



**GAMING BLUES:
JUNE GROWTH
LOWERED AS DATA
DISAPPOINTS**

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**NETO VALENTE DEEMS
PORTUGUESE 'IRRELEVANT'**
The president of the Lawyers Association says the Portuguese in Macau have become irrelevant in local politics

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CANDIDATE HO SPENDS 1M ON CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS

HIS office

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JULIE ZHU

WORLD BRIEFS

CHINA Former Interpol President Meng Hongwei confessed to accepting more than USD2 million in bribes and expressed regret for his crime, a Chinese court said yesterday. *More on p11*



AP PHOTO

NORTH KOREA Leader Kim Jong Un says his country has taken "many positive measures" over the past year, but hasn't received an "active response from the relevant party," an apparent reference to the United States. *More on p10*

LEBANON Authorities are making their most aggressive campaign yet for Syrian refugees to return home and are taking action to ensure they can't put down roots.

EGYPT Officials say 11 tourists are safe after their hot air balloon drifted away, forcing them to land in the country's southern desert. The tourists involve five Indians, four Chinese, a British and an Egyptian

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FOOTBALL CONUNDRUM

Sulu writes to FIFA president calling for match rescheduling

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weekend Guide
INSIDE

editorial

Paulo Coutinho



CARRIE ON

THE deadline imposed by legislators and activists for Hong Kong's government to meet demands for the withdrawal of the controversial extradition legislation and for Carrie Lam to step down passed yesterday without any official response. So, the number of protesters outside the Legislative Council, which had dwindled since last Sunday's march, began picking up again yesterday afternoon.

Another group, the Civil Human Rights Front, which had organized massive marches the past two Sundays, has called for another protest on July 1, the anniversary of Hong Kong's handover from British to Chinese rule in 1997.

Those demands follow from a dramatic press conference on Monday, when Chief Executive Carrie Lam apologized for her handling of the extradition bill, that could be used to send suspects to mainland China for trial, and threatens the territory's judicial independence.

The press meeting was as intense as were the Sundays' mega demos. Carrie Lam sustained a barrage of questions which were endless variations of essentially two issues: are you going to step down? Are you going to completely scrap the fugitives bill? And those were 'the' questions, because over two million people, a whole city, cried out loud, making these demands for two Sundays in a row.

Carrie Lam answered all questions without exception – bravely – and although she had to repeat herself over and over again, she consciously added details to her replies and reformulated them to the point of near surrender. The climax followed a BBC correspondent's question to the point concerning her dismissal and the withdrawal of the extradition bill which prompted the largest protest ever in the Hong Kong SAR.

"I don't think we have time to relaunch the legislative mechanism [for debating and passing the fugitives' ordinance] within the current legislature" which ends in July 2020, Lam said. "Therefore, the bill will lapse. And the government will accept that."

It was capitulation right there. The bill will not pass because "the anxiety that it caused" in the community (her words) won't go away in the foreseeable future.

Carrie apologized but she didn't step down. With dignity and wet eyes on the edge of collapsing in tears, she asked instead for a "second chance" to make it up to the people of Hong Kong. She has but herself to blame for the deadlock emerging from blind obedience to Beijing and lousy timing – on the 30th anniversary of Tiananmen, really?!

My guess is that "second chance" act is a rehearsal for what she's going to announce at her next public appearance: her resignation. Because, make no mistake, the protests will carry on while Carrie Lam shoulders the responsibility of China's attempt to suffocate the autonomy of the SAR.

HO'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN OFFICE

6,000 square foot refurbishment for one million patacas

Julie Zhu

MACAU Chief Executive candidate Ho Iat Seng has spent over 1 million Macau patacas to refurbish his election campaign office.

Yesterday, Ho's election campaign office gave local media a tour, revealing everything from hardware to software, as well as the cost of the office, which occupies the entire sixth floor of Edificio Comercial Rodrigues.

Iau Teng Pio, an agent of Ho's team, disclosed the refurbishment cost. "The place is small, but it is acceptable for a short period of use," said Iau.

Previously, Ho stated that his election campaign cost would be totally financed from his own pocket.

Besides the renovation, Ho is also paying more than MOP100,000 for the rent of his office. "Mr. Ho has the sufficient finances to bear the costs," said Iau.

The city's election law regulates a maximum of 6.4 million patacas for any election campaign.

In total, Ho's election office has 24 workers, eight of whom are volunteers, including Iau Teng Pio, Chui Yuk Lam, president of the Industrial Association and the director of Ho's office, and former vice president of the Legislative Assembly (AL) Lam Heong Sang, who is the deputy-director of Ho's office.

As of today, Ho's office is still preparing his election platform, with the team having just made its first



video earlier this week.

Speaking about being Ho's agent, Iau said that he is "honored" to be in Ho's team. "We went to the same school. After I started working for the AL, I learnt more about him, and we learnt about each other more," Iau said.

Another volunteer, Chui Yuk Lam, joined Ho's election campaign team because of his long-term relationship with Ho, and because they share the same opinions and ambitions.

"We have known each other for 25 years, and we have been working together for a long time. I very much respect his election con-

cept," said Chui.

Chui also indicated that, though the third volunteer, Lam Heong Sang, Ho will represent both the employers' and the employees' sectors, as Chui himself works in the former sector and Lam is from the latter.

So far, the public has three channels through which to issue their opinions to Ho's office: Ho's election website, a Facebook page, and a We-Chat official account.

Regarding street campaigning, at the current stage, the office has no clear plans because the Chief Executive Electoral Affairs Commission has not provided a detailed timetable for the election.

Chui Sai Cheong pegged to succeed Ho as AL president

LAWMAKER Wu Lchou Kit believes that the vice president of the Legislative Assembly (AL), Chui Sai Cheong, is a suitable candidate to succeed Ho Iat Seng.

According to a report by Cheng Pou, Wu stated that the new AL president should have plenty of experience in the AL, should

be widely endorsed, and should not be too young.

"I believe this [the requirements he mentioned] are shared by all lawmakers," said Wu, adding, "I don't think I am qualified to be the president."

Wu also thinks that Kou Hoi In and Chan Hong are on the list as being "selectable and considerable."

Lawmaker Chan Chak Mo strongly believes that all the other lawmakers are suitable for the position except himself. "I am definitely not qualified. I don't think I can be in that position," said Chan.

According to the Rules of Procedure of the Legislative Assembly, if the AL president waives his position

or loses his qualification as a member of the AL, or if he terminates his position, then a new president must be selected within 15 days from among the members, except when the term is to end within less than six months, in which case the president should be directly succeeded by the vice president. **JZ**

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GAMING

June growth lowered as mid-month data disappoints

BROKERAGE Sanford C. Bernstein has lowered its year-on-year growth expectation for June to between 1% and 3%, citing weaker than expected data in its channel checks during the first half of the month.

June has been a consistent poor performer in recent years, recording the second-lowest monthly take in both 2018 and 2017, and the lowest in 2016.

Meanwhile, revenue from gambling activities stood 1.6% lower in the first five months of 2019 compared to the equivalent period last year.

Analysts hold external macro-economic factors responsible for slowing growth in Macau gaming, including the ongoing China-U.S. trade war which has reportedly depressed demand in the VIP sector.



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“Weaker-than-expected macro data for May, along with the recent heightened tension in U.S.-China trade relations however, casts uncertainty over the GGR recovery,” Bernstein wrote in a note this week. “If a trade war sustains over an extended period, it will

likely pose a headwind to China’s economy and gaming spend from China’s high-net-worth individuals in Macau.”

However, “in the long run, improvements in transportation infrastructure, continued growth of the premium consuming class in

China and the opening and ramping up of new casino resorts will support long-term growth in mass.”

The recent performance of the gaming sector shows signs of stabilization after years of double-digit growth in the sector before a deep contraction starting in 2014 wiped more than a third off annual revenues.

Most analysts expect modest single-digit growth or a minor contraction for full-year gross gaming revenue growth in 2019. The sector should perform better in 2020, they said, citing easing year-on-year comparisons.

Meanwhile, official data this week showed that the Macau government has collected over MOP48 billion during the first five months of 2019, representing about 49 percent of the conservative sum it had budgeted to collect for the full year. **DB**

Neto Valente deems Portuguese people irrelevant in local politics

ACCORDING to Jorge Neto Valente, the president of the Macau Lawyers Association (AAM), the Portuguese people in Macau have become increasingly irrelevant in terms of local politics. Neto Valente made this claim in an interview with Portuguese news agency Lusa.

Neto Valente also noted in the interview that the 20 years following Macau’s handover had seen a significant erosion of participation in local politics by the Portuguese people as the “Chinese community occupy all the power positions.”

“Nowadays, the Portuguese [referring to those born in Portugal] are almost irrelevant in terms of local politics,” he said.

According to Neto Valente, some advisory and consultancy positions are reserved for the Portuguese, as well as some business-related positions, but these roles are all removed from policy-making or political positions.

To evidence his claim, he noted that he is the only person born in Portugal left as part of the Electoral College for the new Chief Executive (CE) election, which is due to be held on August 25.

Regarding these higher positions, Neto Valente has a pragmatic view on the topic, saying “it’s China that appoints and we must learn how to live with it. It is useless to make a lot of noise about this system of choosing the CE because this system is the one that will prevail.” **RM**

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Horror video game set in Macau releases internationally

Staff reporter

THE first multi-console video game set entirely in Macau has been released internationally. The game was developed by a local company called 4DMacau.

Nearly two years in the making, multiplayer, horror-survival game "Fight the Horror" was released on PC in April. Although it can currently only be played on PC, its lead developer, Tony Lam, told the Times that the team is working

on a console version for PS4 and Xbox ONE.

In an interview with the Times last year, when the game was still being developed, Lam disclosed that team consisted of seven members. Yesterday, when Lam talked with the Times again, he said the team had grown to a staff of 10, in addition to a number of casual helpers.

Despite the expansion, Lam said they still faced various challenges. "There are many different challenges at diffe-

rent times," Lam said. "We're new in developing games in the market, [and] with such a small team we're lucky to have made a product in such a short time."

He has poured his savings into making a project that he describes as the game he always wanted but could never find. "I wanted a game like this and one didn't exist," he told the Times. "I have been waiting for this sort of game for a long time."

The developer brought the game to the 2019 Taipei Game Show for a preview and it re-

ceived rounds of applause from the players in Taiwan, according to Lam.

However, it has received a mixed response on popular video game distribution platform, Steam. Out of the 45 ratings for the game on the platform, 19 were positive and 26 were negative.

Lam thinks it is too early to comment on the game's feedback because it is only at the early stage of launch and, as he emphasized more than once during the interview, that the

project is on-going.

The horror-survival game pits intimate, multiplayer teams against each other in a seven-day test of endurance and has five storylines in total. There are other elements to the game for players to explore as well.

Fight the Horror relies on its story and atmosphere to deliver the thrills. There are seven ghost stories in the game and all of them are based on real tales from Macau.

In one game trailer, ghostly apparitions are seen wandering around the Ruins of St. Paul's. In another, a young boy is seen starting up at a grotesque adaptation of the Kun Iam statue in NAPE and saying, "I can't stop staring at that statue... I'm afraid that when I turn my back on it, it will come to life!"

AVIATION

Macau unaffected by EVA Air strike

Staff reporter

FLIGHT attendants with EVA Air, a Taiwan airline with connections to Macau, commenced a strike at 4 p.m. yesterday. As of press time, no flight between Macau and Taiwan had been affected.

A total of 43 flights were affected during the first eight hours of the strike.

Taiwan's Civil Aeronautics Administration has instructed the jurisdiction's other airlines to add flights to balance the impact of the strike.

The strike has been in the works for more than two years. Cabin crew of the airline have conducted more than 20 negotiations with the company, urging the company to make impro-

vements on daily spending allowances, flying fatigue, and double pay on public holidays.

Wanting to prevent a strike, EVA Air threatened to withdraw year-end bonuses, salary adjustments, and the provision of employee flight tickets for three years.

Meanwhile, Chang Kuowei, former EVA Air chairman and the son of founder Chang Yung-fa, has inaugurated his own airline company STARLUX after being expelled from his father's business. It has been announced that STARLUX will commence flights in January 2020 with Macau in its inaugural atlas.

Environment report deems undersea tunnel feasible

THE environmental impact assessment report of the subsea tunnel project connecting land reclamation zones A and B suggests that the project is feasible as it will not adversely affect the environment.

As of yesterday, the report was made publicly available and it will be so until July 3. Members of the public can submit their opinions and suggestions to the Land,

Transport and Public Works Bureau (DSOPT) through email, phone call, fax and letters.

Under the mission statement of strictly implementing various countermeasures, the environmental impact of the project must be within an acceptable range and the environmental quality of the project area should not be significantly reduced.

The project is a connecting passage between Zone A and Zone B, to be built as a subsea tunnel which will be more than 1,300 meters long. It may also connect to the artificial island of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge through another channel.

The project will also specify a location to connect to the fourth cross-sea bridge of Macau. **JZ**

FOOTBALL

Sulu Sou writes to FIFA president calling for match rescheduling

Renato Marques

LAWMAKER Sulu Sou has issued a letter to FIFA's president, Gianni Infantino, to call for a rescheduling of the match between Macau and Sri Lanka. The match was originally scheduled to take place on June 11 in the Sri Lankan capital city Colombo but the game never took place as the Macau Football Association (MFA) did not allow the participation of the local team in the match citing safety concerns.

Now, in a letter to Infantino extended also to the MFA, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and the Sri Lankan Football Federation (FFSL), the lawmaker called for the match to be rescheduled, claiming that the one-sided decision from MFA has left, "many players, coaches, football fans and citizens very dissatisfied with the decision of the MFA." Sou notes that local football fans found the decision by MFA disrespectful to the Macau Team as it had wasted the efforts and dreams of the players.

According to Sou, a call was launched at the time by local football fans via a campaign named "One Person, One Letter," in which people individually wrote letters to FIFA, AFC and FFSL requesting the entities call for the match to be played on neutral-ground, and gathered the support of

RENATO MARQUES



around 1,800 people. An additional 48 local football players from several levels and age groups jointly signed a petition to MFA to withdraw the decision to cancel the match. Sou added that according to information from AFC, a final decision on the case of the match between Sri Lanka and Macau is still to be announced and should be known before next stage draw sche-

duled for July 18 noting that, in his opinion, there is still time to amend "MFA's misjudgment." He claimed this was the result of a mix between "administrative issues and personal decisions unrelated to sports."

"The incident has surpassed pure sports events and has become a public concern of the community," wrote Sou.

The lawmaker says his po-

sition as a representative of Macau's citizens means he has the duty to try to help the players of Macau Team not to "lose a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

Sou called on all the football governing bodies to ensure the case is handled in a "satisfactory manner so that both sides can compete against each other in accordance with the sacred spirit of 'Fair Play'."



Agnes Lam calls for Hac Sa protection

Lawmaker Agnes Lam has submitted an inquiry to the government requesting a long-term solution for the accumulation of garbage at Hac Sa Beach. Lam pointed out that the poor water quality recorded at Hac Sa shows that the Macau government needs to show significant improvements in marine and environmental protection. She asked whether the government could explain to the public how the large amount of trash appeared at Hac Sa Beach. Lam also wondered if there is a mechanism to help the local government enhance communication with neighboring regions on matters of environmental protection, hoping to see more measures being implemented in order to improve the local public's marine protection.

Customs officer fined for negligence

An officer in the leadership of the Macao Customs Services has been fined for giving a pass to a batch of undeclared goods. The case was reported by the Commission Against Corruption in 2018. Recently, the Customs authority completed an internal investigation of the case and determined that the officer had failed to take an objective and cautious approach to the incident, meaning that his behavior was negligent and violated his obligation as a public official.

EDUCATION

UM makes 56-spot leap in QS ranking

Staff reporter

THE University of Macau (UM) has leaped 56 places in the QS World University Rankings 2020, compared to last year, reaching 387th in the list. The Macau education institution is the only one in the Special Administrative Region to make it onto the list.

Out of the full overall score of 100 points, the UM earned 28.7 points. The UM scored high points in terms of

internationalization. The ranking body has given 96.2 to UM for the International Student criterion, and a full grade for International Faculty.

However, QS considers the university has not performed very well in terms of Employer Reputation and Academic Reputation, with respective score of 6.4 and 11.2 only.

Even so, both criteria recorded a rise.

Topping the list is MIT, with overall sco-

re of 100. Stanford is in second place, Harvard third, and the United Kingdom's University of Oxford follows suit. The top 10 are shared by U.K. and U.S. universities, with one exception: ETH Zurich in sixth place.

The top three universities in Hong Kong this year go to The University of Hong Kong (rank 25) with an overall score of 83.8 points; The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (32)

with 80.6 points; and The Chinese University of Hong Kong (46) with 75.9 points.

For mainland China, the "Capital Duo" Tsinghua University and Peking University are at 16 and 22, with 88.6 and 84.3 points respectively. Fudan University, located in China's eastern financial center, is at 40 with 78.6 points. While Guangzhou's Sun Yat-sen University, popular among local ethnic Chinese, is at

287 with 34.9 points.

Taiwan's National Taiwan University is at 69 with 67.3 points. QS considers the university is best in terms of employer and academic reputations. While the island's Tsing Hua University is ranked 173. Popular universities among Macau students, including National Chengchi University, Kaohsiung Medical University, and Fu Jen Catholic University are behind UM.

MGTO holds Annual Marketing Meeting

The Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) convened its Annual Marketing Meeting 2019 this week, inviting 46 MGTO market representatives, consultants and representatives of promotional entities from around the world to report on their recent activities. At the meeting, MGTO Director Helena de Senna Fernandes briefed the representatives on Macau's latest tourism situation, the latest developments in the Greater Bay Area and the lineup of major local events over the next two quarters. The representatives discussed their marketing schemes for next year, before visiting parts of the "Art Macao" international arts and cultural event unveiled this month.

The faces of Hong Kong's historic stand

WHILE protests that drew hundreds of thousands of people into Hong Kong's streets this month were likely the biggest the city has ever seen, the leaders of the historic series of marches stayed relatively low key.

There's good reason: Many heads of the 2014 Occupy movement, which shut down swathes of the former British colony for 79 days, ended up in jail, removed from elected office or both. This time around, demonstrators were careful not to give too much credit to a single leader.

Still, the protests brought out an array of colorful characters, some of whom have been fighting from the start to block Chief Executive Carrie Lam's bill that would have allowed extraditions to mainland China. Lam backedpedaled in the face of mass demonstrations that led to clashes with riot police, shelving the proposed law indefinitely.

In the process, Lam may have brought new unity to the city's fractious opposition. Here are some of the most outspoken critics:



Claudia Mo, 62

As a former journalist for Agence France-Presse, Claudia Mo's coverage of the crackdown on pro-democracy protesters in Tiananmen Square was a turning point. In Hong Kong, she later won an election in 2012 on a promise to prevent the city's "mainlandization." Mo eventually left the Civic Party she

co-founded to form a so-called localist group, HK First, with fellow lawmaker Gary Fan. She protested against the extradition bill in March alongside bookseller Lam Wing-kee, and later saw him off at the airport when he fled to Taiwan amid fears that he could be sent to China for illegally selling books if the bill were to pass.



Jimmy Sham, 31

Jimmy Sham, as the convener of the Civil Human Rights Front, helped lead a group known for organizing rallies and calling news conferences. "Hong Kong people no longer believe her apologies," Sham told reporters after Lam's remarks Sunday. The CHRF was founded in 2002 as a broad church of 48 non-go-

vernmental and political organizations. It became known for opposing then-Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa's national security law, which many feared would be used to curb dissent. It was known for its annual marches on the July 1 handover anniversary before helping coordinate the anti-extradition movement.

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Roy Kwong, 36

Legislator Roy Kwong hails from the Democratic Party, a traditional opposition group shunned by activists who favor a more assertive approach. But his role in the anti-extradition protests, in which he repeatedly showed up to aid individual demonstrators, has helped give his party new relevance. Kwong and fellow Democratic Party lawmaker Ted Hui put themselves between protesters and police when things got ugly. He also joined a desperate - and ultimately unsuccessful - effort Saturday to discourage one protester from jumping off a building over the bill. After the man fell to his death, Kwong wept.



Lam Ka Lo, 26

Lam Ka Lo, 26, received the social media moniker Shield Girl after sitting down in front of a phalanx of police holding riot shields outside the Legislative Council last week. To the delight of many photo-snapping bystanders, she began meditating. "I just wanted to send my positive vibes," she told the BBC. The photographs went viral and political cartoonist Badiucac later depicted her in a sketch he posted on Twitter. It wasn't Shield Girl's first demonstration, however. She spent all 79 days on the streets during the Umbrella Movement in 2014.



Eddie Chu, 41

Eddie Chu became known as the "king of votes" after winning the most support of any candidate in the 2016 Legislative Council elections. His support for the city's "self-determination" made him a target of Beijing loyalists seeking to purge pro-independence activists from elected office, and last year he was banned from running in village elections.

Chu had been among the most vocal opponents of the extradition bill. He and lawmaker Au Nok-hin led a march to Lam's office to demand talks on retracting the legislation. **Bloomberg**

HONG KONG

No response as activists' deadline passes

A deadline imposed by activist groups for Hong Kong's government to scrap highly unpopular extradition bills and accept other demands passed yesterday without an official response.

The groups have said they will call on supporters to surround government headquarters if their demands aren't met, continuing demonstrations in which hundreds of thousands have taken to the streets in the past weeks.

The number of protesters outside the Legislative Council, which had dwindled since a massive march last Sunday, began picking up again yesterday afternoon. With no response from the government, protests were slated to begin Friday morning and many people appeared prepared to spend the night at the central government complex.

The government announced that the complex would be closed today "due to security considerations."

Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam has apologized for her handling of the extradition bill, which could be used to send suspects to mainland China for trial. But she has stopped short of scrapping the legislation, which critics say threatens the territory's judicial independence, prompting the largest and angriest protests in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory in years. **MDT/AP**

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Paediatric Surgery : Dr. Yeung Chung Kwong

Paediatrics : Dr. Zhang Zhiqin

Obstetrics & Gynaecology : Dr. Fong Kuan Io

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British associations form working group to explore GBA opportunity

Lynzy Valles

British Chambers of Commerce and business associations have formed an inter-organization working group on the Greater Bay Area (GBA) Initiative, agreeing to collaborate across several areas to take part in the opportunities offered by the central government's mega-project.

The associations agreed to collaborate through sharing information and insights, joint member events, and arranging business exchanges between member companies across the GBA.

The group claims that it is looking to work together to develop policy recommendations for governments and regulators across the region, as well as working with the British government and relevant departments to have access to business opportunities in the GBA.

Suzanne Watkinson, an active member of the British Chamber Commerce of Macau, who represented the Chamber at the meeting in Shenzhen, spoke to the city's position in the mega-project.



The Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau bridge connecting the three jurisdictions of the Greater Bay Area; Macau, Hong Kong and the mainland

"We would like to be able to develop policy proposals for our respective governments, particularly on the potential barriers to business across the GBA," Watkinson told the Times.

"We feel that if we can identify potential barriers to doing better business across the GBA and share that with respective governments, it would be helpful," Watkinson, who is also the managing director of Ambiente Properties,

said.

According to Watkinson, the association is keen to support the GBA initiative, adding that it is making connections in a bid to further assist U.K. businesses that want to invest in Macau.

The British Chamber Commerce of Macau pledged to connect with its members in the mainland to maximize business opportunities and expansion.

"We're very supportive of this

GBA initiative, we want it to work; not only to the 70 million people in the GBA regions but also to the British companies, and companies that want to invest in Britain," said Watkinson.

Watkinson believes that U.K. firms could assist in integrating better education, transport and health systems across the GBA.

"We want to feel very much part of the mega-project. As much collaboration that we can do with

other British associations and chambers, it helps business all around, not just for U.K. businesses but for Chinese firms. It's got to be a win-win [situation]," Watkinson added.

Meanwhile, according to a statement, Peter Burnett, chairman of the British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong said: "The Greater Bay Area Initiative is a major opportunity for Hong Kong, our Chamber, and our members."

"By connecting further with our colleagues in the mainland and Macau we will develop a deeper understanding of the opportunities that the GBA presents for our member companies and the business community at large," he said, adding that they looked forward to working with governments, regulators and businesses.

The meeting was attended by the British Chambers of Commerce in Hong Kong and southern China, the British Chamber of Commerce in Macau, the China-Britain Business Council, and the Confederation of British Industry Beijing Office last week.

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Iceland in shock as tourism collapse halts economic miracle

Ragnhildur Sigurdardottir

GUDRUN Asta Gunnarsdottir found herself at ground zero of Iceland's latest crisis. Four months into her second pregnancy, the 33-year-old check-in desk operator was told she was one of 315 workers being laid off at Reykjavik's international airport.

The news came as "a shock" and "caused a lot of sadness for everyone, especially because a lot of people are now looking for work at the same time," said Gunnarsdottir, who was able to return part-time to her airport job.

The collapse in March of Wow Air is sending ripples through the tiny north Atlantic island, whose spectacular recovery from financial collapse a decade ago was built to a large extent on attracting foreign visitors, thanks in part to its location for the filming of popular television series like Game of Thrones.

The sudden cut in supply caused by Wow Air's bankruptcy, coupled with high prices and a general drop in demand as a result of a global slowdown, mean the latest numbers look dire. Visitors plunged 24% in May from the same period last year and the all-important summer season is looking shaky. The central bank last month pulled the emergency lever to cushion the blow and delivered a half a point rate cut, while

BLOOMBERG



the government has pledged to boost stimulus if needed.

"We are prepared for the possibility of a deeper recession, and the numbers we are getting on tourist arrivals seem to indicate that that may happen," central bank Governor Mar Gudmundsson said in an interview in Dubrovnik.

After 20 quarters of uninterrupted growth - the longest upswing in its recent history - Iceland is bracing itself for a sharp downturn. Forecasts for 2019 vary widely, with Arion Bank predicting a slump as deep as 1.9%, but there's a general consensus that the nation is facing its worst contraction since the financial crisis.

Unemployment, while still low in an international context, has risen to 3.6%. It was below 3% at the start of the year.

For all of 2019, the number of visitors could drop 17%, according to forecasts from

the Keflavik Airport's operator. Hotel owners are already feeling the pinch, with overnight stays falling an annual 5% in April and the total number of employees in tourism-related sectors decreasing by a similar percentage in May.

"May's drop in tourist numbers is larger than what we were expecting," said Skapti Orn Olafsson, a spokesman for the Icelandic Travel Industry Association.

Despite those concerns, the country is now better positioned to weather the storm.

Almost a decade of solid growth has replenished the state's coffers; the central bank has ample margins to cut rates (the benchmark rate now stands at 4%); and the capital controls that were introduced in the wake of the financial crisis have now all but been removed.

"We have never been as well prepared in our history

to deal with adverse situations as we are now," Gudmundsson said. "We have policy space, with a lot of scope to cut rates if necessary." Sedlabanki is due to announce its latest rate decision next week.

Investors are also so far bullish that Iceland will come out okay. The country last week sold 500 million euros (USD565 million) in five-year bonds, in a deal that was almost five times oversubscribed.

The government hasn't yet announced any specific plans for the tourism sector, but parliament is currently discussing how to spend a 1% budget surplus dividend originally penciled in for 2019.

"Even though we are going through a slump, we will regain our former strength," said Olafsson at the travel industry lobby. "In 18 to 24 months we will hopefully be back on track." MDT/Bloomberg

REAL ESTATE MATTERS

Where are all the bookstores in Macau?

Juliet Risdon is a Director of JML Property and a property investor. Having established the company in 1994, JML Property offers Investment Property & Homes. It specializes in managing properties for owners and investors, and providing attractive and comfortable homes for tenants.



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JULIET RISDON

Books are one of the best ways for us to store the knowledge we accumulate and transfer it to other people. Even with the popularization of online learning mediums such as video courses and YouTube, I often find myself reaching for the good-old paperback whenever I want to expand my knowledge on a topic.

However, there is something that I always found to be peculiar - books aren't that easy to find and buy in Macau!

Firstly, there doesn't appear to be very many bookstores in Macau to begin with. And the ones that do exist, such as the two on Rua do Campo, seem to be more catered toward textbooks for students and less for the everyday book enthusiast.

One day, I was speaking with a local friend and this topic came up. When asked why there weren't very many book stores in Macau, his answer shocked me.

He said that because the Chinese character for books (書 Shu) and the character for lose (輸 Shu) sound similar, it's considered bad luck by the casinos and the government to have too many bookstores around!

And the few bookstores and libraries are put underground and out of sight, like the two stores in Rua do Campo and the Taipa Central Park Library.

We're familiar with some Chinese beliefs related to how certain words are pronounced, like some buildings not having a fourth floor because the number 4 and the character for 'death' sound similar in Chinese.

The above example is an interesting cultural by-product, a talking point - but to deny people easy access to books and knowledge because of a coincidence in pronunciation seems a bit ridiculous to me!

I don't want to jump the gun and say that this is absolutely true. After all, it would be quite difficult to enforce a Macau-wide agenda against bookstores, unless business licenses are actively capped for book entrepreneurs. It might just be the case that selling books just aren't that profitable in Macau, and basement stores are cheaper to rent.

After all, the only bookstore in Taipa recently shut down (and broke my heart). There is no way for me to verify that a conspiracy against bookstores exist. For now, I make do by buying books through Taobao and frequenting bookstores in Hong Kong. But if you're looking for a space to open a bookstore in Macau, let me know, I'd honestly love to help.

corporate bits

POUSADA DE COLOANE, YOGA LOVE MACAU CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY



The Pousada de Coloane Boutique Hotel and local Yoga organization, Yoga Love Macau, will join forces with yogis around the world to celebrate International Yoga Day on Saturday. The event includes a full day program of yoga classes and wellbeing activities following on a tradition that is being maintained for the third consecutive year.

The activities, open to the public for free, are this year dedicated to raising awareness about climate change.

During the full day celebration, participants will have the opportunity to explore a variety of yoga styles with nine experienced teachers from Macau and Hong Kong. The program starts with 108 Sun Salutations at 8 a.m. and ends at 6:15 p.m. with Iyengar Yoga.



DIPLOMACY

Kim meets Xi, says awaiting US actions

Ken Moritsugu, Beijing

NORTH Korean leader Kim Jong Un, meeting with visiting Chinese President Xi Jinping, said yesterday that his country is waiting for a desired response in stalled nuclear talks with the United States.

"North Korea would like to remain patient, but it hopes the relevant party will meet halfway with North Korea to explore resolution plans that accommodate each other's reasonable concerns," he said, according to Chinese state broadcaster CCTV.

Xi's two-day trip to North Korea, the first by a Chinese president in 14 years, raises the pos-

sibility that China could help break a months-long impasse in talks between the U.S. and North Korea over the North's nuclear weapons.

Describing the issue as "highly complex and sensitive," Xi said his government is willing to play a constructive role in the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

"The international community expects the U.S. and North Korea to continue to talk and achieve results," he said, according to CCTV.

The summit comes as both Xi and Kim are locked in separate disputes with the United States — Xi over trade and Kim over his nuclear weapons.

With the Chinese leader due to

meet President Donald Trump next week in Japan, analysts say Kim may ask Xi to pass on a message that could revive the talks with the U.S.

Xi's state visit to North Korea, announced just three days ago, began with the synchronized pomp of all major events in the country.

He, his wife Peng Liyuan and senior Chinese officials were greeted with a 21-gun salute and about 10,000 cheering people at an arrival ceremony at Pyongyang's airport.

CCTV showed Xi and his wife waving to the crowd after emerging from the Air China plane, then being greeted by Kim and his wife, Ri Sol Ju, receiving flowers and watching goose-s-

tepping troops march by.

The crowd stood in tight formations, waving flowers and chanting slogans to welcome Xi. Others lined the roads and cheered from overpasses as Xi's motorcade traveled to central Pyongyang, where he joined Kim in an open-top vehicle.

Standing in the car, they waved to crowds as they rode to the square where the embalmed bodies of Kim's grandfather and father, the first two leaders of North Korea, lie in state.

As of Thursday evening, North Korean media had yet to report on Xi's arrival.

Nuclear talks between the U.S. and North Korea broke down after a summit between Kim and Trump in February in Vietnam ended in failure.

The U.S. is demanding that North Korea abandon its nuclear weapons development before international sanctions are lifted. North Korea is seeking a step-by-step approach in which moves toward denuclearization are matched by concessions

from the U.S., notably a relaxation of economic sanctions.

Experts say Xi will likely endorse North Korea's calls for an incremental disarmament process.

A commentary in China's official Xinhua news agency said China could play a unique and constructive role in breaking the cycle of mistrust between North Korea and the U.S. It said both sides "need to have reasonable expectations and refrain from imposing unilateral and unrealistic demands."

A former North Korean diplomat who defected in 2016 said he thinks Kim wants to give Xi a message to deliver to Trump when the two meet at the upcoming G-20 summit in Japan.

Thae Yong Ho said Kim may offer to abandon some of his nuclear facilities in a bid to set up a third summit with the U.S. president. But he cautioned that such a move would only be to buy time and not to denuclearize fully, as the U.S. is demanding.

"The main purpose for the Kim Jong Un regime in negotiating is to keep North Korea as a new nuclear state in this region, there is no doubt about that," he said at a news conference in Tokyo, where he is promoting the Japanese translation of his book, "Password From the Third Floor," an inside look at North Korean diplomacy and the Kim regime.

Kim has met Xi four times in China as talks with both the U.S. and South Korea got underway starting last year.

China is North Korea's most important foreign partner, though their relations grew somewhat rocky as Kim's efforts to build his country's nuclear weapons capabilities threatened regional stability.

A banner at the airport welcome ceremony read, "Long Live with Unbreakable Friendship and Unity Formed by Blood."

The nations fought together in the 1950-53 Korean War against the United States, South Korea and their allies. China welcomed Kim's announcement last year that he was shifting the country's focus from nuclear weapons to economic development. **AP**

Woman testifies about wearing wire in scholar killing case

THE former girlfriend of an ex-doctoral student charged with slaying a scholar from China who was visiting the University of Illinois testified yesterday [local time] in federal court that she was scared and conflicted about wearing an FBI wire to record him.

Terra Bullis said she truly cared about Brendt Christensen, but also "cared about this missing person" Yingying Zhang. "And it's incredibly painful," Bullis said.

Christensen, 29, is on trial in federal court in the death of Zhang, who he's accused of luring

into his car in 2017 and later killing at his apartment. Prosecutors allege she was raped, choked and stabbed before being pummeled with a baseball bat and decapitated. Her body hasn't been found.

Bullis recorded nine conversations she had

with Christensen in person and on the phone for the FBI. During one talk, Christensen told her investigators had found blood in his bedroom and on a baseball bat, and that he led them to believe it was Bullis' blood.

"I made you bleed once on your face," Christen-

sen said to Bullis on the recording. "Do you remember that?"

A prosecutor asked her why she didn't confront her then-boyfriend about what he said.

"I was scared," Bullis testified. "And I wanted to know why he was lying."

Bullis said she became "conflicted" about her relationship with Christensen in May 2017, when he messaged her about his desire to seek notoriety.

She said he was a man she had become attached to emotionally, even though his sentiments weren't representative of someone she would prefer to be attached to.

Bullis testified that she and Christensen met on a dating website. She described their first date at a bookstore cafe as "whimsical." Christensen was married at the time.

Bullis will resume her testimony today (local time). **AP**

TARIFF

Gov't rejects threats, tariffs as way to resolve trade war

CHINA warned yesterday that threats and tariffs will not resolve trade tensions between the two biggest economies and blasted Republican Sen. Marco Rubio for his criticism of technology giant Huawei over patents.

Ministry spokesman Gao Feng said yesterday that its "core concern" over mutual respect has to be properly accommodated.

"If the US insists on taking unilateral trade measures against China, it will definitely bring serious impacts on the economy of itself and the welfare of its people," Gao said in a routine briefing.

Trump and Xi are due to meet at a summit of the Group of 20 on June 28-29. It's unclear when the two countries' negotiating teams will resume detailed talks, which stalled in May when the U.S. accused China of renegeing on earlier commitments.

The talks are aimed at ending the dispute over trade and technology that has resulted in Trump imposing 25% tariffs on \$250 billion worth of Chinese exports and considering expanding those tariffs to include another \$300 billion of Chinese products.

The Wall Street Journal reported last week that Huawei is asking U.S. phone carrier Verizon to pay licensing fees for more than 200 of its patents. While Huawei declined to comment on the matter, company spokesman Joe Kelly said it will hold a briefing later this month

AP PHOTO



on being more aggressive about collecting intellectual property licensing fees.

Rubio filed an amendment to the U.S. defense authorization bill this week that would prevent Huawei Technologies and other companies on security watch lists from pursuing damages in U.S. patent courts. That followed a move by Huawei to seek \$1 billion in damages it says it is owed in unpaid patent

licensing fees, reports said.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman described Rubio's effort to block Huawei's lawsuit as "bizarre."

"We know that someone in the U.S. leaves no stone unturned to smear and suppress other countries' enterprises, yet we did not expect that they would so blatantly manipulate the laws and rules," said the spokesman, Lu Kang.

"This not only damages the reputation and image of the U.S. but also harms its own companies in the long run."

The U.S. has accused Chinese companies such as Huawei of committing forced technology transfers and stealing trade secrets. Last month, the U.S. placed Huawei on its "Entity List," which effectively bars American companies from selling components to Huawei without govern-

ment approval.

Washington claims Huawei poses a national security threat because it may be beholden to China's ruling Communist Party. But American officials have presented no evidence of any Huawei equipment serving as intentional conduits for espionage by Beijing. Huawei's placement on the Entity List is widely seen as intended to persuade resistant U.S. allies in Europe to exclude Huawei equipment from their next-generation wireless networks, known as 5G.

Huawei founder Ren Zhengfei has denied that Huawei would share user data with the Chinese government if ordered to do so.

On Monday during a panel discussion opened to the media he said there are no backdoors in Huawei's equipment that anyone could access, and that Huawei is willing to enter into a "no backdoor" agreement with any nation that wants one.

Trump and Xi are due to meet at a summit of the Group of 20 on June 28-29

Huawei brought a lawsuit in the U.S. this March challenging the constitutionality of a national security law which prevents the U.S. government and its contractors from using Huawei equipment. The complaint, filed in Plano, Texas, where Huawei's American operations are headquartered, alleges that the law singles out Huawei for punishment while denying the company due process.

Ren said during the panel discussion that Huawei will not use its many patents as a "weapon," but did not rule out seeking royalties for usage. **AP**

Court says Interpol ex-president confesses to bribe taking

Christopher Bodeen

FORMER Interpol President Meng Hongwei confessed to accepting more than USD2 million in bribes and expressed regret for his crime, a Chinese court said yesterday.

The No. 1 Intermediate Court in the northeastern port city of Tianjin said Meng read a statement containing the confession at a hearing.

That assures a conviction, although it isn't immediately clear when a verdict and sentence will be handed down. Admitting guilt and expressing regret can

result in slightly lighter punishment, although China has been quick to hand out life sentences as it cracks down on corruption and political disloyalty under a campaign run directly by the president and head of the ruling Communist Party, Xi Jinping.

Meng, who was elected president of the international police organization in 2016, disappeared into custody while visiting China from France at the end of September. Interpol was not informed of Meng's detention and was forced to ask China about his whereabouts.

The Tianjin court said Meng had abused his positions, including as a vice minister of public security and maritime police chief, to curry favor for others in return for bribes.

Meng, 65, was shown on television wearing a plain brown windbreaker and flanked by two bailiffs. He appeared older and grayer than during his time as one of the nation's top law enforcement officers. He has already been fired from his positions and expelled from the Communist Party.

While serving at Interpol, Meng retained his tit-

le as vice minister of public security.

There are suspicions he fell out of political favor with Xi, who has come down hard on corruption and perceived disloyalty in what observers say is a campaign calculated to strengthen party control while bringing down potential challengers to his authority.

Meng's wife, Grace, has remained in France, where Meng was stationed for the Lyon-based Interpol, and has accused Chinese authorities of creating a "fake case" against him for political reasons.

AP PHOTO



Meng Hongwei

Yesterday, Grace Meng questioned whether Meng was even alive, saying she was not certain the figure who appeared on TV was her husband.

"I love him, trust him, respect him and am proud of him," she told The Associated Press. "No matter

how they insult him or frame him, they can't change the facts: He is worthy of his motherland, worthy of police honor, and worthy of the people who love him.

"The international community will know the truth," she said. **AP**

AP PHOTO



Asian nations scramble to contain pig disease outbreaks

Hau Dinh & Sam Mcneil, Hanoi

ASIAN nations are scrambling to contain the spread of highly contagious African swine fever, with Vietnam culling 2.5 million pigs and China reporting more than a million dead in an unprecedentedly huge epidemic some fear is out of control.

Smaller outbreaks have been reported in Hong Kong, Taiwan, North Korea, Cambodia and Mongolia after cases were first reported in China's northeast in August. The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization was expected yesterday to release a weekly update on the scale of infections.

With pork supplies dwindling as leading producer China and hard-hit Vietnam destroy huge numbers of hogs and tighten controls on shipments, prices have soared by up to 40% globally and caused shortages in other markets.

"This is the largest animal disease outbreak in history," said Dirk Pfeiffer, a veterinary epide-

miologist at the City University of Hong Kong. "We've never had anything like it."

In South Korea, where diets rely heavily on pork, there is concern an outbreak could hurt an industry with 6,300 farms raising more than 11 million pigs.

African swine fever is harmless to people but fatal and highly contagious for pigs, with no known cure or vaccine.

Since China first reported an outbreak in early August, 1 million pigs have been culled. It has reported 139 outbreaks all but two of its 34 provinces, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization says.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture forecasts China's total hog herd will shrink by 18% this year to 350 million animals, the lowest level since the 1980s. This year's Chinese pork output might fall by up to 35%, according to Rabobank, a Dutch bank.

In Vietnam, the government reported in mid-May that 1.2 million pigs, or about 5% of its total herds, had died or been destroyed. Vietnamese officials

said this week that number has risen to 2.5 million and military and police officers were mobilized to help contain the outbreak.

Rabobank expects Vietnamese pork production to fall 10% this year from 2018.

The mass culling in Vietnam could sink many farmers deeper into poverty, said Wantanee Kalpravidh, a regional coordinator of the FAO's Emergency Center for Transboundary Animal Disease.

Last month, Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc urged authorities to prevent the disease, which has spread to 56 of 63 provinces, from escalating into an epidemic.

Vietnam's farm ministry reports it has so far culled 8% of its 30 million pigs.

In My Duc, a suburb of Hanoi, disinfecting lime powder has been scattered around empty pig farms and checkpoints set up to control shipments.

"We have to prevent and fight this disease like fighting an enemy," Phuc told Cabinet officials.

Farmer Nguyen Van Hoa lamented that only three pigs had died from the fever but authorities culled 40 of his pigs. They were among 14,000 hogs buried in My Duc district in the past month.

About 2.4 million Vietnamese households engage in small scale pig farming, a large share of the 30 million hogs raised in an industry worth \$18 billion, one of the world's largest.

In Cambodia, 400 infected pigs were culled in April in an eastern province bordering Vietnam but authorities have not reported any new outbreak since then.

Still, Sem Oun, a 58-year-old farmer and father of two in Ta Prum, a village near the capital Phnom Penh, frets that the illness could spread from Vietnam.

"I don't have any other job and my income that provides for my entire family relies solely on these pigs. If they die because of swine flu then everybody in the family will die too," he told The Associated Press.

Hong Kong authorities have killed 10,700 pigs in two outbreaks, including one triggered by an animal imported from the mainland that was found to be infected. Two dead pigs infected with a virus similar to those in mainland Chinese were found in Taiwan, the FAO says.

■ Epidemic fighting efforts have gotten entangled in regional geopolitics

Epidemic fighting efforts have gotten entangled in regional geopolitics.

North Korea scaled back cooperation with South Korea after the collapse of a February summit between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and President Donald Trump, hampering joint work on stemming the spread of the disease following an outbreak near North Korea's border with China.

South Korea's agricultural ministry said that blood tests of pigs from some 340 farms near the border with the North were negative. Fences and traps have been installed near farms to protect hogs from being infected by wild boars that roam in and out of North Korea.

The North's official Rodong Sinmun newspaper said quarantine efforts were focused on disinfecting farms and transport vehicles, restricting visitors, and banning the distribution of food products containing pork. Its references to nationwide quarantine efforts suggest the disease may have spread beyond regions near China.

Thailand and other countries which remain free of infections have taken strong preventive actions, including banning importation of pork, sausages, ham, or bacon.

Sorawit Taneeto, director-general of Thailand's Department of Livestock Development, urged people to cooperate with soldiers at checkpoints in border provinces and quarantine areas. Airports are using more beagle dogs to help in luggage inspections. **AP**

INDIA

Gov't creates new ministry to tackle growing water crisis

INDIA'S government has created a new ministry to respond to a growing water crisis, with more than 60% of the country's 1.3 billion people dependent on farming and favorable

monsoon rains.

Indian President Ram Nath Kovind told Parliament yesterday that the new Ministry of Water Power will tackle water conservation and management.

Kovind said traditional water conservation practices are disappearing as ponds and lakes are filled to build houses and other developments, and that vanishing water sources have worsened the crisis for the poor.

Millions of people have been forced to rely on water from tank trucks in the southern Tamil Nadu state, which had a 62% shortfall in mon-

soon rains last year.

Kovind said water shortages are one of the biggest challenges of the 21st century and are likely to be worsened by climate change. He said the creation of the new ministry "is a decisive step in this direction, which will have far-reaching benefits."

The government is assessing the possibility of connecting rivers in various states to help with

regional water shortages. Several Indian states have disputes over the sharing of water carried by rivers and have petitioned the Supreme Court to obtain larger shares.

Experts recommend the restoration of open areas to recharge groundwater, the prevention of polluted water from entering groundwater, and the collection of rainwater from roofs. **AP**

Malaysia: 'No proof' of Russian involvement in MH17 downing

Eileen Ng, Putrajaya

MALAYSIAN Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad yesterday rejected the implication that Russia may have been involved in the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 over Ukraine, after international prosecutors charged with murder four men — three of them Russians with military or intelligence backgrounds — in the 2014 missile attack that killed all 298 people aboard.

Mahathir said he doesn't think the findings of the international investigative team "is true at all" as it was based on hearsay.

"We are very unhappy because from the very beginning, it became a political issue on how to accuse Russia of the wrongdoing," he told reporters. "Even before they examine [the debris], they already say Russia. So it is very difficult for us to accept that."

In announcing the charges Wednesday, prosecutors appear-

AP PHOTO



led for witnesses to help lead them even further up the chain of command in President Vladimir Putin's Russia.

The trial for the defendants, who also include a Ukrainian separatist fighter, was set for next March in the Netherlands, though it appeared unlikely any of them would be brought before the court, since Russia and

Ukraine forbid the extradition of their citizens.

Russia's Foreign Ministry called the charges against its citizens "absolutely unfounded" and accused the investigators of using "dubious sources of information" and ignoring evidence provided by Moscow in order to discredit Russia.

Malaysia Airlines Flight 17

from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur was brought down on July 17, 2014, over eastern Ukraine by what investigators said was a Buk missile from a Russian anti-aircraft unit. Investigators believe the Ukrainian rebels probably mistook the Boeing 777 passenger jet for a Ukrainian military plane.

Eastern Ukraine's pro-Moscow rebels have relied heavily on Russian military assistance during the separatist conflict that erupted in April 2014 and has claimed more than 13,000 lives.

"As far as we are concerned we want proof of guilt [...] but so far, there is no proof. Only hearsay," Mahathir said. "I hope everybody will go for the truth."

Malaysia's Foreign Ministry said the country remained committed to the investigation to ensure it remains transparent, credible and effective. It urged all parties to cooperate with the process.

In Australia, Paul Guard, the son of MH17 passengers Roger and Jill Guard, told the Aus-

tralian Broadcasting Corp. that he's glad the investigation has progressed and nearing its end. But he said he doesn't hold out much hope that the four men charged will face court.

The parents of another victim, Jack O'Brien, who was one of 38 Australians on the plane, said it was hard for them to even look at the photos of the suspects.

"I also looked at the faces of the [...] average soldiers from that brigade and wondered, you know, are any of them remorseful for what's happened if they played a role? Who knows. We don't know them, we don't know what their lives are."

One of those charged was Igor Girkin, a retired colonel in Russia's main intelligence agency, the FSB. He led Russian and separatist forces in Ukraine's Donetsk region in 2014.

Girkin dismissed the accusations in a telephone interview Wednesday, saying the "insurgents did not shoot down the Boeing." Girkin lives in Moscow.

The three others charged are Russian citizens Sergey Dubinskiy, identified as a former employee of Russia's military intelligence service, and Oleg Pulatov, described as a former soldier in military intelligence; and Leonid Kharchenko, a Ukrainian citizen who led a combat unit in the Donetsk. **AP**

AD



FMCC champions Breakfast Meetings in town with key speakers sharing their views on current business affairs. Our monthly events take place every last Wednesday of the month at Sofitel Macau at Ponte 16. Open to all!



FMCC Breakfast Meeting
Wednesday, 26th June 2019

What makes one Integrated Resort more profitable than another?
Speaker: Mr. Andrew W Scott, CEO of O MEDIA and CEO of Inside Asian Gaming (IAG)

Introduction:
Asian integrated mega-resorts are making profits in the hundreds of millions and even billions of dollars. But until now there has been little research on why one market or one property does better than its competitors. Now that has changed. Hear all about the research and model that Macau business expert Andrew Scott has developed for a Master's Thesis

Date: Wednesday, 26th June, 2019
Time: 9:00a.m. - 10:30a.m. (Reception: 8:45am)
Venue: Sofitel Macau at Ponte 16
6th floor, Promenade Meeting Room

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AP PHOTO



IRAN

Revolutionary Guard shoots down US drone amid tensions

Nasser Karimi
& Jon Gambrell, Tehran

IRAN'S Revolutionary Guard shot down a U.S. drone yesterday amid heightened tensions between Tehran and Washington over the collapsing nuclear deal with world powers, American and Iranian officials said, though they disputed the circumstances of the incident.

The Guard said it shot down the drone over Iranian airspace, while two U.S. officials told The Associated Press the downing happened over international airspace in the Strait of Hormuz. The different accounts could not be immediately reconciled.

Later, the U.S. military's Central Command released a statement saying the drone, an RQ-4 Global Hawk, was downed in international airspace, describing it as an "unprovoked attack."

Previously, the U.S. military alleged that Iran had fired a missile at another drone last week that was responding to the attack on two oil tankers near the Gulf of Oman. The U.S. blames Iran for the attack on the ships; Tehran denies it was involved.

The attacks come against the

backdrop of heightened tensions between the U.S. and Iran following President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from Tehran's nuclear deal a year ago.

The drone incident marks the first direct Iranian-claimed attack on the US amid the crisis

Separately, Saudi Arabia said yesterday that Yemen's Iranian-allied Houthi rebels launched a rocket targeting a desalination plant in the kingdom the previous night. The White House said Trump was briefed about that attack.

Iran has quadrupled its production of low-enriched uranium and threatened to boost its enrichment closer to weapons-grade levels, trying to pressure Europe for new terms to the 2015 nuclear deal.

In recent weeks, the U.S. has sped an aircraft carrier to the Mideast and deployed additional troops alongside the tens of thousands already in the region. From Yemen, the Houthis have launched bomb-laden drones into neighboring Saudi Arabia.

All this has raised fears that a miscalculation or further rise in tensions could push the U.S. and Iran into an open conflict, some 40 years after Tehran's Islamic Revolution. Yesterday's drone incident marks the first direct Iranian-claimed attack on the U.S. amid the crisis.

"We do not have any intention for war with any country, but we are fully ready for war," Revolutionary Guard commander Gen. Hossein Salami said in a televised address.

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, which answers only to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said it shot down the drone on Thursday morning when it entered Iranian airspace near the Kouhmobarak district in southern Iran's Hormozgan province. Kouhmobarak is some 1,200 kilometers southeast of Tehran and close to the Strait of Hormuz.

The Guard said it shot down the drone at 4:05 a.m. after it collected data from Iranian territory, including the southern port of Chahbahar near Iran's border with Pakistan. Iran used its air defense system known as Third of Khordad to shoot down the drone — a truck-based missile system that can fire up to 18 miles into the sky, the semi-official Fars news agency reported.

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency, citing the Guard, identified the drone as an RQ-4 Global Hawk, which cost over USD100 million apiece and can fly higher than 10 miles in altitude and stay in the air for over 24 hours at a time. They have a distinguishable hump-shaped front and an engine atop. Their wingspan is bigger than a Boeing 737 passenger jet.

The Guard described the drone as being launched from the southern Persian Gulf but did not elaborate.

American RQ-4 Global Hawks are stationed at the Al-Dhafra Air Base in the United Arab Emirates, near the capital, Abu Dhabi. AP journalists saw the drones on the base's tarmac during a March 2016 visit by

then-Vice President Joe Biden.

The CENTCOM statement said the RQ-4A Global Hawk maritime surveillance drone was shot down by an Iranian surface-to-air missile while in international airspace over the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which 20% of all global oil moves.

The U.S. has been worried about international shipping through the Strait of Hormuz since the limpet mine attacks in May and June.

"Iranian reports that the aircraft was over Iran are false," CENTCOM said, adding that "this was an unprovoked attack on a U.S. surveillance asset in international airspace."

The two U.S. officials who first told the AP about the downing of the drone spoke on condition of anonymity as the information had not yet been cleared for release to the public.

In Iran, Salami, speaking to a crowd in the western city of Sanandaj, described the American drone as "violating our national security border."

"Borders are our red line," Salami said. "Any enemy that violates the borders will be annihilated."

Iran's Foreign Ministry separately protested the drone, saying it entered Iranian territory.

Iran has claimed to have shot down American drones in the past. In the most-famous incident, in December 2011, Iran seized an RQ-170 Sentinel flown by the CIA to monitor Iranian nuclear sites after it entered Iranian airspace from neighboring Afghanistan. The Iranians later reverse-engineered the drone to create their own variants.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia said Yemen's Houthi rebels fired a rocket at a desalination plant in al-Shuqaiq, a city in the kingdom's Jizan province. The state-run Saudi Press Agency quoted military spokesman Col. Turki al-Maliki as saying the attack caused no damage and wounded no one. The Yemeni rebel Al-Masirah satellite news channel earlier said the Houthis targeted a power plant in Jizan, near the kingdom's border with Yemen, with a cruise missile.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said Trump had been "briefed on the reports of a missile strike in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia."

"We are closely monitoring the situation and continuing to consult with our partners and allies," Sanders said. It wasn't immediately clear why Trump would be briefed about an attack that caused no damage or casualties.

A Saudi-led coalition has been battling the Houthis since March 2015 in Yemen, the Arab world's poorest nation now pushed to the brink of famine by the conflict. In recent weeks, the Houthis have launched a new campaign sending missiles and bomb-laden drones into Saudi Arabia. **AP**

AD

TV canal macau

FRIDAY	
13:00	TDM News (Repetição)
13:30	Telejornal RTPi (Diferido)
15:00	Água de Mar
15:45	Zig Zag
16:05	Portugueses Sem Fronteiras
16:35	Quem Quer Ser Milionário
17:30	Tempos Modernos
18:00	Amor Maior (Repetição)
18:50	TDM Talk Show (Repetição)
19:25	Livros com João Guedes (Repetição)
19:35	Os Nossos Dias Sr.2
20:30	Telejornal
21:15	Semana Internacional
21:50	Viagens em Série - Estreia
22:15	Amor Maior
23:15	TDM News
23:50	Daqui P'rá Frente
01:20	Telejornal (Repetição)
02:05	RTPi Directo

Offbeat

NORWAY ISLANDERS WANT TO GO ‘TIME-FREE’ WHEN SUN DOESN’T SET



Residents of a Norwegian island where the sun doesn't set for 69 days of the year want to go "time-free" and have more flexible school and working hours to make the most of their long summer days.

People on the island of Sommarøy are pushing to get rid of traditional business hours and "conventional time-keeping" during the midnight sun period that lasts from May 18 to July 26, resident Kjell Ove Hveding said this week.

Hveding met with a Norwegian lawmaker this month to present a petition signed by dozens of islanders in support of declaring a "time-free zone" and to discuss any practical and legal obstacles to basically ignoring what clocks say about day and night.

"It's a bit crazy, but at the same it is pretty serious," he said.

Sommarøy, which lies north of the Arctic Circle, stays dark from November to January. The idea behind the time-free zone is that disregarding timepieces would make it easier for residents, especially students, employers and workers, to make the most of the precious months when the opposite is true.

Going off the clock "is a great solution but we likely won't become an entirely time-free zone as it will be too complex," Hveding said. "But we have put the time element on the agenda, and we might get more flexibility ... to adjust to the daylight."

"The idea is also to chill out. I have seen people suffering from stress because they were pressed by time," he said.

Sitting west of Tromsø, the island has a population of 350. Fishery and tourism are the main industries.

Finland last year lobbied for the abolition of European Union daylight savings time after a citizens' initiative collected more than 70,000 signatures.

cinema

CINETEATRO

20 - 26 Jun

MEN IN BLACK: INTERNATIONAL

ROOM 1

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

Director: F. Gary Gray

Starring: Chris Hemsworth, Tessa Thompson, Liam Neeson

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 109min

INVINCIBLE DRAGON

ROOM 2

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

Director: Fruit Chan

Starring: Jin Zhang, JuJu Chan, Anderson Silva

Language: Cantonese (Chinese & English)

Duration: 113min



THE SECRET LIFE OF PETS 2

ROOM 3

2:30, 4:15, 6:00, 7:45pm

Director: Chris Renaud, Jonathan del Val

Starring: Patton Oswalt, Kevin Hart, Harrison Ford

Language: Cantonese (Chinese & English)

Duration: 86min



ALADDIN

ROOM 2

4:30pm

ROOM 3

9:30pm

Director: Guy Ritchie

Starring: Will Smith, Mena Massoud, Naomi Scott

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 109min

this day in history



1982 PRINCESS DIANA GIVES BIRTH TO BOY

Diana, Princess of Wales, has given birth to a boy sixteen hours after checking in to St Mary's Hospital, in London.

The boy, who has been named William, was born at 21:03 BST, weighing 7lb 1½oz.

He is second in line to the British throne after his father the Prince of Wales, who accompanied Princess Diana to the hospital at 0500BST this morning and stayed with her throughout the day.

Outside the hospital crowds had gathered to wait for news of the birth, with some saying they would wait through the night if necessary. Flowers arrived all day long and were taken into the hospital.

Thousands also gathered outside Buckingham Palace, where the birth was formally announced.

The Queen had continued with her scheduled programme, inspecting the RAF regiment on their 40th anniversary at Wittering in Cambridgeshire.

A Palace official said she had looked "absolutely delighted" on hearing that the Princess had gone into labour.

The Princess went into labour earlier than expected, but only by a few days.

Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at St George's Hospital Medical School in London, Geoffrey Chamberlain, told BBC News the long labour period should not present cause for concern.

He said: "Just over half of women expecting their first baby deliver inside 12 hours but another fifth go onto about 18 hours, and another fifth go even longer.

"There is nothing abnormal with a labour going into 24 hours."

The Queen's own surgeon gynaecologist, George Pinker, who has looked after the Princess throughout her pregnancy, was in charge of the delivery.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Prince William was the first heir to the British throne to be born in a hospital.

His brother, Prince Harry, was born on 15 September 1984.

Aged eight, William was sent to school in Wokingham, Berkshire, and at 13, he went to Eton, where he gained 12 GCSEs and excelled at a variety of sports.

After attaining A-Levels at grades A, B and C, he began a History of Art degree at Scotland's oldest university, St Andrews. He switched to Geography and achieved a 2:1 honours in his MA degree.

In 2006 the Prince joined the army, entering the officer training academy at Sandhurst.

The prince has had to endure the break up of his parents' marriage and the sudden death of his mother in August 1997.

YOUR STARS



Aries

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

You should have listened to your mother and planned for a rainy day, it's true. But even if you had, this is more like a typhoon. Kicking yourself is only adding to your pain. Give yourself an emotional break instead.



Taurus

April 20-May 20

No matter how conservative you are with spending, your budget is still in trouble. It's time for radical cost cutting measures. Think Edward Scissorhands if you need a reference, then let yourself go to town.



Gemini

May 21-Jun. 21

Circumstances may look dire, but conditions are actually ideal for some things. Giving is not off the table, for example. Just look at it in the radically changed light and you'll see you still have plenty to offer.



Cancer

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Your panic is drowning out your thoughts. Try to take a more intellectual approach to your own personal rescue plan instead of being so emotional. At this rate, money is just the half of it.



Leo

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

You may think you're still clinging tightly to your money but, all jokes aside, it left the building long ago. Once you realize that all you're holding onto is a security blanket, letting go will be that much easier.



Virgo

Aug. 23-Sept. 22

Be open minded about the new life you find yourself living. It's not by choice, but you can still choose to make the most of it or be miserable. Experiment a little. You may find much to be thankful for.



Libra

Sep.23-Oct. 22

It feels like your synapses are just not connecting properly. That's not the case, though. For now, put your need to understand aside and focus on having a simple, old fashioned kind of good day.



Scorpio

Oct. 23 - Nov. 21

It's not that harmony at home is upset, exactly. The discord is caused by a shift in the balance of power. You may be forced to agree to terms you would have objected to in fatter times.



Sagittarius

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

You relate well to everyone you meet today. Since you're in the business of impressing others, you might as well take your show straight to the bank. You can't afford to waste a single opportunity.



Capricorn

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Everyone is wary of new schemes. There's just no convincing anyone that you have what they need. Changing your approach isn't the issue. Don't stop short of changing your product.



Aquarius

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

People are in need of some inspiration. Double check your ambitions. As long as you're not selling the Brooklyn Bridge, then share your visions. People with money in their wallets will be affected.



Pisces

Feb.19-Mar. 20

Maintaining the status quo is unrealistic. But change isn't as bad as you're making it out to be, either. Once all the inner chatter dies down, you'll be able to focus on the present and plan for the future.

THE BORN LOSER by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

Easy

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Easy+

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Hard

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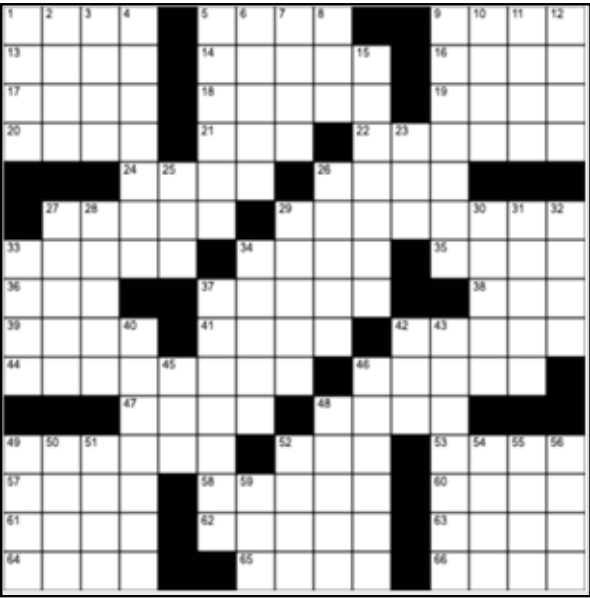
CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Arrow poison; 5- Creator of Perry and Della; 9- Memo heading; 13- Earth; 14- Clip, as wool; 16- Playwright Simon; 17- "Rule Britannia" composer; 18- Scout master?; 19- Morales of "La Bamba"; 20- Ukrainian capital; 21- Mag. staffers; 22- Tortoise; 24- Sheltered, at sea; 26- Spellbound; 27- Clan emblem; 29- Dental device; 33- Wrapped up; 34- Alley; 35- Sleek, in car talk; 36- Pea's place; 37- Ran swiftly; 38- Monopoly quartet; Abbr.; 39- Thing; 41- One more time; 42- Diplomatic agent; 44- Porcelain; 46- Old newsman; 47- Periodic movement of the sea; 48- Commoner; 49- Big step; 52- Football's Parseghian; 53- Ink spot; 57- Person, place, or thing; 58- Thorny flowers; 60- Canoeing body; 61- S-shaped molding; 62- From Bern, say; 63- Goofs up; 64- Commanded; 65- New Orleans is The Big ___; 66- Three-player card game;

DOWN: 1- Writer Dinesen; 2- Me neither; 3- German article; 4- Lift up; 5- Regard; 6- ___ Island; 7- Camera part; 8- Dine; 9- Sluggishness; 10- Robin's digs; 11- 100 dinars; 12- Author Wiesel; 15- Turned; 23- Put ___ fight; 25- Conducted; 26- Extend a subscription; 27- Govt. security; 28- Comparatively peculiar; 29- Speed contests; 30- Audacity; 31- Wrong move; 32- Like Santa's cheeks; 33- Monumental; 34- Knight's weapon; 37- Oakland outfit; 40- Afternoon performance; 42- Before; 43- Bites gently; 45- Central; 46- Stylish; 48- Squeeze; 49- Hoity-toity sort; 50- Garment of ancient Rome; 51- Felt sorry about; 52- Bhutan's continent; 54- Carefree adventure; 55- Soup pod; 56- Lab procedure; 59- Be in debt;

Yesterday's solution

S	A	R	I		R	E	C	A	P		E	A	S	T
O	L	E	S		A	G	A	P	E		M	A	L	I
A	F	A	R		P	O	K	E	R		M	R	E	D
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E	Q	U	I	P		N	I	N	A		O	E	R	
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B	R	A	C		N	A	C	R	E		E	D	G	E
B	E	L	T		G	R	A	T	E		S	E	T	A
A	Y	E	S		T	F	R	E	M		S	A	S	S



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

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Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300

IAM 28 387 333

Tourism 28 333 000

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[Taipa] Nova City 4 1/2 3 1/2
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800 ft² \$7,380,000 (ref: 19055005ST)

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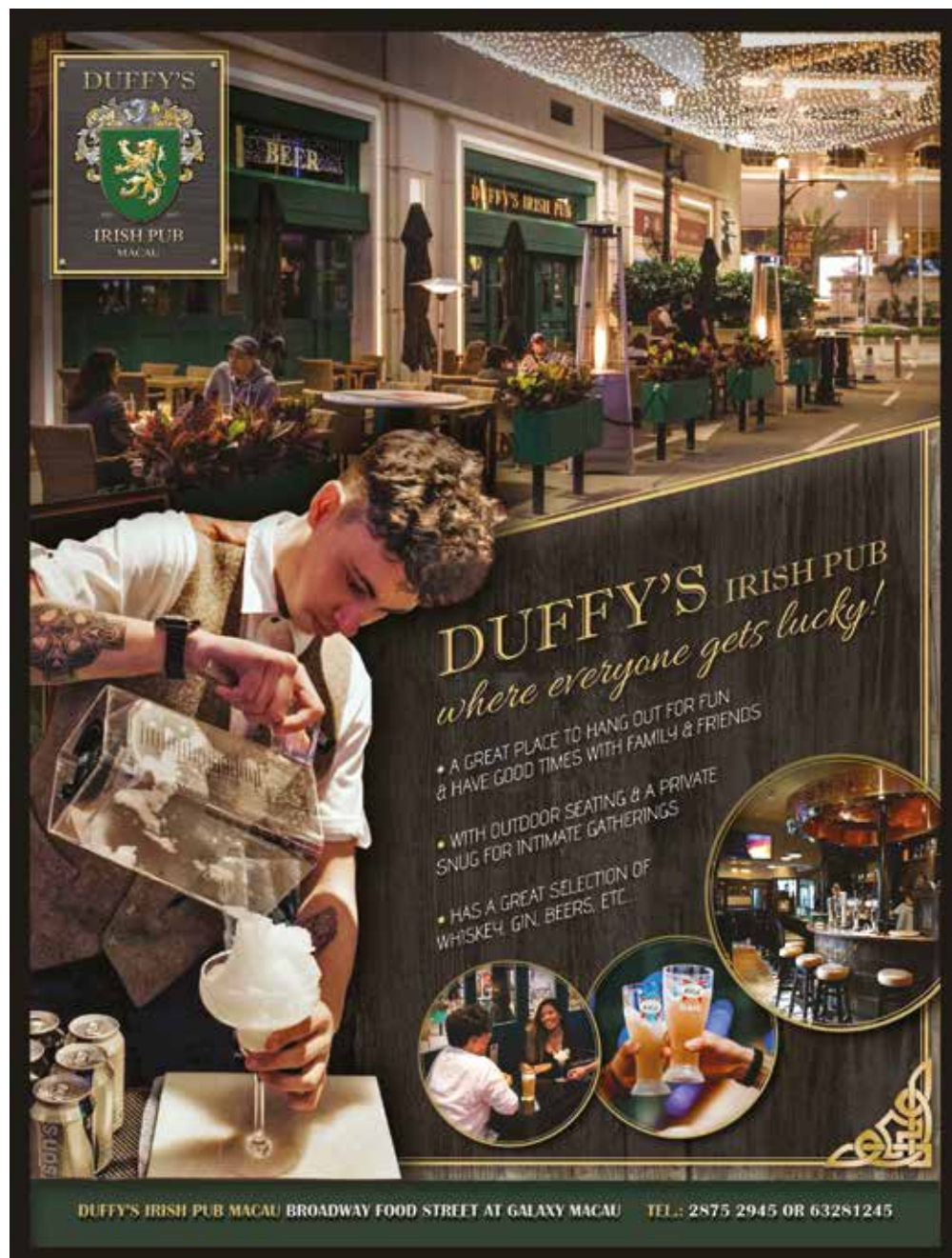
[Taipa] Soi Cheung Studio 1 1/2 1 1/2
660 ft² \$9,000/mth (ref: 18040675)
[Taipa] Cheoc Van House 3 1/2 2 1/2
2,000 ft² \$28,000/mth (ref: 19055009)
[Taipa] Nova Grand 2 1/2 1 1/2
986 ft² \$16,000/mth (ref: 19055007RT)
[Taipa] Ocean Garden 4 1/2 4 1/2
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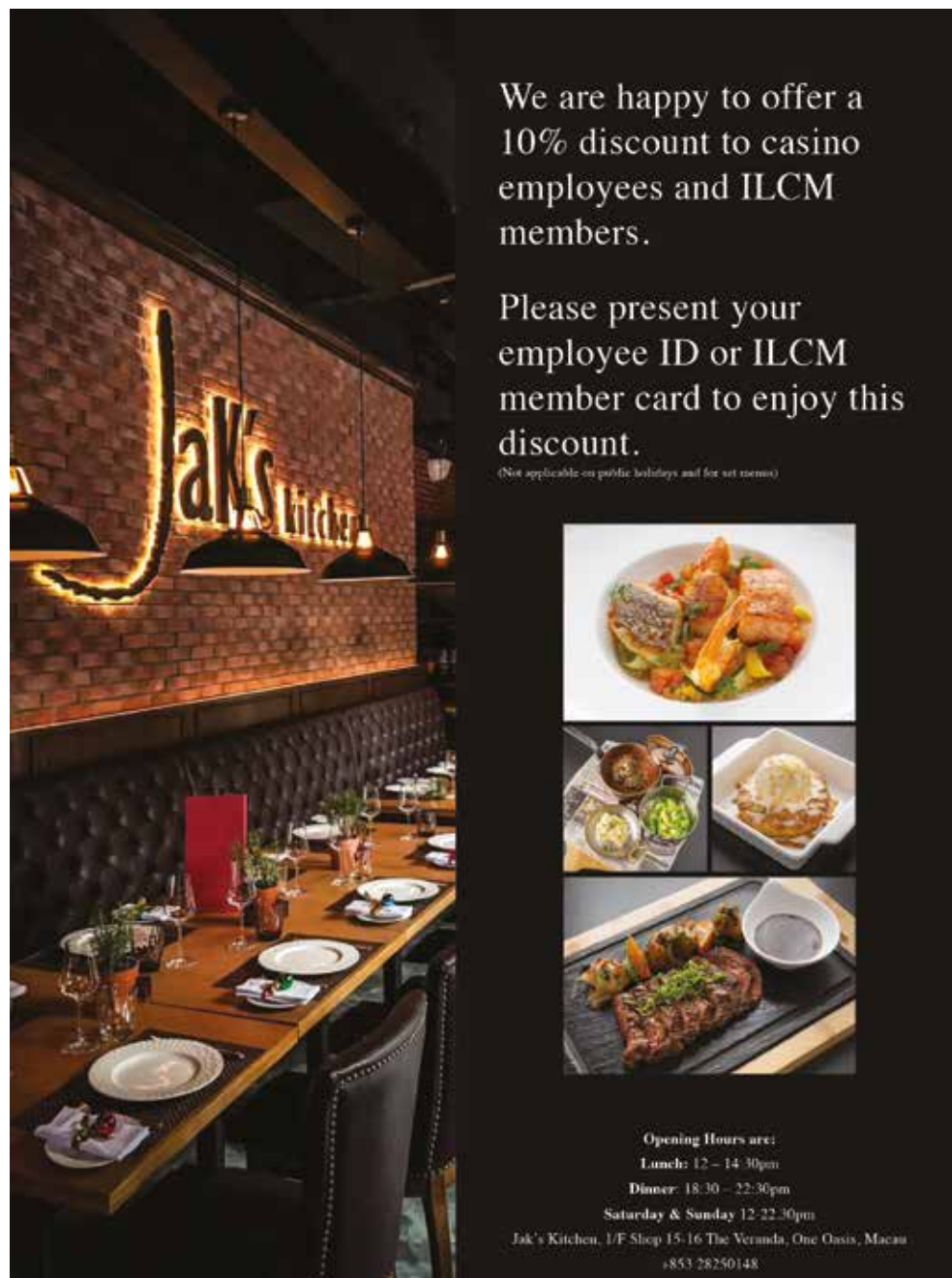
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RUGBY

Jaguares to break new ground in Super Rugby playoffs

Steve McMorran, Wellington

Friday, 23:05
Jaguars v Chiefs
H 1.73, D 29, A 2.38

ARGENTINA'S Jaguares will celebrate a significant milestone in their history, ignoring the catcalls of opponents, when they host a Super Rugby quarterfinal for the first time today.

The Jaguares have made the playoffs only once before in their four-year history — last year when they were beaten by South Africa's Lions in the quarterfinals — and will have home advantage for the first time when they host the Chiefs in Buenos Aires.

In other quarterfinals, the defending champion Crusaders will play the Dunedin-based Highlanders in Christchurch, the Wellington-based Hurricanes will host the Pretoria-based Bulls and the ACT Brumbies will play the Durban-based Sharks in Canberra, Australia.

The Crusaders are attempting to win the Super Rugby title for the 10th time and for the third straight year while the Bulls are seeking their fourth title, the Brumbies their third, the Hurricanes and Highlanders their second and the Sharks and Jaguares their first.

The success of the Jaguares this year has attracted critics, especially in Australia, who say that because they are built around the Argentina test team, they enjoy a huge advantage as a national team playing in a "provincial" competition. Critics



Sebastian Cancelliere of Argentina's Jaguares (right)

also say Argentina will enjoy an advantage at this year's World Cup because the Pumas have effectively been playing together throughout the Super Rugby season.

It's unclear whether any of those critics would mortgage their houses to bet on Argentina winning the World Cup, an outcome rated 40-1 by British bookmakers.

It is also unclear how Argentina could field a Super Rugby team if it couldn't call on its test players who would otherwise have to play in France.

The Jaguares haven't responded to those criticisms but have concentrated on putting together their best-ever Super Rugby season, compiling an 11-5 record to top the South Africa conference. They also overcame the problems of travel which have tripped them up in the past, winning in New Zealand for

the first time.

History shows that home advantage has a massive influence in Super Rugby playoff matches and it may be more valuable to the Jaguares, who will face a travel-weary Chiefs team.

However, the Jaguares are not taking anything for granted, recognizing they are moving in uncharted waters.

"New Zealand teams are always very difficult and more in these types of games," captain Jeronimo de la Fuente said. "They become strong and play good rugby."

"For us it represents a good opportunity to play well and take advantage of what we do at home."

The Jaguares will take confidence from their two wins this season over New Zealand teams and a narrow 30-27 loss to the Chiefs when they met in the regular season.

"We look at ourselves, how we have been improving and how we are playing this year," de la Fuente said. "If we want to keep going, we have to beat anyone who comes in front of us."

The Crusaders, who qualified in overall first place, are heavy favorites to beat the Highlanders, who just scraped into the playoffs when the Bulls beat the Lions in the last match of the regular season. But the Highlanders go to Christchurch on Friday with nothing to lose, no greater outsiders than when they won the title in 2015.

The Hurricanes have struggled all season to harness their huge array of talent. Their weakness at set pieces is likely to be exposed by the Bulls on Saturday and remains a major Achilles heel, though they have shown an ability to win with only fragments of possession. AP

FOOTBALL

Man arrested in connection with death of soccer player Sala

POLICE investigating the death of Argentine soccer player Emiliano Sala arrested a man yesterday [Macau time] on suspicion of manslaughter.

A single-engine aircraft carrying Sala and pilot David Ibbotson crashed in the English Channel on Jan. 21. The body of Sala, who had just signed for Cardiff City from French club Nantes and was traveling to join his new team in Wales, was recovered from the wreckage two weeks later.

Detectives in the southwest English county of Dorset, where Sala's body was brought in February, have been investigating the circumstances of the player's death and said a 64-year-old man was arrested "on suspicion of manslaughter by an unlawful act."

"He is assisting with our inquiries and has been released from custody under investigation," Detective Inspector Simon Huxter, of Dorset Police, said.

Police said the man was from North Yorkshire in England.

Family liaison officers have been updating the families of Sala and Ibbotson, the pilot of the plane that lost contact with Air Traffic Control north of Guernsey. The body of Ibbotson, who was 59 at the time of the crash, has not been found.

Cardiff, which was playing in the English Premier League up until May, agreed to pay a club-record fee of 15 million pounds (about \$20 million) to Nantes to sign Sala.

Mark McKay, one of the brokers of the transfer, said he helped to organize a "private flight" for Sala to Wales from Nantes, where he had returned briefly after signing the deal in Cardiff.

Nantes and Cardiff are still in a dispute over Sala's transfer fee, which was a record signing.

Another English police force in Wiltshire, west of London, said this month that two people were facing charges over a photograph showing Sala's body at a mortuary. They will appear in court next month. AP

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opinion

Kapok
Eric Sautedé



FOR THE PEOPLE?

The contrast could not be more striking: while in Hong Kong two million residents were taking to the streets to express their dissatisfaction at Chief Executive Carry Lam, in Macao, slightly more than 5,000 happy few were taking part in an exercise of total perversion of democracy by choosing the electoral college that will select the next Macao Chief Executive on August 25.

On one side of the delta, a quarter of the population of the former British colony was marching and telling Mrs Lam that she had failed them and that the suspension of a much derided extradition bill was too little and too late. Beyond the five precise demands — total withdrawal, retraction of the “riot” characterization, independent enquiry, charges being dropped and resignation of the CE — lies the idea of accountability, that one has to shoulder responsibility for his or her acts and that ultimately, if government could not be by and of the people, it had to be at least for the people.

On the other side of the delta, it was business as usual and the mockery of competition — 350 candidates for 344 positions — acted as a striking illustration of the political deadlock Macao has had to endure for the past twenty years. Same faces, or almost; same associations, or almost; same self-congratulations, always. All this for what? For Mr Ho Iat Seng to confirm the next day something everybody had already known for the past two years: that he would be the next CE. Only a handful of protesters led by legislator Sulu Sou, soon rounded up by policemen filming them from multiple angles at close range, dared disrupt the velvety process, denouncing the “small circle election” and the disenfranchisement of the vast majority.

On the next day, the cover page of the main Chinese daily in Macao, the Macao Daily News, was splashed with multiple photos of the successful voting exercise held the day before. The biggest ever peaceful demonstration in Hong Kong had no place on that first page. On June 10, only the “attack” on the LegCo had been reported on the cover of the same newspapers after one million people had taken to the streets the previous day. And on June 13, the full cover was dedicated to tear gas pictures and clashes between youngsters dressed in black and police in full battle gear, with a huge title splattered in the middle indicating that the “riot” (baoluan) had caused 72 people to be injured! Clearly, only a twisted, unfavorable and partial outlook gets reported.

What about these elections then? Why would they deserve the full cover the next day?

The 5,001 voters who turned out to the booths on June 17 actually represent very limited interests. Behind these voters, there are only 633 legal persons — associations — registered and authorized to vote. Each of these associations is entitled to a maximum of 22 votes, all of these votes entrusted in the members of the board of directors or managing bodies — regular members are excluded.

It is no secret that these associations vote as “blocks” and that voting instructions are discussed beforehand so as to make sure important figures of the community get the highest scores. Chui Sai Cheong, the brother of the present CE, made it first in the “professional” college, with 77% of the votes. He is also a member of the board in several dozens associations in Macao, even though not all of them are in the professional sector. Instructions are also made to exclude the very few who dare challenge the status quo, as Mrs Rita Santos just experienced in the “labor” college together with three others.

It is moreover clear that not all associations of a given sector are registered. If one simply looks at the “education” college, it is only made of 20 associations that select a total of 29 members of the Electoral Committee. And out of these 20, none of them has a connexion with catholicism, whereas there are 27 registered Catholic schools in Macao comprising about 37% of the non-tertiary educational service delivery in Macao!

Some are prevented from getting into the fray, others just renounced beforehand.

THE TRUMP OFFERS HELP FOR CANADIANS
BUZZ HELD IN CHINA

President Donald Trump is offering to intervene on Canada’s behalf to bring up the plight of two Canadians held in China when he meets with China’s president Xi Jinping next week.

Trump is meeting with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and was asked yesterday by reporters if he would discuss the Canadian detainees when meeting with Xi.

“I would, at Justin’s request. I will absolutely bring it up,” Trump said. He added that “anything I can do to help Canada I will be doing.”

Beijing detained ex-diplomat Michael Kovrig and entrepreneur Michael Spavor in an apparent attempt to pressure Canada to release Meng Wanzhou, a top executive of Chinese tech giant Huawei. She was arrested Dec. 1 at the request of U.S. authorities who want her to face fraud charges.

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‘Hunger Games’ prequel novel coming in 2020

Hillel Italie, New York

A decade after seemingly wrapping up “The Hunger Games,” Suzanne Collins is bringing readers back to Panem. A prequel, set 64 years before the beginning of her multimillion-selling trilogy, is coming next year.

The novel, currently untitled, is scheduled for release on May 19, 2020. Collins said in a statement Monday that she would go back to the years following the so-called “Dark Days,” the failed rebellion in Panem. Collins set the “Hunger Games” books in a post-apocalyptic dystopia where young people must fight and kill each other, on live television.

“With this book, I wanted to explore the state of nature, who we are, and what we perceive is required for our survival,” she said. “The reconstruction period 10 years after the war, commonly referred to as the Dark Days — as the country of Panem struggles back to its feet — provides fertile ground for characters to grapple with these questions and thereby define their views of humanity.”

Set on the morning of the reaping of the Tenth Hunger Games, the book takes place well before the lifetime of “Hunger Games” heroine Katniss Everdeen, played by Jennifer Lawrence in the billion-dollar movie franchise. Scholastic spokeswoman Tracy van Straaten declined comment on the new book’s contents or featured characters beyond what’s described in Monday’s



Suzanne Collins

announcement.

“Suzanne Collins is a master at combining brilliant storytelling, superb world building, breathtaking suspense, and social commentary,” Scholastic Trade Publishing President Ellie Berger said in a statement. “We are absolutely thrilled — as both readers and publishers — to introduce the devoted fans of the series and a new audience to an entirely new perspective on this modern classic.”

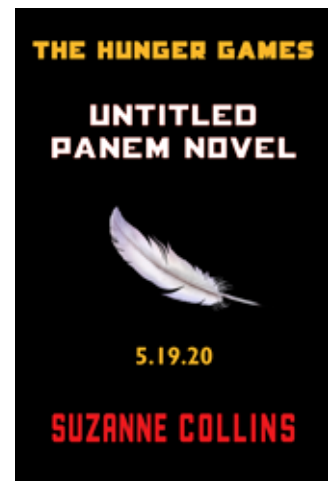
Lionsgate released the four “Hunger Games” movies, and the studio’s vice chairman, Michael Burns, has suggested a prequel. In a recent statement to The Associated Press, the chairman of the Lionsgate Motion Picture Group, Joe Drake, said, “As the proud home of the ‘Hunger Games’ movies, we can hardly wait for Suzanne’s next book to be published. We’ve been communicating with her during the writing process and we look forward to continuing to work closely with her on the movie.” The studio did not immediately respond when asked if an agreement for film rights had already been reached.

The first three “Hunger Games” books — “The Hunger Games,” “Catching Fire” and “Mockingjay” — have sold more than 100 million copies,

have been translated into more than 50 languages and have been credited with launching a wave of Dystopian fiction for young people. The very title “The Hunger Games” has become a catchphrase for suffering and deadly competition, inspiring such headlines as “Trump’s \$1 trillion (infrastructure) plan inspires ‘Hunger Games’ angst.”

Although she was actively involved with the production of the “Hunger Games” films, Collins appeared done with the novels after the publication of “Mockingjay,” in 2010. She had said little about her plans in recent years, beyond telling a gathering at the 2013 BookExpo publishing convention that she was working on a new series. Her most recent book, of any kind, came out in 2013: The picture story “Year of the Jungle” was based on the time in Vietnam served by Collins’ father, a career Air Force officer.

Collins has cited her father as a reason for her lifelong studies of war, and cited both contemporary and classical culture as inspirations for “The Hunger Games.” She named the country Panem as a reference to the Roman expression “panem et circenses,” meaning bread and circuses, diversions for the masses. AP



Station	Air quality	
Roadside	10-30 Good	
High Density Residential Area	10-30 Good	
Ambient	15-35 Good	

SOURCE: DSMG

WORLD BRIEFS

RUSSIA Officials have launched an operation to release nearly 100 illegally captured whales whose confinement in Russia’s far east has become a rallying cry for environmentalists.



TURKEY A court has sentenced 128 people accused of being among the ringleaders of the failed military coup in 2016, to life terms in prison, according to Turkish media.



HUNGARY A court has extended the prison sentences of four human traffickers convicted last year for their roles in a 2015 incident in which 71 migrants suffocated in the back of a refrigerated truck found on a highway in Austria.

ITALY Firefighters say three people were killed by an explosion in an apartment building that appears to have been caused by a gas leak. The explosion in the northeastern city of Gorizia near the Slovenian border completely leveled the building, leaving just outside walls standing on three sides



UK A British court ruled yesterday that the U.K. government acted unlawfully in selling weapons to Saudi Arabia that were used in the Yemen war, though it did not order a halt to the exports.

WIKILEAKS A Swedish prosecutor won’t appeal a decision not to detain WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, who is now jailed in Britain and suspected of rape in Sweden. Deputy Chief Prosecutor Eva-Marie Persson said yesterday she planned to carry out “certain supplementary questioning,” but didn’t elaborate.