



HOME AWAY: SOUTHAMPTON TO PLAY IN OWNER'S TOWN

The Sports Bureau said that one of the reasons to bring the English team is that "the owner of the Southampton FC is from Macau"

▲ P2 FOOTBALL



IAM SAYS A DOZEN MORE TREES TO GO DOWN

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CHINESE DESCENDANTS DECISIVE IN AUSTRALIA POLLS

PM Scott Morrison and opposition leader Bill Shorten opened WeChat accounts to reach large Chinese populations in big cities

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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'"

WORLD BRIEFS



CHINA's exports fell unexpectedly in April, adding to pressure on Beijing ahead of negotiations on ending a tariff war with Washington over Chinese technology ambitions. *More on p11*

CHINA The U.S. has "further aggravated" tensions over the Iran nuclear issue, China's foreign ministry said, amid moves by Washington to ratchet up pressure on Tehran. Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said China appreciated Iran's "strict implementation" of its 2015 nuclear deal. *More on p14*



PAKISTAN A suicide bomber attacked security forces guarding a famous Sufi shrine in Lahore yesterday, killing at least 10 people and wounding 20 others, police said. Hizbul Ahrar, an offshoot of the Pakistani Taliban, claimed responsibility for the attack, saying their target was the police.



JAPAN's Emperor Naruhito performed a Shinto ritual at the palace yesterday to report to imperial family gods the plans for the main ceremonies of his succession later this year. Naruhito ascended to the Chrysanthemum Throne on May 1, the day after his father Akihito abdicated.

More on backpage

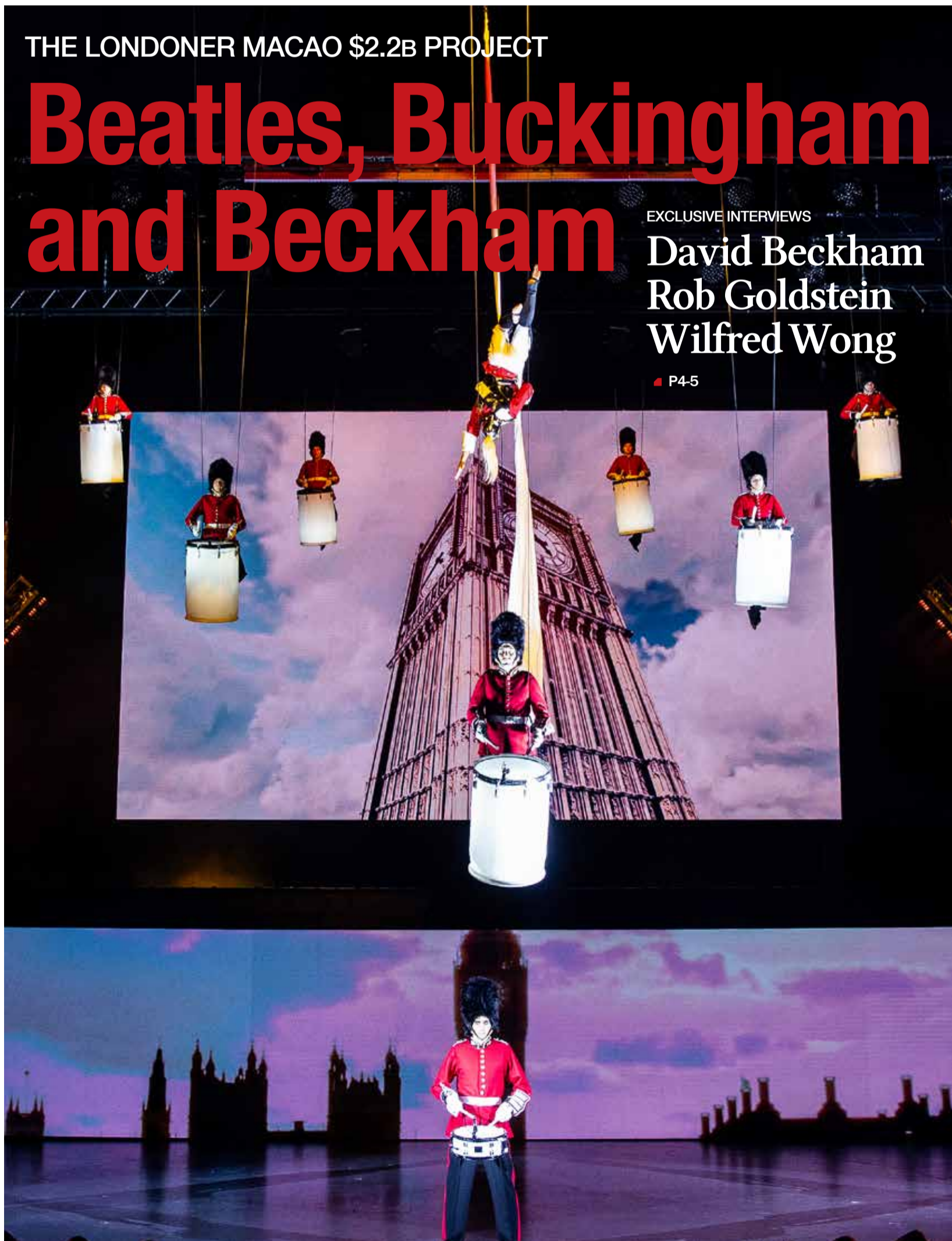
THE LONDONER MACAO \$2.2B PROJECT

Beatles, Buckingham and Beckham

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS

David Beckham Rob Goldstein Wilfred Wong

▲ P4-5



Dried food seized at HKZM Bridge checkpoint

The Macau Customs has seized HKD70,000-worth of dried seafood and goods at the Macau checkpoint of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge (HKZMB). During the Labor Day holidays, two tourists coming in from Hong Kong were inspected by the Customs at the Macau checkpoint as they were carrying suspicious bags of goods. Respectively 14 kg of dried fish maw, 1 box of dried deer tails, and a total of 96 packs of dried shallow's nests. According to the law, these goods must be quarantined before entering Macau. The two were from Hong Kong and Mainland China respectively, and are subject to a fine between MOP1,000 and 50,000 each.

Special measures ordered by Court on domestic violence suspect

An unemployed man from Hong Kong was under investigation for allegedly assaulting his local girlfriend who lived with him. The victim did not report to the police even after repeated assault and threatening out of the fear of retaliation. Days ago, the victim eventually reported because she sustained several injuries in the latest assault. In order to prevent the suspect from obstructing the procedures and committing further violence, the judge agreed with the prosecutor and ordered special measures be taken on the suspect, including bail, regular report to the police, and injunction. Violator of the domestic violence crime is subject to imprisonment of one to five years.

Man cut himself with razor at a Cotai hotel

A man was found cutting himself with a razor blade at the Parisian Casino in Cotai. It happened at around 10:45 pm on Tuesday. The man was about 30 years old, and was suspected to have been in conflict with some casino staff related to the games he had played. He then took out a razor blade and started cutting his wrist. Security officers of the casino immediately requested for assistance from the on-site criminal investigators. The Judiciary Police deployed negotiators and successfully convinced the man for medical care after two hours. The man refused hospitalization though.

Southampton to play on 'home side' in match against Guangzhou R&F

Renato Marques

THE announcement of the Sports Bureau (ID) on May 3 that the teams of Southampton Football Club and Guangzhou R&F Football Club would meet for a match in Macau in July this year as part of the celebrations of the 20th Anniversary of the handover, left several unanswered questions. The most recurrent question was why these two teams, one from the British Premier League and another from the Chinese Super League, had been chosen to play one another.

The ID said in reply to the Times that one consideration behind the decision was the fact that "the owner of the Southampton FC is from Macau," which in the words of the governmental department, "makes the choice more meaningful." It is also the first time that such team will play in the region.

The bureau also stated that it took account of "the submitted proposal in terms of the selection of the teams, event schedule and the conditions involved."

80% of Southampton FC has been jointly owned by Gao Jisheng and his daughter Nelly Gao since August 2017, when the entrepreneur and executive vice president of the Macao Association of Zhejiang Entrepreneurs acquired the large majority of shares in the British club. Gao is the ninth Chinese entrepreneur to acquire a European football club since Tony Xia, CEO, and owner of Recon Group, bought the Aston Villa Football Club (also British) in June 2016.

Gao, who attended the ID press conference that announced the match, is also the chairman and director of "Lander Sports Development Company Ltd," a company that he founded in 1995. He is the majority stakeholder of the company, with an approximate 53% of shareholding in the company.

The match will take place at Taipa Stadium on July 23 with the kick-off scheduled for 8 p.m. In addition to this, the British team will participate in



Gao Jisheng

a joint training session with the Macau national team and young local players, the president of ID, Pun Weng Kun, announced during the press conference. Pun stated, "this will be an opportunity for the local team and local youth players to learn more and raise their skill level."

Pun also took the opportunity to confirm that a match between the Chinese and Portuguese National Teams, which has been rumored, would not happen.

ID UNAWARE OF TOP EUROPEAN MATCH

Immediately after the announcement of the match between Southampton FC and Guangzhou R&F, scheduled for July 23, another football match has been announced for Taipa Stadium. This match will be between the teams of Inter Milan and Paris Saint-Germain

(PSG) and is included in the tour to China by the Chinese-owned Italian club.

According to the official statement of Inter Milan, the "Nerazzurri summer is set to be enriched with another stop in Asia." This is in addition to the already announced International Champions Cup, where they will face the British teams Manchester United on July 20 in Singapore, and the Juventus and Tottenham on August 4 in London. "Inter will be involved in another prestigious fixture in the International Super Cup. On July 27 at the Macau Taipa Olympic Sports Center, the Nerazzurri will face Paris Saint-Germain in a top-level clash," according to the statement.

According to the Italians, the match will present another opportunity to bring all the club's fans in Asia closer

to the team.

In the same statement, Inter recalled how the club was one of the first foreign clubs to visit China, and are returning "20 years on from their last visit to Macau."

The Parisian club also confirmed the match, which is included as part of a tour from the French team to China where it would play in Macau, Suzhou, and Shenzhen for the "20th anniversary of Macau's Special Administrative Region, as well as the 55th year of China-France diplomatic relations."

To the Times, and following previous media inquiries, the Sports Bureau continued to assert no awareness that such a match would be held in Macau and that no reservation or request to use the Macau Olympic Stadium in Taipa for that purpose had been made to the bureau as of yesterday.



Announcements of the 'mysterious' Macau match on PSG and Inter Milan websites

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Macau has problematic traffic, say lawmakers

Staff reporter

SEVERAL lawmakers expressed their concern for Macau's traffic and transport problems during yesterday's Legislative Assembly session, while others noted that tourism policies in the city were in need of a review.

With a speech titled "Do not let tour bus become bombs on roads", lawmaker Agnes Lam mentioned the recent incident in which a tour bus crashed into a cafeteria, and recommended the introduction of new technologies.

According to Lam, in January this year, the government of South Korea started mandating the installation of the Automatic Emergency Braking and Lane Departure Warning Systems on all vehicles. The latter issues

warning when the vehicle goes off lane, and the former is an assistive brake system, which is widely accepted in Japan, Russia, and the EU.

She also noted that measures should be in place against tired driving.

Ho Ion Sang also commented on the tour bus incident. He suggested the government narrow certain roadside planting areas where tour buses frequent.

At the recent incident, the door of the tour bus failed to open after the crash. Ho recommended requiring by law more emergency doors be added to heavy passenger vehicles.

Both Lam and Ho agreed that tougher fences or bumpers should be installed at black spots, to better protect pedestrians.

Lawmaker Wu Chou Kit pointed out the lack of design in Macau's roads, quoting signage as

an example. He said that messages on temporary signboards are usually illegible due to the size and choice of font. Such signage should also be placed at least 100m in advance in Chinese, English, and Portuguese.

Wu noted that there are locations in Macau where crossing facilities such as footbridge and underpass were built, but the government failed to "scientifically manage" the facility nearby. In many cases, several means of crossing facility overlap each other. Wu recommended the government to start with the simpler problems.

TOURISM VS DAILY LIFE

Lawmaker Ella Lei described what she termed a "deadlock" in Macau's tourism. She said that as transport is becoming easier in the Greater Bay Area, more single-day tourists should

be expected. They tend to utilize every second in Macau to visit as many spots as possible. Therefore, the Tourism Office's strategies of adding new spots and diverting tourists have indeed failed.

Many of the tourists' spots have become over crowded, she said, adding if no other strategies were taken, the deadlock might become permanent.

"The inconvenience caused to residents would not disappear even if they were told to be tolerant," Lei said.

Zheng Anting reminded the government to think ahead and construct a multilayer road network to ease traffic congestions during peak hours. He also recommended the establishment of maritime passenger travel between Macau and Taipa, which would help ease road traffic and become another tourist attraction.

UNANIMOUS SUPPORT WITH SOME QUESTIONS

The agenda for yesterday's plenary meeting of the Legislative Assembly was about the urgent amendment to the existing law forbidding the production, sale, and consumption of anesthetic and psychiatric substances.

Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak said in his introduction speech that it was a United Nations requirement that an extra 21 substances be added to the law. Wong justified the need for the urgent procedure by reiterating Macau's responsibility in conforming to international treaty. Also it was an act of adding new substances into the list of control substances inscribed in the law, without amendment to any other part of the law.

One of the substances being discussed, Fentanyl, is widely used by medical professionals as a painkiller.

According to Lawmaker Chan Iek Lap, who is a medical doctor himself, it works 50 times more effectively than morphine.

As it is obtainable at pharmacies, several lawmakers, including Agnes Lam, Leong Sun Iok, and Chan Iek Lap, expressed concerns about its easy accessibility.

In response, Secretary Wong noted that every member entity in the Anti-drug Committee would work to educate people about the 21 new substances. Also, considering the medical needs for Fentanyl, it will be available only under certain circumstances.

However, Wong cautioned he was not in the right position to comment on the topic because it was within the authority of the Health Bureau.

Wong also boasted that the black market price of substance is often two to three times more expensive in Macau than in Hong Kong, because his departments combat drugs with sufficient effort.

The law amendment was passed unanimously.

IAM says a dozen more trees to be felled

Staff reporter

THE tree cut down this week in front of the Portuguese School was one of those severely affected by fungus. According to the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM), it was an *Albizia chinensis*, with 80% of the neck of the root dried out and the crown shriveled.

The Times reported yesterday that some citizens had concerns regarding the removal of trees downtown.

In a response to Times'

inquiry, the IAM noted that an inspection had been underway since Super Typhoon Mangkhut struck last year. It was found that the growth of certain trees was constrained, while large wounds were found on some roots and branches. In addition, these trees have become vulnerable to strong winds.

After the first phase of inspection, the IAM spotted trees in critical condition in several districts: two in front of the Portuguese School, which have

already been cut; a 70% rotten tree on Estrada do Cemitério; a 50% dried-out tree on Avenida do Coronel Mesquita; and nine others across various districts.

All work is expected to be finished before the start of the typhoon season.

Citizens are reminded to avoid areas where tree cutting and trimming work is being undertaken as the work carries certain risks. Owners of private gardens or yards are also reminded to inspect the conditions of their trees.



Daniel Beittler

DAVID Beckham returned to Macau this week for the announcement of The Londoner Macao integrated resort - the latest property to be unveiled by Sands China on the Cotai strip and, with a phased opening plan extending into 2021, likely one of the last before the city's gaming concessions are reviewed.

Ahead of this critical juncture in Macau gaming, Sands China shows little signs of slowing its Cotai expansion. It's doubled down on the strip and is once again making conferences and exhibitions forefront among its non-gaming offerings at the USD2.2-billion renovated property. Senior officials say they are confident a new license is heading their way in 2022. They say diversification is key and they are showing they're willing to walk the walk.

The Times sat down with Las Vegas Sands President and Chief Operating Officer Robert Goldstein, Sands China President Wilfred Wong and international star and businessman David Beckham to learn more about the inspiration for the upcoming property.

Macau Daily Times (MDT) – London. It's the third instalment in Sands China's location-themed approach to the integrated resort model. Many might suppose it's less iconic than Venice or Paris, lacking the instantly-recognizable features of Venice's grand canals or the Beaux-Arts architecture of Paris. Why choose London? And has this made the Londoner Macao concept tougher to put together than its sister 'cities' in Cotai?

Wilfred Wong (WW) – London is both easy and difficult to define. It's the old meets the new; very contemporary in some parts but very traditional in others. London is so cosmopolitan and means so many different things to different people.

Robert Goldstein (RG) – I think London is easier than Venice or Paris. London is probably the easiest for me, because there is just so much to it. Venice has the canals and the gondolas and the bridges, and certain iconic, architectural elements. But London is a fascinating city. You can have fun with the black cabs, with the double decker buses, the British humor, the iconic nature of Churchill, Shakespeare or the Beatles – it's endless, and we plan to integrate these elements into the property.

MDT - How does London as a destination resonate with the Chinese market?

RG – I think Europe as a whole resonates with a lot of markets, not just China.

For example, we did the Venetian resort in the U.S. about 20 years ago. I would hazard a guess that maybe just 1 or 2 percent of Americans have been to Venice

Q&A | ROBERT GOLDSTEIN, WILFRED WONG, DAVID BECKHAM

London to land in Macau with touch



and that's because it's not easy to get to; it's far to travel and expensive. Well, the same is true here. I think a lot of people in Macau and China have never been to London and so a part of the fun is that we create a glamorous version of these cities as hotels. London is a fascinating city [...] and] so I think it is very suitable. Not just for here, but also for the U.S. I wouldn't be surprised if someday we see a London-themed hotel in Las Vegas. It just works on so many levels.

MDT – When you look at the figures in Macau, few can dispute that Sands China has led the charge in terms of non-

-gaming diversification. At the last count, around half of Macau concessionaire hotel rooms and retail space was in Sands China properties, while the vast majority of MICE space is also inside your resorts. From what is promised about The Londoner Macao, is it fair to say that you are doubling down on these alternative offerings?

RG – Diversification has been our mantra from day one. People talk about it, but we actually do it. We invested USD15 billion into the non-gaming aspects; hotel rooms, MICE rooms, retail, spas. I mean, look at what we've done here. We were the only ones who wanted to

move out to Cotai. Everyone else just wanted a small plot on the Peninsula.

We keep investing because we like Macau. We are very grateful to be here. We like being here and we take the government's advice very seriously. They say they want non-gaming and so we provide non-gaming. Gambling is important - lets not deny that - but diversification is very important too.

MDT – Gaming revenues in the last few years have shown signs of market stabilization, but the divide between VIP and mass is drifting further and further in favor of mass. Given that Cotai is generally

more geared toward mass than the Peninsula, is the changing tide vindication for Adelson's bet on the strip?

RG – Absolutely. When I first started coming here it was all about super high-end and VIP rollers. Today it's a mass market and a lifestyle market, and that includes entertainment and restaurants. Now everyone wants to be in Cotai because that is where you can build a 50-acre resort, not just a gambling casino. Anyone can build a casino, but integrated resorts are much tougher to do. [...]

I just think that our actions speak louder than words. Words are cheap, but put up \$2.2 billion and that shows how we have con-

ch of Beckham

fidence in this government. We are big fans of Macau and big fans of the governments' [vision], and we are committed to making Macau a leisure destination.

MDT – International sports and business personality David Beckham has been making periodical trips to Macau since 2013 to feature in adverts or star in viral internet shorts. We have felt your presence here for years, but do you feel a reciprocal connection to this city?

David Beckham (DB) – I am in Macau a lot, as well as Asia, and I think I would be here even without this partnership. There is something about this place that I really enjoy, in both Macau and China. It's being around the people, eating in the restaurants, the entertainment...

For me, the great thing about shooting the campaigns [promotional videos] is that I get to meet real characters from Macau and China. It's about the fun that comes with being with great people, for example in the last campaign we shot about the egg tarts.

RG – When you watch that egg tart clip, you can see [David Beckham] is really getting a kick out of it. That's really clear. It looks like he and the other actors are having a good time and I think that translates into the video because it has been viewed millions of times.

DB – I've been an egg tart fan for years and I used to go to Portugal just to get some. Now I know where to get them here!

MDT – David Beckham is making one of his first forays into interior design with The Londoner Macao. Beneath the excitement of taking on this type of project, is there a certain responsibility that comes in being asked to capture the essence of your hometown?

DB – It's exciting to be involved in The Londoner, because it feels a bit like home to me. [...] When we talked about The Londoner coming to Macau, we talked about how to make it authentic, how to create London in Macau. So, we have Big Ben, the Hou-

ses of Parliament and the Royal family. Those things are easy. But making the property look authentic is a different question. It's not just that it's called The Londoner and you see a red bus drive past. It's so much more than that, and those details are found in the experience of being here.

MDT – The property was earlier described as an "immersive" experience. Are these details designed to make visitors forget they are even in Macau?

RG – It's not London – the property is not meant to be. It's meant to be just a taste of the city. A part of this project is escapism. Part of it is about being in a fun place. I hope that we can do that well. There are other elements we want to bring to the property. It should be whimsical. [For example] I think the Brits have great humor and a great sensibility about life. I hope we can bring that to The Londoner too.

MDT – Speaking of Brits and their humor, just a few weeks ago, compatriot, close friend and late night show host James Corden pranked David Beckham in a video clip that has gone viral. In the clip, Corden tricks you into believing a deliberately horrendous statue of you is to be placed outside the Dignity Sports Park in California. Does having a friend like Corden keep you on your toes? And are you on the lookout now when attending openings or announcements like these?

DB – [Laughs] Having a friend like James is always entertaining. He's always an entertainer. I've known him for a long time, but he surprised me with this one. I think I was in shock. It was early morning and so I have that on my side. I also had my best friend with me and I didn't think that he would be in on it... but he was. [...] It was an amazing honor to have a statue of me in Los Angeles. I always expect to have a humorous side to it with James... but he definitely took it to the next level.

But trust me – I'm planning on getting him back and I will get him back at some point.

The Londoner Macao unveils USD2.2b project, executives to invest more in the MSAR



Lynzy Valles

The Londoner Macao unveiled its features and offerings yesterday, highlighting Sands China's collaboration with David Beckham.

Set to open progressively in 2020 and 2021, the USD2.2 billion project will convert the current Holiday Inn Macao Cotai Central to The Londoner Hotel which will feature 594 rooms, along with The Londoner apart-hotel that will accommodate 368 apartments.

The Londoner Macao will feature recreations of classic British landmarks, with an exterior facade modelled on the Palace of Westminster and Houses of Parliament, complete with 96-metre Elizabeth Tower and iconic clock face.

Las Vegas Sands president and chief operating officer, Robert Goldstein, stressed that The Londoner represents a new addition to the landscape of this "transformational city."

"The Londoner represents a transformation [of] previous hotels that could be improved upon. [...] It's also a part of Mr Sheldon Adelson's vision for diversification: more retail and MICE spaces, and more entertainment," said Goldstein.

"Our hope is to continue to invest billions of dollars in this city. [...] We're continuing our belief in our commitment to invest in Macau [as] part of the Greater Bay Area transformation and the Greater China," said the executive.

With Sands China's ga-

ming concession set to expire in 2022, Goldstein is nevertheless confident that the government will renew its license, hinting that their heavy investments in non-gaming elements match the SAR's expectations.

The new project's gaming areas offer over 34,000 square metres of gaming, including over 450 table games and more than 2,000 slot machines, as well as rooms designed for VIP and premium players.

According to Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China, 95% of the project focuses on non-gaming elements, including restaurants, retail offerings and entertainment facilities – a response to the idea of Las Vegas Sands' CEO, Sheldon Adelson, which aims to bring iconic places in Europe to Macau.

These non-gaming elements include over 20 dining options, with new restaurant concepts such as a British style gastropub by Gordon Ramsay and a new Thai restaurant, The Mews.

The current Shoppes at Cotai Central will also be converted into Shoppes at The Londoner, featuring 200 stores. A 34,300 square metre meeting and convention space will also be featured, as well as three spas and four health clubs.

The Londoner will have capacity to hold British-themed Streetmosphere shows such as the famous Changing of the Guards and daily retail parades featuring characters from British history, culture and literature.

The fully completed inte-



grated resort will also offer a new 6,000 seat arena to host live entertainment.

"We were very successful in creating The Venetian and The Parisian and we felt that in a city where everyone is competing to give the best to the costumers, iconic buildings do have an advantage," Wong explained.

Wong admitted that the project is challenging, yet remains confident in the gaming property's skills.

The executive remarked that the SAR currently has the highest standard in hospitality, making competition within the industry more challenging.

When questioned why themed-resorts have been successful in the city, Wong said, "Competition is so keen. Everyone is trying their best in upgrading their standard [and] in order to differentiate themselves to others, we need to have buildings and properties that can be recognized immediately by people."

The president also added

the new project has sourced from local small and medium enterprises, pledging that the hotel would continue to prioritize local residents as employees.

Meanwhile, David Beckham, Sands Resorts Macao global ambassador, is working with the interior design team to bring his style to the exclusive top floor suites of The Londoner Hotel.

The hotel introduces introduce two floors of bespoke suites called "The David Beckham Suites."

"There will be certain details that scream London and what I love. When I'm involved and partnered with someone, I am in 110% and these are the things that are important to me," said Beckham.

The Londoner Macao will incorporate four hotel brands, including the new The Londoner Hotel, alongside existing properties Conrad Macao, Cotai Central, Sheraton Grand Macao Hotel, Cotai Central and The St. Regis Macao, Cotai Central.

New Jersey sues US for Adelson link to online gambling crackdown

Erik Larson, Christopher Palmeri & Bill Allison



NEW Jersey sued the U.S. Justice Department, claiming it failed to respond to the state's demand for documents linking a recent crackdown on legal online gambling to lobbying efforts by casino magnate and Republican mega-donor Sheldon Adelson.

The Justice Department is violating the Freedom of Information Act by not responding to a February request for information about the new enforcement policy's reported link to Adelson, whose brick-and-mortar casino businesses are threatened by online gambling, New Jersey Attorney General Gurbir Grewal said in a federal complaint filed Tuesday in Trenton.

"The residents of New Jersey deserve to know why the Justice Department is threatening to come after an industry we legalized years ago," Grewal said in a statement. "It's especially important that we figure out whether this federal crackdown is the result of

a lobbying campaign by a single individual seeking to protect his personal business interests."

Online gaming in New Jersey generates USD353 million (MOP2.85 billion) in annual revenue and \$60 million in direct gaming taxes, the attorney general said.

Adelson is a friend of President Donald Trump, who awarded a

Presidential Medal of Freedom to the casino magnate's wife last year. Adelson has been a staunch opponent of online wagers, claiming it will lead to more betting addiction. He has lobbied against it in statehouses and nationally, although a person familiar with the billionaire's efforts said he has never personally asked Trump to change the policy.

A spokesman for Adelson's Las Vegas Sands Corp. declined to comment on the lawsuit.

The Justice Department in January expanded a federal prohibition on Internet gambling, saying the U.S. Wire Act bars all Internet gambling that involves interstate transactions. The decision, which takes effect June 14, reversed the agency's position from 2011 that

only sports betting was prohibited under the law passed 50 years earlier.

The reversal was prompted by the department's criminal division, which prosecutes illegal gambling. The opinion issued about seven years ago that the 1961 Wire Act only banned sports gambling was a misinterpretation of the statute, according to a 23-page opinion by the department's Office of Legal Counsel dated Nov. 2.

Las Vegas Sands spent \$280,000 lobbying the federal government in the first quarter of the year, disclosures filed with the Senate show. It paid \$30,000 to Lincoln Policy Group, founded by Blanche Lincoln, a two-term Democratic Senator from Arkansas. The firm disclosed that Lincoln and three of her colleagues lobbied Congress on issues related to online gambling, but did not disclose any contacts with the Justice Department.

Adelson and his wife Miriam have been prolific donors to Republican causes and candidates. The Adelsons were the biggest donors in the 2018 midterms, according to the Center for Responsive Politics, giving \$122.3 million. In 2016, they poured \$20 million in the final weeks of the election into Future45, a super political action committee that backed Trump with critical advertising in swing states. **Bloomberg**

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Dinner & Dancing: 8pm - 2am
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Tickets: MOP/HKD 1,800
Tables of 6 or 8, or multiples thereof

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Macau delegation participates in GBA Forum

A Macau delegation led by the Secretary for Economy and Finance Lionel Leong participated in the "Forum on Economic Cooperation between Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau," held as part of Asia's Leading Food & Hospitality Tradeshow (HOFEX 2019) at Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Center.

The delegation included, among others, members of the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM). At the Forum, Secretary Leong pointed out that the "Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Bay Area Development Plan" has been presented and will gradually be implemented.

Leong said the Greater Bay Area (GBA) possesses an advantage compared to other similar projects around the world; namely, the "One country, two systems" policy in force in Ma-



IPIM's Irene Va (left) and other delegates

cau and Hong Kong that is rooted and finds strong points in its foundations based in international standards and international rules, the IPIM noted in a statement to the press.

In the same statement, Leong also noted that, "building the Greater Bay Area could be an innovative 'testing ground' and an innovative community project, combining international standards and

international rules with China's efficiency and the speed advantages."

Noting the 20th anniversary of the handover of Macau, the Secretary said that it was time to face a new pattern of regional cooperation and development for a new era, taking the "unprecedented range of opportunities" made available by the initiative to achieve a moderate level of economic diversification.

The forum, held at HOFEX 2019, was part of the opening ceremonies of the event that also included an experience shared by a Macau representative at the National People's Congress, lawmaker Si Ka Lon. After the session, the delegation visited the exhibition and participated in related activities including a visit to the booths of local exhibitors at the fair. **RM**

FORUM

MDT/Macauhub

Swine fever in China creates an opportunity for Brazilian exporters

The outbreak of African swine fever in China and the resulting slaughter of the affected animals has led the government of the country to authorise imports of edible pork fat from Brazil, reported the Brazilian press.

The information, released by President Jair Bolsonaro on his Twitter feed, said the Chinese government had authorised pork exporters in Brazil to also ship the edible fat of the animal, in order to make up the lack of the product as a result of the swine fever outbreak.

"The measure comes in response to a request presented by the Brazilian Association of Animal Protein," the president wrote, citing the association as saying

that pork fat has a higher market value than traditional meat.

Brazil's Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply estimate that China has lost about 30% of the pigs in the country as a result of the swine fever outbreak, which creates an opportunity for Brazilian producers to increase their exports to China, the world's largest producer and consumer of pork.

The Brazilian Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply, Tereza Cristina, on Monday, started a 16-day tour of four Asian countries – Japan, China, Vietnam and Indonesia, with about 100 business people, parliamentarians and representatives of producer associations.

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Daniela Wei

CHINA'S love of a fiery grain liquor made Kweichow Moutai Co. the world's most valuable alcohol distiller, and the company's approach has been to milk that demand for all it's worth.

But now a change in leadership is bringing a U-turn in Moutai's strategy. Li Baofang, the new chairman of parent Kweichow Moutai Group, is rolling back the efforts of his predecessor, Yuan Renguo, who quietly departed the company last May after 18 years at the helm and was removed this week from a key political position in the company's home province.

Li is seeking to re-focus the Moutai Group back on its cash cow: the Shanghai-listed arm that sells an ultra-premium line of baijiu - China's national drink - embraced by the elite and increasingly coveted by the country's rising middle class.

A customization business is being halted, and subsidiaries that make alcohol for non-premium brands are being shut down to channel production resources to the listed arm, according to people familiar with the matter.

The parent group is also trying to sell directly to customers through the establishment of its own sales office, while cutting down the listed company's 3,000-strong network of distributors.

Suspicion a system of kickbacks had developed between liquor distributors and some of these units helped trigger the shift, say the people, who didn't want to be identified discussing internal company matters.

The changes are creating a stir among investors. The Shanghai Stock Exchange has asked the company's controlling shareholder to explain the reason for setting up a new direct sales company, along with its business model and plans, according to a company filing late Tuesday.

Moutai's stock has lost as much as 12 percent this week amid concerns the new structure shifts power and sales to the parent group, away from the listed body. The shares fell 0.6 percent yesterday amid the global market selloff.

BAIJIU KING

Moutai's Feitian, or Flying Fairy in English, is the king of China's baijius. Made with local stream water and fermented sorghum in a mountain village in the nation's south, production hasn't been able to keep up with demand. While that's added to the liquor's cachet, it's put the company in a challenging position when it comes to growth. Moutai can't just hike prices because of government restrictions on the cost of high-end alcohol in China.

Former chairman Yuan's solu-



MOUTAI

\$165 billion distiller changes course by cutting brands

tion was to diversify and trade off the Moutai name. Used by Mao Zedong to toast the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, Feitian and the ultra-premium baijiu lines run by the company's Shanghai-listed arm are a must-have symbol of wealth and power on the banquet tables of China.

Yuan sought to grow the customization business, which made HKD6,000 (USD765) bottles of personalized Feitian for gambling junket operators in Macau, the world's biggest casino hub and a magnet for China's biggest spenders. The company introduced a raft of brands and sub-brands separate to the premium lines and Yuan also had plans for a less-expensive line of baijiu, which means white liquor, named Xijiu.

But the new guard - Li took over last May - has shut down subsidiaries, including one called Baijin Liquor, diverting some of their production lines to Moutai's core brands and leaving hundreds of workers idle, according to the people.

Kweichow Moutai Co. has more than doubled in value over the past two years, af-

ter leapfrogging Diageo Co. - the maker of Johnnie Walker whiskey and Smirnoff vodka - in 2017. Thanks to soaring demand for Feitian, Moutai's gross profit margin has held around 90 percent for more than a decade, and the listed arm contributed 78 percent of the wider group's revenue of 40.8 billion yuan (\$6 billion) in 2014. That's expected to rise to 86 percent of the projected 100 billion yuan in sales this year.

The brand cull was aimed at protecting that flank. Some subsidiaries were causing "serious and negative impact to Moutai's reputation," according to an internal company document from February announcing the shutdowns seen by Bloomberg and verified by people familiar with the company's activities.

IMAGE CONCERNS

Moutai suspects distributors were paying kickbacks for the right to operate and distribute those subsidiary brands, tarnishing the company's image, the people said.

A company representative didn't respond to requests for comment.

Moutai's Feitian baijiu bottled at their factory in the town of Maotai. Photographer: Qilai Shen/Bloomberg

Li is trying to streamline the alcohol giant as smaller rivals like Wuliangye Yibin Co. muscle in on the baijiu trade and Chinese consumer demand ebbs amid a slowing economy.

Moutai cut more than 400 of its 3,000 distributors throughout China in recent months, according to its annual report published in March. For the first time, the company is signing contracts directly with retailers, issuing a tender last month for six supermarkets to carry its stock. This week it announced the opening of a new in-house unit that will sell Feitian and other core brands directly to customers, bypassing distributors.

The shift is designed to boost margins, but is also a way of cleaning up the distribution network, the people said.

OTHER PLANS

One of the consequences has been a spike in prices in the retail market as distributors hoard inventory on concern

they'll be terminated next, according to people involved in the sales network who didn't want to be identified. A 500 ml (16.9 oz) bottle of Feitian on Chinese e-commerce platform T-mall, currently costs in excess of 2,000 yuan, more than double Moutai's factory-gate price set in late 2017 - the last time it was increased.

Former chairman Yuan Renguo speaks during an interview in 2017. Photographer: Qilai Shen/Bloomberg

In an interview with Bloomberg in late 2017, Yuan detailed his strategy for pushing Moutai forward. He also planned to set up insurance and asset management businesses and was weighing public listings of Moutai's e-commerce platform, an agricultural unit and the subsidiary selling Xijiu by 2020.

Those plans haven't been mentioned by Moutai since Yuan was replaced almost a year ago. His removal from Guizhou province's political consultative body this week, according to state-run media, could be another sign Yuan's legacy is being unwound. **Bloomberg**



A brain surgery patient walks down the main corridor of Ruijin Hospital's functional neurosurgery center in Shanghai

Chinese researchers try brain implants to treat addiction

Erika Kinetz, Shanghai

THE sound of doctors boring through his skull to feed electrodes deep into his brain made Yan tremble.

"The drill was like bzzzzzzz," he later recalled. "The moment of drilling is the most terrible."

Yan has been using methamphetamine since 2011. The hope is that technology will extinguish his addiction — quite literally, with the flip of a switch.

The treatment — deep brain stimulation — has long been used for movement disorders like Parkinson's. Now, the first clinical trial of DBS for methamphetamine addiction is being conducted at Shanghai's Ruijin Hospital, along with trials for opioid addiction. Yan is the study's first patient; for fear of losing his job, he asked that only his surname be published.

Western attempts to push forward with human trials of deep brain stimulation for drug addiction have foundered, even as China has emerged as a hub for this kind of research.

But the vast suffering wrought by the U.S. opioid epidemic may be changing the risk-reward calculus for doctors and regulators. Now, the experimental surgery Yan underwent is coming to America. In February,

the U.S. Food and Drug Administration greenlighted a clinical trial in West Virginia of DBS for opioid addiction.

Until now, complex ethical, social and scientific questions made it hard to push forward with such experiments in the United States, where the devices can cost \$100,000 to implant. Scientists in Europe have struggled to recruit patients for their DBS addiction studies.

Globally, there are eight registered DBS clinical trials for drug addiction, according to a U.S. National Institutes of Health database. Six are in China.

China has a long, troubled history of using brain surgery

to treat addiction. Doctors destroyed small clumps of tissue in the brains of heroin users, garnering huge profits and leaving behind a trail of patients with mood disorders, lost memories and altered sex drives.

In 2004, China's Ministry of Health ordered a halt to the practice at most hospitals. Nine years later, a military hospital in Xi'an reported that roughly half of 1,167 patients who had their brains lesioned stayed off drugs for at least five years.

DBS builds on that history. The surgery involves implanting a device that acts as a kind of pacemaker for the brain, electrically stimulating targeted areas. Instead of irreversi-

bly killing brain cells, the devices allow interventions that are — in theory — reversible. The technology has opened a fresh field of human experimentation globally.

"For many other psychiatric disorders, for example, anorexia schizophrenia, OCD, there's no way to use the animal to be like a model," said Dr. Sun Bomin, director of the functional neurosurgery center at Ruijin Hospital. "For these kinds of special psychiatric disorders we have to use human patients."

Some believe such human experiments for drug addiction should not be allowed.

Critics argue that they are premature, and will not address the complex biological, social and psychological factors that drive addiction. Scientists don't fully understand how DBS works and there is still debate about where electrodes should be placed to treat addiction. There is also skepticism in the global scientific community about the general quality and ethical rigor of clinical trials done in China.

"It would be fantastic if there were something where we could flip a switch, but it's probably fanciful at this stage," said Adrian Carter, who heads the neuroscience and society group at Monash University in Melbourne. "There's a lot of risks that go with promoting that

idea."

Meanwhile, the body count from addiction is rising. More than 500,000 Americans died of drug overdoses in the decade ending in 2017, adding urgency to the search for new, more effective treatments.

But research for DBS as an addiction treatment funded by the U.S. National Institutes of Health has focused on animals, not people. And at least two U.S. laboratories dropped clinical trials of DBS for treating alcoholism over concerns about study design and preliminary results that didn't seem to justify the risks, investigators who led the studies told The Associated Press.

"The lack of scientific clarity, the important but strict regulatory regime, along with the high cost and risk of surgery make clinical trials of DBS for addiction in the U.S. difficult at the present time," said Dr. Emad Eskandar, chairman of neurological surgery at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York.

China's studies have offered mixed results. Sun and his colleagues have published one case study, describing a patient who used heroin and fatally overdosed after getting DBS. But a separate pilot study published in January by doctors at a military hospital in Xi'an showed that five of eight heroin users stayed off drugs for two years after DBS surgery.

Based on those results, the Chinese deep brain stimulation device manufacturer SceneRay Corp. is seeking Chinese regulatory approval of its DBS device for opioid addiction, and funding a clinical trial targeting 60 participants. SceneRay chairman Ning Yihua said his application for a clinical trial in the U.S. was blocked by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

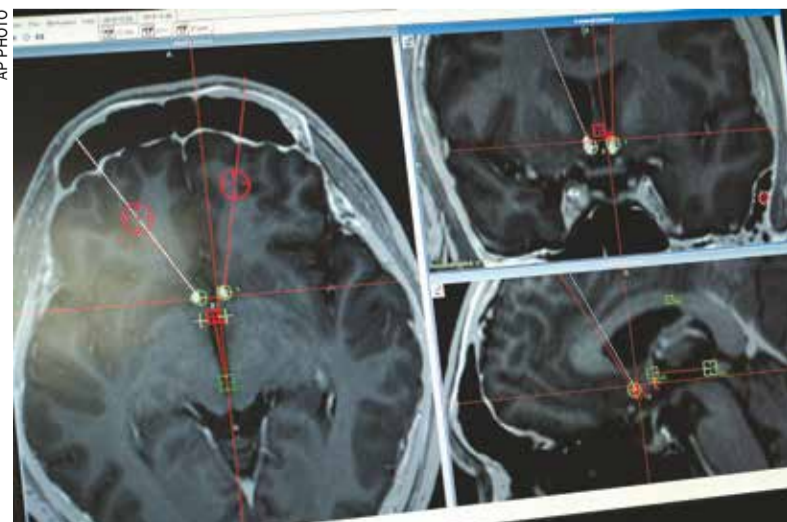
But in February, the FDA greenlighted a small, separate trial of DBS for opioid use disorder. The study lead, Dr. Ali Rezaei, director of the West Virginia University Rockefeller Neuroscience Institute, hopes to launch the trial in June.

"People are dying," Rezaei said. "Their lives are devastated. It's a brain issue. We need to explore all options."

Yan is among those whose lives have been ravaged. Years of drug use cost him his wife, his money and his self-respect, before landing him at Ruijin Hospital in search of a radical cure.

After surgery, Yan said the machine in his brain was magical. "It controls your happiness, anger, grief and joy," he said.

More than six months later, he says he is still off drugs and has put on 20 pounds (9 kilograms). Sometimes, in his new life, he touches the hard cable in his neck that leads from the battery pack to the electrodes in his brain. And he wonders: What is the machine doing inside his head? **AP**



A brain scan of a methamphetamine user with the path of electrodes that doctors at Ruijin Hospital implanted to stimulate an area of the brain associated with addiction

TRADE WAR

Trump puts deal-making credentials to test with China talks

Kevin Freking & Zeke Miller,
Washington

AS he cranks up the pressure on China in pursuit of a new trade accord, President Donald Trump is putting his deal-making persona on the line and injecting new risk into his bid for another four years in the White House.

Trump has raised the already high stakes of this week's talks between U.S. and Chinese negotiators as he seeks to seal an agreement he can brandish on the campaign trail. The push to bring the talks with China to a conclusion comes as his administration gears up for a difficult fight in Congress over its new North American trade deal. Progress or failure on the twin agenda items stands to be a key selling point for his reelection or a sobering verdict on his unpredictable stylings.

Already, the risks are mounting. Trade fears sent U.S. markets sharply downward yesterday [Macau time] amid rising concerns about the China talks resuming today. Earlier this week, U.S. Trade Representative Bob Lighthizer said the Trump administration was prepared to raise import taxes on USD200 billion worth of Chinese goods tomorrow.

Trump made protecting American manufacturers and farmers central planks of his 2016 candidacy, and his pledge to reverse the tide of globalization helped him win over voters in Democratic-leaning states like Michigan and Wisconsin. Now those groups Trump vowed to help are sounding the alarm about the impact of Trump's protectionist measures on im-



President Donald Trump met China's Vice Premier Liu He in the Oval Office last April

ports from China and other trading partners.

Despite Trump's rhetoric to the contrary, tariffs are paid by U.S. importers of foreign goods. Manufacturers dependent on foreign material, retailers and other importers have been charged more than \$15 billion in the last year, according to federal data, though the impact directly felt by consumers has been relatively minimal.

Dave Salmons, a senior director at the American Farm Bureau Federation, said the group is hopeful that the president's threat of increased tariffs on Friday "is just part of the negotiating process." He said that agriculture exports to China fell by more than half last year from \$21 billion in 2017. "They've retaliated on almost everything we send," he said.

Throw in retaliatory tariffs from Canada, Mexico and

other nations, and the trade war contributed to a projected 16 percent decrease in farm income last year, according to a recent study from the Agriculture Department. The Trump administration ended up providing up to \$12 billion in aid to farmers affected by the trade skirmishes.

Trade fears sent US markets sharply downward yesterday amid rising concerns about the China talks resuming today

Some Republican senators voiced concerns about the state of trade negotiations during a private lunch Tuesday with Vice President Mike Pence.

"We're not in a good way at all," said Sen. Pat Roberts of Kansas, chairman of the Agriculture Committee.

"There's a lot of feeling in ag country that we're being used as pawns in this whole business," Roberts said, but added: "We will benefit tremendously if we get a good deal, so we're hanging in there with the president."

The vice president encouraged the senators to stick with Trump as he pushes China for a better deal.

Despite the political fallout back home, senators seemed intent on not breaking ranks with the White House at this crucial moment in the trade talks.

"Even though there's some real issues in Wisconsin, there's a great deal of support for what he's trying

to accomplish," said Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Wis. "I don't think anybody wants to undermine his negotiating position right now, and we're all keeping our fingers crossed."

Current and former Trump administration officials believe the U.S. still has the most leverage in the talks, saying China needs access to the U.S. market more than the reverse. And even if the talks don't succeed for Trump, their hope is that voters are more likely to blame any pain on China, rather than the president.

Former Trump strategist Stephen Bannon wrote in *The Washington Post* that the president's best political option is "not to surrender, but rather to double down on the tariffs — they have been highly effective in pressuring the Chinese without harming the U.S. economy."

"Certain Trump advisers inside and outside the White House are playing on the president's well-earned pride in a rising stock market and a fear he might lose the Farm Belt to try to box him into a weak deal. But it is a decidedly false narrative that any failure to reach a deal will lead to a market meltdown and economic implosion," Bannon wrote.

And there are indications that at least some Trump supporters are all for the president's confrontation.

"Right now, because we have a strong economy and China has some issues with its aging population and a slowing economy, we're in a position of strength to negotiate a better deal," said Jeff Schulmeister, 52, a resident of the Detroit suburb of Macomb Township. "I think what he's doing is the right thing to do, and I think it's going to benefit the country." AP

Sino investment in US drops 83% amid growing mistrust

CHINESE direct investment in the United States dropped 83% last year, pushed down by growing mistrust between the world's two biggest economies.

In a report yesterday, the Rhodium Group research firm said that China sank USD5 billion last year into direct investments in America, down from \$29 billion in 2017 and a record \$46 billion in 2016. Direct investments include things like putting up factories, not financial invest-

ments like buying stocks.

The numbers fell partly because Beijing sought to rein in deeply indebted investors and partly because the U.S. regulators have stepped up scrutiny of Chinese investments.

Rhodium estimates that China dropped deals worth \$2.5 billion last year because they wouldn't pass muster with the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, which reviews foreign investments with national security implications.

Chinese investment in the U.S. information and communications technology industry plunged to \$200 million last year from \$2.5 billion in 2017.

U.S. direct investment in China, meanwhile, dipped to \$13 billion from \$14 billion in 2017. U.S. investment in the Chinese information and technology industry dropped to \$2.1 billion last year from \$4.1 billion in 2017 and \$4.3 billion in 2016.

U.S.-China trade relations have deteriorated

since President Donald Trump took office.

The U.S. and China have slapped tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars of each other's products in a dispute over Beijing's aggressive drive to challenge American technological dominance. Congress last year passed a law making it harder for the Chinese to invest in U.S. companies and to buy cutting-edge technology. The U.S. is also putting restrictions on sensitive tech exports. AP





Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, right, and Bill Shorten, leader of the federal opposition, shake hands before the third leaders debate at the National Press Club in Canberra yesterday

AUSTRALIA

Political parties woo Chinese-Australian voters

Rod McGuirk, Canberra

THE Chinese diaspora in Australia, long regarded as a politically apathetic ethnic minority, are being wooed like never before by political parties who see them as key to winning crucial seats that could decide next week's general election.

China has become one of Australia's largest sources of immigrants. Both Prime Minister Scott Morrison and opposition leader Bill Shorten have opened WeChat accounts to reach large Chinese

populations in big cities with political messages.

The opposition center-left Labor Party has cried foul over some of that engagement, complaining to WeChat's owner Tencent that China's largest social media platform with 1 billion monthly users is being exploited by opponents who generate fake news.

Morrison yesterday denied his conservative Liberal Party was behind misleading WeChat posts and doctored accounts that target Labor policies on refugees, taxes and

the economy.

"That's not the Liberal Party's campaign," Morrison told reporters. "People should be up front and candid about their policies. That's what we're doing."

An extraordinary feature of the Australian political system is that voting is compulsory. So ethnic minorities turn out to vote to avoid a fine even if they are not politically engaged.

Maree Ma is the general manager of independent Australia-based newspaper Vision China Times, which

has 500,000 readers across five Australian cities who are mostly immigrants from China.

Ma said her readers were responding to the political messaging and "are really quite engaged."

"Historically, I would say a lot of our readers don't really care too much about the federal election, people don't know the candidate and there's not that many Chinese candidates. But this time around, what we've found is people are very interested in this particular federal election," Ma said.

Wanning Sun, a professor at the University of Technology Sydney's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, said WeChat had become far more important than traditional media to Australian politicians attempting to reach Chinese-Australian voters.

"To put it bluntly, they actually realize that it is a platform they can't afford not to use," Sun said. "The challenge for them is, A, how to use it effectively and, B, how to stop yourself being shafted on WeChat by the opposition. It's getting quite dirty out there."

She said Labor had learned a lesson from how the Liberals "very aggressively and effectively" used WeChat to campaign in the east Melbourne seat of Chisholm in the last election in 2016.

The government lost 14 seats in that election and Chisholm was the only seat that the Liberals won from Labor. The Labor and Liberal parties are pitting two Chinese-Australian candidates against each other in Chisholm in the May 18 election. Either Liberal candidate Gladys Lui or Labor candidate Jennifer Yang is likely to become the first Chinese-Australian woman to be elected to Australia's House of Representatives.

Labor lawmaker Penny

Wong on Tuesday blamed the Liberal Party for fake campaign news on WeChat.

"Our message to the prime minister is this: This is not what we do in Australia. We have robust political debates. We don't have major political parties engaging in fake news on this media platform or any other media platform," Wong said.

Mining billionaire Clive Palmer is a political party leader who is trying to exploit Australian concerns about Chinese investment. His United Australia Party has entered into a vote-swap deal with the Liberal Party that improves both parties' chances of winning House seats.

"I'm opposed to the Chinese because they're trying to invade our country, destroy our industries and take things over," Palmer told Australian Broadcasting Corp. yesterday. Palmer is seen as having a strong chance to win a Senate seat after spending tens of millions of dollars of his own money on political advertising.

Ma said the most important election issues for her readers were the economy and Australia's relationship with China, its biggest trading partner.

Chinese immigrants had traditionally favored Labor, she said. A Labor-led government gave diplomatic recognition to the People's Republic of China in 1972, seven years before the United States took the same step. A Labor government also allowed 20,000 Chinese students to stay in Australia permanently after the Chinese military killed student protesters in Tiananmen Square in Beijing in 1989.

But Ma said Chinese voter support seemed to be shifting toward the conservatives. Opinion polls suggest Labor will win the election. **AP**

CAMBODIA

Court summons members of defunct opposition party

A court in northwestern Cambodia has summoned for questioning more than two dozen regional members of the defunct opposition Cambodian National Rescue Party, accusing them of engaging in politics even though their party was dissolved by the Supreme Court a year and a half ago.

The action was criticized yesterday by New York-based Human Rights Watch, which called for the court in Battambang province to cease such actions immediately.

"The Cambodian government continues to harass numerous opposition officials in the courts and to threaten them with prison time long after the main opposition party was unjustifiably disbanded," Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Rights Watch, said in an emailed statement. "The government should immediately end the political harassment campaign against the CNRP and drop this latest batch of absurd court cases."

The Supreme Court on Nov. 16, 2017, ordered the

opposition party dissolved on the unsupported pretext that it conspired with the United States to overthrow Prime Minister Hun Sen's government, a move seen as a government effort to ensure it won last July's general election. Hun Sen's ruling Cambodian People's Party ended up sweeping all 125 National Assembly seats.

Because they considered the elections neither free nor fair, some Western nations applied diplomatic sanctions against Hun Sen's government. The European

Union has set in motion a process to withdraw special trade privileges from Cambodia unless it takes measure to improve civil and human rights. Hun Sen has decried these actions and blamed the opposition for encouraging them instead of reconciling with him.

The court's ruling also banned 118 senior members of the CNRP from political activity for five years, but did not include any of the 26 people summoned in Battambang, who mainly were local officials who just had to leave their jobs.

However, the summons issued by Battambang provincial court prosecutor Ky Bunnara accuses those who have been called in for meetings over the next few weeks of acting against the Supreme Court ruling.

More senior party members have faced tougher action.

The Phnom Penh Municipal Court has issued arrest warrants for eight leading members of the CNRP in exile on charges of conspiring to commit treason and incitement to commit a felony. All eight leaders left

Cambodia ahead of the July 2018 election after a widespread crackdown on the political opposition, independent media and nongovernmental organizations.

Party co-founder and former co-leader Sam Rainsy has a stack of convictions and charges against him, all of which he and his supporters say are politically inspired. He has stayed abroad since late 2015 to avoid going to prison.

The party's co-founder, Kem Sokha, was arrested in September 2017 on treason charges. **AP**

Kathy Gannon, Islamabad

PAKISTAN

Christian woman acquitted of blasphemy leaves country

A Christian woman acquitted of blasphemy after spending eight years on death row in Pakistan has left for Canada to be reunited with her daughters, Pakistani officials and others involved in the case said yesterday.

Aasia Bibi was convicted of blasphemy in 2009 after a quarrel with a fellow farmworker. The Supreme Court overturned her conviction last year, and she had been in protective custody since then.

Islamic extremists have rioted over the case and threatened to kill her. The same radical Islamists, many of whom have been jailed for their threats, also urged the overthrow of the government following Bibi's acquittal.

Wilson Chawdhry of the British Pakistani Christian Association told The Associated Press that he received a text message from a British diplomat saying "Aasia is out." A close friend of Bibi also confirmed that she had left the country, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal. Her lawyer, Saif-ul Malook, said she had already arrived in Canada.

Officials at Pakistan's interior and foreign ministries also con-



firmed her departure, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief media.

British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt tweeted his pleasure at Bibi's departure.

"Fantastic news that Asia Bibi

appears to have left Pakistan safely," he tweeted, adding that he was about to meet U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo "to talk about persecution of Christians around the world."

The case has brought international attention to Pakistan's controversial blasphemy law, which carries an automatic death penalty. The mere suspicion of blasphemy against Islam is enough to ignite mob lynchings in the country. Blasphemy allegations have also been used to intimidate religious minorities and to settle scores.

Radical Islamists have made the punishment of blasphemy a major rallying cry, bringing tens of thousands into the streets and paralyzing major cities. The reluctance of local and foreign officials to speak openly of Bibi's departure may reflect fears of igniting more violence.

Salman Taseer, the governor of Punjab province, was shot and killed by one of his guards in 2011 for defending Bibi and

criticizing the misuse of the blasphemy law. The assassin, Mumtaz Qadri, has been celebrated as a martyr by hard-liners since he was hanged for the killing, with millions visiting a shrine set up for him near Islamabad. Pakistan's minister for minorities, Shahbaz Bhatti, was assassinated later that year after demanding justice for Bibi.

Prime Minister Imran Khan has vowed not to be intimidated by the rioters, saying the rule of law would decide Bibi's fate. But she was denied permission to leave the country for several months until sentiments cooled.

The friend, who last spoke to her on Tuesday, said Bibi and her husband Ashiq Masih had spent the last several weeks getting their documents in order. He said she was longing to see her daughters, with whom she talked to almost daily from her secure location, protected by Pakistani security forces. AP

AD



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AP PHOTO



South Africa starts voting amid issue of corruption

Andrew Meldrum, Johannesburg

SOUTH Africans voted yesterday in presidential and parliamentary elections amid issues of corruption and unemployment.

It is 25 years since the end of apartheid, but despite the demise of the harsh system of racial discrimination, the country remains divided by economic inequality.

The African National Congress, the party of Nelson Mandela that has been in power since 1994, is likely to win a majority but it will face a difficult challenge to do as well as five years ago.

The party has been tarnished by widespread corruption scandals and a national unemployment rate of 27% that has left many voters disillusioned. The ANC's leader, President Cyril Ramaphosa, has campaigned on promises to clean up his party, an acknowledgment

of the problems that forced his predecessor to resign last year.

Opposition leader Mmusi Maimane, who has campaigned vigorously against corruption, was one of the first voters at the Dobsonville polling station in Soweto, Johannesburg's largest black township.

"Soweto represents to me the home of the struggle against apartheid and it is where we are now struggling against corruption and for a new government," Maimane said after casting his ballots.

Black support for Maimane's party, the Democratic Alliance, is limited because it is generally perceived to be run by whites.

In the working class suburb of Kempton Park, in eastern Johannesburg, Albert Lethole, 65, said it felt good to vote. He said he voted in the first all-race elections in 1994.

"Things have been changing slowly but more needs to be done," said Lethole of changes since the end of apartheid.

■ The ANC has vowed to embark on a program of seizing white-owned land without compensation

The ANC has vowed to embark on a program of seizing white-owned land without compensation, for which it needs a 67% majority to change South Africa's constitution.

In the most likely scenario, the ANC will need to form a coalition government with another party to get the votes needed to alter the constitution. That is likely to be the Economic Freedom Fighters, a populist, left-wing party that also supports land seizures.

If the ANC's share of the vote slips below 60%, Ramaphosa could be vulnerable and his party could oust him and choose a new leader.

The country's young voters, who make up about 20% of the electorate, largely support the EFF, which is led by charismatic firebrand Julius Malema, who broke from the ANC six years ago.

More than 40 smaller parties also are vying for power in the balloting.

Neither the president nor the parliament is elected directly. Voters cast ballots for a national party

and the number of votes won by each party determines how many representatives are sent to the legislature. The president is the leader of the party that gets the most votes.

Some 26 million people of the country's population of 57 million are eligible to vote. Most of the 22,900 polling stations opened at 7 a.m. local time and were to close at 9 p.m. (0500 to 1900 GMT).

The day is a national holiday to encourage turnout.

South Africa was famous for its long lines of voters in the first post-apartheid election 25 years ago. But a sense of national apathy this year could be an ominous sign for the ANC.

Preliminary results will be announced from the electoral commission in the capital, Pretoria, and final results are not expected for 48 hours. **AP**

IRAN

Rouhani threatens more enrichment if no new nuclear deal

IRAN threatened yesterday to resume higher enrichment of uranium in 60 days if world powers fail to negotiate new terms for its 2015 nuclear deal a year after President Donald Trump withdrew from the accord, raising tensions as a U.S. aircraft carrier and a bomber wing deploy to confront unspecified threats from Tehran.

In a televised address, President Hassan Rouhani also said that Iran would stop exporting excess uranium and heavy water from its nuclear program, two requirements of the deal. He did not elaborate on the degree to which Iran was prepared to enrich uranium, which at high

levels of enrichment can be used in nuclear weapons.

Rouhani said Iran wanted to negotiate new terms with remaining partners in the deal, but acknowledged that the situation was dire.

"We felt that the nuclear deal needs a surgery and the painkiller pills of the last year have been ineffective," Rouhani said. "This surgery is for saving the deal, not destroying it."

Iran notified Britain, Russia, China, the European Union, France and Germany of its decision earlier yesterday. All were signatories to the nuclear deal and continue to support it. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Ja-

vad Zarif was to meet Wednesday in Moscow with his Russian counterpart.

"If the five countries join negotiations and help Iran to reach its benefits in the field of oil and banking, Iran will return to its commitments according to the nuclear deal," Rouhani said.

However, Rouhani warned of a "strong reaction" if European leaders instead sought to impose more sanctions on Iran via the U.N. Security Council. He did not elaborate.

Rouhani also said yesterday that if the 60 days pass without action, Iran will halt a Chinese-led effort to redesign its Arak heavy water nuclear reactor.

Such reactors produce plutonium that can be used in nuclear weapons.

Zarif separately issued his own warning from Moscow.

"After a year of patience, Iran stops measures that (the) US has made impossible to continue," he tweeted. World powers have "a narrowing window to reverse this."

Reaction came swiftly from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a staunch critic of Iran and the nuclear deal.

"I heard that Iran intends to continue its nuclear program. We will not allow Iran to obtain nuclear weapons," Netanyahu said. "We will continue to fight

AP PHOTO



President Hassan Rouhani speaks in a cabinet meeting in Tehran yesterday

those who seek to take our lives, and we will thrust our roots even deeper into the soil of our homeland."

There was no immediate response from the U.S. However, the White House said Sunday it would dispatch the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and B-52 bombers to the Persian Gulf over what it described as a new threat from Iran.

Apparently responding to that, the general staff of Iran's armed forces issued a statement yesterday applauding Rouhani's decision and warning its enemies.

"Any possible movement by them will face a regrettable response by the Iranian nation and its armed forces," the statement said, according to the semi-official Fars news agency. **AP**



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what's ON



SEE SAW ZINE?

TIME: 12pm-8pm (closed on Tuesdays)

UNTIL: July 12, 2019

VENUE: Taipa Village Art Space

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2857 6212/ 2857 6118

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

MANDARIN'S HOUSE

TIME: 10am-6pm daily (last admission at 5:30pm; closed on Wednesdays, open on public holidays)

ADDRESS: No. 10, Travessa de António da Silva

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2896 8820

STROLLING AND FEELING: WATERCOLOUR PAINTINGS OF LAI IENG

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

UNTIL: June 16, 2019

VENUE: Macau Museum of Art

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

STAMPS AROUND THE WORLD – LIECHTENSTEIN, KINGDOM OF STAMPS

TIME: 9am-5:30pm (closed on public holidays)

UNTIL: May 31, 2019

VENUE: Temporary Gallery, Communications Museum

ADMISSION: MOP10

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2871 8063

Offbeat

WHOSE POO IS THIS? PRAGUE ZOO TAKES A CLOSER LOOK AT DUNG



Gorilla feces for an exhibition of animal excrements at the Prague Zoo

After producing plenty of elephant dung and other manure for years, Prague Zoo has capitalized on its expertise by creating a new permanent exhibit on the world of animal excrement.

It displays information and samples of everything from fossil turds, also known as coprolites, from extinct animals to the excrement of modern-day gorillas, lions, elephants, horses, turtles, wombats, camels and other animals, all in various sizes, shapes, textures and colors.

Zoo director Miroslav Bobek, whose surname literally means "poop" in Czech, says he was inspired by American George Frandsen and his online museum.

The exhibition coincides with the zoo's publication of a new edition of the "Encyclopedia of Excrements." The zoo has been selling elephant dung to gardeners as fertilizer for years.

TV canal macau



| | |
|-------|---|
| 13:00 | TDM News (Repetição) |
| 13:30 | Telejornal RTPi (Diferido) |
| 15:00 | Agua de Mar |
| 15:45 | Zig Zag |
| 16:20 | T2 para 3 Remodelado |
| 16:50 | Quem Quer Ser Millionario |
| 17:45 | Moda Portugal Sr.3 |
| 18:20 | Portugal de... Ricardo Costa |
| 19:00 | Montra do Lilau (Repetição) |
| 19:35 | Os Nossos Dias Sr.2 |
| 20:30 | Telejornal |
| 21:15 | TDM Talk Show |
| 21:50 | Livros com João Guedes |
| 22:00 | Todas as Palavras |
| 22:20 | O Pátio das Cantigas |
| 23:15 | TDM News |
| 23:50 | Resumo Liga dos Campeões 2018/2019 |
| 00:10 | Ocidente no Oriente - Macau nos Cantos da Memória |
| 01:25 | Telejornal (Repetição) |
| 02:10 | RTPi Directo |

cinema



CINETEATRO

09 - 15 May



POKEMON: DETECTIVE PIKACHU

ROOM 1

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

Language: Cantonese

ROOM 1

9:30pm

Director: Rob Letterman

Starring: Ryan Reynolds, Justice Smith, Kathryn Newton

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 104min



AVENGERS: ENDGAME

ROOM 2

2:30, 5:45, 9:00pm

Director: Anthony Russo, Joe Russo

Starring: Brie Larson, Scarlett Johansson, Karen Gillan

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 181min



THE HUSTLE

ROOM 3

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

Director: Chris Addison

Starring: Anne Hathaway, Rebel Wilson, Tim Blake Nelson

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 94min

this day in history



1955 WEST GERMANY ACCEPTED INTO NATO

West Germany has formally joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation at a special ceremony in Paris.

The German delegates to NATO were greeted by British Foreign Secretary Harold Macmillan at the Conference Hall of the Palais de Chaillot.

Ministers from 14 member countries made a short speech welcoming West Germany into the alliance, saying they believed Germany's inclusion would strengthen peace in Europe.

Norway's Foreign Minister, Halvard Lange, who spent two years in Ravensbruck concentration camp, called the entry of Germany into Nato "a decisive turning point in the history of our continent".

Some ministers also paid tribute to Dr Konrad Adenauer, German Chancellor since 1946.

In response, Dr Adenauer said in German: "I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the words of welcome you have addressed to the federal government and to the German nation."

"All your words reflected the importance of the hour and the event. You will realise that this moment fills me with deep emotion. The German people have paid harshly for the horrors which were committed in their name by evil leadership and have paid these horrors with unlimited suffering."

"Today, everywhere in Germany, peace and freedom are felt to be the greatest treasures as was true in the best periods of her history."

This morning, the red, yellow and black German flag was raised at a military ceremony at Nato headquarters in Rocquencourt, France.

A British band played the German national anthem - better known as "Deutschland ueber Alles". A French band had refused to play the music because of its Nazi connotations.

Professor Hans Speidel, former general of the Third Reich and ex chief-of-staff to Field Marshall Erwin Rommel, witnessed the ceremony alongside United States General Alfred Gruenther and Major General Rene Lehr of France.

Herr Speidel was implicated in a plot to kill Adolf Hitler and spent the end of the war in a German prison.

Formal ceremonies over, the Nato members will now discuss the agenda of a proposed conference with the Soviet Union on the future of Germany and disarmament.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

West Germany was reunified with East Germany on 3 October 1990.

The USSR saw the inclusion into Nato of West Germany in 1955 as a direct threat and in the same year it created a counter-alliance called the Warsaw Pact.

This dissolved after the break-up of the USSR in 1991 and Nato had to re-evaluate its role as a military alliance defending Western Europe against perceived Soviet aggression.

Nato formed closer links with former eastern bloc countries by setting up a North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1991 and the Partnership for Peace programme in 1994.

The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland became the first former Warsaw Pact countries to gain Nato membership in 1999. Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia are expected to join in 2004.

Nato's first aggressive action against a sovereign state took place in 1999, when it bombed targets in Yugoslavia in an attempt to halt that country's policy of "ethnic cleansing" in Kosovo. This was strongly opposed by Russia.

But the Kremlin's supportive response to the 11 September 2001 attacks on targets in the USA led to the formation in May 2002 of the Nato-Russia Council.

This means Russia and Nato countries will have an equal role in decision-making on policy to counter terrorism and other security threats.

YOUR STARS

Aries Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Cell phones, emails - they're old hat by now. But that doesn't mean you should forget to think before you speak. Things could change in the time it takes you to say what you wish you could take back.

Taurus April 20-May 20 The temptation of a single purchase has your thoughts racing. Is it really as exciting as all that? Best to put off any decisions around finances, at least until you have a chance to catch up with yourself.

Gemini May 21-Jun. 21 Cross discussion is always risky. You're either flirting with disaster, or tempting the next big idea. Here's a simple rule of thumb: don't be the one to initiate it, but do jump right in once it starts.

Cancer Jun. 22-Jul. 22 You're not the only one caught up in internal chatter. If everyone misses the point, who's going to be the voice of authority, let alone reason? Pay attention, even when others aren't.

Leo Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Just like in college, life is one lecture after another. Or is it one party after another? It's a bit of both, today. Those all-or-nothing days are long gone, but that doesn't mean you can't enjoy the office fraternity.

Virgo Aug. 23-Sept. 22 The sun will be shining, the birds singing - or clouds will be forming and lightening cracking. It's a toss up. Even doing your best doesn't guarantee the outcome, but do it anyway.

Libra Sep.23-Oct. 22 Talking with coworkers is part of office life, but the last thing you should be doing is sharing your innermost self. When you get the urge, stop yourself, unless you've mastered putting the toothpaste back in the tube.

Scorpio Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 When you assume you make a you-know-what-of-you-and-well-you. You know just where the unusual minor detail is always hidden - in the fine print. Read it, today, even if it means using a magnifying glass.

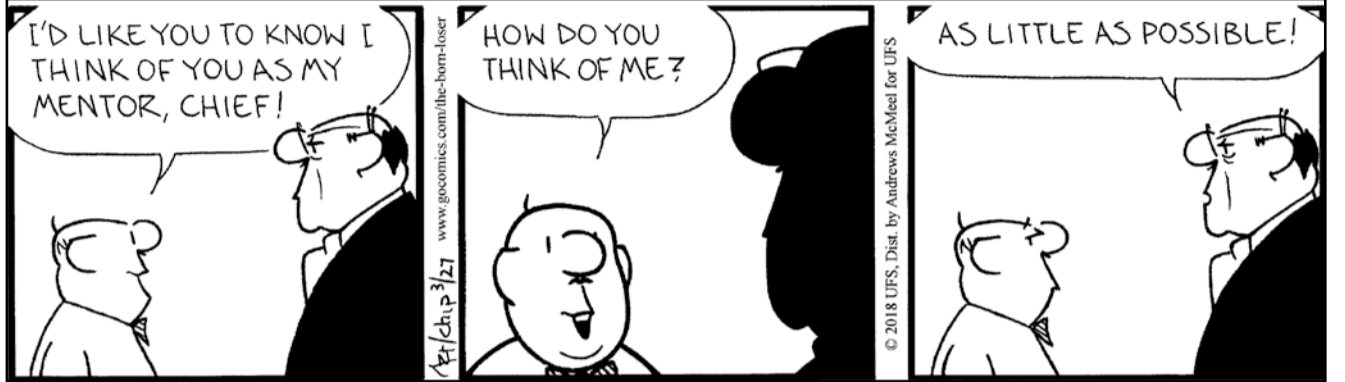
Sagittarius Nov. 22-Dec. 21 You've been working in overdrive for a while, now. If you're all talk and no action, it may be because you're exhausted! Wouldn't it be so much easier to simply sleep at night, instead of working all the time?

Capricorn Dec. 22-Jan. 19 You need to clarify your thoughts. Make a list of the major issues and go from there. Be as Zen as possible about it, today, and block out all the extra, mindless chatter.

Aquarius Jan. 20-Feb. 18 Loving your work is all well and good, but you're going overboard. If you feel like you're carrying on a sizzling affair every day simply because of a certain project, it's time to enjoy it, a little.

Pisces Feb.19-Mar. 20 Only act from a position of strength. If you're feeling overwhelmed, it's the wrong time to make your move. Be vague, prevaricate, do whatever it takes to put off any further action.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

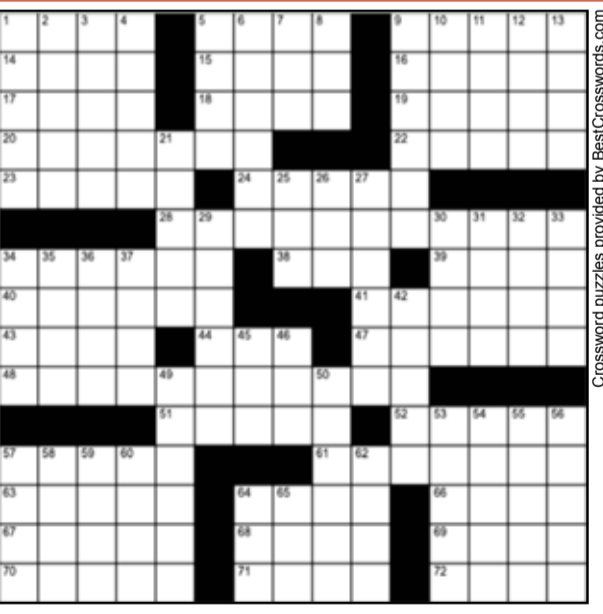
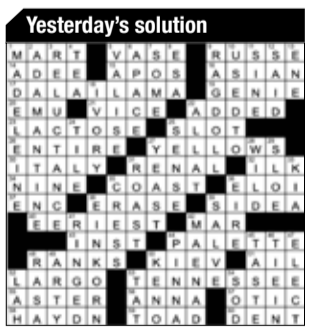
WEATHER

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

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1-Castro's country; 5- Minute amount; 9- Early computer; 14-Russia's ___ Mountains; 15- Dog drawn by Jim Davis; 16- Female vampire; 17- Bits of thread; 18- Don; 19- Orchard fruit; 20- Nightclothes; 22- To date; 23- Now, in Nogales; 24- Tiffs; 28- Leaping insect; 34- Falafel sauce; 38- Mao ___-tung; 39- ___-Rooter; 40- Places of contest; 41- Not rough; 43- The back end of something; 44- Altar words; 47- Ditto!; 48- Patriotism; 51- "Snowy" bird; 52- Moistened while cooking; 57- Pianist Claudio; 61- Wrench; 63- Ninth-century pope; 64- Scottish Celt; 66- Writer Janowitz; 67- Astrologer Sydney; 68- Woody's kid; 69- Tears; 70- Furze; 71- Questionable; 72- Gen. Robert ___;

Down: 1- Mea ___; 2- Heep of "David Copperfield"; 3- Bluegrass instrument; 4- Sacrifice site; 5- Caucus state; 6- Ukraine port; 7- Carrere of "True Lies"; 8- ___ Lingus (Irish carrier); 9- Sun Bowl site; 10- Scottish refusals; 11- Noncommittal words; 12- Leeds's river; 13- Play group; 21- ___ cum laude; 25-L.A. hours; 26- Horse-like animal, term of insult; 27- Essay; 29- Ascending; 30-Type of rock, briefly; 31- Impoverished; 32- Novel ending; 33- Architect Mies van der ___; 34- Small mountain lake; 35- Field of study; 36- Warmth; 37- Cross inscription; 42- Deadly African snake; 45-Patriotic org.; 46- Corrida call; 49- Body of work; 50- In and of ___; 53- Cavern; 54- Gastropod mollusk; 55- City near Phoenix; 56- Efface; 57- Sleep like ___; 58- San ___, Italy; 59- Crowd noise; 60-Snobs put them on; 62- Clever maneuver; 64- Moo goo ___ pan; 65- Husky cry;



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FOOTBALL

Liverpool ousts Barca in historic Champions League comeback

Steve Douglas, Liverpool

LIVERPOOL 4, BARCELONA 0

LIVERPOOL'S players had their hands on their heads, seemingly unable to comprehend their achievement. One of them, James Milner, was in tears. When he wasn't punching the air, Liverpool manager Juergen Klopp stood in front of The Kop in full voice and just took it all in.

Just when Liverpool fans thought they had seen it all — the so-called "Miracle of Istanbul" in particular, but also those storied comebacks at Anfield against Saint-Etienne, Olympiakos and Borussia Dortmund down the years — along came another European night that just might top them all.

The Liverpool players faced a 3-0 deficit against Barcelona from the first leg of the Champions League semifinals. They faced the great Lionel Messi, perhaps in the best form of his life. They faced fatigue from a

AP PHOTO



Liverpool's Divock Origi (right) celebrates scoring his side's fourth and winning goal

grueling Premier League title race with Manchester City and the absence of two of the team's key forwards, Mohamed Salah and Roberto Firmino.

How to explain, then, a remarkable 4-0 win that sent Li-

verpool into a second straight Champions League final, 4-3 on aggregate?

"We know this club is a mix of atmosphere, emotion, desire and footballing quality," Klopp said. "For me, this club has a big heart

and tonight the heart was pounding like crazy. You could feel it all over the world."

It took a goal of breathtaking quality — but also extraordinary cheek — to complete the greatest in a long line of famous come-

backs by Liverpool, which is one win away from becoming European champion for a sixth time.

Euphoria had already engulfed Anfield when Liverpool, leading 3-0 and smothering Barcelona with its intensity, was awarded a corner in the 79th minute. Trent Alexander-Arnold, a 20-year-old right back, put the ball down in the quadrant and then turned around as if he was about to leave the kick to a teammate.

In an instant, he spun round again and whipped in a low cross that Barcelona's players weren't prepared for. Divock Origi was ready, though, and he swept home a finish from eight meters into the top corner for his second goal of the game.

Klopp was full of praise for the lucid thinking of Alexander-Arnold, the youngest player on the Liverpool team, and said he hadn't even seen the corner being taken.

"Incredibly smart," Klopp said, shaking his head. "Genius."

It was only the third time in the history of the competition that a team rallied from three goals down after the first leg of a semi-final and progressed to the final, after Panathinaikos in 1970-71 and Barcelona in 1985-86. No team had done it in the Champions League era.

"When you have a collapse of this nature," Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde said, "we will have a few horrible days ahead." AP

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opinion

Made in Macao
Jenny Lao-Phillips



WEIGHING ON THE
'START OF SUMMER'

The 6th of May marks a new solar term in the Chinese agricultural calendar. We are currently in the term of 立夏 Lixia (beginning of summer). As is evident from the name of the term, the day signifies the beginning of warm weather. Usually, on this day, the sun would be shining brightly and emperors in ancient China would send their officials to fields and villages to remind farmers to take care of their produce, welcoming the warmth that will nurture the growth of crops. However, this year's Lixia seems to be going the opposite direction. Instead of beginning with hot weather, we have encountered a drop in temperature. But whether or not we can enjoy the sun without too much heat at the beginning of summer, there is something we can do to make these two weeks entertaining despite the rain.

During this solar term, one thing we know that was done in ancient China was 'weighing' – yes, as in weighing how heavy people were. Nowadays, we use electronic scales. In ancient China, people used a long pole with a basket, and one by one people would hop onto the makeshift scales to see how heavy they were. I believe many of us have unknowingly been practicing this custom. It is the beginning of summer, the time to start losing weight, so it is not surprising to find people weighing themselves every day to see how much weight they have lost or need to lose.

I have found different stories about weighing people during Lixia, but one thing for certain is that it is not to see if we have lost weight. One special thing about weighing in this period is that when a person goes on the scale others will say lucky things; for example, to old people, it is often said, "weighing at 80, living till 91". And for young girls, it is "weighing 105 kg, being courted by intelligent gentlemen." While this sounds odd in English, the sayings have a better rhythm in Chinese. And yes, girls probably wanted to weigh 105 kg since being fat was considered beautiful in ancient China. But how did this custom begin?

Legend has it that this practice started during the period of the Three Kingdoms. To keep the story short, one of the kings, Liu Bei, had a son named Liu Shan, who became the last king of Su Han. Liu Shan was orphaned when his mother, the queen, killed herself. When Liu Bei had to go to war, he left his beloved son under the care of one of his concubines. His concubine worried that if she did not take good care of the child, she would be blamed. So when Liu Bei's general delivered the child to her care, she weighed him and ensured that she would not let the child be mistreated and lose weight. The next year, on the day of Lixia, she weighed him again and reported the growth of the child back to the general. So, it became a tradition for her to weigh the child every year on Lixia. People started to follow this custom, weighing their children to see how much they grew. Over a thousand years later, it has become customary to weigh one's children on Lixia so that they will be blessed and grow up healthy. It was not clear when people started weighing not just children but also the elderly and young women at home for good luck, longevity, and good marriage.

Anyway, we are in the season for weighing. So, perhaps over these two weeks as we step on the scale, we should get our family and friends to say something lucky for us and practice an old custom. Whether we are gaining or losing weight, consider it an act for good luck.

THE TRUMP SAYS REPORT HE
LOST OVER \$1B 'INACCURATE'

President Donald Trump says a New York Times report that his businesses lost more than USD1 billion from 1985 to 1994 is "highly inaccurate." The newspaper, citing information from Trump's tax transcripts, reported business losses of \$46.1 million in 1985, and a total of \$1.17 billion in losses for the 10-year period. Trump tweeted yesterday that real estate developers during that period were "entitled to massive

write offs and depreciation" that would "show losses and tax losses in almost all cases." He tweeted that much of those losses were "non monetary." Trump said, "You always wanted to show losses for tax purposes" and "renegotiate with banks." Trump called that "sport." He said the Times story was based on "very old information" and a "highly inaccurate Fake News hit job!"



Keith Raniere (center) leader of the secretive group NXIVM, attends a hearing at court in the Brooklyn borough of New York

EYES WIDE SHUT

Witness testifies
on secret society's
'sex slave' initiation

Tom Hays, New York

A woman testified that shortly after being recruited for a secret "master-slave" society within an upstate New York self-help group she got a disturbing message from her handler: It was her turn to "seduce" the group's leader, Keith Raniere.

The witness at Raniere's trial at federal court in Manhattan said she thought to herself, "Oh God. This is not what I want to do... What does this even mean?"

The 32-year-old woman from England testified in federal court in Manhattan only using her first name – Sylvie – to protect her privacy. She was to return to the stand yesterday as the first of several women expected to testify about the dark underbelly of NXIVM, a group that's been compared to a cult.

Raniere, 58, has pleaded not guilty to sex-trafficking and other charges. He claims his encounters with the alleged victims were consensual.

Five of Raniere's co-defendants, including TV actress Allison Mack, have pleaded guilty. Mack is a possible government witness at a trial expected to last six weeks.

Testimony from the first witness came after opening statements in which Assistant U.S. Attorney Tanya Hajjar described Raniere as a master manipulator who used "shame and humiliation" to force women to have

sex with him while he was a spiritual leader known as "Vanguard." The prosecutor alleged that Raniere really was a "con man" and "predator" whose offenses included having sex with a 15-year-old girl when he was 45 and having some female followers branded with his initials.

"The defendant pretended to be a guru," Hajjar said, "but he was a criminal."

[US attorney] described Keith Raniere, 58, as a master manipulator who used 'shame and humiliation' to force women to have sex with him

Defense attorney Marc Agnifilo conceded the evidence, including that some slaves had abortions, could be offensive. But he insisted his client's intent was to help his devotees by teaching them lessons about achieving inner strength through vulnerability.

"This is something these

people signed up for," Agnifilo said. "They were there to make their lives better."

The first witness painted a different picture, saying that when she was told to seduce Raniere in 2015, she couldn't refuse because another woman who was her "master" had collected embarrassing material from her. The so-called "collateral" included a letter written to her parents where she falsely claimed she was a prostitute.

As a slave, "I had to do what my master said to do or my collateral would be released," she said. Another purpose was to "basically make me keep my mouth shut," she added.

She said she tried to flirt with Raniere by text only to have him respond: "You're going to have to do better than that." He soon was demanding that she send him nude photos, she said.

Since she was married, "It was a freaky thing," she said. "I had to do it in secret."

At one point, she was "horrified" to learn that her father had stumbled across a computer file of her photos and immediately stopped sending them, she said. She started to cry on the stand while describing how her "master" scolded her for not getting Raniere's permission first.

She concluded her testimony for the day by saying she was informed that when it came to Raniere, "the next thing would be in person." AP

| Station | Air quality | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|--|
| Roadside | 45-66 Moderate | |
| High Density Residential Area | 40-60 Moderate | |
| Ambient | 50-70 Moderate | |

WORLD BRIEFS



JAPAN A car slammed into a group of 16 mostly kindergarten children who were strolling on a sidewalk in the lakeside city of Otsu in western Japan, leaving two dead. The accident occurred in the morning after the compact car bumped into another passenger car at an intersection and veered off to the sidewalk

INDIA's general election inching toward the finish line, the battle for one seat in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh is being closely watched to see whether the scion of the country's most important modern political dynasty can retain his seat and revive his party's fortunes. After 15 years in politics, Rahul Gandhi is beginning to articulate a vision for India that some observers say is making him a more credible leader.



USA Two high school students shot and killed a classmate and injured eight others at a charter school in a Colorado community that marked the 20th anniversary of one of the nation's worst school shootings just weeks ago. Devon Erickson, 18, and a younger student walked into the STEM School Highlands Ranch and opened fire on students in two classrooms.



UK Royal couple Meghan and Prince Harry revealed their newborn son to the public on Wednesday, with the proud new mother declaring him "a dream." The couple, known as the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, posed with their son for cameras at Windsor Castle – the first in a lifetime of photo calls for the two-day-old baby, who is seventh in line to the throne.