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SECRETARY SONIA CHAN HAS REFUSED TO RULE OUT CALLING IN THE POLICE TO SETTLE URBAN RENEWAL DISPUTES

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THE MACAU GRAND PRIX IS INSTALLING 'SOFT WALL' BARRIERS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A BID TO RAISE SAFETY MEASURES

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AP PHOTO



China-US President Donald Trump said he would meet at the White House today with the leader of the Chinese negotiating team now in Washington for the latest round of talks aimed at ending a 15-month trade battle that is weighing on the global economy. With expectations for this week's talks low, Trump tweeted late yesterday: "Big day of negotiations with China. They want to make a deal, but do I?"

Malaysia Amnesty International urged Malaysia's government yesterday to keep its promise to abolish the death penalty, saying unfair trials and the use of harsh treatment to obtain confessions put people at risk of execution. *More on p13*

Singapore A Chinese former gambler at Marina Bay Sands Pte is suing the Singapore-based casino operator to recover \$6.6 million he claims was transferred to other casino patrons without his authorization. *More on p4*

AP PHOTO



North Korea threatened again yesterday to resume nuclear and long-range missile tests, accusing the U.S. of having instigated some members of the U.N. Security Council to condemn its recent weapons tests. *More on p13*

Japan is bracing for a super typhoon on track to hit central and eastern regions over the three-day weekend, with sport events and domestic flights canceled and sandbags given away to minimize potential damage from torrential rains and strong winds.

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TAIWAN SAYS HK PROVES FAILURE OF ONE COUNTRY, TWO SYSTEMS

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AP PHOTO



MAN BEHIND HORRIFIC ASSAULT GETS 13 YEARS

P5 COURTS



'Rooster, Tiger, Sheep by Snake' – Wen-You Cai Photography Exhibition is showing at MGM Cotai until February 9 to celebrate the landmark anniversaries of the PRC and the MSAR

times Extra

ELECTRICITY USAGE HAS TRIPLED IN PAST 20 YEARS

Electricity consumption in Macau is more than triple that of 20 years ago, revealed the Director of the Office for the Development of the Energy Sector (GDSE) according to a report by Macao Daily News. In 1999, the city's total electric energy consumption was 1.672 GWh. In 2018, consumption reached 5,528 GWh. On average, annual electricity consumption has increased by 6.5% in the past two decades. Since 2005, the local government has been increasing the amount of electricity supplied from mainland China. In 2018, the local power generation capacity was 33% in the peak period. Local power generation mainly includes power-plant-generated electricity and about 3% of waste incineration power generation.

FEWER RESIDENTS VISITED MUSEUMS AND WORLD HERITAGE SITES

The number of local residents visiting museums or World Heritage sites dropped significantly this year, down by 14.4% year-on-year to 86,200, according to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC), which cited the results of the "Survey on Participation of Residents in Cultural Activities" for the second quarter of 2019. Local residents visiting museums (61,000) and World Heritage sites (58,200) dropped by 12.4% and 12.6%, respectively. The main reasons for not visiting were "no interest" (65.3%) and "no time" (46%). Despite a fall in the number of local participants, the average number of visits edged up by 0.1% year-on-year. The number of local residents going to libraries increased by 4.6% year-on-year to 137,600. The rate of participation in activities rose by 1.1 percentage points to 30.5%.

MAINLAND MAN ARRESTED FOR DRUG DEALING

A 32-year-old mainland man has been arrested for dealing drugs in Macau, the Judiciary Police (PJ) said yesterday. The PJ found about 31.7 grams of cocaine on the suspect, in addition to MOP13,000 in cash and dismantling tools. The total black market price of the drugs is estimated at about MOP100,000. The PJ revealed that the suspect claimed he owed a gambling debt in mainland China and that he was later hired by a Hong Kong drug trafficking group to sell drugs in Macau on a daily salary of HKD1,500. The suspect further claimed that his Hong Kong employer used a mobile app to instruct him to deliver the drugs to designated locations in Macau. Five grams of cocaine was sold to frequent visitors of NAPE nightclubs.

URBAN RENEWAL

SONIA CHAN REFUSES TO DISCUSS USE OF POLICE IN DISPUTES

JULIE ZHU

SECRETARY for Administration and Justice Sonia Chan has not given the media a direct response regarding whether the police force will be called to deal with residents not cooperating with the government on the urban renewal project. The questions came after reports of mainland police using violence to evict residents from their property in China.

Yesterday, Chan held a press conference briefing the media on the public consultation paper, together with other government high-ranking officials from her sector, including Liu Dexue, director of the Legal Affairs Bureau.

The document proposes a percentage of approval needed for property owners to rebuild a residential property, and the methods by which to solve disputes, among other things.

When a building is between 30 and 40 years old, a suggested minimum of 90% of the building owners should agree to rebuild the building. The percentage suggested for buildings older than 40 years is 80%, whereas the government outlined that for buildings that are a danger to public hygiene or public safety and have already been demolished, at least 60% approval must be



Sonia Chan (right)

gained from owners in case the government plans to rebuild the building.

The bill proposed an acquisition mechanism which allows urban renewal implementation organizations to buy the properties from owners who disagree to their building's renewal plan. According to the acquisition proposal, the government can provide "reasonable and timely" compensation to an owner to acquire property ownership.

If any disputes arise during the acquisition procedure, they will be referred to an arbitration committee, which will be estab-

lished specifically to handle such situations. If the relevant parties are dissatisfied with the arbitration result, they can file a lawsuit.

In some of Macau's neighboring regions, the police authority intervenes when residents are uncooperative with the government's house rebuilding plan. In some cases, violence against property owners has been reported in order for the government to coerce them into leaving and tear down the building. These actions frequently result in injuries and, in some cases, death.

When questioned by the media on whether Macau's police authority will interfere in situations where a resident is uncooperative, for instance when owners refuse to accept eviction from their property, Chan repeated the arbitration proposal and court solution, and indicated that private property protection is assured.

"Protecting private property is [contained within] the Basic Law. But I believe all protections are not 100% absolute. If the dispute assistance fails, there is arbitration. If the arbitration fails, then there is a lawsuit," explained Chan.

"Our improvement of these old areas is for the protection [of the owners]. We all know that if these buildings are rebuilt in the future, the entire community rebuild will include more facilities, and road and transportation improvements, which lead to a certain increase of the property's value," said Chan.

According to the consultation draft, in order to encourage more property owners to participate in the urban renewal project, property owners can choose either to get a new property with their old property or be compensated by monetary means. The government also proposed specific subsidies to push the city's urban renewal process forward.

Retailers, restaurateurs look to Macau to cover HK losses

JULIE ZHU

ONGOING protests in Hong Kong have caused some entrepreneurs in the region to focus on developing their business in Macau in a bid to cover mounting losses incurred in the city's sister SAR.

That was message from Centaline Property's (Macau) General Manager Pun Chi Meng

yesterday, who said at a press conference yesterday that the phenomenon was mostly affecting the retail and restaurant sectors. He explained that some shops and restaurants in Hong Kong have been found their business disrupted by the protests.

"In a short period, we can't see any improvement in Hong Kong to make the market more

peaceful or more stable. Many in the retail sector [in Hong Kong], in this period, face a rather big pressure," said Pun.

"Investors and retail bosses have started considering how to arrange their businesses in Hong Kong," said Pun. "Starting from August, our regular customers asked us to visit Macau and have a look at the Macau market, or open

more branches in order to explore further business opportunities and enhance operations in Macau to cover losses in Hong Kong."

"Our colleagues have recorded an increasing number of inquiries from Hong Kong bosses. Some of them paid a visit to Macau to see the shops," said Pun.

These businesses are from the catering, phar-

macy and cosmetic industries.

In the third quarter of this year, commercial rental transactions decreased by approximately 20%. However, non-local businesses inquiring about shops in Macau increased 20% to 30%. According to Centaline, Macau local shops have become "rather cautious" when renting or buying a shop due to external factors.

Centaline believes that an increase in shop rental transactions will surface in the fourth quarter or the beginning of next year.

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

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

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

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ADMINISTRATOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com
OFFICE MANAGER Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com
ADDRESS Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84
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Gov't admits to shortcomings in Five-Year Plan progress

LYNZY VALLES

THE mid-term review of the government's first Five-Year Development Plan indicated that lawmaking and the region's construction sector had both faced a series of challenges between 2016 and 2018, and thereby became two of the city's least successful sectors in terms of achieving their targets outlined in the plan.

"Some works that did not reach the expected goals are mainly reflected in the improvement [amendment] of the bills and the construction of works. The Macau SAR government is aware that there are shortcomings in government actions and [will] make every effort to improve the situation," the government statement read.

The MSAR government pledged to strengthen interdepartmental cooperation in the construction of the governance regime and amending laws by improving and optimizing the

RENATO MARQUES



coordination of legislative production, amongst others.

As cited in the report, the government also pledged that communication between project stakeholders would be strengthened and infrastructure construction would be accelerated.

Between 2016 and 2018, the annual execution rate regarding

tasks outlined in the Five-Year Development Plan was approximately 90%, according to the mid-term evaluation issued by the government on Wednesday.

The 90% includes improvements to traffic systems, environmental protection indicators and the development of the gaming and non-gaming industries.

In terms of gaming, the report highlighted that the industry maintained healthy development between 2016 to 2018.

Although the Five-Year Development Plan did not list out its targets or limits for the gross gaming revenue performance of gaming operators, it listed its aspirations for the sector.

According to the plan, the government will "not pursue expansion in scale, but focus on improving quality and utilize existing modern gaming tourism building clusters to facilitate development of non-gaming elements."

The mid-term review noted that non-gaming revenue amounted to a proportion of 9.97% of the total revenue of the sector in 2018, slightly lower than the figures in 2016 and 2017, which were 10.7% and 10.36% respectively.

However, the report said that it had already exceeded expectations, citing that the plan only mentioned a goal of at least 9% in terms of non-gaming revenue.

The report also noted that the government had concluded its consultation on the gaming industry, regarding the rules regulating junkets, gaming machines and equipment supply.

Meanwhile, in terms of progress on the city's health system infrastructure, the sector only achieved 51% of its 80% completion goal.

The shortfall was mainly due to the delays in the construction of the Islands District Medical Complex.

"The foundation works of the six blocks of the first phase of the Islands District Medical Complex have already been completed and construction work has begun on the upper Nursing Institute," the report explained.

"The demolition of the first phase of the building [and] of the complementary public health boarding school were completed, and demolition works for phase two were already completed in January 2018," it added.

Furthermore, the government pledged to improve the SAR's "social security system, housing, healthcare, education, human resources training, and prevention and reduction of disasters."

The government also mentioned that it would aim for improvements regarding the quality of convention and exhibition activities.

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FORMER CHINESE GAMBLER SUES CASINO OVER \$6.6 MILLION IN TRANSFERS

CHANYAPORN
CHANJAROEN

A Chinese former gambler at Marina Bay Sands Pte is suing the Singapore-based casino operator to recover SGD9.1 million (\$6.6 million) he claims was transferred to other casino patrons without his authorization.

Wang Xi discovered in July that the money was missing as a result of 22 transfers allegedly made from his casino deposit accounts between October and December of 2015, according to a Sept. 26 statement of claim filed in the High Court in Singapore. Wang doesn't know the people who allegedly received the money, the claim said.

Marina Bay Sands, owned by Las Vegas Sands Corp., is one of two firms granted exclusive licenses by the Singapore government to operate casinos on the island. Earlier this year, the government



BLOOMBERG

agreed to extend the licenses held by Genting Singapore Ltd. and Las Vegas Sands to 2030, in exchange for pledges to invest SGD9 billion into local tourism projects.

According to the suit, Marina Bay Sands told Wang it received authorization letters signed by him in Macau for the disputed transactions. Wang said his signature had

been copied and pasted on to the authorization letters.

Marina Bay Sands told him the originals had been destroyed by the Singapore firm's Macau affiliate for "reasons of confidentiality," the lawsuit said.

The casino operator "failed to verify whether the Disputed Authorization Letters were in fact signed by the plaintiff before effecting the

disputed transactions," according to the lawsuit.

A representative for Marina Bay Sands declined to comment. Wang is represented by Paul Tan and Alessa Pang at Rajah & Tann Singapore LLP. Both declined to comment.

The case is Wang Xi v. Marina Bay Sands Pte. Ltd., S967/2019, Singapore High Court. **BLOOMBERG**

VISITOR STUNNED BY HOTEL SECURITY SITUATION

A tourist from Taiwan was frightened to find out that the door to her room at a four-star hotel in Macau had been opened while she was asleep. As reported by Taiwanese news outlet TVBS, the incident did not cause her any financial loss or physical injury.

The report did not disclose which was the hotel in question, but stated that the room cost the tourist more than NTD4,000, approximately MOP1,000, per night. It was also reported that the room had a balcony overlooking the shore.

On the fourth night of her trip, the woman woke to find an intruder attempting to open the door to her room. Luckily, she had used the security lock, so the door was not completely opened. According to the report, the intruder tried to forcibly open the door on their second attempt, creating a loud "bang."

After her discovery, the woman went to reception and asked the staff about the incident. She also requested the surveillance camera footage to be viewed, however, the staff member replied saying that only under police instruction would the footage be available for her viewing.

The woman then reported the incident to the police, who did not pursue the case as there was no actual loss. She was astonished, so she changed the dates of her flights and ended her trip a day earlier than planned. **AL**

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Man in horrific domestic assault sentenced to 13 years in prison

THE man who inflicted prolonged agony on his wife, Lao Mong Ieng, by splashing drain cleaner and cooking oil over her was sentenced yesterday by the Court of First Instance to 13 years, along with the requirement to pay monetary compensation to the victim, totaling nearly 12.9 million patacas.

The case was first handled as a matter of domestic violence by the Judiciary Police. The charge was afterwards altered to "aggravated assault causing serious injuries". The criminal and civil parts of the lawsuit were combined and handled by a single procedure.

The maximum penalty for this crime is 13 years and four months.

The incident occurred last July when Lao, then 31 years old, sustained serious burns to her head, face and body, causing her to lose her sight among other severe injuries. Lao also lost the ability to eat, due to muscular atrophy in her mouth.

Prior to announcing the judgment, the Judge commented on



Lawmaker Agnes Lam (left) and the father of Lao Mong Ieng

the suspect's act. The judge said it "was a horrific act that destroyed the life of both a person and one whole family." She added that the suspect had expressed no feeling of guilt in any way, nor had he apologized to the victim.

The judge pointed out that

during the procedure, the suspect refused to confess to some of the accusations, including the matter of the temperature of the cooking oil he splashed on the victim. He had earlier told the court that it was at room temperature, instead of "boiling oil" as was widely reported.

Additionally, the suspect also argued about his mental state when the incident happened.

However, the judge pointed out that Lao was able to explain the case completely. The judge also reiterated that the court had heard the statements from

many parties, including the household's domestic helper, the victim and her clinical psychologist, as well as others.

The court had also heard from two of Lao's former superintendents at work, who explained Lao's attitude at work, her previous salary level and the changes caused to Lao's appearance.

The judgment was made after the court referenced all available social and medical reports, the judge explained.

According to forensic reports, Lao suffered second and third degree burns to as much as half of her body area and fourth degree burns to her eyes. The court considered it severe harm.

The court explained that all details in the lawsuit have been verified, leading to yesterday's judgment.

Following the court session, Lao's father spoke to the press. He said he thought the case was well and fairly reported by the press. Lao's father also thanked lawmaker Agnes Lam for the assistance she rendered throughout the proceedings, their lawyer and the Good Shepherd Association, who led the donation campaign to support Lao.

It is not clear whether the defendant will appeal the decision at the Court of Second Instance. **AL**

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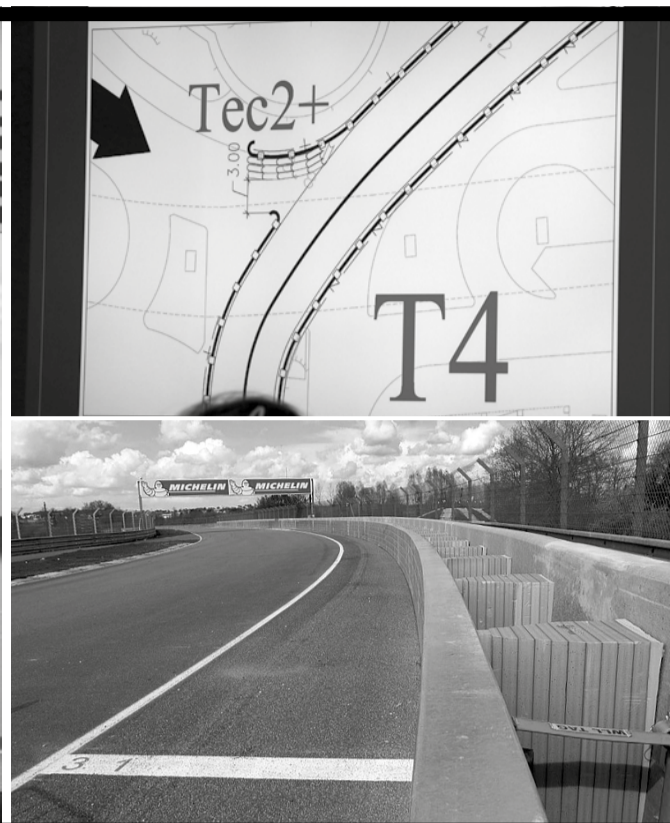
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MACAU GRAND PRIX INSTALLS 'SOFT WALLS' FOR ADDED SAFETY

RENATO MARQUES

THIS year's Macau Grand Prix will have, for the first time, "soft wall" safety barriers installed.

Steel and Foam Energy Reduction (SAFER) Barriers will be installed on Turns 1 and 2 (Reservoir and Mandarin Bend), the two fastest bends of Guia Street Circuit in order to increase safety for all vehicles racing on the track, but namely for the Formula 3 (F3) cars, said Vice President of the Automobile General Association Macao-China (AAMC) Herculano Ribeiro yesterday during a media gathering event organized by the 66th Macau Grand Prix Organizing Committee (MGPOC).

MGPOC presented further details on the changes to be enforced at this year's event regarding the circuit's safety. The inclusion of these barriers on the fastest bends was one of the measures announced, with a total of six points to be addressed this year.

Other changes will be made to T3 (Lisboa Bend), T4 (São Francisco Bend), T15 (Police Bend) and T23 (R Bend).

There will be a major change to Lisboa Bend, with the enlargement of the buffer zone. This was announced at last month's press conference, but was now explained in further detail. According to MGPOC Sporting Subcommittee Coordinator and President of AAMC Chong Coc Veng, the "idea at Lisboa [Bend] is to match the width of the track with the buffer zone, so in case of need to make use of the area, the drivers do not need to turn left into it but instead, [can] just go straight."

Questioned by the media if the serious accident at last year's F3

race led to other reinforcements in that area, the official said, "not for the time being. We will enforce this change [to] the buffer zone and then, during the final inspection by FIA [International Automobile Federation], if we see that we need to reinforce any details, we can still do it."

As for the T4 and T23 changes, Tecpro Barriers will be installed instead of the commonly used tire walls. The new material provides added energy absorption, reducing the force of impact and reducing damage to vehicles during a crash. Macau had already started using these a few years ago, namely on the Fishermen's Bend.

On R Bend, besides the inclusion of Tecpro Barriers, the barrier area will also increase by another 15 meters in length in the direction of the finish line.

Last but not least, changes to Police Bend are related to the prolongation of the tire barrier into the Moorish hill area.

Ribeiro reaffirmed what Chong had previously said on the topic, saying, "all these changes have the purpose of complying with demands for the upgrade of [the Guia Circuit] to FIA Grade 2."

Questioned by the media on when the upgrade will be finished, Chong said, "it is not yet finished. Only after the construction of the circuit is complete will [it] be subjected to a final evaluation from the FIA."

SAFER barriers, generically named "soft walls," were developed in the late 1990s and early 2000s and are found on many racing circuits, namely the oval automobile racetracks (US Indy and NASCAR Series) as well as high-speed sections of road and street tracks.

By using a mix of tube metal

sections stacked together, and a middle section of high-density foam between the metal part of the barrier and the concrete wall, soft walls absorb and reduce kinetic energy during a high-speed crash, lessening the injuries sustained by drivers and spectators.

This technology was initially designed by a team of engineers led by Dean Sicking at the Midwest Roadside Safety Facility at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and was first installed on the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in 2002.

ELECTRONIC FLAG SYSTEM TO BE TRIALED

During the event, AAMC technical support member Armando de Jesus noted that the electronic flag system would be used in Macau for the first time. It will

be installed at 10 different points on the circuit and its use will be evaluated, with the aim of a possible expansion in the coming years.

In response to media enquiries, Chong clarified that the electronic flag system would not replace the work of marshals, who will continue to be present in the same numbers. It will instead, aim to provide drivers and riders with extra help and added information on any situation on the track, especially in areas where there are fewer marshal posts.

"[Physical] flags are always the priority," Chong remarked.

De Jesus noted that the particularities of the local circuit justify the new addition even more, saying, "Macau is very special. Bends are 'blind' and drivers do not have any idea of what they find

after the bend, so the [prompt display of] flags [will] have an even more important role here [than on other circuits]."

MGPOC NOTES DIFFICULTIES IN MEDIA COVERAGE

Questioned by the Times on the constant reduction of the number of on-track areas available for the photojournalistic coverage of the event, as well as other difficulties encountered by the media, MGPOC president Pun Weng Kun acknowledged the problem, noting that for safety and other reasons some changes to the field had to be made over the years.

While Pun was aware that every year, the Grand Prix attracts many local, regional and international media organizations that bring over 1,000 media professionals to the region, he said that MGPOC has been struggling with the lack of options for these professionals. But nevertheless, Pun promised to try to improve on this and offer the media a wider range of locations to cover the event.

LUCA ENGSTLER TO REPLACE FARFUS ON MACAU'S WTCR RACE

GERMAN driver Luca Engstler has been chosen by the BRC Hyundai N LUKOIL Racing Team to replace Brazilian Augusto Farfus during the Macau round of World Touring Car Cup (WTCR).

The announcement was made yesterday by the team ahead of the already announced participation of Farfus in the FIA GT World Cup where he is going to defend last year's title achieved with the BMW-Schnitzer Team.

It will be the first time that 19-year-old Engstler races in Macau after the young driver's successful campaign with Hyundai Motorsport's Customer Racing Junior Driver initiative that clinched the TCR Malaysia and TCR Asia titles, winning also several races in TCR Europe and TCR China.

On the topic, Engstler was quoted on the WTCR website saying, "I'm really happy to have this chance to race in the WTCR; it's a huge opportu-



Luca Engstler (center)

nity. It will be a new track for me, and I expect the weekend to be very physical with three races on a very demanding street circuit." **RM**

Pink Inspired charity lunch sees growth in attendance

CONRAD Macao, Cotai Central, held its annual Pink Inspired charity lunch, attracting some 330 attendees, an increase of nearly 20% compared to last year's figures.

The organizer invited award-winning journalist Anna Coren as the guest speaker at the sixth edition of the luncheon.

Proceeds of the luncheon will again support the Hong Kong Cancer Fund's (HKCF) Pink Revolution and local charity Associação de Feliz Paraíso, which provides respite care to patients in need.

Sally Lo from the Hong Kong Cancer Fund again emphasized the prevalence of breast cancer and the importance of early detection, noting that the youngest woman receiving assistance from the association is 18 years old.

Meanwhile Donna Cam-



pbell, the executive director of Public Relations at Sands China said that this year's luncheon had sold out.

"This luncheon is one of the many events that we're hosting at Conrad. Today's luncheon was a sell out," said Campbell.

"This is something I did with my previous job in Australia. We had 70 guests during the first year and I'm proud to say we have over 330 guests that attended on this date," she added.

This is the eighth year that Conrad Macao, now a HKCF Diamond Sponsor, has pledged to donate a portion of its Pink Inspired proceeds to benefit breast cancer awareness campaigns.

As a statement of support, the hotel, along with all its floral arrangements, decorations and even external lighting, will transform into a riot of passionate pink once again.

This year, as an extension of the Pink Inspired charity lunch, Sands Resorts Macao

staged a Pink Eiffel Tower Run race up The Parisian Macao's iconic half-scale Eiffel Tower.

Although the amount raised for the campaign has not yet been disclosed, one might predict that the luncheon has raised even more funds this year, as it saw a growth in the number of attendees.

Last year, Conrad Macao raised over MOP168,000 as part of the Pink Inspired campaign, higher than the amount raised in 2017, which was MOP140,000. LV

MACAO ORCHESTRA WELL-RECEIVED BY PORTUGUESE AUDIENCES

THE Macao Orchestra has concluded its tour in Portugal with acclaim from audiences. The orchestra toured the Portuguese cities of Évora, Coimbra, Portalegre and Lisbon.

The 12-day tour, from September 12 to 24 September, saw the orchestra's first return to the European country in seven years, following an earlier visit in 2012.

One of the highlights of the tour was that the orchestra enjoyed the honor of performing at the world-famous Marvão International Music Festival in Portalegre and Festival TODOS in Lisbon.

As the Macao Orchestra was touring as a cultural representative of Macau, it took the opportunity to highlight Macau's unique cultural appeal through the music performances.

Conducted by music director and principal conductor Lü Jia, the orchestra, along with German-born Korean violinist Clara-Jumi Kang, presented Dvoák's "Carnival Overture," Jean Sibelius's "Violin Concerto in D minor" and Tchaikovsky's "Symphony No.5 in E minor."

The orchestra kicked off their tour at the Baroque-style Teatro Garcia de Resende in Évora, playing before an audience of nearly 500.

They then travelled to Coimbra, where they co-performed with the city's Orquestra Clássica in a filled auditorium. The third stop was Portalegre, the host city of the prestigious Marvão International Music Festival, where 400 people enjoyed the performance. Closing the tour was a show at Festival TODOS in Lisbon in front of 600 people. AL

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HK IS SINKING INTO A RECESSION WITH NO RECOVERY IN SIGHT

BY ERIC LAM

HONG Kong is facing its first recession since the global financial crisis, with little prospect of an immediate recovery as the city confronts its most violent protests in decades.

From luxury hotels and major shopping malls to neighborhood stores and restaurants in tourist hubs like Central, Causeway Bay and Tsim Sha Tsui, businesses are closing early or seeing fewer customers. Even when things are open, stores and the airport are quiet, as tourists stay away.

The city's subway network, or MTR, was closed entirely for long stretches during the holiday weekend from Oct. 4 amid the violent backlash to Chief Executive Carrie Lam's attempt to quell months of protests by invoking a colonial-era emergency law.

The economy in Hong Kong contracted in the second quarter, almost certainly in the third quarter and the data are still deteriorating. The question is how deep and

prolonged the pain will be. Once Asia's manufacturing powerhouse before the rise of mainland China, Hong Kong's freewheeling consumer and finance-led economy is highly vulnerable to a collapse in confidence that has been delivered by the turmoil.

The city's government has struggled to make the case that it has the policy tools to arrest the slide while the unrest continues.

"I do not expect to see any strong measures that can instantaneously turn things around," said Dong Chen, senior Asia economist with Pictet Wealth Management, one of a growing chorus of experts predicting Hong Kong had a second straight quarterly contraction in the three months through September. "The best scenario is after this political unrest they can come up with longer-term planning or measures to solve structural problems."

The effects of the U.S.-China trade war combined with a lack of tourist spending power also raises the prospect of a contraction for

the full year, compared with 2018. The downturn has been rapid, as declining exports and protests have erased any economic momentum from the start of 2019. When Financial Secretary Paul Chan unveiled his budget in February, he forecast annual growth of 2% to 3% - by August, he had slashed that forecast to zero to 1%.

Many economists see growth for all of 2019 sliding well below 1% - JPMorgan Chase & Co.'s latest call is 0.3% - for the weakest reading since 2009.

The downturn has also taken its toll on Hong Kong's equity market. The MSCI Hong Kong Index has slumped 18% from an April high, with real estate and consumer stocks leading declines in that time.

A variety of key economic indicators have rapidly turned south in the past few months.

Tourism arrivals declined almost 40% in August from a year earlier to about 3.6 million visitors, the worst performance since the 2003 SARS epidemic, according to data from the Hong Kong

Tourism Board.

Meanwhile, retail sales by value plunged a record 23% in August as demand for luxury goods such as jewelry and watches plummeted, and export are expected to shrink this year to the worst level in a decade, the Hong Kong Trade Development Council warned as it slashed its 2019 growth forecasts.

At a press conference this week, Lam said visitor arrivals fell by more than half from Oct. 1-6, the "Golden Week" when mainland tourists usually flood Hong Kong's shops to snap up luxury goods. Along with likely confirmation of a recession, advance third-quarter GDP figures due Oct. 31 may indicate even weaker growth forecasts for the rest of the year.

Hong Kong has had severe economic challenges before. In the early 2000s the SARS epidemic shut down the city amid fears of contracting the deadly virus. Once the all-clear came, though, visitor arrivals and business

confidence bounced back. The difference now is that there's little expectation of a rapid resolution, as positions harden on either side of the barricades.

The lack of foot traffic also means months of weakening sales among retailers at all levels, from the glitzy shops in Central to family-run small businesses. The city's unemployment level in July ticked higher for the first time in two years, and it's likely layoffs and store closings will increase in coming months.

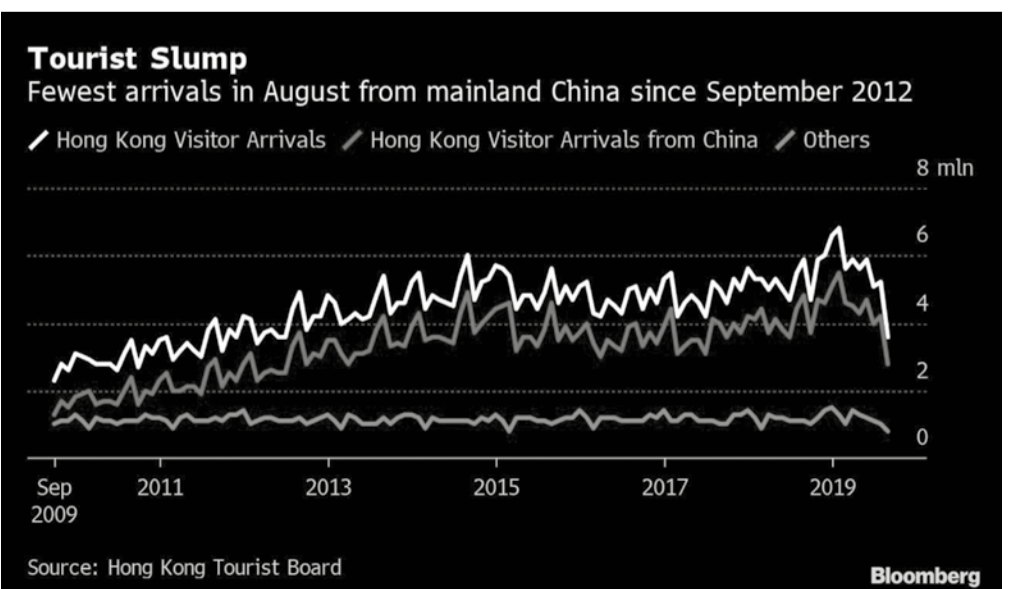
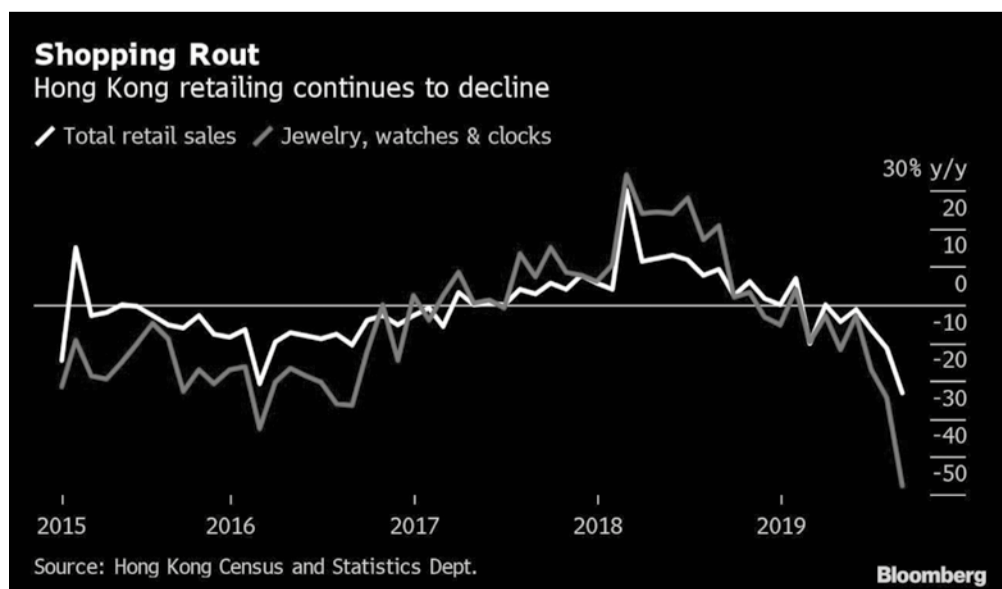
"In the short term, we see the economy falling into a recession as growth pillars including trade, tourism, and finance are all under stress. The more significant risk, though, would be the city losing its reputation as a global business and financial center, which significantly undercuts long-term growth prospects," said Qian Wan of Bloomberg Economics.

In response to the immediate downturn the government announced a \$2.4 billion stimulus package in August including measures to benefit citizens and companies, and there may be more spending announced in Lam's annual policy address Oct. 16. There is an opportunity to increase spending in areas such as welfare, health care services and facilities that could help to deal with longer-term issues, according to Tommy Wu, senior economist with Oxford Economics in Hong Kong.

Given the scale of the current political challenges, the August package already looks like small change, particularly in light of the government's HKD1.2 trillion (\$149.3 billion) in fiscal reserves, as of the end of March.

"A large, timely and targeted fiscal stimulus package including tax rebates and incentives can alleviate the impact of recession and stimulate the economy in the short run," said Paul Luk, an assistant professor in the department of economics at Hong Kong Baptist University. "The future needs in different welfare areas are known. These areas should have been expanded aggressively a few years back, and it is better late than never to do it now."

BLOOMBERG



DAVID RAMLI

SERVICE providers to some of Asia's wealthiest families say they are fielding a rising number of calls about shifting away from Hong Kong, with some already moving money to Singapore-based banks.

"Projects that were going into Hong Kong, people are now holding back," said Shanker Iyer, Asia executive chairman at IQ-EQ, which says it has about \$450 billion of assets under administration for family offices and other investors.

The company is getting regular calls from clients asking about the logistics of leaving Hong Kong, he said. "People who aren't in the market already and want to come in, they're having second thoughts," with Singapore seen as a much more business-friendly destination, he added.

The shift comes at a critical time for Hong Kong, which has been roiled by months of violent protests that have made investors fearful of direct intervention by Chinese authorities to quell the unrest.

Clifford Ng, a managing partner at Zhong Lun Law Firm in Hong Kong, who specializes in advising high net-worth individuals on cross-border transactions and investments and has lived in the city since 1995, said the level of interest in moving assets to Singapore is "unprecedented."

"We have certainly received a lot of questions regarding the freedom to move money," he said. "Investors hate uncertainty and Hong Kong is a little typhoon within a much bigger storm of uncertainty. Risk avoidance, in handling other people's money, drives that money to a less uncertain place."

With financial services accounting for about one-fifth of Hong Kong's GDP, any disruption will have a real impact on the economy, which is already slipping as tourists desert the city and

Family office advisers see interest in leaving Hong Kong



retail sales slump. The local economy contracted in the second quarter and may be on track to suffer its first recession since the global financial crisis, according to experts.

The possibility of Hong Kong's legal system changing earlier than the scheduled deadline of 2047 is another cause of angst among family offices, according to IQ-EQ Group Executive Chairman Serge Kranczenblum.

The city operates a legal system derived from British common law under the One Country, Two Systems principle. A failed attempt to introduce extradition

laws that would expose citizens to prosecution in mainland China sparked the protests and the imposition of colonial-era emergency powers have also shaken investor confidence.

"If you're an investor, even a non-local one with Hong Kong structures as a family office, how can you base your future on a system that may not be there as long as you thought it would be?" Kranczenblum said. "This is a very big problem. Investors, and families, care about stability."

The instability may already be having an impact, with Goldman Sachs Group Inc. estimating

that there has been an outflow of Hong Kong dollar deposits of between \$3 billion to \$4 billion to Singapore.

"We've seen some of our Hong Kong-based managed clients that have said they want to move their assets from Hong Kong-based banks to Singapore-based banks," said Steve Knabl, chief operating officer of Swiss-Asia Financial Services Pte, whose platform hosts hedge funds and wealth managers. "So the move is clearly there, especially from private clients."

While many hedge funds are seeking advice from lawyers, accountants and migration agents,

few are actually moving, and Knabl said he didn't expect an overnight shift in staff from Hong Kong to Singapore.

Eurekahedge Pte data show assets under management by Hong Kong hedge funds reached a record high \$92.1 billion in September.

This is partly because the months-long process needed to get a license in Singapore can be a deterrent to moving. Hong Kong also remains a better gateway for hedge funds seeking to profit from mainland China without the downsides of living there.

BLOOMBERG

Apple pulls app that tracks HK police activity

VLAD SAVOV
& MARK GURMAN

APPL Inc. has pulled the plug on an app that shows police activity in Hong Kong, reversing course yet again as violent pro-democracy protests wrack the city.

The U.S. company said yesterday it's now decided to remove HKmap.live from its App Store after consulting with local authorities, because it could endanger law enforcement and city residents. That marks a re-

turn to its original position, where it initially rejected the app. After an outcry, the iPhone maker allowed it to run for a few days before the decision. The see-sawing is unusual for Apple, which exercises rigid control over its app store, the foundation of its global iPhone ecosystem.

Apple joins other foreign companies struggling to navigate the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong as protests that began in June show no sign of abating. The issue has become

a red line for those doing business in China, most recently drawing the National Basketball Association into a firestorm over a tweet that's caused partners to stop doing business with the league and state television to halt airing its games. A growing number of American giants, including Activision Blizzard Inc., find themselves embroiled in controversies over the extent to which their actions are influenced by economic considerations in a vast Chinese market.

"Many concerned customers in Hong Kong have contacted us about this app and we immediately began investigating it," Apple said in a statement. "The app displays police locations and we have verified with the Hong Kong Cybersecurity and Technology Crime Bureau that the app has been used to target and ambush police, threaten public safety, and criminals have used it to victimize residents in areas where they know there is no law enforcement. This app violates

our guidelines and local laws, and we have removed it from the App Store."

Apple's reversal came after the Chinese Communist Party's flagship newspaper criticized Apple for letting the software through. Protesters in the city used HKmap.live to monitor police whereabouts and it facilitated illegal activities, the People's Daily said in a commentary late Tuesday. But the app's developers rejected that view.

"We disagree with Apple's claim that our app

endangered anyone" in Hong Kong, the developer said in a statement.

Greater China, including Hong Kong and Taiwan, is Apple's largest market after its own home country. The iPhone maker is also one of the most visible symbols of corporate America in the world's No. 2 economy. Apple recently pulled the Taiwan flag emoji from some iPhones, underscoring the difficult balance the company must strike in supporting free speech while appeasing China. Beijing has long been sensitive to how foreign companies portray an island it considers part of its territory. **BLOOMBERG**

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

HADI AZMI

1MDB TRIAL UNCOVERS NETWORK OF CONSPIRACY

THE 1MDB trial of former Malaysian leader Najib Razak has shed light on the staggering scope of the scandal, with testimony detailing alleged involvement by a Chinese state-owned entity and some of the world's richest people. Najib's first trial may conclude as soon as November when the judge decides whether to call on the defense or move on to delivering a verdict.

The current case involves 25 charges, including accusations Najib received bribes linked to state support for \$3 billion of 1MDB debt sales and allegations he accepted gratuity involving a \$1 billion joint venture with PetroSaudi International Ltd. His lawyers have argued he was misled by others, including fugitive financier Jho Low. Najib has pleaded not guilty to all 42 charges he faces for his alleged role in 1MDB, while Low has denied any wrongdoing.

In the latest development, it was alleged that Bernard Arnault, chairman of LVMH Moët Hennessey Louis Vuitton, was approached by Jho Low to join 1MDB's board of advisers, witness Shahrol testified. Shahrol then met with the billionaire in Paris to give him a letter of appointment signed by Najib, and Arnault verbally agreed at the time, he said.

Arnault had been listed as an adviser on 1MDB's website, along with Citic Group Chairman Chang Zhenming and Mubadala Development Company CEO Khaldoon Khalifa Al Mubarak.

"From my observation Jho Low has a direct personal connection



Former Malaysian leader Najib Razak leaves court in Kuala Lumpur

with these people," Shahrol said in court.

"Throughout the years, the method used by the perpetrators has been refined and tightened up," leaving little room for discussion, Shahrol testified. The fund raised \$3 billion in 2013 to fund its half of a \$6 billion joint venture with Aabar Investment PJS Ltd. to develop TRX City Sdn., while Aabar didn't contribute its part of the

fund, he said. TRX has previously said it received none of the funds.

Shahrol said Jho Low sought to rush the process through and told him that the joint venture would have a big impact on Malaysia's 2014 general election, creating the perception that the fund-raising was linked to the polls.

In July 2012, 1MDB planned to sell a more than \$2.22 billion stake in a unit operating in Venezue-

la after the U.S. sanctioned the South American country, Shahrol said. The stake was sold to Bridge Partners International Investment Ltd. which paid 1MDB using \$2.32 billion of promissory notes. 1MDB received none of the funds as the promissory notes were used to buy units in Bridge Global Absolute Return Fund as managed by Brazen Sky Ltd., he said.

"Jho Low has no authority but

he was given a mandate by Najib to arrange the plan from behind 1MDB," Shahrol said. "I'm confident and believe that without the involvement and consent from Najib definitely none of this would have happened."

Prosecutors presented Shahrol with all the documents linked to his testimony and asked if the instructions contained in them could have proceeded without Najib's signature. Each time, he answered no.

Shahrol said 1MDB transferred funds to Aabar soon after two bond sales arranged by Goldman Sachs. 1MDB received \$907.5 million on May 22, 2012, part of proceeds from its \$1.75 billion debt offer meant to fund the purchase of Tanjong Energy Holdings Sdn., only to transfer \$576.9 million to Aabar as "security deposit" that same day, he testified.

That year, 1MDB received \$1.64 billion on Oct. 19 from proceeds of another \$1.75 billion of notes sold to finance the acquisition of a power producer from Genting Power Holdings Ltd. The state fund transferred \$692.2 million to Genting for the purchase, and \$790.4 million to Aabar again as "security deposit," Shahrol said.

He said the payments to Aabar was made in "good faith" based on documentations presented to him by former Goldman Sachs banker Tim Leissner, 1MDB's ex-general counsel Jasmine Loo and former 1MDB director Terence Geh. It was only after an investigation into 1MDB that he found out that the payments were arranged by Jho Low to bring the funds into an account managed by him, Shahrol said. **BLOOMBERG**

Japan's 7-Eleven operator cutting 3,000 jobs, closing stores

SEVEN & i Holdings Co. said it will close 1,000 unprofitable 7-Elevens and eliminate 3,000 jobs from its other units as the Japanese retailer continues its structural reform and cuts back on 24-hour operations.

The convenience chain said it will implement new policies for its franchisees, such as reducing monthly fees. Additionally, it will close five Seibu and Sogo department stores, and is considering shuttering 33 Ito-Yokado general-merchandise shops.

The company's 7-Eleven Japan business will take a 10 billion yen (\$93 million) charge due to the new incentives for the franchisees, Chief Executive Officer Ryuchi Isaka said in Tokyo while announcing the company's second-quarter results. Seven & i said a new mid-term plan will be announced next April.

Seven & i, the largest convenience store operator in Japan, has been pressured in a saturated domestic market, where growth has been limited to taking share from competitors. It's also been under fire in the past year for enforcing a 24-hour operation on its franchisees amid a labor crunch in Japan. It is now testing stores with reduced hours.

The staff reductions will apply to Ito-Yokado, where 1,700 positions will be cut, and Sogo and Seibu, which will see 1,300 job losses. Those stores have dragged on the company's more profitable convenience store operation. Although known for its 7-Elevens that dot Japan and the globe, the company's other operations span multiple business areas, from Denny's Japan restaurants to its own bank.

JP Morgan analyst Dairo Murata said the news will

likely be taken negatively, as the 7-Eleven charge was a surprise. But in the long run, it could bear some fruit. "They'll have their new mid-term plan announcement next April, so this structural reform is probably an effort to be able to grow earnings for that period," he said.

While Seven & i said it is examining the impact of the measures on earnings, it kept its operating profit forecast for the current fiscal year the same at 420 billion yen, in line with estimates.

In recent months, Seven & i has also been embroiled in negative publicity in Japan as its digital payment system 7 Pay was hacked and money from customers taken within days of its launch in July. The company shut down the service last month. The company said yesterday the executive in charge of the payment system will retire. **MDT/BLOOMBERG**



Tsai Ing-wen says Hong Kong unrest shows China 'failure'

MIAOJUNG LIN

TAIWAN'S president said unrest in Hong Kong showed Beijing's "failure" in governing the city and vowed to defend her island's sovereignty.

President Tsai Ing-wen vowed to fight for Taiwan's survival in her National Day address yesterday, saying it faced "unprecedented change" in the world. She pointed to Beijing's rule over Hong Kong, which has seen months of violent protests opposing China's grip, as impetus to reject the "one country, two systems" principle through which it governs the financial hub - and which she said China wants to impose on Taiwan.

Taiwan would have "no space to survive once accepting 'one country, two systems,'" she said. "Rejecting 'one country, two systems' is the biggest consensus among the 23 million people of Taiwan regardless of party affiliation or position."

Coming three months before Taiwanese voters go to the polls, the neighboring chaos is just one of the battles China is fighting -



along with halted broadcasts of some U.S. National Basketball Association games and a protracted trade war with President Donald Trump - that could boost Tsai's hopes of re-election in January.

She currently has a more than 13 percentage-point lead over her main rival, popular Kaoshiung City mayor Han Kuo-yu of the China-friendly opposition Kuo-

mintang party, according to a poll published in the Apple Daily newspaper Tuesday.

In contrast to last week's massive National Day celebrations in the mainland, which focused on military bombast and featured President Xi Jinping driving through the streets of Beijing greeting troops, Taiwan's was lower-key and highlighted immigration - in-

cluding letting dozens of new immigrants lead the singing of the national anthem.

"When democracy is under threat, we need to stand up to guard it. Being a president, I need to guard sovereignty, to maintain Taiwan's survival," Tsai said yesterday.

While the People's Republic has never controlled Taiwan, it claims

the separately ruled island as part of its territory, a claim Tsai's Democratic Progressive Party rejects.

Tsai, a longtime China critic, faces challenges in her closely-watched bid for re-election, including Beijing's efforts to isolate Taipei diplomatically. Its success in persuading two of Taiwan's diplomatic allies to switch recognition to China in the last month - the Solomon Islands and Kiribati - leaves Tsai with just 15 such partners worldwide.

But it also threatens to backfire as Taiwan's election draws closer, with U.S. and Australian concerns about China's growing footprint in the Pacific strengthening Tsai's argument that Beijing poses a threat to both Taiwan and regional order.

The U.S. supports Taipei militarily, a key source of tension between Washington and Beijing. It made a show of support for Tsai yesterday as Senator Ted Cruz, a Texas Republican, attended the National Day celebrations in Taipei. He is the first U.S. senator to attend such a celebration in 35 years, according to statement from Taiwan's foreign affairs ministry.

Senator Cory Gardner, a Colorado Republican, and Taiwanese Foreign Minister Joseph Wu also wrote an article Tuesday in the Hill newspaper, calling for strengthening Taiwan-U.S. relations to counter rising Chinese influence in the Pacific region. **BLOOMBERG**

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A man hands out national flags to others arriving for the NBA preseason game to be held at the Mercedes Benz Arena in Shanghai yesterday

MEDIA EVENTS CANCELED FOR NBA PRESEASON GAME

TIM REYNOLDS

IN response to the NBA defending Daryl Morey's freedom of speech, Chinese officials took it away from the Los Angeles Lakers and Brooklyn Nets.

All of the usual media sessions surrounding the Lakers-Nets preseason game in Shanghai yesterday — including a scheduled news conference from NBA Commissioner Adam Silver and post-game news conferences with the teams — have been canceled. It's the latest salvo in the rift between the league and China stemming from a since-deleted tweet posted last week by Morey, the general manager of the Houston Rockets.

"There will be no media availabilities for tonight's game between the Brooklyn Nets and Los Angeles Lakers," the NBA said in a statement yesterday, released a few hours before the game.

The game was proceeding as scheduled. Fans arriving at the arena to watch — many of them donning NBA jerseys — were handed small Chinese flags to carry with them inside, and at least one person carried a sign critical of Silver.

"I understand that there are consequences from that exercise of, in essence, his freedom of speech," Silver said at a news conference in Tokyo earlier this week. "We will have to live with those consequences."

And this move was one of those consequences.

Morey's tweet expressed support for anti-government protesters in Hong Kong, and sparked fallout that has completely over-

shadowed the NBA's annual trip to China — which typically takes on a celebratory tone.

Not this year. Most events in advance of the game, such as NBA

Morey's tweet expressed support for anti-government protesters in Hong Kong, and sparked fallout that has completely overshadowed the NBA's annual trip to China

Cares events to benefit educational causes and the Special Olympics, were called off, as was a "fan night" where Lakers and Nets players were to interact directly

with some Chinese ticketholders. Signage in Shanghai to promote the game — huge photos of LeBron James, Anthony Davis, Kyrie Irving and other players — was ripped down, and mentions of the game were scrubbed from the arena website.

All that comes as many Chinese corporations suspended their business ties to the NBA. Chinese state broadcaster CCTV said it was not going to show the Lakers-Nets games on yesterday or in Shenzhen tomorrow, and NBA broadcast partner Tencent also said it was changing its coverage plans for the league.

Silver said earlier this week that Rockets great Yao Ming, a Basketball Hall of Famer and now the president of the Chinese Basketball Association — which has also suspended its ties with Houston as part of the Morey tweet fallout — is angry as well.

"I'm not sure he quite accepts

sort of how we are operating our business right now, and again, I accept that we have a difference of opinion," Silver said. "I also think that as part of our core values, tolerance is one of those as well. I think tolerance for differing societies' approaches, tolerance for differing points of view and the ability to listen. Certainly I don't come here, either as the commissioner of the NBA or as an American, to tell others how they should run their governments."

In the U.S., there was governmental reaction as well leading up to the game.

On Wednesday in Washington, a bipartisan group of lawmakers — including the rare alignment of Republican Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas and Democratic Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York — sent a letter to Silver saying the NBA should show the "courage and integrity" to stand up to the Chinese government. They asked the NBA to, among other things, suspend activities in China until what they called the selective treatment against the Rockets ends.

"You have more power to take a stand than most of the Chinese government's targets and should have the courage and integrity to use it," the lawmakers told Silver.

The Rockets were extremely popular in China, largely because of Yao. But the team's merchandise has been taken off e-commerce sites and out of stores selling NBA apparel in the country, murals featuring the team's stars and logo were painted over and even the Chinese consulate office in Houston expressed major displeasure with Morey and the Rockets.

Morey has been silent on the matter since a tweet Sunday where he attempted to make some sort of amends with the Chinese.

"I have always appreciated the significant support our Chinese fans and sponsors have provided and I would hope that those who are upset will know that offending or misunderstanding them was not my intention," he wrote Sunday. "My tweets are my own and in no way represent the Rockets or the NBA."

Tomorrow's game between the Lakers and Nets in Shenzhen also remains on as scheduled. **AP**

Gov't complains about US visa restrictions

CHINA has accused the U.S. of harassing Chinese scholars, students, entrepreneurs and scientists, in part through the delay, denial or revocation of visas.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said the actions have been

taken "for some time."

"This has thwarted normal people-to-people exchange between China and the U.S. and infringed upon the safety and lawful rights and interests of the Chinese personnel involved," Geng said at a daily news briefing on Wednesday.

His complaint came as China demanded Washington lift restrictions on sales of U.S. technology to a group of Chinese companies, calling it interference in the country's affairs. American officials say those companies provide technology used to repress Muslim minorities in

China's northwestern region of Xinjiang.

The sanctions announced Monday restrict sales of U.S. technology to a group of Chinese companies working on facial recognition, artificial intelligence and other advanced products.

Those technologies are part of the ruling Communist Party's industry development plans.

China, for its part, is believed to be tightening restrictions on foreigners linked to human rights groups and other organizations it consi-

ders subversive.

The ruling party has long distrusted such individuals, but ongoing violent anti-government demonstrations in Hong Kong are believed to have fed such suspicions. Beijing has accused foreign governments and organizations of encouraging the demonstrations in a bid to smear China's reputation and constrain its development. **AP**

North Korea threatens to resume nuke, long-range missile tests

HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

NORTH Korea threatened again yesterday to resume nuclear and long-range missile tests, accusing the U.S. of having instigated some members of the U.N. Security Council to condemn its recent weapons tests.

The warning by Pyongyang's Foreign Ministry followed the weekend breakdown of North Korea-U.S. nuclear negotiations in Sweden, the first such talks between the countries in more than seven months. North Korea said the talks collapsed because the U.S. didn't have any new proposals, and whether it maintains a self-imposed moratorium on major weapons tests was up to Washington.

Some observers say North Korea's threat may be a tactic to pressure the U.S. into making concessions as a restart of nuclear and long-range missile tests would likely derail negotiations, deepen its international isolation and further dim prospects for rebuilding its moribund economy.

A ministry statement took issue with condemnation Tuesday by the European members of the U.N. Security Council of North Korea's recent ballistic missile and other weapons tests, including its first underwater-launched missile



AP PHOTO

launch in three years on Oct. 2. North Korea said those tests were of the self-defense nature.

North Korea also accused the U.S. of being behind the European condemnation of its weapons tests after having "begged for working-level North Korea-

-U.S. talks" in Sweden.

On Tuesday, the U.N. council discussed the North's latest underwater-launched missile test and its European members urged Pyongyang to abandon all weapons of mass destruction and engage in "meaningful negotiations"

with the U.S. The council meeting was called by France, Germany and the United Kingdom.

Council members Belgium and Poland joined in supporting the statement along with Estonia, which will join the council in January.

The North Korean statement said the condemnation is particularly a "grave provocation to us" because the Security Council didn't act on the Oct. 2 U.S. test of an unarmed Minuteman 3 intercontinental ballistic missile, which it said was apparently designed to apply pressure on North Korea. A U.S. Air Force Global Strike Command statement said that such tests demonstrate the capability of the intercontinental ballistic missile system and are not a response to world events or regional tensions.

North Korea said it can make a response "on the same level" but is refraining from doing that because it's still unnecessary or premature to do so.

But the statement said that "our patience has a limit" and the European condemnation is pushing North Korea to reconsider whether to maintain the disarmament steps it has taken to build confidence with the U.S.

North Korea last year suspended nuclear and long-range missile tests, partially dismantled its long-range rocket test site and dismantled its only known underground nuclear testing site.

U.S.-led diplomacy aimed at stripping North Korea of its nuclear program had been stalemated since the second summit between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Vietnam in February ended without any agreement. That summit fell apart because of Trump's rejection of Kim's demands for major sanctions relief in return for a limited denuclearization step. AP

Amnesty International urges Malaysia to end death penalty

AMNESTY International urged Malaysia's government yesterday to keep its promise to abolish the death penalty, saying unfair trials and the use of harsh treatment to obtain confessions put people at risk of execution.

The rights group released details of nearly two years of research on 150 cases as well as interviews with prisoners' families, lawyers and embassy officials in a report that it said showed the use of the death penalty was "fatally flawed."

Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's government promised shortly after taking power in May 2018 to scrap capital punishment, which mandates hanging as punishment for a wide range of crimes including murder, drug trafficking, treason, kidnapping and acts of terror.

But the government



AP PHOTO

Shamini Darshni Kalimuthu, executive director of Amnesty International Malaysia

backtracked after public objection. Parliament, which resumed meeting this week, will instead remove mandatory death penalties for some offenses and give courts discretion in imposing the sentence.

The report said 73% of

the 1,281 people on death row as of February were convicted of drug offenses, including 568 foreigners from 43 countries and many poor members of ethnic minorities.

It said some prisoners were tortured and beaten

to make them confess. In one case, a Malaysian man detained in 2005 for possessing drugs and later sentenced to death had his finger broken by police, who also threatened to beat up his girlfriend, it said.

Those who are poor of-

ten go without legal assistance until they are brought to court, it said. Some were asked to sign documents in the Malay language that were not translated for them, according to the report.

The group said the pardon process was also not transparent, with no clear criteria and access to pro-bono legal services controlled by prison officials. It said half of the foreigners on death row didn't seek pardons.

"Our research found a pattern of unfair trials and secretive hangings that itself spoke volumes. From allegations of torture and other ill-treatment to an opaque pardons process, it's clear the death penalty is a stain on Malaysia's criminal justice system," Amnesty Malaysia director Sharmini Darshni Kalimuthu said.

The group said its requests to meet Malaysian

authorities including the police and officials in the attorney-general's office for more details were rejected or unanswered.

It said government sources indicated 469 people had been executed since Malaysia's independence from Britain in 1957, half of them for drug trafficking.

The death penalty is currently retained for nearly three dozen offenses. Amnesty International urged Malaysia to move toward scrapping capital punishment by repealing mandatory death sentences for all crimes and maintaining a moratorium on executions until then.

Government officials couldn't immediately be reached for comment.

Many Asian countries including China, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam impose capital punishment. AP

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Ukraine president: 'No blackmail' in conversation with Trump

YURAS KARMANAU, KYIV

UKRAINE'S president insisted yesterday that he faced "no blackmail" from President Donald Trump in their phone call that helped spark an impeachment inquiry, distancing himself from the U.S. political drama and trying to claw back his own credibility.

Volodymyr Zelenskiy said for the first time that his country will "happily" investigate the conspiracy theory pushed by Trump that it was Ukrainians, not Russians, who interfered in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. And he encouraged U.S. and Ukrainian prosecutors to discuss investigating a gas company linked to the son of Trump's Democratic rival Joe Biden.

But Zelenskiy insisted he's not Trump's puppet and his moves appeared to be an attempt to put an end to questions dogging the Ukrainian president since details of his July 25 call with Trump emerged. He said U.S. officials have presented zero evidence of Ukraine's interference in 2016, but it's in his country's interests to find out once and for all what happened.

In an all-day "media marathon" held in a Kyiv food court, Ukraine's president played down suggestions that Trump pressured him in exchange for U.S. military aid to help Ukraine battle Russian-backed separatists. Congressional Democrats believe Trump was holding up the aid to use as leverage to pressure Ukraine and advance his domestic political interests.

Responding to questions from The Associated Press, Zelenskiy said he only learned after their phone call that the U.S. had blo-

AP PHOTO



cked hundreds of millions of dollars in military aid to Ukraine.

"There was no blackmail," he said.

"We are not servants. We are an independent country."

Zelenskiy invited U.S. and Ukrainian prosecutors to cooperate on an eventual investigation into the Bidens, but insisted he would not interfere.

"I don't want to be pulled into this because I understand that my words could impact the elections of the American people," he said.

Trump has said the United States has an "absolute right" to ask foreign leaders to investigate corruption cases, though no one has produced evidence of criminal wrongdoing by the former U.S. vice president or his son.

Trump also has pushed a lon-

g-discredited theory about Ukrainian interference in support of the Democrats in 2016, an attempt to cast doubt on Russia's role in the 2016 hacking of the Democratic National Committee. The theory contends, without evidence, that the DNC hack was based on fabricated computer records and designed to cast blame

Zelenskiy insisted he's not Trump's puppet

on Russia but was initiated from Ukraine.

Zelenskiy said yesterday that Ukraine would investigate the theory because otherwise we "can't say yes or no" as to whether

there was any such interference.

During his July 25 call with Zelenskiy, Trump mentioned CrowdStrike, a security firm hired by the DNC that detected the hack. CrowdStrike has also worked for the Republicans. Trump has claimed the company was based in Ukraine, but it is based in the U.S. and company co-founder Dmitri Alpeyev is a Russian-born U.S. citizen.

The July call is central to the impeachment inquiry, and embarrassed Zelenskiy because it showed him as eager to please Trump and critical of European partners whose support he needs to strengthen Ukraine's economy and to end the conflict with Russia.

Zelenskiy said it was "wrong"

of the White House to publish a rough transcript of the call — and said he will not publish the Ukrainian transcript. He said he "didn't even check" whether the Ukrainian transcript of the July call is the same as that of the White House, but says "I think they match."

Zelenskiy appears to be playing to both U.S. political camps to ensure Ukraine has continued support no matter who wins the presidential election next year.

Zelenskiy said he thought the call would lead to an in-person meeting with Trump, and wanted the American leader to come to Ukraine. Zelenskiy said the "key question" for him was to try to persuade the White House to "change its rhetoric" about Ukraine as a corrupt and untrustworthy country.

Trump said the military aid was frozen because of concerns about corruption in Ukraine, but the move prompted congressional outcry and the money was released in September.

Asked what Ukraine did to persuade the U.S. to release the aid, Zelenskiy said: "We have many diplomatic contacts. And in case we need to find a solution to questions of this level, questions about our country's security, we use all our powerful possibilities." He didn't elaborate.

A TV and film comedian, Zelenskiy overwhelmingly won the presidency in April on promises to fight corruption and end the five-year conflict with Moscow-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine. He's treading carefully to ensure continued support from the U.S. while trying to make peace with powerful neighbor Russia.

Most of the questions at yesterday's unusual media event related to the Russia conflict or Ukraine's economic troubles.

Zelenskiy also joked about Trump's Twitter missives, saying he doesn't expect a change in U.S.-Ukrainian relations in the future, "but if there is, we'll learn about it on Twitter." **AP**

ROMANIA

Gov't collapses after losing confidence vote

IRINA VILCU
& ANDRA TIMU

ROMANIA lost a third prime minister in as many years as the government was ousted in a no-confidence motion.

Parliament voted to remove Viorica Dancila and her minority cabinet, which lost its coalition partner in August and has struggled to steady the Black Sea na-

tion's finances as the budget deficit tests European Union limits.

With a transitional government now likely until new elections can be held next year, investors didn't fret much, with the leu losing 0.1% against the euro.

Eastern Europe is no stranger to political turmoil. Only Italy gets close to the number of government heads who've come

and gone since the region jettisoned communism almost three decades ago. Romania is on now course for its 17th - more than any other EU member.

"Romania's nightmare is now over and we're now embarking on a new period of reconstruction, which won't be easy," Ludovic Orban, leader of the opposition Liberal Party, told reporters in Bucharest

after the vote.

The party will outline its strategy on Friday before mandatory consultations with President Klaus Iohannis, who must designate the next prime minister.

Yesterday's result paves the way for the Liberals to lead a new ruling alliance and comes just a month before presidential elections that polls suggest will hand

Dancila another defeat and incumbent Iohannis a second term. Even so, the administration that takes over until elections can be held is likely to be shaky.

"Expect chaos, noise and bad timing in terms of who wants which portfolios," said Bucharest-based political consultant Radu Magdin, who's worked in the past with the Social Democrats. A snap parliamentary

election - which would be Romania's first since the fall of communism - can't take place in the final six months of a presidential term, with Iohannis's ending in December.

Iohannis said he'll check whether parties support the idea of an early vote. In the meantime, he'll look for a prime minister to steady the ship.

"I will propose a premier with a clear-cut mandate: an efficient government until the next parliamentary elections, regardless of when they can be held," he said. **BLOOMBERG**

TV canal macau

13:00	TDM News (Repetição)
13:30	Telejornal RTPi (Diferido)
15:00	Água de Mar
15:30	Zig Zag
15:30	Os Ursos Boonie e o Fantástico Outono
16:00	Quem Quer Ser Milionário
16:55	Geoparque Açores - Fim
17:50	Amor Maior (Repetição)
18:35	Semana Internacional (Repetição)
19:10	Resumo Liga dos Campeões 2019/2020
19:30	Ouro Verde Sr.1
20:30	Telejornal
21:15	TDM Talk Show
21:50	Livros com João Guedes
22:00	Todas as Palavras
22:25	Amor Maior
23:15	TDM News
23:50	Justiça de Chicago
00:55	Liga Europa: PSV Eindhoven - Sporting (Directo)
03:00	Liga Europa: Porto - Young Boys (Directo)
05:00	RTPi Directo

Offbeat

POLICE: HIGH SCHOOL COACH LIFTED \$40 FROM PLAYER'S WALLET

AP PHOTO



A New Mexico football coach has been fired and faces criminal charges after authorities said a student used a cellphone video to capture the coach on video taking money from a player's wallet.

State Police arrested Miyamura High School coach John D. Roanhaus (pictured) last week following a review of the footage showing Roanhaus going into the school's locker room and taking \$40 from the wallet, court documents said.

According to an arrest warrant, a police officer was contacted by a student's mother who showed the officer the cellphone video. The video showed Roanhaus walking into the school's locker area, taking two \$20 bills from a black wallet and stuffing the money in his sock. Officer Nathaniel Renteria wrote in the arrest warrant.

Roanhaus had been the head football coach at the high school in the small, New Mexico western city of Gallup since 2018. He is the youngest son of New Mexico Hall of Fame coach Eric Roanhaus, who retired in 2016 as head football coach at Clovis High School after recording 343 wins, the most in state history.

The mother told Renteria it wasn't the first time that players had experienced thefts in the locker room.

Gallup-McKinley County Schools Superintendent Mike Hyatt told the Gallup Independent newspaper that Roanhaus was fired.

Roanhaus, 42, was charged with larceny and non-residential burglary and ordered held on \$2,000 bail. Roanhaus did not immediately respond to a telephone message left Wednesday seeking comment.

No attorney was listed for Roanhaus and he has not been assigned a public defender, court records said. A preliminary court hearing on the case was scheduled for Wednesday.

Miyamura High School's football team has a 1-6 record this season after a 55-14 loss last Friday.

cinema

CINETEATRO

10 - 16 Oct



JOKER

ROOM 1

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

Director: Todd Phillips

Starring: Joaquin Phoenix, Robert De Niro, Zazie Beetz

Language: English

Duration: 122min



GEMINI MAN

ROOM 2

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

Director: Ang Lee

Starring: Mary Elizabeth Winstead, Will Smith, Clive Owen

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 117min



47 METERS DOWN: UNCAGED

ROOM 3

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

Director: Johannes Roberts

Starring: Sophie Nélisse, Corinne Foxx, Brianne Tju

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 90min

this day in history



1976 CHINA'S 'GANG OF FOUR' ARRESTED

The new chairman of China's Communist Party, Hua Guofeng, has ordered the arrest of four leading radicals in Peking.

It is a sign that China is changing political direction following the death last month of Chairman Mao Zedong.

The so-called Gang of Four is led by Chairman Mao's widow Jian Qing, and includes Wang Hongwen, Yao Wenyuan, and Zhang Chunqiao.

They were active proponents of the Cultural Revolution instigated ten years ago by Chairman Mao.

This was a political and ideological campaign aimed at reviving revolutionary fervour and resulted in enormous social, economic and political upheaval.

Ideological cleansing began with attacks by young Red Guards on so-called "intellectuals" to remove "bourgeois" influences. It is believed millions were forced into manual labour, and tens of thousands were executed.

Mr Zhang rose up the ranks during the first year of the Cultural Revolution in Shanghai and was until recently chief political commissar of the armed forces.

Mr Wang had less power but was regarded a wonderboy - he rose to number three in the party in 1973 while still only in his late thirties, relatively young by Chinese standards.

Mr Yao, also a member of the Politburo standing committee, is regarded as dedicated, if not fanatical, in his belief in Maoist ideals of social development.

Jian Qing, formerly an actress, became Chairman Mao's third wife in 1939. She is regarded as a radical and active proponent of Maoist principles but in the years before his death, had led an independent life from her husband.

News of the arrests have not been confirmed by China's officials but it is believed the four were attempting a coup in the wake of the death of Chairman Mao on 9 September.

Some reports say Jian Qing was in the process of forging Chairman Mao's will placing her as Mao's successor, when she and her associates were surrounded by Hua Guofeng's personal bodyguards and placed under house arrest.

They are being questioned about their campaign against former prime minister Zhou Enlai, who died in January.

Commentators say the arrests might lead to a liberalisation of foreign, cultural and economic policy - the Times newspaper editorial calls this latest move "the most potent sign of a new political direction" following 27 years of Maoist dogma.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The Gang of Four were kept under house arrest and, following a propaganda campaign against them, were expelled from the Communist Party in July 1977.

By the end of 1978 reformist Deng Xiaoping had effectively wrested power from Hua Guofeng - although he did not assume the title of premier of China and chair of the CCP until 1982.

On 20 November 1980 all members of the Gang of Four were put on trial charged with attempting to overthrow the government and establish a hardline Communist dictatorship.

They were sentenced to death, later commuted to long-term imprisonment. After a period of political indoctrination Jian Qing was released in 1991 and died soon after - some reports say she committed suicide.

Wang Hongwen died in 1992, Zhang Chunqiao died in April 2005 and Yao Wenyuan died in December 2005.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Even if it feels like an effort, it is an effort worth making. Sometimes you have to put your personal goals aside and put other people first. That way, you'll show them that they are important.

TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20
Today it will be easy for you to gain a deep understanding of the problems that have been plaguing you, if you have the courage to ask a few sensitive questions. Try to cut to the chase.

GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21
If it's not clear what someone wants from you right now, why should you waste your time guessing? Ask them! Going to the source of the confusion is almost always the best way to find clarity.

CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Be patient with the folks who just can't understand what you are saying. They have much too much on their mind and lack the focus you have. The good news is that you will make great strides today.

LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Other people are relying on you to exhibit your characteristic good sense and practicality - so if you suddenly start acting on whims, you will be setting them on edge.

VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Buck up, because this is the beginning of a new phase for you, in which your outlook is much more positive. Things suddenly feel more possible than ever.

LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Any limits you are pushing up against right now are completely self-imposed, so quit feeling frustrated and start feeling empowered! Step out of these restrictions and do whatever you want to do today.

SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Let forgiveness and charity take over today - the peaceful resolution of a situation may require you to take the high road (yet again). You may not realize it, but you are a role model to many other people.

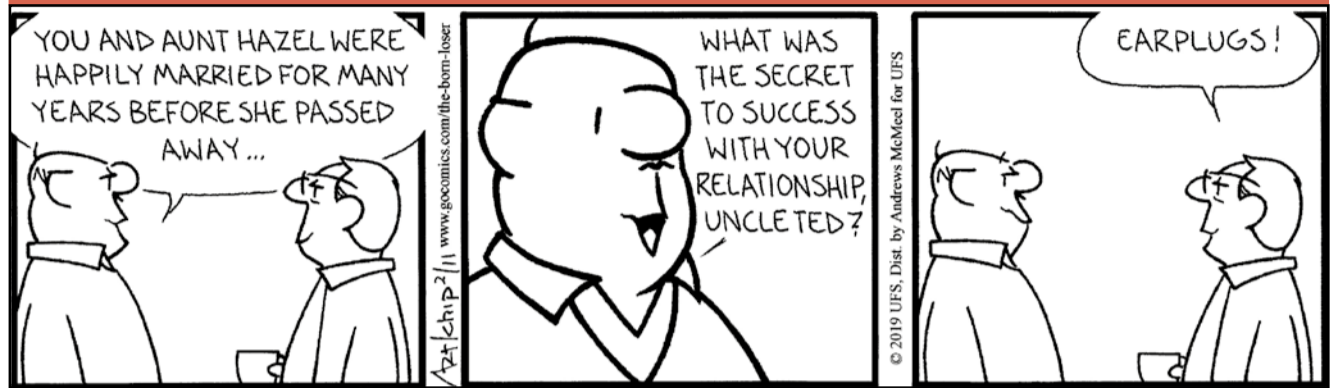
SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21
There may be a lot of noise and excitement around you today, but you will be all too happy to stay outside of the activity. Your energy will flourish in quieter surroundings, with few (if any) people around you.

CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19
It may be extremely tempting to let other people take the reins today and just follow along - after all, it is easier to just go where you are told to go and do what you are told to do.

AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18
You won't do well today if you are stuck into a situation full of limitations and regulations. Restriction never looks good on you, so why even bother trying it on? Get out...

PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Your generosity is coming out in full force, and you will feel like you have time for everyone's requests. In fact, you will probably help out a whole slew of folks before you even get to your lunch break!

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

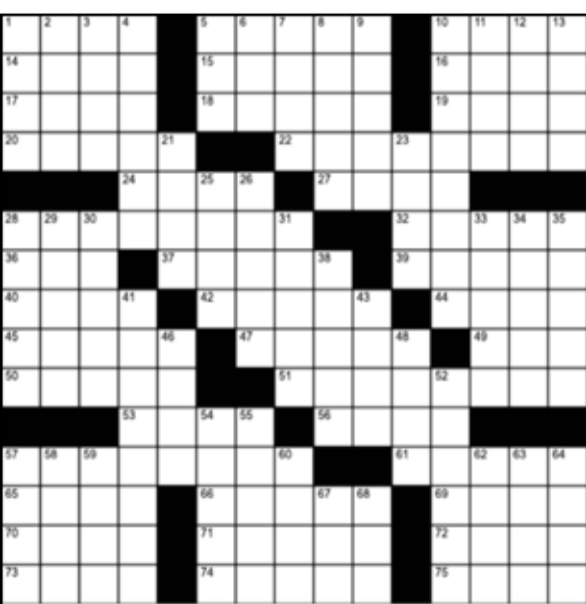
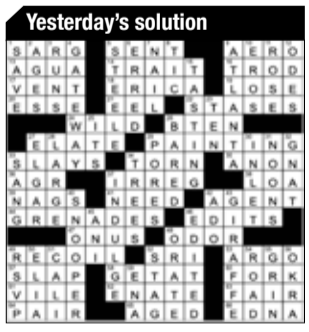
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	27	35	cloudy
Harbin	20	25	thundershower
Tianjin	27	35	thundershower
Urumqi	21	28	shower
Xi'an	24	35	cloudy
Lhasa	11	24	shower
Chengdu	24	34	shower
Chongqing	26	34	cloudy
Kunming	18	24	shower
Nanjing	29	36	cloudy
Shanghai	29	36	cloudy
Wuhan	28	37	clear
Hangzhou	28	38	cloudy
Taipei	26	30	overcast
Guangzhou	26	35	thundershower
Hong Kong	28	33	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	17	22	moderate rain
Frankfurt	21	33	clear
Paris	22	32	clear
London	16	24	clear
New York	18	27	clear

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Publisher Adolph; 5- Native Israeli; 10- Public walk; 14- Get ready; 15- Fool; 16- S-shaped molding; 17- Bull; 18- ___ and Sensibility; 19- Impulse to act; 20- Rub vigorously; 22- Feudal lord; 24- Eastern European; 27- Agitated state; 28- Revoked; 32- Jewish scholar; 36- ___ little teapot...; 37- Vietnam's capital; 39- Pale reddish purple; 40- Fancy-schmancy; 42- Martini's partner; 44- Centrepiece of the human face; 45- Actor Hawke; 47- Stiller's partner; 49- Plop preceder; 50- Cool; 51- Humidity; 53- "Power Lunch" network; 56- What you do to a joint, prior to a heist; 57- Strong feeling of happiness; 61- ___ beaver; 65- Castaway's home; 66- Ibuprofen brand; 69- All-night bash; 70- ___-do-well; 71- Turns away; 72- Fencing sword; 73- Whirlpool; 74- Goofed; 75- Big name in PCs;

DOWN: 1- Goes (for); 2- Gator's cousin; 3- German Mister; 4- One's husband or wife; 5- Family girl; 6- Fruit drink; 7- Storage places; 8- Thorny flowers; 9- Dined at home; 10- Large hill; 11- Farming prefix; 12- Kid's building block; 13- Impolite look; 21- Dullsville; 23- Female child; 25- Apple application, once; 26- Malice; 28- Age; 29- Chew the scenery; 30- Turkish title; 31- Gave medicine to; 33- British guy; 34- Foundations; 35- Champagne buckets; 38- Sir ___ Newton was an English mathematician; 41- Place for incubating eggs; 43- ___ la Douce; 46- Taboo; 48- Church niche; 52- Got close to; 54- Courageous; 55- Apple juice; 57- German article; 58- Secondhand; 59- Answered a charge; 60- State firmly; 62- Stare open-mouthed; 63- First name in stunts; 64- Film spool; 67- Pique condition?; 68- Timothy Leary stash;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

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- Fire department 28 572 222
- PJ (Open line) 993
- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
- Customs 28 559 944
- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IAM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
- Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
- Telephone - Report 1000
- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

GERALD IMRAY, TOYOTA

RUGBY WORLD CUP

Typhoon stops All Blacks' run, and Italian farewells

At times it felt like only a force of nature could stop New Zealand's streak of wins at the Rugby World Cup. And that's what happened.

The threat of Typhoon Hagibis forced Rugby World Cup organizers in Japan to cancel two pool games scheduled for Saturday, including the Pool B match between the defending champion All Blacks and Italy in Toyota.

That ended New Zealand's perfect record in the group stage.

The three-time champions had won all 31 of their pool games dating back to the first tournament in 1987. New Zealand had also won 17 straight games at the World Cup, playoffs included, before yesterday's announcement by organizers.

World Rugby said Hagibis, which has the same force as a Category 5 hurricane, "is highly likely to cause considerable disruption in the Tokyo, Yokohama and Toyota City areas throughout Saturday."

The England-France Pool C game in Yokohama was also canceled. The typhoon is predicted to be the worst of Japan's 2019 typhoon season and other games on Sunday might also be affected.

Japan's World Cup had no contingencies for group games that couldn't be played on the day they were scheduled. No provision for

AP PHOTO



New Zealand's T J Perenara looks to score a try

a postponement and no chance of being played at another venue. The rules mean the game is called a scoreless draw and both teams get two log points. It's the first time any Rugby World Cup games have been cancelled.

The All Blacks will get over it. After all, they still finish top of Pool B, as expected. New Zealand still has the playoffs and an attempt at a third straight World Cup title and fourth overall ahead of it.

Coach Steve Hansen had no issues with the game being called off for safety reasons.

"When you get a typhoon to the level we're getting, then safety is the paramount thing so it's a no-brainer," Hansen said.

The cancellation hit Italy harder.

Italy had a sliver of a chance of going through to the quarterfinals if it beat the defending champion for the first time in its history. No one was expecting that, though, and it wasn't forefront in Italian players' minds in Toyota.

Instead, Italy was ready to give veterans Sergio Parisse and Leonardo Ghiraldini fitting farewells after their long service to the team.

No. 8 Parisse, Italy's captain, has played 142 tests, breaking the record for a northern hemisphere player in the Azzurri's last game at the World Cup against South Africa. He is the second most-capped player ever behind New Zealand World Cup winner Richie McCaw. The 34-year-old Parisse said he was going to retire after the World Cup and was due to go out against the world's best team in Toyota.

At least he got to play at this World Cup.

Hooker Ghiraldini, who is also 34, had to struggle to recover from injury to make Italy's squad and was due to be given his first action in Japan against New Zealand. It was to be in recognition of his 13 years and more than 100 tests of commitment in the front row.

Ghiraldini reportedly shed tears among his teammates at the Italy camp when news broke that the game against New Zealand had been canceled. AP

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OPINION

Kapok
 Eric Sautede



TOO LATE AND TOO LITTLE

When on September 4 Hong Kong's Chief Executive Carrie Lam finally decided to officially "withdraw" the Extradition Bill, the overall reaction in the pro-democracy camp was to say that the move came "too late" and amounted to "too little".

At the time I felt that the government's announcement was rather a substantial achievement to be indeed credited to the ever-evolving "Be water" movement. At long last a political response of sort was somehow and somewhat addressing a political challenge that had been dragging for far too long. How could that not be an achievement, far beyond the "suspension" of the Bill on June 15 or any claim the Bill was "dead" on July 9? Neither the temporary shelving nor the burial of this piece of legislation had ever been on the list of demands formulated by the demonstrators — moderates and radicals alike — but the "withdrawal" had been the core, and until June 12 the only demand of the protestors. So yes, politics was back, especially after all the fantasies fueled by saber rattling moves across the border and ill-designed martial video clips hastily cooked up by Communist propaganda.

In my mind, the rebuttal was meant to be temporary, and after a period of adjustment during which things would turn worse before getting better — and how could it be otherwise after three months of resolute and unabated fight — the path for a more rational and possibly peaceful settlement would start to shine again. Things would take time and trust had to be rebuilt: a survey conducted by the Chinese University of Hong Kong in early September was showing that about 69% of the people did not trust either the government or the police, and if about the same proportion of people believed that the principle of non-violent action should be upheld, still 56% considered that violent action was understandable if the government failed to respond to large-scale peaceful demonstrations. Moreover, almost 71% still considered that the demand to set up an independent commission of enquiry looking into police violence and other incidents was a requirement.

More than one month after the announcement of the withdrawal which will be effective only when the LegCo reconvene next week, are we finally seeing a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel? Clearly not. While professing to initiate a dialogue, Carrie Lam made it clear that there would be no other concession, and that contradictory move immediately gave rise to a new show of unity among the protesters, best encapsulated by the defiant slogan "Five demands, not one less". A butchered 2-hour encounter with district councilors supposed to kickstart a dialogue on September 18 turned into disarray when only 98 out of 458 councilors decided to show up. A subsequent community dialogue with 130 citizens held at Queen Elizabeth Stadium on September 26 turned into a real agony for the Chief executive and her principal officials when participants mostly vented their frustration and anger at the inability of the government to resolve the crisis.

Following further defiance of infuriated and ever younger protesters on October 1, the "Chief Executive in council" decided to invoke the Emergency Regulations Ordinance on October 4 to ban masks at unauthorized protests. The problem is, supposedly because of security concerns, that most marches have not been authorized since August 18, meaning that people cannot even vote with their feet anymore, as marches are banned, the MTR closed at sensitive times and the police being given excessive leeway in the interpretation of the new ban. Things will get worse before they will worsen even more!

Meanwhile in Macao, a decision rendered by the Court of Final Appeal on September 27 states that the Macao police was right to forbid demonstrations in Praça do Tap Seac and da Amizade aimed at denouncing police violence in Hong Kong on the basis that publicly allowing these to happen would have amounted to interfering with the internal affairs of the Hong Kong SAR, and thus violating the Macao Basic Law. As clearly stated by lawyer Jorge Menezes, with this decision, freedom of assembly and freedom of expression are all but history in Macao, despite them also being entrenched in the Basic Law. Will freedom of conscience be next?

TOKARCZUK IS FIRST WOMAN TO BE HONORED THIS YEAR

THE BUZZ

Polish novelist Olga Tokarczuk is the first woman this year to be awarded a Nobel Prize — although strictly speaking her prize is for 2018. The nine winners of this year's science prizes were all men.

Tokarczuk is only the 15th woman to win the Nobel literature prize in more than a century and the first since Belarusian journalist Svetlana Alexievich in 2015.



Last year, three women received prizes — Donna Strickland in physics; Frances H. Arnold in chemistry; and Nadia Muras won the Nobel Peace Prize. With Tokarczuk, that number has been raised to four for 2018.

53 women have been honored in all categories since 1901. The first woman to get the literature prize was Swedish author Selma Lagerlof in 1909.

TURKEY PRESSES SYRIAN ASSAULT AS THOUSANDS FLEE THE FIGHTING



Turkey pressed its assault against U.S.-allied Kurdish forces in northern Syria yesterday for a second day, pounding the region with airstrikes and an artillery bombardment that raised columns of black smoke in a border town and sent panicked civilians scrambling to get out.

Residents fled with their belongings loaded into cars, pickup trucks and motorcycle rickshaws, while others escaped on foot. The U.N. refugee agency said tens of thousands were on the move, and aid agencies warned that nearly a half-million people near the border were at risk.

It was a wrenchingly familiar scene for many who had fled the militants of the Islamic State group only a few years ago.

The Turkish air and ground assault was launched three days after U.S. President Donald Trump opened the way by pulling American troops from their positions near the border alongside their Kurdish allies.

At a time when Trump faces an impeachment inquiry, the move drew swift criticism from Republicans and Democrats in Congress, along with

many national defense experts, who say it has endangered not only the Kurds and regional stability but U.S. credibility as well. The Syrian Kurdish militia was the only U.S. ally in the campaign that brought down the Islamic State group in Syria.

Trump warned Turkey for moderation during its assault and safeguard civilians. But the opening barrage showed little sign of holding back: The Turkish Defense Military said its

Over dozen columns of thick smoke rose in and around the town of Tel Abyad, one of the offensive's first main targets

jets and artillery had struck 181 targets so far.

More than a dozen columns of thick smoke rose in and around the town of Tel Abyad, one of the offensive's first main targets. Turkish officials said the Kurdish militia has fired dozens of mortars into Turkish border towns the past two days, including Akcakale.

Turkish officials in two border provinces said mortar fire from Syria killed at least six civilians,

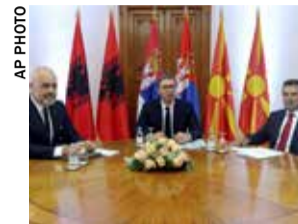
including a 9-month-old boy and three girls under 15. On the Syrian side, seven civilians and eight Kurdish fighters have been killed since the operation began, according to activists in Syria.

A Kurdish-led group and Syrian activists said that despite the bombardment, Turkish troops had not made much progress on several fronts they had opened. But their claims could not be independently verified.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said 109 "terrorists" were killed in the offensive, a reference to the Syrian Kurdish fighters. He did not elaborate, and reports from the area did not indicate anything remotely close to such a large number of casualties.

Erdogan also warned the European Union not to call Ankara's incursion into Syria an "invasion." He threatened, as he has in the past, to "open the gates" and let Syrian refugees flood into Europe.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said the military intends to move 30 kilometers into northern Syria and that its operation will last until all "terrorists are neutralized." AP



Serbia The leaders of Serbia, North Macedonia and Albania have pledged to lift barriers to free trade and travel between the three Balkan countries as they all seek entry into the European Union.

Vatican City Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of a New York City bishop after he was accused of sexually abusing a teenage boy in the 1980s.



Germany The president urged his nation yesterday to stand up for their Jewish compatriots as he visited the scene of an attack on a synagogue in the city of Halle, seeking to reassure an unsettled Jewish community after members saw a man trying to break into their house of worship on Judaism's holiest day.

Belgium In a big blow to French president Emmanuel Macron, his country's nominee for the next European Commission has been rejected by EU lawmakers assessing whether she was fit for the job.



UK The leaders of Britain and Ireland were meeting yesterday in an attempt to find common ground for an elusive Brexit deal, with just three weeks until the U.K. is set to leave the European Union.

USA President Donald Trump said he planned to get involved in the case of an American diplomat's wife who quickly left the U.K. after she was allegedly involved in a fatal wrong-way crash — but stopped short of suggesting he would revoke her diplomatic immunity and return her to Britain to face charges.