China: Hackers with a history of state-sponsored espionage have intercepted the text messages of thousands of foreigners in a targeted campaign that planted eavesdropping software on a telecommunications provider’s servers, a cybersecurity firm said. More on p12.

Pakistan: A raging fire swept through a train in Pakistan’s eastern Punjab Province yesterday, killing 74 people and survivors said afterward it took nearly 20 minutes for the train to stop amid contradictory reports about the condition of the train’s brakes. More on p14.

Japan: A fire broke out early yesterday and spread quickly through historic Shuri Castle on Japan’s southern island of Okinawa, nearly destroying the UNESCO World Heritage site. Firefighters battled the blaze for about 12 hours before bringing it under control in the afternoon.

North Korea: fired two projectiles into its eastern sea, an apparent resumption of weapons tests aimed at ramping up pressure on Washington over a stalemate in nuclear negotiations, according to officials in South Korea and Japan.

UK parties spar in election that may settle Brexit – or not

More on backpage

Financial decisions are rarely easy, and the anxiety can be heightened for millennials.
Macau cuts benchmark interest rate for third time this year

DANIEL BEITLER

The Monetary Authority of Macau (AMCM), which cuts the benchmark interest rate yesterday in response to the U.S. Federal Reserve’s reduction in borrowing costs.

The Hong Kong dollar is pegged to the U.S. dollar in a band that ranges between HKD7.75 and 7.85 to the U.S. dollar. In turn, the Macau pataca is fixed to the Hong Kong dollar at an exchange rate of 1.03. As the Hong Kong dollar is pegged to the greenback, both special administrative regions essentially import U.S. monetary policy, although local banks are not obliged to follow with lower retail costs.

In a statement issued yesterday, the AMCM noted that the policy rates in Hong Kong and Macau “should be basically consistent in order to maintain the effective operation of the linked exchange rate system.”

Bloomberg reported that the move is unlikely to have much bearing on the local cost of borrowing, as lenders don’t necessarily pass on the rate to their customers.

“It is hard to say whether the Hong Kong interbank rates may follow the U.S. rate,” HKMA Chief Executive Eddie Yue said at a briefing yesterday. “However, the U.S. rate cut does reflect the downward pressure on the global economy, to which Hong Kong is not immune.”

“Looking ahead, we expect there’s still downward pressure on the U.S. rate,” said George Leung, HSBC Holdings’ Asia-Pacific adviser, at a separate briefing held yesterday. “This is likely to make the operating environment for banks like HSBC more challenging in the future, but we hope that it will bring some relief to our customers and maybe a little bit of sunshine to the gloomy economic outlook.”

The lawyer also cited other laws that refer to the currency as Ou Mun Pai as examples of the widespread use of the term.

The same thing occurred in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Basic Law uses Heung Kong Yuen, not Heung Kong Pai, to refer to the currency. However, “Kong Yuan” (an abbreviation for Hong Kong Dollar in Chinese) is printed on the paper money.

“So, if it affects the Macau currency, it affects the Hong Kong one too,” said Tang.

Considering the issue from another perspective, Tang thinks this problem may have been caused by something being “lost in translation.” A mere word choice may be the root of the issue.

It is worth pointing out that when Macau was under Portuguese administration, written Chinese was not even an official language of Macau until 1991.

Before 1999, when all laws were written in Portuguese, the currency would only be referred to as “pataca.” The Chinese name may have become ambiguous, as both Pai and Yuan mean money.

Nonetheless, Tang pointed out that some laws were written in both languages even before 1999. In these laws, Ou Mun Pai was used to refer to the currency.

The lawyer pointed out that the 20th anniversary commemorative banknote used Ou Mun Yuan.

An Executive Decree was issued in March, far earlier than the minutes of the Legislative Committee.

Prior to the actual issuing of paper money, the design and other specifications were to be determined by an Executive Decree. In the Executive Decree, the currency is referred to its Chinese as Ou Mun Pai, not Ou Mun Yuan.

“I don’t think the matter can be raised up to the level of violating the Basic Law,” Tang reiterated.

The legal tender of Macau is not issued by its de-facto central bank, the Monetary Authority of Macau. It is issued, under the authority’s commission, by two commercial banks: the Bank of China and Banco Nacional Ultramarino. The latter has never explicitly used either of the full Chinese terms on their banknotes.

The Bank of China was also contacted for comment, but no response was received by press time.
Saturday 2 November, 2019
2019年11月2日，星期六

TIME
08:00 for 30KM Corporate Challenge (Arrival time: 06:45am)
09:00 for 20KM Corporate Challenge (Arrival time: 07:45am)
10:00 for 10KM Family & Fun Course (Arrival time: 08:45am)
Cut off at 04:00pm

VENUE
Start and finish at MGM Cotai, North Lobby
Your way walk, hike, jog or run around this scenic and challenging

RACE CATEGORIES
30KM Corporate Challenge
20KM Corporate Challenge
10KM Family & Fun Course

時間
30公里挑戰賽 於早上八時正開始 (抵達時間: 早上六時四十五分)
20公里挑戰賽 於早上九時正開始 (抵達時間: 早上七時四十五分)
10公里家庭賽 於早上十時正開始 (抵達時間: 早上八時四十五分)
結束時間為下午四時正

地點
地點和終點設於澳門美高梅酒店 北大堂

參賽組別
30公里挑戰線
20公里挑戰線
10公里家庭線

Good Luck to All Participants!
Thank you for your participation, all net entry fees will be donated to the beneficiary charities.
感謝參與，報名費淨收益將全數撥捐受惠機構。

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詳情請瀏覽 www.macaulattrailhiker.com，或上facebook 查詢
GAMING | LAS VEGAS

MGM SETS YEAR-END TARGET FOR MGM GRAND SALE

The company agreed this month to sell the Bellagio resort in Las Vegas to Blackstone Group in a $4.25 billion deal under which MGM will continue to manage the property. MGM is also selling its Circus Circus casino in the city to real estate mogul Phil Ruffin. Chief Executive Officer Jim Murren said on a conference call Wednesday that he’ll use the proceeds from the MGM Grand sale to reduce debt and invest in new growth opportunities, including a potential $10 billion casino in Japan and sports betting in the U.S.

The company’s transition should result in higher free cash flow per share and a more flexible financial structure that allows MGM to better capitalize on its strengths as a casino developer and manager, Murren said.

MGM Resorts is continuing to evaluate the sale of its remaining real estate assets -- including CityCenter, a joint venture with Dubai World that owns the Aria resort in Las Vegas. The company also plans to reduce its majority stake in MGM Growth Properties, a real estate investment trust, Murren said.

The company has been under pressure from activist investors to boost its stock price over the past few years. Murren reiterated his target of as much as $3.9 billion in earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization next year.

BLOOMBERG
U.S. President Donald Trump was expected to sign an interim trade deal with his Chinese counterpart President Xi Jinping during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Chile. However, the summit was unexpectedly cancelled due to the social unrest rocking the South American country, leaving the two parties scrambling to find an alternative location.

Now Macau is being touted as a possible substitute, according to U.S. media reports.

It wasn’t clear whether U.S. officials would be able to find an alternate venue for the meeting with Xi, and APEC summit organizers had indicated that they had no plans to hold the event elsewhere.

Citing a trade source familiar with the issue, U.S.-based network Fox News reported that China has suggested Macau as a possible replacement venue.

This suggestion has not been corroborated by another source, but Bloomberg reported that three people familiar with the state of U.S.-China discussions said that the teams have been looking at other locations in recent weeks and that China could be among them.

Meanwhile, Wei Jianguo, former vice minister of the Ministry of Commerce and current vice president of China Center for International Economic Exchanges, played down the effect of the cancellation at a press briefing in Singapore yesterday.

“I don’t think the cancellation of the APEC meeting will have any impact on the U.S.-China trade deal,” said Wei. “The venue could move to China, the U.S., or any third-party country. The two sides will surely talk about it.”

A nexus of Chinese-American business interests, the casino enclave Macau is thought to be particularly vulnerable to any fallout from the trade war.

The symbolic venue of Macau would serve as a reminder to the U.S. of what is at stake if trade talks break down. It is where big Republican backers, like Sheldon Adelson of Las Vegas Sands make most of their money. It is also where Trump was part of a consortium of billionaire investors that unsuccessfully bid for a casino licence, back in 2001.

Though it is yet to be confirmed by official sources, it is widely speculated that Xi will visit Macau in late December to preside over commemorative activities marking the 20th anniversary of the Macau Special Administrative Region. The Chinese president embarked on a three-day visit to Hong Kong in June 2017 to celebrate the neighboring city’s milestone 20th anniversary.

December 15, just five days prior to the handover celebrations, may provide to be a critical date in the coming months. That is when new U.S. tariffs on Chinese imports, such as laptops, toys and electronics, are scheduled to begin, but an agreement signed beforehand could avert them.

**ONE YEAR, TWO VISITS**

China said to offer rendezvous in Macau for Trump trade deal
MUST research shows preference for current free healthcare system

Research into Macau’s healthcare system conducted by the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) showed that two-thirds of respondents expect existing systems of free medical care to be retained.

Commissioned by the Health Bureau (SSM), the research team consists of scholars from the University of Science and Technology, the Faculty of Science and Technology, the Faculty of Business Administration, the Faculty of Law, and the Faculty of Arts and Humanities.

Nearly 60% of respondents want further efficiencies and improvements to Macau’s current free healthcare system.

According to the research, at this stage, Macau’s healthcare system has distinct strengths in its coverage, effectiveness and cost control.

“In terms of safeguarding health, [the Macau healthcare system] provides free access to basic health services for all [respondents], demonstrates high efficiency and high precision, and therefore is capable of establishing a protection network for all citizens in a low-cost, highly efficient fashion,” said Serra. “Such a healthcare system that benefits all people is the best choice for the needs of Macau,” the research team wrote.

The research team recommends that the government take two measures to improve the existing health care system. These are “encouraging and promoting voluntary private medical insurance through issuing insurance vouchers” and “setting up a disaster-relief medical fund” for people who are not entitled free specialist medical services.

Following the announcement of MUST’s research results, the SSM said that the bureau plans to carry out a detailed analysis of the conclusions and recommendations published in the report. The SSM also emphasized that at present, the majority of Macau residents enjoy free healthcare, and if the residents are asked to purchase insurance, there will be discontent.

JZ

UM delegation visits Portuguese universities

A delegation from the University of Macau (UM) led by Rector Yonghua Song recently visited universities in Portugal. The UM delegation met with heads of the Portuguese universities led by University of Lisbon (ULisboa) Rector António Manuel da Cruz Serra, with the aim of strengthening collaboration between UM and Portuguese universities.

During the meeting, Song said that forging a long-term collaborative relationship with universities in Portugal-speaking countries is a core part of UM’s global strategy. Cruz Serra said the university would be happy to carry out full-scale strategic collaboration with UM. Both parties discussed various matters, including teaching, research, and faculty and student exchange. Both parties also agreed to strengthen collaboration in areas such as clinical medicine, public health, dentistry and pharmacy.

Three ULisboa vice rectors, as well as representatives of UM’s Faculty of Science and Technology, Faculty of Business Administration, Faculty of Health Sciences, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, and Faculty of Law also joined the meeting. The delegation later visited ULisboa’s Institute for Systems and Robotics. The UM delegation also visited the University of Coimbra (UC) and was received by its vice rector Cristina Albuquerque. During the meeting, Albuquerque expressed her hope of strengthening collaboration with UM through faculty and student exchange, launching dual-degree programs and research. Song presented UM’s developments in recent years, adding that priority would be given to finalizing the details of UM’s collaboration with UC.

The UM delegation also visited Manuel Heitor, Portugal’s minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education; Cai Run, China’s ambassador to Portugal; and O Tin Lin, director of the Macau Economic and Trade Office in Lisbon. The delegation additionally visited the University of Porto and the University of Minho.

Package tour visitors drop 35% in September

Package tour visitors dropped 35.7% year-on-year in September. Official data released yesterday showed, rounding out the first three quarters of the year with a 4.5% contraction.

According to the data released by the Statistics and Census Service, the number of package tour visitors in September amounted to 448,000. Apart from an increase in package tour visitors from Malaysia (4,300), all other countries and territories registered decreases, with those from mainland China (325,000), South Korea (32,000), Hong Kong (6,600) and Taiwan (58,000) dropping by 39.8%, 37.6%, 29.9% and 3% respectively.

September package tour arrivals bring the total number for the first three quarters of 2019 to over 6.79 million. Data released earlier in October showed that total visitor arrivals for the first three quarters had surpassed the 30-million mark, representing growth of 17% year-on-year. The growth was led by a 30.6% surge in the number of same-day visitors to 15.93 million.

At the end of the third quarter, there were 121 hotels and guesthouses operating in Macau. The number of available guest rooms edged down by 0.8% year-on-year, on account of a 7.3% drop in the number of four-star hotel rooms. The number of five-star hotel rooms held steady at 8,617, while the number of three-star rooms decreased by 0.6%.

In the first three quarters of 2019, guests of hotels and guesthouses totaled 10.54 million, up by 1.7% year-on-year. The average occupancy rate of hotels and guesthouses rose marginally to 90.8%, while the average length of stay of guests remained stable at 1.5 nights.

By way of questionnaire-based surveys and interviews, MUST received a total of 3,005 valid responses. The team also conducted interviews with representatives from government bodies, residents with special needs, medical groups, industry experts and others.

Some 60% of respondents want further efficiencies and improvements to Macau’s current free healthcare system.

According to the research, at this stage, Macau’s healthcare system has distinct strengths in its coverage, effectiveness and cost control.

“In terms of safeguarding health, [the Macau healthcare system] provides free access to basic health services for all [respondents], demonstrates high efficiency and high precision, and therefore is capable of establishing a protection network for all citizens in a low-cost, highly efficient fashion.” Such a healthcare system that benefits all people is the best choice for the needs of Macau,” the research team wrote.

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Following the announcement of MUST’s research results, the SSM said that the bureau plans to carry out a detailed analysis of the conclusions and recommendations published in the report. The SSM also emphasized that at present, the majority of Macau residents enjoy free healthcare, and if the residents are asked to purchase insurance, there will be discontent.

JZ
Anima: Proposed IAM bill could lead to shutting down of slaughterhouses

LYNZY VALLES

Anima, the animal rights group, has proposed a bill to euthanize animals in Macau as a last resort to prevent animal diseases. The move is to be authorized by the Institute for Health and Medical Care (IAM), which believes that the proposed bill could lead to the shutdown of slaughterhouses.

The group has indicated that the proposed bill is anything related to pets, and it would be allowed to be euthanized. However, there are concerns about the potential for misuse, as the bill would be used to euthanize animals in cases of abuse or neglect. The IAM has clarified that it would be allowed to be euthanized only in cases where there is no other way to prevent the spread of disease.

The government of Macau has indicated that there is no reason for the proposed bill to be enacted, as it would not be necessary to euthanize animals. The IAM has clarified that it would be used only as a last resort to prevent the spread of disease.

The proposed bill would require the IAM to monitor the health and condition of animals, and to only euthanize those that are beyond rescue. The IAM has clarified that it would be used only in cases where there is no other way to prevent the spread of disease.

The local government has indicated that it would not support the killing of animals, except for animals that may cause harm to humans. The IAM has clarified that it would be used only in cases where there is no other way to prevent the spread of disease.

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The annual Macau Open Badminton is back until November 3, inviting approximately 280 players from 18 countries and regions to participate in the tournament.

With a total cash prize of some MOP1.2 million, the event, which kicked off Tuesday, is a part of the HSBC BWF World Tour. Players can earn ranking points to qualify for the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics.

The tournament – a World Tour Super 300 event – sees players compete in the men’s singles, women’s singles, men’s doubles, women’s doubles and mixed doubles categories.

Yesterday, the tournament kicked off with the women’s singles games. Canada’s Michelle Li defeated Hong Kong’s Leung Yuet Yee with a score of 21-17, 28-30 and 21-12.

The mixed doubles competition was held at the same time, with Thailand’s Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattanachai winning against South Korea’s Wang Chan and Jeong Na Eun. They led the game 21-20 and 21-16 in the second set.

Meanwhile, five men and two women played for the Macau team in men’s singles, women’s doubles, men’s doubles and mixed doubles. However, the local team lost the qualifying match of mixed doubles to Taipei with the scores 21-13 and 21-14. The local men’s doubles team also lost to Hong Kong with the scores 21-11 and 21-8.

The other local mixed doubles team lost to Korea with scores 21-10 and 21-9, while the women’s doubles team lost to Taipei, with the scores 21-15 and 21-12.

Macao’s representative for men’s singles lost to Thailand, 21-9 and 21-10.

Meanwhile, China’s Shi Yu Qi, who ranks sixth globally in men’s singles, and Korea’s Son Wan Ho, who ranks 21st, hope to make up for lost time and opportunities to qualify for the Olympics.

Shi is currently ranked No. 54 in the Race to Tokyo standings, while Son is yet to play a tournament since the qualifying period began on April 29, 2019.

Shi had previously withdrawn from the Korea Open due to an injury, while Son injured his Achilles tendon at a domestic tournament.

The next tournament will be held in Fuzhou, China, from November 5 to 10, followed by the Yonex-Sunrise Hong Kong Open. The tournaments have an aggregate total prize money of USD700,000 and USD400,000 respectively.

As cited on the BWF World Tour website, Macau will put forward no representatives in the upcoming tournament.
Hong Kong banking giants defy dire predictions amid protests

There may be protests, wall-to-wall tear gas and the occasional burning of Starbucks along the street, but inside Hong Kong’s biggest financial firms the outlook for business is surprisingly status quo.

That was the takeaway this week as two banking giants in Hong Kong - HSBC Holdings Plc and Standard Chartered Plc - posted quarterly results that showed business there held up despite civil unrest. Now, one of the top experts on the financial hub is weighing in with his evaluation: Don’t expect the city to lose any stature among global markets.

“We would take a huge structural change,” for Hong Kong to cede its position as a financial center, K.C. Chan, the city’s former secretary for financial services and the treasury, said in an interview. “That’s not what I see today. The reason Hong Kong’s financial markets are doing so well is because they have been serving China’s economy. Has this changed? No.”

Demonstrations led by pro-democracy activists have indeed disrupted local commerce and dissuaded tourists, tipping the city toward a technical recession. Still, HSBC and Standard Chartered are suffering. And on Thursday it lowered its best lending rate in the city for the first time in more than a decade, a move that the lender said should help the local economy and companies.

Some ultra-wealthy clients are drawing contingency plans for parking cash elsewhere, the company said, but very little has actually moved. Across the city, there’s been little significant capital outflow, Hong Kong Monetary Authority Chief Executive Eddie Yue added at a briefing yesterday. Standard Chartered said it earned more in Hong Kong, too. “Business is actually continuing to perform pretty well,” Chief Financial Officer Andy Halford told Bloomberg Television on Wednesday, referring to the city. “Maybe not growing quite as much as it’d have done previously, but absolutely still growing.”

Some clients, he acknowledged, have explored whether to shift money to Singapore, or to move your money to Singapore in a flick,” Chan said.

That, in turn, has generated wealth in the city, drawing legions of private bankers and money managers to tend to it.

“If you have your liquidity here in Hong Kong, you won’t just move your money to Singapore in a blink,” Chan said.

Few global companies have tied their fortunes as much to Hong Kong as London-based HSBC. When the firm posted third-quarter results Monday, it described operations in Asia as resilient. Adjusted pretax profit of Hong Kong, the bank noted, climbed 1% in the quarter to $3 billion.

Still, HSBC took a $90 million credit charge because of the dimming outlook for the local economy, where small- and medium-sized businesses in particular are suffering. And on Thursday it lowered its best lending rate in the city for the first time in 10 years, a move that it planned to use to prop up the local economy and companies.

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HONG KONG CRASHES INTO RECESSION AS PROTESTS HIT ECONOMY

ERIC LAM & ENDA CURRAN

Hong Kong's economy contracted sharply in the third quarter as it entered a recession, exceeding economists' worst estimates of the damage from nearly five months of protests.

Third-quarter gross domestic product retreated 3.2% from the previous three months, after a 0.4% contraction in the second quarter. That's the worst slump since 2009, in the aftermath of the global financial crisis. Two consecutive periods of negative growth mean Hong Kong has fallen into a technical recession.

The economic debate now is focused on how long the downturn will last, if recent glimmers of stabilization point to a bottom, and if the U.S.-China trade war and the demonstrations have done lasting damage. Financial Secretary Paul Chan said this week that a full-year economic contraction is "very likely."

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority cut its benchmark interest rate yesterday, in line with the city's currency peg to the dollar following the U.S. Federal Reserve's reduction in borrowing costs. The move is unlikely to have much bearing on the local cost of borrowing, as lenders don't necessarily pass on the rate to the public.

The city hasn't seen significant capital outflow amid the unrest, HKMA Chief Executive Eddie Yue said at a briefing. The Hong Kong dollar rate, deposit level and exchange rate are broadly stable, he said.

The city's economy has shown the faintest of positive glimmers since the protests' initial impact this summer, when tourists began staying away. Small business sentiment has ticked higher, as has a gauge of the outlook among purchasing managers, though both remain close to their record lows. The real estate and financial services sectors have remained fairly resilient.

The MSCI Hong Kong Index tumbled as much as 18% from an April high, before recently clawing back some gains in October as investors calmed down. The index remains positive for 2019. While property prices have slipped about 5.5% since June, the Centaline Property Cents-City Leading Index is up for the year, hanging on to gains after a February low.

HSBC Holdings Plc, the largest lender in the finance hub, said adjusted pretax profit fell 12% to $5.3 billion for the third quarter. Looking just at its Hong Kong operation, adjusted pretax profit inched up 1% in the quarter to $3 billion and executives said there hasn't yet been a significant outflow of funds. Standard Chartered Plc also said it earned more in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong's Monetary Authority has sought to maintain stability in the city's financial markets. The Hong Kong dollar's peg to the greenback isn't likely in jeopardy despite the slowdown, said Jonathan Ostry, deputy director of the research department with the International Monetary Fund.

"That peg has survived over many decades and has been an important anchor for Hong Kong and its economy," Ostry told reporters.

One of the biggest factors in determining if Hong Kong will recover and how soon is whether mainland Chinese tourists scared away by the protests will return. In the aftermath of the 2003 SARS epidemic, they came back, though it may be different this time given the demonstrations' anti-China tone.

Tourism from the mainland, which hit a record of more than 5.5 million visitor arrivals from China in January, had plummeted to half that by end-August. Mainland visitors will account for almost 80% of total arrivals in Hong Kong. Hong Kong's Monetary Authority has sought to maintain stability in the city's financial markets.

Tourism from the mainland, which hit a record of more than 5.5 million visitor arrivals from China in January, had plummeted to half that by end-August. Mainland visitors will account for at least 80% of total arrivals in Hong Kong. Hong Kong's Monetary Authority has sought to maintain stability in the city's financial markets.

The Hong Kong government has announced relief packages this year, but for most struggling businesses the best cure would be an end to the protests - especially as Hong Kong has little to no influence over the trade war.

"It's absolutely life and death for us," Douglas Young, co-founder of lifestyle and fashion retail chain Goods of Desire, said in an interview with Bloomberg Television. "His firm is doing what it can to avoid layoffs, including unpaid leave, voluntary holidays and other ways to make the business more efficient, he said.

"If it ends with decent compromises between all the parties involved, I can see Hong Kong rebounding very quickly," Young said. "Not within my lifetime have I experienced something this serious. I'm very confident Hong Kong will bounce back, but the crucial thing is: When is this going to end?" BLOOMBERG
In Carlos Tavares, Fiat family finds heir to Marchionne legacy

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MGM receives social responsibility accolade

The 8th Cross-Strait-Four-Region Outstanding Corporate Social Responsibility Award Ceremony was held at Hotel ICON in Hong Kong on October 28. Grant Bowes, CEO and Executive Director of MGM China Holdings Limited, said: “We are very honored to receive this prestigious regional award for our corporate social responsibility scheme, as it highlights our dedication to the community, our employees and the environment.”

“T his award serves as a motivation to our continuous effort in innovative community projects and our enthusiasm in giving back to the community,” he added.

Melco inaugurates platform for SMEs

“T o the Table by SMEs,” as part of the campaign to discuss food safety and hygiene standards with local businesses, and to provide an opportunity for direct dialogue between SMEs, the Melco culinary team and the company’s F&B outlet representatives. This event saw nearly 100 local F&B industry representatives from almost 60 Macau SMEs, including members of the Macau Union Suppliers Association and Macao Chamber of Commerce. Specializing in a broad range of F&B categories, such as meats and seafood, fruits and vegetables, dry and frozen groceries, ready-to-wat foods and beverages.

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A s the scion of the Agnelli family’s industrial dynasty, John Elkann honed his management skills under Sergio Marchionne, who brought Fiat back from the brink before turning it into a global force with the purchase of Chrysler. When Marchionne died suddenly last year, Elkann pushed ahead alone with their quest for another major partner.

Yesterday, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV announced a combination with France’s PSA Group to create a European powerhouse rivalling Volkswagen AG with a stock-market value similar to that of Honda Motor Co. Elkann stands to gain a new sidekick: Carlos Tavares, PSA’s 61-year-old chief executive officer, who has shown his mettle building an international automotive group while keeping costs under control. Those qualities would make him the heir apparent of the empire Marchionne built. “Auto sector deals are incredibly complex to deliver upon and have no hope of success without a ‘Great Man’ CEO at the controls,” said Max Warburton, an automotive analyst at Sanford C. Bernstein & Co. “It’s clear that Tavares has spent years thinking about how a deal with FCA might work.

SECOND CHOICE

PSA, maker of the Peugeot brand, may not have been Elkann’s preferred partner — another merger attempt with Renault SA fell through in June after demands by the French government proved insurmountable. But Tavares best fits the mold of Marchionne, a shrewd operator who passed away after a short illness in July 2018 at the age of 66.

Both men turned around businesses that from the outside looked beyond repair. Marchionne endlessly propagated the need for mergers, saying the industry is rife with duplication and could save billions if it pooled resources in areas like research and purchasing. Tavares, too, has been blunt about the need for car manufacturers to adapt or risk going under, and says global scale is key.

PARTICULARLY OPPORTUNISTIC

A merger with Fiat Chrysler would mark a reversal of fortunes for Tavares, who was forced into a bystander role earlier this year when Elkann approached Renault, PSA’s French rival. At the time, Tavares didn’t mince his words, calling the transaction “particularly opportunistic” for Fiat Chrysler and a “virtual takeover” of Renault by Fiat. Fiat and Peugeot have a long history of flirtation, dating back as far as the 2008 crisis when Elkann and Marchionne were hunting for a partner before engaging with Chrysler. In 2013, Emmanuel Macron, then a top adviser to President François Hollande, held preliminary talks with Fiat about a merger with troubled Peugeot. At the end of 2014, Marchionne was told by some of his advisers that Tavares was interested in discussing a merger.

MAJOR TURNAROUND

Tavares, a racing enthusiast like Marchionne, joined PSA five years ago after serving under Renault-Nissan’s now-dragged former boss, Carlos Ghosn. That assignment bore significant risk, with PSA in trouble and lacking the heft to compete globally. A ruthless cost cutter, Tavares managed a turnaround by pushing unions to accept job losses and slashing costs on everything from printers to phones. He used the same methods when he took over Opel in 2017, restoring that business to profit within a year. “It makes perfect sense that Carlos Tavares will run the show, given his experience restructuring businesses,” said Arndt Ellinghorst, an automotive analyst at Evercore International Ltd. in London. “It looks like a merger of equals; both companies are earning money, balance sheets are restored.

In its most recent quarter, PSA was able to weather a slump in the auto industry with demand for popular models like the Peugeot 508 and Citroën C5 Aircross. Its operating margin reached 8.7% in the first half of the year, exceeding the profitability of many rivals. By contrast, Renault slashed its outlook for revenue and profit this month.

COST SAVINGS

Tavares will have ample opportunity to put his integration abilities to the test at the enlarged group. Cost savings from the deal without plant closures are projected to be about 3.7 billion euros ($4.13 billion). Some analysts have more ambitious projections, with UBS estimating they could reach as much as 6.6 billion euros every year by avoiding duplication of capital spending in new technologies.

Peugeot-Fiat would compete with GM - long Marchionne’s proposed partner - for the spot of fourth-biggest carmaker, with more than 8 million vehicles sold per year and revenue in excess of 180 billion euros. It could surpass Volkswagen’s profit margin, according to JPMorgan analysts.

Tavares will hold the CEO title for five years at the combined entity, while Elkann will be chairman, announced early Thursday. No plant closures are planned, and any savings would come from more efficient pooling of resources, they said. BLOOMBERG
SECURITY FIRM SAYS
CHINESE HACKERS
INTERCEPTED TEXT MESSAGES

Beijing denies reports of professor spying in Belgium

CHINA said last night that reports that a pro-

fessor leading a Beijing ba-

cked language and culture institute in Belgium was in-

volved in spying are untrue.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said some Western media have published "false re-

ports of distortions about the Confucius Institute."

"This is completely un-

true and has ulterior moti-

ves. We resolutely oppose this behavior that hinders normal exchanges and educational cooperation projects," Geng told report-

ers at a daily briefing.

Confucius Institutes at universities around the

world have come under in-

creasing scrutiny as some accuse them of being tools of Chinese Communist Party propaganda and in-
fluence.

The professor in the Bel-

gium case, Song Xinning, told The Associated Press by phone from his home in Beijing that the Brussels immigra-
tion office gave him a notice on July 30 stating that his visa would not be renewed because he "supported Chinese intel-

telligence agencies' spying and interference activities in Belgium."

The accusations that he recruited intelligence per-

sonnel in the Chinese bu-
siness and academic com-
inity in Belgium were "invented from thin air," Song said.

Song is a professor at Beijing's Renmin Universi-
ty of China who specializes in European studies. For the past three years, he was head of the Confucius Ins-

titute at Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Song returned to China after his visa expired on July 31.

A spokesman for Bel-

gium's VSE state security service declined to discuss the case.

Song said he may have been targeted because he was known for organizing "live" events when he was leading the Confucius Ins-
titute, including monthly gatherings and academic dialogues to which people of all nationalities were in-
vited.

In September, Song ap-

plied from Beijing for vi-
sas to Finland, Austria and Belgium for a work trip. He received a notice from the Belgian immigration bureau saying that he was banned from entering the Schengen Area, which en-
compasses 26 European states that have abolished passport controls.

Song said reports in Belgian media about his alleged ties to Chinese in-

telligence and spying were "fabricated," adding that their descriptions of him as a "hard-liner within the Chinese Communist Par-
ty," were ironic since he's regarded in China as a li-

eral.

According to the Confu-
cius Institute website, there are 184 institutes in Euro-

pe. The schools are hos-

ted by foreign universities through partnerships with Hanban, an affiliate of Chi-

nese Ministry of Education. Hanban provides teachers and directors from China, along with textbooks and startup funding.

Officials in the U.S. and Australia have called Con-
fucius Institutes a threat to national security and a tool for Chinese Communist Party interference in other countries.

A total of 26 have closed since 2014, most since mid-

2018 and many over con-

cerns about free speech, academic freedom and na-
tional security, according to the National Association of Scholars.

Some schools in the U.S. decided to cut ties following the passage of the 2018 National Defense Au-

thorization Act that forbids universities that host the institutes from receiving Defense Department fund-
ing for Chinese language study.
Pakistán

Survivors say burning train took 20 minutes to stop, 74 dead

ASIM TANVEE, MULTAN

A raging fire swept through a train in Pakistan’s eastern Punjab Province yesterday killing 74 people and survivors said afterward it took nearly 20 minutes for the train to stop amid contradictory reports about the condition of the train’s brakes.

Three carriages were consumed by flames from a fire caused by a cooking gas stove and dozens of people jumped in panic from the speeding train.

Conductor Sadiue Ahmed Khan told The Associated Press the train’s emergency braking system was in perfect working order and the train stopped within three minutes after the first signs of fire.

“This is the worst tragedy in my life as a driver,” he said.

Investigators said they will be looking into the train’s braking system to determine its condition at the time of the fire. Survivors recounted pulling at emergency cords that weave through the train to notify the conductor, but they said the train continued to speed down the tracks.

Ghulam Abbas, a passenger who had gotten on the train in the town of Nawabshah in neighboring Sindh Province with his wife and two children, echoed other passengers who said it took nearly 20 minutes for the train to stop. He recounted watching panicked passengers jumping off the speeding locomotive.

“We learned afterward that most of them had died,” he said.

Abbas’ wife, Sulai Khan Bibi, said she was horrified what would happen to their two small children. “We were so close to death, but Allah saved us,” she said, clutching the children.

The train, which was traveling from the southern Arabian Sea port city of Karachi to Rawalpindi, just 10 kilometers (6 miles) from the federal capital, was carrying 857 passengers. Most of the dead were members of Tableeghi-jamaat, an organization of Islamic missionaries. The fire was believed to have started in their compartment.

Mufti Wahab, a district chief of the Tableeghi-jamaat, said as many as 52 members of his organization were “murdered because of the fire.”

The fire apparently started after one of several small stoves brought on to the train by the Tableeghi members exploded, setting other gas cylinders used to fuel the stoves on fire, said Deputy Railways Commissioner Jamil Ahmed.

Flames roared through the train engulfing three carriages as it approached the town of Liaquatpur in Punjab. Survivors recounted horrific scenes of fellow passengers screaming as they jumped through windows and off the train, flames billowing from the carriages.

“We could hear people crying and screaming for help,” said Chaudhry Shujaat, who had boarded the train just a few hours earlier with his wife and two children.

“I thought we would die. The next car was on fire. We felt so helpless.”

Kareem Ulhaq, an official with the district emergency services, said of the 43 people injured, 11 were still in critical condition. Seven of them had jumped off the train — many to their deaths — after the fire broke out and before it eventually screeched to a halt, said Ahmed, the railways official.

In Pakistan, poor passengers often bring their own small gas stoves on the trains to cook their meals, despite rules to the contrary, according to Railways Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed. Safety regulations are often ignored in the overcrowded trains.

Railway official Shabir Ahmed said bodies of passengers were scattered over a 2 kilometer (1 mile)-wide area around the site.

People from nearby villages rushed to the train, carrying buckets of water and shovels to help douse the flames. “But it was impossible,” said Ahmed.

Through the morning hours, rescue workers and inspectors sifted through the charred wreckage, looking for survivors and aiding the injured. Local Pakistani TV footage from the scene showed a huge blaze raging as firefighters struggled to get it under control.

Officials said they were still trying to identify the victims and that the lists of fatalities and those injured were not ready yet. Another train was dispatched to bring the survivors to the city of Rawalpindi, they said.

Yasmin Rashid, a provincial minister in Punjab, told reporters that medical staff were providing the best possible treatment for the injured at a hospital in Liaquatpur.

Those critically injured were taken by ambulance to the city of Multan, the largest city nearest to the site of the accident.

Pakistan’s military said troops were also participating in the rescue operation. Prime Minister Imran Khan issued statements expressing their sorrow over the tragedy.

Khan took to Twitter to offer his condolences to the families of those killed and say he was praying for the speedy recovery of the injured. He also ordered an urgent investigation into the incident.

Cambodia

Police say body of missing British tourist found at sea

The body of a British backpacker missing for more than a week in Cambodia was found on a rock near the edge of the ocean.

The Facebook page of Cambodia’s deputy navy chief also reported the discovery.

Authorities had launched an intensive land, air and sea search that was joined by members of the woman’s family who came after learning she was missing.

Bambridge’s family had speculated that she might have become lost in the heavy jungle in the island’s interior, but Cambodian officials had leaned toward the theory that she drowned because her bag with money and a cellphone was found on a rock near the site of the accident.

Police yesterday about 100 kilometers from the coastal city of Sihanoukville, where she disappeared, officials said.

The police chief for Preah Sihanouk province, Maj. Gen. Chhune Nain, said the body of 21-year-old Amelia Bambridge was discovered in the Gulf of Thailand northwest of Koh Rong, where she disappeared after attending a beach party on the night of Oct. 23.

It was found near another island, Koh Chhlam, close to Cambodia’s marine time border with Thailand.

The Facebook page of Cambodia’s deputy navy chief also reported the discovery.

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Her brother, Harry Bambridge, who took part in the search, posted a message on his Facebook page last night saying he had seen the body and could confirm it was Amelia.

“I am so sorry to all her friends and family there is nothing more I wanted than to bring her back alive,” he wrote. “And I’m sorry to you Amelia Bambridge the round is on me when we meet again in heaven.”

Deputy Navy Commander Tea Sokha said the body had been spotted by a fisherman, who notified authorities. He said it was identified by the clothing and tattoos, which matched photos of the woman taken on the night she disappeared.

The body was taken to Sihanoukville Referral Hospital in Cambodia’s main coastal city. Sihanoukville. Tea Sokha said forensic experts would confirm the identification and examine the body for the cause of death.

Bambridge’s mother, father, sister and brother have been on Koh Rong and in Sihanoukville in recent days, but it was unclear if anyone other than her brother had viewed the body.

AP
The opposition Labour Party kicked off its campaign for Britain’s December general election with one overriding message yesterday: It’s not just about Brexit.

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn put the emphasis firmly on economic and social issues, calling the Dec. 12 vote a once-in-a-generation chance to transform the country. All seats in the 650-seat House of Commons are up for grabs in the early election, chosen by Britain’s 46 million eligible voters.

In his first stump speech of the six-week campaign, Corbyn outlined the left-of-center party’s plan to take on the “vested interests” and “born to rule” elites that he said are hurting ordinary people. The stance was an attempt to pivot the election battle away from the political turmoil swirling around Britain’s stalled departure from the European Union.

Returning to his party’s core issues, Corbyn called out prominent business leaders — including media mogul Rupert Murdoch and aristocratic landowner the Duke of Westminster — as he painted Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s Conservatives as champions of the wealthy few.

“We’re going after the tax dodgers. We’re going after the dodgy landlords. We’re going after the bad bosses. We’re going after the big polluters. Because we know whose side we’re on,” Corbyn told supporters at a rally in London.

Britain was supposed to leave the EU yesterday, and Johnson spent months vowing that Brexit would happen on schedule, “come what may.” But after Johnson failed to get British lawmakers to pass his Brexit divorce deal with the bloc, the EU granted Britain a three-month delay, setting a new Brexit deadline of Jan. 31.

Johnson pushed to have this election two years early in order to break the parliamentary deadlock over Brexit.

While Johnson’s Conservatives have a wide lead in most opinion polls, analysts say the election is unpredictable because Brexit cuts across traditional party loyalties. For many voters, their identities as “leavers” or “remainers” are more important than party affiliation.

The prime minister plans to campaign as a Brexit champion and blame his opponents for the delay.

“Today should have been the day that Brexit was delivered and we finally left the EU,” Johnson planned to say in later campaign stops, according to his office. “But despite the great new deal I agreed with the EU, Jeremy Corbyn refused to allow that to happen — insisting upon more dither, more delay and more uncertainty for families and business.”

Labour is hoping that voters want to talk about issues such as health care, the environment and social welfare — all of which saw years of funding cuts by Conservative governments — instead of more Brexit debates.

The party is divided between those such as Corbyn, who are determined to go through with Brexit, and others who want to remain in the EU. After much internal wrangling, Labour now says if it wins the election, it will negotiate a better withdrawal agreement with the EU, then call a referendum where voters will be able to choose between that Brexit deal and remaining in the bloc. It has not said which side it would support.

“The prime minister wants you to believe that we’re having this election because Brexit is being blocked by an establishment elite,” Corbyn said. “People aren’t fooled so easily. They know the Conservatives are the establishment elite.” AP
Indiana have so-called “fertility fraud” laws, but Colorado in 1979 to 1985.

Health Care of Western Colorado, where the suit claims he been licensed to practice medicine in Colorado on July if he’d donated his own sperm to father the children.

Health Care of Western Colorado, where the suit claims he been licensed to practice medicine in Colorado on July if he’d donated his own sperm to father the children.

He informed the Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of his decision at around 1800 on Thursday. Sir Geoffrey said the reasons for his resignation were the prime minister’s policies towards Europe and her opposition to a single European currency. He is the fourth member of the cabinet to leave after disputes over Europe. The prime minister is said to have had no prior warning that Sir Geoffrey had decided to go.

A statement from the prime minister’s office said Mrs Thatcher and Sir Geoffrey had talked for 30 minutes before she accepted his resignation “more in sorrow than in anger”.

Sir Geoffrey, 63, was the last remaining member of Mrs Thatcher’s original 1979 cabinet. He served as both chancellor and foreign secretary.

A short statement from Sir Geoffrey was read to journalists by his parliamentary private secretary, David Harris. There were few details but Mr Harris told reporters Sir Geoffrey had no intention of challenging for the party leadership. “I have absolute authority from Sir Geoffrey to say that there is no question of his standing against Mrs Thatcher in a leadership election,” Mr Harris said.

Labour leader Neil Kinnock said Mrs Thatcher had warned that Sir Geoffrey had decided to go.

The Labour MP Dennis Healey once famously said being attacked by Geoffrey Howe was “being savaged by a dead sheep”.

The former deputy PM’s attack on Mrs Thatcher in a dramatic resignation speech on 13 November ultimately led to her downfall.

The speech spurred Mrs Thatcher’s long-time adversary, Michael Heseltine, to stand against her in a leadership contest. When she failed to win the contest outright in the first round, Mrs Thatcher resigned. Geoffrey Howe retired from the Commons in 1992 and was given a life peerage taking the title Baron Howe of Aberavon.
If you want to have a unique day, all you need to do is take a unique approach. All you need to do is see things from another perspective—view the world from an audience you may entertain.

SUDOKU

CROSSWORDS

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS
LOCAL rugby team the Macau Bats competed in their first festival of the new season held at King's Park, Hong Kong last weekend. The festival hosts were USRC Tigers and the tournament kicked off on a warm and sunny morning. First up were the U7s against the Tigers. The young Bats played some good, flowing rugby and secured a 2-1 victory over the hosts. This was followed by draws, (2-2) against Sandy Bay and Hong Kong Football Club (HKFC), also 2-2, before a 1-3 loss to Valley Fort.

The U8s also had a mixed set of results - a win against Tai Hang Tung, a 2-2 draw with the Flying Kukris and losses against Valley Fort (1-3) and Sandy Bay (2-3). The team showed enough promise to be optimistic about upcoming tournaments. Meanwhile the U9s got off to an impressive start with wins over Sandy Bay (2-0), East Kowloon (4-1) and Shatin Sha Pei (6-1). The Bats came up against a good Tin Shui Wan Eagles team and lost an exciting game 2-4.

The U10s arrived with a depleted squad, however reinforced with some last minute additions the team went on to record four victories - 2-0 in a very tough game against South Lantau Buffaloes followed by wins over Shatin Sha Pei (3-1), HKFC (5-2) and Tai Po (6-1). Last up at King’s Park were the U11s who started with a 2-4 loss to South Lantau Buffaloes in what was a very even game until the Bats let in two late tries. However spirits soared as the Bats showed a more determined and ruthless streak in beating Tigers 5-0. The Bats continued their fine play against HKFC and quickly led 5-0 lead with a series of strong scores before letting Football Club back into the game for a final 6-3 score.

Over at Happy Valley on Hong Kong island the U12s were playing in the Bowl competition of the Richard Hawkes Cup. The Bats won their group with two wins and a draw to play in the final. This also ended in a 1-1 draw and will see the Bats promoted for the next round of the competition in November.

To complete a busy day of rugby the U19s played last season's champions USRC Tigers. The Bats acquitted themselves well, scoring three tries before going down 30-19 to a very good Tigers team. However, the team should take encouragement from how competitively they played against one of the favourites for the overall championship.
England, Boks meet in a final not for the faint-hearted

Steve Douglas, Tokyo

Saturday, 17:00
England v South Africa
H 1.53, D 26, A 3.1

During one of England’s practice sessions this week, front-rower Kyle Sinckler donned a hoodie and a pair of boxing gloves and started throwing punches, sparring with his strength-and-conditioning coach. What better way to prepare for what could prove to be the most brutal Rugby World Cup final there has ever been.

After six weeks, 47 games and one deadly typhoon that briefly wreaked havoc with the first World Cup to be staged in Asia, the winner of rugby’s biggest prize will be determined in a contest between the two most physically intimidating teams around.

England vs. South Africa.

“What we are going to witness,” England coach Eddie Jones said this week, is the “two most powerful rugby teams in the world.”


They are all words or phrases that best describe the task accorded to players and coaches in news conferences across Tokyo this week in relation to a final that will not be for the faint-hearted.

“We are going to see who is the bravest, who crosses that line, who wants to dominate the opposition,” said South Africa flanker Pieter-Scheep ter Du Toit, clearly relishing what lies ahead.

The Springboks World Cup winners in 1995 and 2007, and 2003 champion England have long prided themselves on their physicality. In one encounter — at Twickenham in 2009 — the Springboks got particularly nasty; then-South Africa captain Corne Krige lost his cool and swung a punch at an Englishman — only to rue and knock out his own flyhalf, Andre Pretorius.

One tweet, sent by former Ireland international Stephen Ferris during the Bok ten game on Saturday, showed the Springboks squad posing for a photo with their jerseys off and muscles flexed. It is quite a sight.

Three members of South Africa’s starting pack tomorrow are more than two meters tall. The eight-man forward pack weighs a combined 927 kilograms, 7 kilograms more than England’s.

The challenge has been laid.

“Tackles have increased, the physicality has increased,” England wing Jack Nowell said this week.

“The Springboks are a massive, massive team. They are all words or phrases that best describe the task accorded to players and coaches in news conferences across Tokyo this week in relation to a final that will not be for the faint-hearted.”

“The challenge has been laid,” England coach Eddie Jones said this week. “When you’re playing with your adrenaline pumping, you want to dominate the opposition.”

Jones said, “We have the opportunities to break the game up, we are then confident and composed enough to take them.”

The only northern hemisphere country to win the World Cup, England would want no less than a title to consolidate the contest other than Jones, a wily Australian working with a fourth different country in nine editions of the tournament.

Jones led Australia to the 2003 final, consulted to the Springboks’ winning campaign in 2007 — when they beat England 15-6 over New Zealand in the semifinals — that might go down as England’s greatest ever performance, considering how comfortably the defending two-time champions All Blacks were smothered.

If England wins tomorrow, it will have beaten all three of the traditional southern-hemisphere heavyweights in the knockouts, a feat certainly deserving of the title.

And it will mark an amazing turnaround from the 2015 tournament in which England hosted and exited at the pool stage in embarrassing, unprecedented fashion.

The Springboks will start as underdogs but will be tough to subdue, having only lost once in 2019 — against New Zealand in the pool stage. They broke the hearts of host nation Japan in the quarterfinals and exuded an ugly victory over Wales in the semis.

Rassie Erasmus took charge in early 2018 with the Springboks low on belief and ideas. He has got them playing to their strengths again — the set-piece, heavy defense and a strong, tactical kicking game — and the results have followed.

“They’ve got a history of being the most physically intimidating team in the world,” Jones said, “so we’ve got to make that way from them.”

The sight of South Africa being led out by Siya Kolisi, the first black player to be appointed Springboks captain, will also be poignant for a country that is still trying to fully emerge from the apartheid era.

All Blacks aim to start next World Cup streak with bronze

Friday, 17:00
New Zealand v Wales
H 1.1, D 61, A 11

A painful knockout loss in the 2015 final was the catalyst for an All Blacks resurgence that led to unprecedented Rugby World Cup success.

In his last game in charge, Steve Hansen wants his players to use another painful defeat as inspiration for a new dynasty for New Zealand’s rugby team.

A 19-7 semifinal loss to England last weekend has the two-time defending champions playing Wales on the next-to-last day of the World Cup — for third place.

“It is different. You can’t just lie down. There’s a lot of pain involved and a lot of hurt, but you’ve just got to make that work for you,” Hansen said. The quarterfinal loss to France in 2007 “has earned us two World Cups because it’s created a real pain that’s personal and deep inside you.”

When you have adversity in sport, it makes you tougher,” Hansen and Wayne Smith were assistants to Graham Henry 12 years ago when the All Blacks were upset in Cardiff. The squad decamped almost immediately.

“The last time we didn’t get another opportunity to play a game,” Hansen said. “We had to wait four years to get it out of our system.”

And get it out of their systems they did.

The coaching staff was retained, and it rebuilt the team that won the World Cup on home soil in 2011, ending a 24-year title drought. Hansen took over and led the All Blacks to victory in 2015 in England, when the home team was unceremoniously bundled out in the pool stage. The All Blacks were the first back-to-back Rugby World Cup winners.

“Some people externally may be saying there’s nothing on it, there’s no pressure, so therefore they’ll throw the ball around,” he said. But, “there is a lot on the match; their whole year will be forgotten if they win this game.”

Wales, on the other side, has “the chance to create a little bit of history against the All Blacks,” Gatland said. “It has been a long time, 66 years, not to beat a side. We have had success against every other nation. The All Blacks have been that elusive team we have not been able to conquer.”

MTD/AP

Lineups


ENGLAND: Elliot Daly, Anthony Watson, Manu Tuilagi, Owen Farrell (captain), Jonny May, George Ford, Ben Youngs; Billy Vunipola, Sam Underhill, Tom Curry, Courtney Lawes, Marco Rojo, Kyle Sinckler, Jamie George, Makazole Mapimpi, Handre Pollard, Owen Farrell (captain), Sam Underhill, Lewis Ludlam, Billy Vunipola, Reserves: Luke Cowan-Dickie, Joe Marler, Dan Cole, George Kruis, Mark Wilson, Ben Spencer, Harry Stade, Jonathan Joseph.


RUGBY WORLD CUP

England's coach Eddie Jones

South Africa's coach Rassie Erasmus

England, Boks meet in a final not for the faint-hearted


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MTD/AP
**Obsolescent Mind**

Obsolescence: I’ve always had to rely on the spe-lly checker for the spelling. Sometimes maybe it's a subconscious attempt to deny the existence of the commercial form of this phenomena. From the ludicrous idea that computers have existed of 30 years in the new world, to the need to renovate, renew and replace almost everything with the season, obsolescence is our way of life. We tend to replace rather than maintain our belongings.

You might consider daring the holes in that gorgeous Scottish lambswool cardigan your mother bought on that trip to the UK, but most things of lesser quality and sentimental value will more likely end up being chuck out in our lives of abundan- ce, the new is simpler.

A property I bought in 2009 had a quality SMEG refrigerator built into the kitchen cabinetry. The build in nature suggested longevity was intended in the design, and the SMEG Italian reputation was consistent with that idea. As can be guessed, 10 years on, and in the moist climate of Macau where even the best appliances fast deteriorate, the tenant noted his electricity bill soar and narrowed it down to the seals on the frig.

Property management was approached for direction. The cost of a repair man, on the basis that if it were happening with one fringe in the block, it would be happening with others. A sita comes out to look, the seal is no longer available and gives us a quote on the only refrigerator which will fit the cabinet. Gotcha!

HKD12,000 for a new Italian fringe with only 1-year warranty, but with a generous discount for lucky me. Installation of HKD650 and - this is perfectly good fridge that only needs replacement seals.

Hitting a brick wall with the local repair fellow, the throw-away mentality and the joy in the brand-s- panning new, I go to work contacting SMEG from Melbourne to Milano for spare parts. I reason that given the quality reputation of the brand and Eu- rope’s refusal to continue to put up with planned obsolescence, this corporation will find them on a shelf somewhere.

A warning: there is tedium in the process to beat the planned obsolescence paradigm. (And should you consider a 10-year fringe beyond bothering with, my point is made.) After a couple of days of emails to SMEG I got through to a Sydney-ite who asked for the compliance plate details. A day later the tenant was its site and a picture was sent off to the spare parts department. A few days later, another email with the same response as Macau, no parts, sorry, but they suggested I might try my luck with SMEG Italy.

One wrong email address and after a couple of days I tried another to be sent an auto-response to expect an email within 3 working days. And this is where the quality name let me down: no indication of spare parts availability, just to contact the local representative!

In one last ditch effort to keep a good fridge working, calls were made to Hong Kong. From a process that began in September, this week, I found the seals for 50% down payment, HKD3,480 for the two sets of “gaskets”, HKD350 inspection fee, and a five-week lead time.

With this type of obsolescence, we don’t own what we have. Without the right to readily repair applian- ces, we are only using their utility for a limited time. A one-year warranty is effectively a lease on utility for one year, anything more is just luck.

The cost of obsolescence is that we are forced to replace the embodied resources of the material, pro- duction and transport and disposal management along the supply chain of a new HKD12,000++ re- frigerator - for one year! Cold comfort and expen- sive cold beer!

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**US official urges ASEAN to stand up in sea row**

A senior U.S. official urged Southeast Asian nations meeting this weekend in Bangkok to put up a stiffer resistance to China’s militarization of the disputed South China Sea.

At the same time, David Stilwell, the U.S. assistant secretary of state for East Asia and the Pacific, sought to downplay Chinese concerns over U.S. involvement in the region.

He told a forum in Malaysia that the concept of a fire and open Indo-Pacific region was not to expand U.S. dominance but reflected Washington’s “enduring engagement” to make the area prosperous.

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**Poll: Trump Approval Steady as Impeachment Rages**

President Donald Trump’s approval rating is holding steady as the House presses forward with an impeachment probe that could imperil his presidency, according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

But there are warn- ing signs in the survey for Trump.

Though Trump remains overwhelmingly popular within his own party, some Republicans have a critical view of the president’s ho- nesty, his discipline and his respect for America’s demo- cratic norms. Overall, 61% of Americans say Trump has little or no respect for the country’s democratic institu- tions and traditions, an issue that strikes at the heart of the impeachment inquiry focused in part on whether he sought a foreign government’s help for personal political gain.

Trump has foug- ht back against the House probe with the same strategy that has bunted him throughout the other investigations and contro- versies that have consumed his three first years in office, launching the investigations as politically motivated and repeatedly disparaging his opponents, often in biring personal terms. Republicans are so far sticking with him, with 85% saying they apro- ve of Trump.

“The Democrats will not let the president do his job,” said Robert Little, a 73-year-old Republican from Kannahsp, North Car-olina. “Ever since he’s been in office, he’s done a lot of good things for the United States, but the Democrats’ constant is to get rid of Trump.”

Overall, 42% of Americans approve of Trump’s handling of the job, in line with where he has been throughout his tenure. Just 7% of Demo- crats have a positive view of Trump as president.

Trump’s job approval rating and other markers in the survey underscore the deeply divisive nature of his presidency, with Re- publicans largely favoring the economy, including a quarter of Democrats. Democrats, in contrast, inherited a growing economy from his predecessor, Barack Obama, and the trajectory has remained positive with the unem- ployment rate hovering below 4%. But economists have warned that Trump’s push to levy tariffs China puts economic gains at risk, and a majority of Americans, 55%, disapprove of Trump’s handling of trade negotia- tions with other countries.

Americans are more cri- tical of Trump’s handling of foreign policy, with 59% dis- sappropoing of how he’s han- dling that issue.

The poll is also skeptical that Trump’s ac- tions as president have been good for America’s standing in the world; 46% said his policies have done more harm than good, while 59% said they have had a more positive im- pact.

The poll was conducted almost entirely before Trump an- nounced on Sunday that Is- lamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi had been killed in a U.S. raid in Syria.

Trump was elected in 2016 with low marks from majorities on his handling of foreign policy, with 59% disappo- inting signs in the survey for his handling of the job, in line with where he has been throughout his tenure. Just 7% of Demo- crats have a positive view of Trump as president.

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**Syria The Islamic State group declared a new leader after it confirmed the death of its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (pictured) days earlier in a U.S raid in Syria. In its audio release by the Is central media arm, al-Furqan Foundation, a new spokesman for ISIS identified the successor as Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi — tracing his lineage, like al-Baghdadi, to the Prophet Muhammad’s Quraysh tribe.**

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**Spain’s interim leader has offered to have Madrid host an international U.N. climate summit next month that was originally scheduled to be held in Chile. Chilean President Sebastian Piñera yesterday (Macau time) canceled plans to host the Dec. 2-3 climate gathering, as well as a summit of South- American leaders, to focus on restoring security in his rift-torn country.**

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**USA Strong winds fanned new Southern California wildfires burning homes and forcing residents to flee their homes in a repeat of the frightening scenario already faced by tens of thousands across the state. The latest blazes erupted in the heavily populated inland region east of Los Angeles.**

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**Germany Judges throw out a lawsuit by three farming families who had taken Chancellor Angela Merkel’s government to court and argued that it wasn’t doing enough to tackle climate change. The EU court had ordered Germany to halt new coal plants and make an attempt in Germany to hold authorities legally accountable for pledges they have made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.**