SPY SATELLITES

A separate report showed increased activity just before the February summit at a rocket-production facility called Sanumdong in the Pyongyang area, where long-range missiles and space launch vehicles are constructed.

Town, who's also a research fellow at the Washington-based Stimson Center, said it was too early to say what North Korea was doing based only on satellite imagery. The regime might be preparing an actual launch or going through the motions to increase its leverage, knowing that what it does is watched by U.S. spy satellites, she said.

U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton declined to speculate about Kim's intentions when asked about the reports Sunday, saying "we see exactly what they're doing now." "The leverage is on our side right now, not on North Korea's," Bolton said on ABC's "This Week."

SIMILAR TECHNOLOGY

The latest UN resolution punishing the regime for its 2017 ballistic missile test called for the suspension of any launches using ballistic-missile technology. That means even a civilian satellite launch would be a violation, said Oh Joon, a former South Korean ambassador to the UN.

"China and Russia won't be able to say that North Korea has been abiding by the resolutions and sanctions should be eased," Oh said.

A space launch could provide North Korea's missile program a chance to test ICBM engines and guidance systems, said Jeffrey Lewis, director of the East Asia Nonproliferation Program at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in Monterey, California.

"The technology for making sure you put the satellite into the right orbit is the same technology for making sure the missile is on the right course," Lewis said, noting that previous North Korean launches used older technology. "There is also the possibility that they will take one of these new missiles, paint it white and put a space logo on it."

Kim could also be prepping the launch facilities to increase their value in future talks with the U.S., said Go Myong-Hyun, a research fellow at Asan Institute for Policy Studies in Seoul. North Korea's offer to close parts of its main nuclear research facility in Yongbyon in return for sanctions relief didn't satisfy Trump in Hanoi.

"It is trying to change the view within the U.S. administration and outside that what North Korea's offered was not good enough," Go said. "North Korea's message is that doing a deal with it and easing sanctions are the best way to stop its provocations." **Bloomberg**

SOUTH KOREA

K-Pop takes a hit after Big Bang singer named in sex probe

By Heejin Kim

THE popularity of K-Pop is taking a dive - at least in the stock market - after South Korean police confirmed a member of the Big Bang boy band is being investigated as part of a

probe into prostitution at Seoul nightclubs.

Initial media reports surfaced last week and have divided the band's young fan base on social media. Stocks of talent agencies took a plunge yesterday after Yonhap News named

Seungri, nicknamed "Korea's Great Gatsby" for his opulent lifestyle, as a suspect in the probe involving prostitutes at clubs in the Gangnam area in Seoul. Prostitution is illegal in South Korea.

A police officer at the

Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency today confirmed the Yonhap News report. The officer declined to provide their name due to an internal policy. Representatives of YG Entertainment Inc., which manages Big Bang, weren't imme-

diately available for comment.

YG Entertainment slid as much as 14 percent. SM Entertainment Co., known for boy bands including EXO, fell as much as 11 percent, while JYP Entertainment Corp., the manager of popular girl group TWICE, dropped as much as 4.5 percent.

"I guess I need to wait until the issue of Seungri is resolved," said Yoon Joonwon, a fund manager at HDC Asset Management, who holds "a few

shares" in K-Pop stocks.

Big Bang, a boy band formed in 2006 by YG Entertainment, is currently on hiatus. Seungri is starting his two-year mandatory military service from March 25, according to Yonhap.

On social media, some fans remained loyal to the singer and the band. Under the #SeungriDeservesBetter, user ayobigbang wrote: "We call on the real fans' voice, do not fall into the shameless trap, we support Seungri!" **Bloomberg**

JAPAN

Court rejects Ghosn's request to attend Nissan board meeting

Yuri Kageyama, Tokyo

A Japanese court has rejected a request by former Nissan chairman Carlos Ghosn, released on bail last week, to attend the Japanese auto-maker's board meeting today.

Nissan dismissed Ghosn as chairman after his Nov. 19 arrest, but he remains on the board. The Tokyo District Court said it rejected Ghosn's request yesterday but did not elaborate on the reasons.

It had been unclear whether Ghosn could attend the board meeting. The court's approval was needed based on restrictions imposed for his release on bail. The restrictions say he cannot tamper with evidence, and attending the board meeting could be seen as putting pressure on Nissan employees.

Prosecutors had been expected to argue against his attendance. They were not available for immediate comment.

Ghosn has been charged with



falsifying financial reports in underreporting his compensation and breach of trust in making payments to a Saudi businessman and having Nissan shoulder investment losses.

He insists he is innocent, saying the compensation was never decided or paid, the payments were for legitimate services and Nissan never suffered the losses.

Since his release on March 6

from Tokyo Detention Center on 1 billion yen (USD9 million) bail, he has been spotted taking walks in Tokyo with his family, but he has not made any comments.

His attempt to exercise what his lawyer, Junichiro Hironaka, called his "duty" by attending the board meeting signals one way he may be fighting back.

Hironaka has said Ghosn will speak to reporters soon. A date

for a news conference has not been announced.

Nissan said yesterday that Renault Chairman Jean-Dominique Senard, Renault Chief Executive Thierry Bollore, Nissan Motor Co. CEO Hiroto Saikawa, and Osamu Masuko, the chairman and CEO of Mitsubishi Motors Corp., will hold a joint news conference today after the board meeting.

Nissan appears determined to highlight new leadership without Ghosn. It is part of an alliance with Renault SA of France, and more recently with Japan's Mitsubishi Motors, that was largely cobbled together by Ghosn, who led Nissan for two decades.

Nissan, which makes the March subcompact, Leaf electric car and Infiniti luxury models, has denounced Ghosn for alleged misconduct. A decision at a shareholders' meeting is needed to remove Ghosn from the board. A shareholders' meeting is scheduled for next month. AP

PAKISTAN

Anti-graft tribunal indicts ex-premier, six others

A Pakistani anti-graft tribunal has indicted former Prime Minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf and six others over millions of dollars in losses because of delays to a power project.

Yesterday's indictments came years after the country's anti-graft body, called National Accountability Bureau, concluded in its findings that Ashraf and six other officials and politicians had caused the government severe losses over the Nandipur project. Ashraf served as prime minister in 2012.

One of the accused politicians, Babar Awan, is a senior leader of Prime Minister Imran Khan Pakistan's Tehreek-e-Insaf party.

Khan came into power in last year's parliamentary elections after campaigning on promises to route corruption from the government. His predecessor, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, was removed from office over corruption allegations. Sharif is currently in prison and facing multiple trials. AP

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USA

Trump reviving his border wall fight with new budget request



Lisa Mascaro, Washington

PRESIDENT Donald Trump is reviving his border wall fight, preparing a new budget that will seek USD8.6 billion for his signature project, impose steep spending cuts to other domestic programs and set the stage for another fiscal battle.

Budget documents like the one Trump released yesterday (Macau time) are often seen as just a starting point of negotiation. Fresh off the longest government shutdown in history, Trump's 2020 proposal shows he is eager to confront Congress again to boost defense spending and cut \$2.7 trillion in nondefense spending over a decade.

Titled "A Budget for a Better America: Promises Kept. Taxpayers First," Trump's proposal "embodies fiscal responsibility," said Russ Vought, the acting director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Vought said the administration has "prioritized reining in reckless Washington spending" and shows "we can return to fiscal sanity."

Speaking on CNBC, Vought confirmed that the \$8.6 billion border request was part of Trump's spending blueprint for the 2020 budget year, which begins Oct. 1. It would pay for hundreds of miles of new barriers along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Vought said "the border situation is deteriorating by the day" with "record numbers of apprehensions."

An administration official said Trump's budget proposes increasing defense spending to \$750 billion — and standing up the new Space Force as a military branch — while reducing nondefense accounts by 5 percent, with cuts recommended to safety-net programs used by many Americans.

The plan sticks to budget caps that both parties have routinely broken in recent years and promises to come into balance in 15 years, relying in part on economic growth that may be uncertain.

The official was not authorized to discuss budget details publicly before yesterday's release of the plan and spoke on condition of anonymity.

While pushing down spending in some areas, including the Environmental Protection Agency, the proposal will seek to increase funding in others to align with the president's priorities, according to one official.

The administration will invest more than \$80 billion for veterans services, a nearly 10 percent increase from current levels, including "significant" investments in rehabilitation, employment assistance and suicide prevention.

It will also increase resources to fight the opioid epidemic with money for prevention, treatment, research and recovery, the administration said. And it seeks to shift some federal student loan costs to colleges and universities.

The proposal will also include \$1 billion for a child care fund that would seek to improve access to care for underserved populations, a White House official confirmed. The one-time allocation is championed by the president's daughter Ivanka Trump, who has focused on economic advancement for women in her role as a White House adviser.

By adhering to strict budget caps, Trump is signaling a fight ahead. The president has resisted big, bipartisan budget deals that break the caps — threatening to veto one last year — but Congress will need to find agreement on spending levels to avoid another federal shutdown in fall. To stay within the caps, the budget shifts a portion of the defense spending to an overseas contingency fund, which some fiscal hawks will view as an accounting gimmick.

White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow said Trump's budget "points a steady glide path" toward lower spending and borrowing as a share of the nation's economy. He also told "Fox

News Sunday" that there was no reason to "obsess" about deficits, and expressed confidence that economic growth would top 3 percent in 2019 and beyond. Others have predicted lower growth.

■ Vought confirmed that the USD8.6 billion border request was part of Trump's spending blueprint for the 2020 budget year

But the Democratic chairman of the House Budget Committee, Rep. John Yarmuth of Kentucky, called the proposed cuts to essential services "dangerous." He said Trump added nearly \$2 trillion to deficits with the GOP's "tax cuts for the wealthy and large corporations, and now it appears his budget asks the American people to pay the price."

The border wall, though, remains a signature issue for the

president and is poised to stay at the forefront of his agenda, even though Congress has resisted giving him more money for it.

Leading Democrats immediately rejected the proposal.

"Congress refused to fund his wall and he was forced to admit defeat and reopen the government. The same thing will repeat itself if he tries this again," said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York. They said the money "would be better spent on rebuilding America."

In seeking \$8.6 billion for more than 300 miles of new border wall, the budget request would more than double the \$8.1 billion already potentially available to the president for the wall after he declared a national emergency at the border last month in order to circumvent Congress — although there's no guarantee he'll be able to use that money if he faces a legal challenge, as is expected. The standoff over the wall led to a 35-day partial government shutdown, the longest in U.S. history.

Along with border wall money, the proposed budget will also increase funding to increase the "manpower" of Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers and Customs and Border Patrol at a time when many Democrats are calling for cuts — or even the elimination — of those areas. The budget also proposes policy changes to end sanctuary cities, the administration said.

The budget would arrive as the Senate readies to vote this week to terminate Trump's national emergency declaration. The Democratic-led House already did so, and a handful of Republican senators, uneasy over what they see as an overreach of executive power, are expected to join Senate Democrats in following suit. Congress appears to have enough votes to reject Trump's declaration but not enough to overturn a veto.

Trump invoked the emergency declaration after Congress approved nearly \$1.4 billion for border barriers, far less than the \$5.7 billion he wanted. In doing so, he can potentially tap an additional \$3.6 billion from military accounts and shift it to building the wall. That's causing discomfort on Capitol Hill, where even the president's Republican allies are protective of their power to decide how to allocate federal dollars. Lawmakers are trying to guard money that's already been approved for military projects in their states — for base housing or other improvements — for the wall. The administration is promising to backfill those funds, senators said.

The wall with Mexico punctuated Trump's campaign for the White House, and it's expected to again be featured in his 2020 re-election effort. He used to say Mexico would pay for it, but Mexico has refused to do so. **AP**

USA

Tesla walks back its plan to close most showrooms

Tom Krisher, Detroit

TESLA is walking back its plan to close most retail stores worldwide in a move the company says will force it to raise prices on most of its electric vehicles.

The company still will move to online-only sales, but now says it won't close as many stores as originally thought.

Tesla announced last month that it would shutter most of its stores to cut costs so it could sell its lower-priced Model 3 for USD35,000.

The \$35,000 base Model 3 will still be available but the company will raise prices 3 percent on all other models.

In a filing with government securities regulators, Tesla now says it closed 10 percent of its stores, but a few of those will now remain open. Another 20 percent are being evaluated and some could remain open.

The company gave no numbers, but said it would close only



AP PHOTO

about half the stores that it had intended to. It has 378 stores and service centers worldwide and about 100 stores in the U.S.

"As a result of keeping significantly more stores open, Tesla will need to raise vehicle prices by about 3 percent on average worldwide," a company's statement said. "We will only close about half as many stores, but the cost savings are therefore only about half."

Remaining stores could have

fewer workers, but will have vehicles available for test drives and a small inventory in case people want to buy immediately, the statement said.

The company also announced yesterday that it has purchased car-hauling trucks and trailers from a California company in a stock deal worth about \$14.2 million. Tesla paid for the purchase with about 50,000 previously authorized shares. The move is designed to increase

Tesla's vehicle transportation capacity and cut delivery times.

The reversal shows that Tesla had second thoughts about shuttering the stores and whether buyers would make such a large purchase without a test drive. The company says it still plans to offer buyers the ability to return purchased vehicles at no cost after a seven-day or 1,000 mile test drive.

Gartner analyst Michael Ramsey called the move "startling" and said it undermines the credibility of Musk and Tesla's management.

"How else can you view it except to see it as a remarkable example of lack of foresight or planning?" Ramsey asked. "It's almost as if the decision was announced and made without any analysis of what the outcome would be."

Musk probably realized that he was locked into long-term leases on the stores that he would have to pay regardless of whether they were closed, Ramsey said.

The move made no sense to begin with because Tesla had spent millions fighting in courts and state legislatures trying to change laws that prevented companies from selling vehicles at their own stores, Ramsey said.

But he also said the move to close 10 percent of stores and evaluate others is the right thing to do, and said most retail companies do that all of the time.

Messages were left seeking comment from a Tesla spokesman.

Shares of Tesla edged up less than 1 percent in trading early yesterday.

In announcing the move on Feb. 28, CEO Elon Musk said it was necessary to cut costs in order to profitably sell the mass-market version of the Model 3 sedan for \$35,000. That's a price point needed to reach more consumers and generate the sales that the company needs to survive, Musk has said.

Before the announcement, the cheapest Model 3 started at \$42,900.

"This is the only way to achieve the savings for this car and be financially sustainable," Musk told reporters during a conference call announcing the change. "It is excruciatingly difficult to make this car for \$35,000 and be financially sustainable." AP

AD

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what's ON



MASTERPIECES OF RUSSIAN ART FROM THE STATE TRETYAKOV GALLERY

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

UNTIL: April 22, 2019

VENUE: Macau Museum of Art

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

ONENESS: CALLIGRAPHY BY PROFESSOR JAO TSUNG-I

TIME: 10am-6pm (No admission after 5:30pm, closed on Mondays)

UNTIL: September 30, 2019

VENUE: Jao Tsung-I Academy

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2852 2523

BIOMIMICRY – INSPIRED BY NATURE

TIME: 10am-6pm (closed on Thursdays)

UNTIL: March 31, 2019

VENUE: Gallery 2, Exhibition Center, Macau Science Center

ADMISSION: MOP25

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2888 0822

EXHIBITION OF NEW WORKS IN MAM COLLECTION - CHE HO

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

UNTIL: April 14, 2019

VENUE: Macau Museum of Art

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

NO WHERE THERE – WORKS BY TANG JING

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

UNTIL: March 16, 2019

VENUE: 1844 Macau Photography Art Space

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 6311 1390

3RD MACAU PRINTMAKING TRIENNIAL

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

VENUE: Macau Contemporary Art Center - Navy Yard No.1

Exhibitions Gallery and Nostalgic

House of the Taipa Houses

UNTIL: March 16, 2019

VENUE: 1844 Macau Photography Art Space

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2836 6866

Offbeat

MAN LINKED TO USD500M ART HEIST TO BE RELEASED FROM PRISON

A reputed Connecticut mobster who authorities believe is the last surviving person of interest in the largest art heist in history is nearing the end of a four-year prison sentence in an unrelated weapons case.

Eighty-two-year-old Robert Gentile is scheduled to be released from the Fort Dix federal prison in New Jersey on March 17.

Federal prosecutors have said they believe Gentile has information about the still-unsolved 1990 heist at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston. Thieves stole an estimated USD500 million worth of artwork, including works by Rembrandt and Johannes Vermeer.

Gentile has denied knowing anything about it.

He pleaded guilty in the weapons case stemming from federal agents' seizure of firearms and ammunition from his Manchester home. He cannot possess firearms as a convicted felon.

TV canal macau



13:00	TDM News (Repetição)
13:30	Telejornal RTPi (Diferido)
15:00	Água de Mar
15:50	Zig Zag
16:10	Conversa da Treta
17:35	Ministério do Tempo
18:30	TDM Desporto (Repetição)
19:35	Os Nossos Dias Sr.2
20:30	Telejornal
21:15	TDM Entrevista
21:50	O Contrato Sr.1 - Fim
22:35	Escritores a Norte - Vidas com Obra em Casas D'Escritas - Estreia
23:15	TDM News
23:50	Filhos da Nação Sr.2
00:25	Telejornal (Repetição)
01:10	RTPi Directo

cinema



CINETEATRO

06 - 13 Mar



CAPTAIN MARVEL

ROOM 1

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

Director: Anna Boden, Ryan Fleck

Starring: Brie Larson, Samuel L. Jackson, Ben Mendelsohn

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 124min



HAPPY DEATH DAY 2U

ROOM 2

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

Director: Christopher Landon

Starring: Jessica Rothe, Israel Broussard, Phi Vu

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 100min

THE WANDERING EARTH

ROOM 2

7:15pm

ROOM 3

2:30pm

Director: Frant Gwo

Starring: Chuxiao Qu, Jing Wu, Guangjie Li

Language: Chinese (Chinese & English)

Duration: 123min



DRAGON BALL SUPER BROLLY

ROOM 3

4:45, 9:30pm

Director: Tatsuya Nagamine

Starring: Masako Nozawa, Aya Hisakawa, Ryô Horikawa

Language: Japanese (Chinese & English)

Duration: 100min

this day in history



1969 PAUL McCARTNEY WEDS LINDA EASTMAN

Paul McCartney has married Linda Eastman in a civil ceremony in London.

Hundreds of people gathered outside the Marylebone Register Office to catch a glimpse of the couple as they arrived with Miss Eastman's six-year-old daughter, Heather, from a previous marriage.

A dozen policemen were on hand to fend off enthusiastic teenagers, many of whom were distraught that the last remaining bachelor Beatle was tying the knot.

The couple entered the building via a side-door to the disappointment of many of the crowds.

Miss Eastman, 27, was wearing a daffodil yellow coat over a fawn dress, while 26-year-old Mr McCartney was sporting a matching yellow tie.

The ceremony was delayed because the best man, Mr McCartney's brother Mike McGear of the Scaffold pop group, arrived late.

He had been travelling from Birmingham where he had been performing the night before when his train became delayed.

After the ceremony the newly-weds were ushered through the crowds into a waiting car and driven away to their local parish church where the marriage was blessed.

The couple met two years ago when Miss Eastman, a professional photographer, was taking photographs of the Beatles in America.

Linda Eastman was born in 1941 in New York and was educated at the prestigious Scarsdale High School.

After leaving school, she trained as a photographer and throughout the 1960s has photographed many famous names, including Jimi Hendrix, the Doors, the Who, Bob Dylan and Otis Redding.

Paul McCartney was born in 1942 in Liverpool and had written his first song, I Lost My Little Girl, by the age of 14.

The Beatles were formed in 1960 and by 1963 Beatlemania had gripped the country.

The couple plan to spend their honeymoon visiting relatives in America.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Paul and Linda McCartney were married for 29 years and had one of the most successful marriages in show-business.

The couple raised four children - Heather, from her previous marriage, Stella, Mary, and James.

A year after their wedding the Beatles split up and Linda McCartney joined her husband's band Wings.

A well-known vegetarian and animal rights campaigner, she went on to become a millionaire in her own right with her successful range of vegetarian meals which she launched in the 1990s.

She died of breast cancer in 1998 at the McCartney ranch in Tucson, Arizona.

Paul McCartney married former model Heather Mills in 2002 with whom he had a baby daughter in October 2003.

The couple announced they would separate in May 2006 and began divorce proceedings in July of that year.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Where has all the time gone? It seems as though the last few weeks have flown by...

Taurus April 20-May 20 To find a great deal today, you'll have to shop around. Don't just rush out and get what you've had your eye on—slow down!

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 The harmony is due mostly to the fact that you two are focusing on the creative side of things and waiting until ideas are solidified before putting things into action.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 So much positive energy and enthusiasm might make it hard for you to concentrate as the day continues, and this afternoon you will want to slow down for a planned social event.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 A friend's artwork doesn't appeal to your aesthetic sensibilities, but they're absolutely in love with it—should you let them know that they're fooling themselves? Nope...

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 There's a time to move forward, and then there's a time to stay right where you are—like today. There are no new projects worth your time, so don't try to create any!

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 These issues are none of your business, so even if you feel the need to defend someone's honor, you shouldn't. Let them fight their own battles and come to their own conclusions.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 Use your hidden talents of perception today, and you might just be able to figure it all out. Start by sharing your nighttime visions with friends and finding out what they have to say about possible meanings.

Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 Your recent period of growth is slowing down. It's not that you have nothing new to learn; it's just that you need some downtime to process the things you've learned so far.

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 If things have been getting silly instead of serious between you and someone else, you will have to court them more aggressively. It's time to let down your walls and let them know how you really feel.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 You're a giver, and it's no wonder that your unselfishness is something that people remember about you. Make sure you maintain this glowing reputation today by stocking up on things that people always need.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 Today your curiosity will be the key to transforming a stale relationship—and in doing so, you will rediscover a piece of yourself that you have been missing for a while.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy

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

Easy+

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

Medium

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

Hard

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

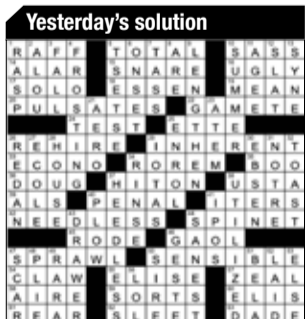
WEATHER

Table with columns: CHINA, MIN, MAX, CONDITION. Rows include Beijing, Harbin, Tianjin, Urumqi, Xi'an, Lhasa, Chengdu, Chongqing, Kunming, Nanjing, Shanghai, Wuhan, Hangzhou, Taipei, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, and WORLD cities like Moscow, Frankfurt, Paris, London, New York.

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Zoologist Fossey; 5- Eurasian juniper; 10- X-ray units; 14- Comedian Johnson; 15- Part of an act; 16- "East of Eden" director Kazan; 17- In spite of; 20- With ___ of thousands!; 21- End for Siam; 22- Grammarian's concern; 23- Fannie follower; 25- Overjoy; 27- Never converging or diverging; 31- Explosions; 35- Arabian gulf; 36- Timmy's dog; 38- Reason for overtime; 39- D.C. pol; 40- Place for ordering alcoholic drinks; 41- CD earnings; 42- Off-road wheels, for short; 43- Boater or bowler; 44- Collision; 46- Heap; 47- The Last Frontier; 49- Coheir; 51- Mislead; 53- Swiss river; 54- Betelgeuse's constellation; 57- "___ Beso" (1962 hit); 59- Grow to maturity; 63- Direct; 66- High schooler; 67- Some are kosher; 68- Hipbones; 69- "___ quam videri" (North Carolina's motto); 70- Take care of; 71- Nerd;

DOWN: 1- Comic Carvey; 2- Camaro model; 3- ___ boy!; 4- Reporter; 5- Fast flier; 6- Dull pain, often in the head or back; 7- Ships; 8- Chip maker; 9- PBS supporter; 10- It had a part in the Bible; 11- Inter ___; 12- Fender flaw; 13- Wise one; 18- Romance lang.; 19- Squirrel food; 24- "Cow Cow Boogie" singer Morse; 26- From within; 27- Ottoman title; 28- Let's Make ___; 29- Oscar de la ___; 30- Lawman Wyatt; 32- Stigma; 33- Championship; 34- Cut off; 37- Director Vittorio De ___; 40- Two-piece bathing suit; 45- Peter or Paul, but not Mary; 46- Peruke; 48- Everett of "Citizen Kane"; 50- Singer Vikki; 52- Little laugh; 54- Bone; 55- Numbered rds.; 56- Angers; 58- Think nothing ___; 60- Lacking color; 61- Buffalo's county; 62- Mont. neighbor; 64- Mdse.; 65- Barcelona bear;



USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
Fire department 28 572 222
Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993
Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333
Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944
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IACM 28 387 333
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FOOTBALL

English field invasions see players punched, pushed

Rob Harris, London

IN an alleged moment of malice, a pitch invader punches a player. In an apparent attempt to join goal celebrations, a fan pushes an opposition player.

Concerns about security at English football games grew Sunday after incidents at Birmingham City and Arsenal resulted in two supporters arrested for leaping out of their seats and attacking players.

The first incident happened in the opening minutes of the match known as the "Second City Derby" in Birmingham. A fan charged onto the field and caught Aston Villa captain Jack Grealish unaware, swinging a right arm and striking the side of his head.

"I was walking into position and then just felt a whack around the side of the face," Grealish said. "Obviously there's rivalry and stuff in football but I don't think there's any place for that."

The pitch intruder — later identified as Paul Mitchell — was quickly restrained by a stadium security official as Villa players rushed to confront him early in the second-tier League Championship game. The 27-year-old Mitchell was led away by police, blowing kisses to the crowd. He was later charged with assaulting Grealish and invading the pitch, and detained in custody before a court appearance yesterday.



A fan is removed after attacking Aston Villa's Jack Grealish (right) on the pitch during a football match at St Andrew's Trillion Trophy Stadium, Birmingham

"We apologize to Jack and all at Aston Villa Football Club," Birmingham said in a statement. "What happened has no place in football or society."

Hours later in the rain of north London, after Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scored Arsenal's second goal from the penalty spot in a 2-0 Premier League victory over Manchester United, a supporter darted onto the field. As he raced toward the celebrating Arsenal players, he pushed United defender Chris Smalling.

"It's obviously a concern with the one earlier today," United's Ashley Young told beIN Sports.

The Metropolitan Police said a man was in custody on Sunday night after being arrested on "suspicion of common assault and pitch invasion." Arsenal said the man would be banned from its games — home and away.

"We utterly condemn the behavior of the individual who ran onto the pitch and approached Chris Smalling," Arsenal said in a statement. "We would

like to apologize to Chris and Manchester United, and are pleased that the individual was apprehended and arrested. We will be working closely with the Metropolitan Police in their investigation."

In Birmingham, Grealish responded to the violence by scoring a second-half goal that secured a 1-0 victory for Villa. But he was booked for jumping into the stands to celebrate with visiting Villa fans.

"I just tried to get on with my job," Grealish said. "To score the

winner was unbelievable, after what happened in the first half I think it was set up for it."

The competition organizer said it "condemns the mindless actions" of the man who attacked Grealish.

"It's a situation no player should ever be faced with," the English Football League said in a statement. "In all circumstances the playing surface is for players, not supporters. Those playing in the game must be able to do so safe in the knowledge they will not be subjected to this type of behavior."

"We will work with all the relevant parties to address the issue of player and match officials safety on the pitch and ensure the appropriate action is taken."

Birmingham said it would assist the authorities in their investigations and review stadium safety procedures. Precautionary measures were already taken in an attempt to reduce the risk of violence.

"We kick off on Sunday at [noon] for a reason, to keep the people out of the pubs," Villa manager Dean Smith said. "Security's got to be ready for people coming on to the pitch but then some lunatic goes on trying to make a name for himself."

The attack followed a number of recent high-profile incidents of crowd trouble north of the border in Scottish football.

In a Scottish Premiership game on Friday night, Rangers captain James Tavernier found himself face to face with a Hibernian fan who had jumped out of the home support stand. The previous weekend a glass bottle was thrown from the same section of the stadium as Celtic winger Scott Sinclair prepared to take a corner kick during a game at Hibernian. **AP**

RUGBY

Cooper finds new home with Melbourne Rebels in Super Rugby

WALLABIES outcast Quade Cooper has found a comfortable new home at the Melbourne Rebels, playing a major role from flyhalf in the club's unbeaten start to the Super Rugby season.

Will Genia, Cooper's former halves partner for Australia, has been equally influential in the Rebels' rise to the top of the Australian conference and to third place on the overall standings after four rounds.

Shunned by the Queensland Reds since Brad Thorn became head coach, and equally overlooked by Wallabies coach Michael Cheika, Cooper has found

himself adrift within Australian rugby. He first found a welcoming shore in club rugby in Brisbane and then with the Rebels who have allowed him to flourish again as a uniquely talented playmaker.

Having proved himself anew, Cooper has been recalled to an early Wallabies training squad in what could be his first step toward selection for this year's World Cup in Japan.

Cooper rose to prominence as a flyhalf with a singular vision and set of playmaking skills, who saw matches from a different perspective from most other players. At his

best he was a devastating attacker and counter-attacker when Australia valued those abilities and one whose defensive weaknesses could be masked.

But his ability to use his talent dwindled amid off-field distractions, and hostility from rival fans which shook his confidence. Thorn's decision to exile Cooper from his hometown Reds might have been the last straw, but instead seems it may have been the decision that turned around Cooper's career.

He rediscovered his love of the game by playing at its basic level — among

mostly amateur club footballers — and he has returned to Super Rugby with the Rebels apparently re-energized.

Now the Wallabies are apparently interested again in harnessing his talent for the World Cup where their flyhalf options may be thin, reliant on the more conventional Bernard Foley and others like Kurtley Beale who are occasionally adapted to the role.

Genia, whose long association with Cooper makes him better-placed than most to judge, sees a player ready to return to the international play. The pair combined to steer the



Quade Cooper (right) and Will Genia

Queensland Reds to the Super Rugby title in 2011 and have renewed their combination in Melbourne.

"Quade has been consistent over the first three games and I'm sure he will be hoping that carries on through the season. And if he does there's no reason why he can't get an opportunity in a [Wallabies] jersey," Genia said.

Even Wallabies coach

Michael Cheika has been given pause by Cooper's form this season. Cheika could never be said to be a member of the Cooper fan club; the conservative Australia coach apparently found Cooper capricious and unreliable.

But he can't dismiss the form of an experienced player in a position in which the Wallabies aren't currently strong. **AP**

opinion

Our Desk
 Renato Marques



THE STATE OF EDUCATION AND VICE-VERSA

As an educator by training, and as a father, I have always nurtured both a significant interest in, and a concern for, education.

When I first arrived in Macau, long over a decade ago, I realized that Macau had very favorable conditions for something that I always dreamed of but that was impossible to achieve in closed and over-controlled education systems such as the Portuguese one, from which I had migrated and in which I had been trained.

If this was the view I had as an outsider, when I started to work in Macau I began to realize that the system was not as "open" as it looked in theory.

With time and experiences collected from different institutions, I soon realized that schools in Macau are far more concerned about complying with regulations and guidelines than realizing the real needs of their population and developing ways to facilitate their interests and overcome their difficulties.

Going back to the book of memories, I recall that long ago (maybe nine years ago), I heard in a lecture on the topic of education, held at a local university, a high ranked official of China's Ministry of Education saying that "China cannot afford to have one education system but, instead, it must have all education systems" operating simultaneously and with a constant evaluation of which one(s) are working better in a given context and time. Well, if you ask me, this is pretty much the old education system of Macau that allowed almost everything if properly justified.

The fact is, we once had a "poorer" system in resources but we were more evolved in fundamentals. This system has been recently and gradually replaced by a mechanistic, retrograde and obsolete system in the name of something called the "financial stability" of schools.

Nevertheless and despite this "trade," in the past we did not experience a much lower charge on tuition fees to the parents and, I also suspect, the teachers and school staff have not gotten any richer either.

It is also a common practice in many sectors in Macau to throw the guilt away like throwing a rock in the lake. Most of the time people throw their "stones" as far as Beijing. Perhaps it is easier to do that rather than looking at one's navel and realizing that the source of evil is, in most cases, right inside our home.

Education as one fundamental pillar of any country, nation or political system is vulnerable to all kinds of influences and is surely the quickest way to change mentalities and ideas.

In this context, a freer system, less controlled in every single step of its different stages and, above all, with a vision of the future, starting from who we are and why we exist, would definitely be an "ideal" for which it is surely worth fighting.

To begin with, we could start the reform by retiring some of the regressive, unqualified, and highly biased school principals who inhabit many of the region's schools (not all fortunately), wielding their imperial scepter as owners of truth, thereby giving way to a more open and more interactive system among proficient pedagogues.

Honestly, I do not believe in a police state, especially when this police state spreads and gives way to an "educational police," who suggest "guidelines" in exchange for subsidies and, when something goes really wrong and cannot be swept under the carpet, issues financial fines, working in this way more like a financial ombudsman than an education bureau.

That is the system we need to reform – urgently!

THE CHICAGO SYMPHONY MUSICIANS TRADE BUZZ PICCOLOS FOR PICKETING

Striking musicians at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra are grabbing picket signs instead of piccolos after a lack of progress in contract talks.

The musicians picketed yesterday in front of Orchestra Hall, a day after an-

nouncing they were going on strike. They say management is trying to reduce their pension benefits after nearly a year of negotiations.

The previous contract expired last September and had been extended to last weekend.



FLIGHT 302

A shredded book, a passport: What 157 victims left behind

AP PHOTOS



Yidnek Kirubel & Cara Anna, Ejere

WHAT little was left was heartbreaking: A battered passport. A shredded book. Business cards in many languages.

Searchers in white gloves and canvas shoes picked their way through the scattered remains of Ethiopian Airlines flight 302 for a second day yesterday, gingerly lifting from the scorched earth the pieces of 157 lives.

The tattered book, its pages singed, appeared to be about macroeconomics, its passages highlighted by a careful reader in yellow and pink.

There was a shattered keyboard. And playfully printed T-shirts.

There was even a plaintively ringing mobile phone, picked up by a stranger and silenced.

The dead came from 35 countries. As their identities slowly emerged from shocked families, governments and employers, a common strand became clear.

The flight that set off Sunday morning from Ethiopia's capital, faltered and plowed into the earth six minutes later was full of people unafraid to take on the world and its problems — and explore it, too.

The plane held 32 people from neighboring Kenya, including a law student and a football official, a toll that left the country numb. Ethiopia lost 18 lives.

Others came from afar, to work or play: A satirist. A former ambassador. Tourists. An accountant.



But the number of humanitarian workers was shockingly high.

There were doctors. A child protection worker. Advocates. Environmental activists.

They carried high ideals obscured by mundane, bureaucratic names: Briefing papers. Capacity-building initiatives.

Addis Ababa and the plane's destination, Nairobi, are popular hubs for aid workers addressing some of the world's most pressing crises: Somalia. South Sudan. Climate change. Hunger.

"They all had one thing in common — a spirit to serve the people of the world and to make it a better place for us all," the United Nations secretary-general said.

At least 21 U.N. staffers

were killed, he said, along with an unknown number of people who had worked closely with the world body.

The U.N. flag flew at half-staff yesterday, and Ethiopia marked a day of mourning for all.

Save the Children. The Norwegian Refugee Agency. The Red Cross of Norway. The International Committee for the Development of Peoples. The African Diaspora Youth Forum in Europe.

All mourned their colleagues.

A steady wind blew as more remains were found, flashes of humanity among the gritty pieces of hull and wheel.

Beyond the yellow tape around the crash site, huddled figures wrapped in blankets watched in silence. **AP**

Station	Air quality
Roadside	65-95 Moderate
High Density Residential Area	55-75 Moderate
Ambient	60-80 Moderate

SOURCE: DSI/MG

WORLD BRIEFS



USA A big chunk of the 2020 Democratic field began making Texas an unlikely early-state stop over the weekend and pushed back on big tech in front of young, social-media savvy crowds in a city where companies including Google and Apple have big footprints.



BREXIT British Prime Minister Theresa May refused to admit defeat for her European Union divorce deal, despite deadlocked talks with the bloc. The House of Commons is due to vote today on whether to approve a deal that it resoundingly rejected in January.



IRAQ Iranian President Hassan Rouhani (left) was in Baghdad yesterday, making his first official visit to the nation that Tehran once fought a bloody war against and later backed in the battle with the Islamic State group. He met with President Barham Salih (right) and, speaking to journalists, said that a "stable Iraq will lead to stability in the entire region."



ALGERIA Teenagers and lawyers held protests yesterday, and workers held scattered walkouts, as their tense nation waits to see whether ailing President Abdelaziz Bouteflika offers any concessions in the face of unprecedented protests.