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A JAPAN LAWMAKER WAS ARRESTED ON SUSPICION OF BEING BRIBED BY A SHENZHEN-BASED COMPANY SEEKING TO INVEST IN CASINOS P5

BISHOP STEPHEN LEE ENCOURAGES BELIEVERS TO RESIST CONSUMERISM P7

HONG KONGERS ARE HUNTING FOR HOMES ALL OVER THE WORLD AS ANTI-GOV'T PROTESTS LOOK SET TO DRAG INTO THE NEW YEAR P9



Indonesia Thousands of people knelt in prayer in Aceh province at ceremonies yesterday marking the 15th anniversary of the Indian Ocean tsunami, one of modern history's worst natural disasters.



Indonesia People along a swath of southern Asia gazed at the sky in marvel on yesterday at a "ring of fire" solar eclipse. The so-called annular eclipse, in which a thin outer ring of the sun is still visible, could be seen along a path stretching from India and Pakistan to Thailand and Indonesia.



Philippines A strong typhoon that barreled through the central Philippines left at least 20 people dead and forced thousands to flee their homes, devastating Christmas celebrations in the predominantly Catholic country. Typhoon Phanfone stranded many people in sea and airports at the peak of holiday travel, set off landslides, flooded low-lying villages, destroyed houses, downed trees and electrical poles and knocked out power in entire provinces. One disaster response officer described the battered coastal town of Batad in Iloilo province as a "ghost town" on Christmas Day.

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THE QATAR GAP

MACAU FALLS BEHIND IN RACE TO BECOME WORLD'S RICHEST PLACE P3



FLORIAN WEHDE

HO IAT SENG RETURNS FROM GUANGDONG TRADE MISSION P2



The liberalization of the conservative monarchy is a staggering pivot from just three years ago, when religious police would storm restaurants playing music and harass women for showing their face



WONG PRESIDES OVER INAUGURATION OF NEW PSP COMMANDER

The Secretary for Security, Wong Sio Chak, presided over the swearing-in ceremony of the new Commissioner of the Public Security Police Force, Ng Kam Wa. According to the government, Ng will hold the post for a period of one year. Since 2017, the official has served as a deputy commander at the Civil Protection Operations Centre. Managed by the Unitary Police Service, the Civil Protection Operations Centre aims to enhance the coordination of security forces in the event of major security incidents or crises in the territory.

LAWMAKER WANTS TO PROTECT YOUTH FROM GAMBLING

Lawmaker Lam Lon Wai wants the city to prevent local underaged citizens from becoming addicted to gambling. In his interpellation, Lam wants the local government to raise awareness about gaming addiction in local parents, schools and organizations, and carry out promotional and educational work on relevant topics. Earlier, Macau's Health Bureau (SSM) claimed it would list gaming addiction as a mental illness. Lam expressed concern that, since Macau currently records only a small number of medical treatment requests for gaming addiction, the existence of undiscovered cases of gaming addiction is probable. Lam wants to know if the local government will conduct research on the prevalence of gaming addiction in Macau.

EXPLANATION WANTED FOR 'TALENTED PEOPLE' DEPARTMENT

Lawmaker Ella Lei wants to know the local government's plan for a human resources management department. Such a department has been planned to train talented professionals for all of Macau's industries. In Lei's opinion, the five-year development plan proposed strategic goals for training and development of industry experts, but specific measures for long-term mechanisms have been insufficient for many years, producing few results. The plan proposes actively studying skilled worker immigration policies. Lei thinks that there are loopholes in supervision and misuse in the measures, with abuses continuing to occur.

HO IAT SENG RETURNS FROM TRADE MISSION IN GUANGDONG



JULIE ZHU

CHIEF Executive Ho Iat Seng has reiterated the two major priorities of his administration: to improve the livelihoods of local people and to enhance the communication and cooperation between Macau and mainland China.

Just days after his stepping into office, Ho visited Guangzhou and Zhuhai.

Leading a large trade delegation to Guangzhou, Ho met with Li Xi, Party secretary of Guangdong, and provincial governor Ma Xingrui to discuss how to expand economic ties between the two regions amid Macau's ambitious task of diversifying its economy. Currently, Macau relies primarily on the gaming and tourism sectors for economic development.

According to China Daily, Li said the province fully supports Macau's economic development and urged both sides to seize the opportunities brought about by the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area in the coming years.

"Guangdong expects to accelerate the construction of the Hengqin New Area, which is adjacent to Macau," Li said, as cited by China Daily, adding that investors from Macau are also playing

an important role in the creation of an industrial park devoted to the science and technology of traditional Chinese medicine.

Guangdong wants to increase the infrastructure connectivity of the two regions and expand exchanges of young people to take cooperation to a new level, he said.

Ho and his delegation, which included senior officials and business executives, also visited major projects funded by Macau investors in Zhuhai before ending their two day tour and returning to Macau.

Hengqin has so far attracted about 3,100 companies from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. Of those, more than half are funded by money from Macau.

His delegation, which included several policy secretaries, also visited the new and still under-construction Zhuhai-Macau Border in Hengqin. The new border will only be open to traffic after Macau establishes laws regarding its operation.

Macau's local urban renewal company has already started preparatory works for the Macau New Community in Hengqin. Part of the works can be disclosed to the public soon, according to Ho. The local government is still discussing land topics concerning the project with Hengqin.

Ho also said yesterday that he plans to enhance the effectiveness of government meetings. His message resonates with his accusations of inefficiency and waste in the previous administration, made in an interview with TDM Chinese earlier this month.

On the subject of his first working week, Ho said that he is temporarily using the Moorish Barracks as his office. Once the government completes office clearance procedures, the majority of secretaries will be able to move into the Government Headquarters as their permanent base.

On December 20, the Executive Council (ExCo) held its first meeting. Ho said that the ExCo has not managed to study Xi Jinping's message, but in the near future, Ho will discuss the protocols and systems with members of the Council.

Asked yesterday about the new office headed by the former Secretary for Administration and Justice, Sonia Chan, Ho explained that the office will standardize public asset funds, relevant application requirements as well as relevant standards and criteria.

SECURITY: POLICE WORK IS ALWAYS ONGOING

Besides Ho, Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak, and

Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong, also spoke with the media yesterday.

Wong said that the police force's work is always ongoing and that he will consider how to advance relevant works in accordance with Ho's new policy concepts.

Five years ago, the security forces proposed active policing, community policing, and public relations. In order to coordinate with the Chief Executive's requirement for innovation, these three police policies are said to require updates.

According to Wong, the security force must constantly adjust to the demands and expectations of the citizens.

ECONOMY: A REVIEW OF THE PAST 20 YEARS

Asked about the city's gaming concessions, which are due to expire in 2022, Secretary for Economy and Finance said he would first review the past 20 years of experience in the gaming industry, follow current relevant regimes and then review and modify the laws.

Commenting on casino employees' casino entry ban, which comes into effect today, Lei believes that it will take the public some time to adapt to the law.

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Macau won't overtake Qatar as richest economy after all

RENATO MARQUES

MACAUI will not overtake Qatar next year to become the world's richest economy, but will instead lose its second-place ranking to Luxembourg within a few years.

Back in 2018, a forecast from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicted that Macau would soon become the richest place worldwide in terms of per capita gross domestic product. The widely cited forecast, measured with purchasing power parity, found that Macau would surpass the Middle Eastern country by 2020 when its per capita gross domestic product would reach \$143,116 (about MOP1.15 million), compared to Qatar's \$139,151.

However, the most updated report from the IMF now forecasts that Macau will continue to trail Qatar in 2020, reaching only \$113,350, and less than the \$122,489 recorded in 2018. At the same time, Qatar is expected to reach \$138,910, which represents



an increase of about \$10,000 when compared to 2018.

The significant revision comes as Macau's economy entered recession this year for the first time since the VIP gambling crunch of 2014. The latest forecast of the Economist Intelligence Unit suggests that the economy will contract at a rate of 5.2% in 2019. It also predicts that the territory will only return to growth in 2021.

The IMF prediction equally expects a prolonged contraction. It expects that by 2021, Macau may even lose its second place to Luxembourg, which is predicted to reach \$115,190, while Macau will stabilize at \$113,570.

Moreover, if the forecasts are proven correct, Macau's sluggish economic growth will see it fall behind Singapore in terms of per capita gross domestic

product by 2023.

According to World Bank data, the per capita gross domestic product in Macau was last recorded at the end of 2018 at \$108,831 when adjusted for purchasing power parity. The purchasing power is determined by the relative cost of living and inflation rates in different countries.

Despite its small decline, the figure is still equivalent to 613% of

the world's average.

The World Bank also records Macau's all-time high in 2013 when it reached \$134,960. In the opposite direction, Macau's lowest point on record occurred in 1990 when, under Portuguese administration at the time, the territory had a per capita gross domestic product of \$40,380.

Local economist Albano Martins told the Times yesterday that the contraction in the economy might be related to the lack of clarity over the renewal of the gaming licenses. "Until the new gaming licenses are clarified, the economy will be dragging," he surmised.

Back in 2018, Martins and fellow economist José Luis de Sales Marques had warned the Times that the figures forecasted by the IMF could be misleading because Macau has a very small population when compared to other regions and countries featured in the same report.

The economists also highlighted the flaws with using this sole indicator to reflect the wealth of an economy, noting that it was "theoretical wealth" and did not shed any light on the distribution of wealth.

Nevertheless, Sales Marques acknowledged that per capita gross domestic product is a widely used tool for what he described as labelling the "international image of economic performance."

AD

A vibrant advertisement for the New Year's Eve Countdown event. The background is a night sky filled with colorful fireworks. In the foreground, a large, glowing hourglass is positioned on the left. The text "NEW YEAR'S EVE COUNTDOWN" is written in large, bold, golden letters across the center. Above this, the Chinese characters "跨年倒数盛典" are displayed in a similar golden font. Below the Chinese characters, smaller text lists the event features: "Live Band & Dancing Performance, 3D Light and Sound Spectacular, Eiffel Tower Grand Illustration Show, Fireworks Countdown Celebration". Further down, it specifies the location: "The Venetian® Macao Lagoon and Le Jardin at The Parisian Macao" and the date: "31st December, 8PM | Free Entry". At the bottom left, there is a QR code with the text "Scan QR code and learn more". At the bottom right, the Sands Resorts Macao logo is visible, featuring the word "Sands" in a stylized font above "RESORTS MACAO".

BAN ON OFF-DUTY EMPLOYEES ENTERING CASINOS STARTS TODAY

RENATO MARQUES

The law amendment banning gaming industry employees from entering gaming floors when off-duty (Law 17/2018) will be enforced from today.

The measure comes as a way to prevent workers from several departments from accessing casino floors after a number of reports suggested gaming industry workers were vulnerable to gambling addiction.

The restrictions on access apply to employees of gaming concessionaires who work or are responsible for duties at gaming tables, gaming machines, cashiers, public relations, catering, cleaning, security, and surveillance staff in casinos, as well as workers from gaming promoters (junkets) who work in casinos.

As previously mentioned, the provisions restrict these workers from accessing the areas at all times outside of their working schedule and to all casinos and gaming floors from all concessionaires,



whether or not the worker is attempting to access a gaming floor belonging to his employer.

Workers who are found to contravene these provisions may be punished with a fine of up to 10,000 patacas.

Similar to the regime already enforced for civil servants, there is an exception for the first three days of the Lunar

New Year and in situations where there is a legitimate cause.

A legitimate cause could include accessing the gaming floor for training purposes, to complete special work requested by the employer, and activities related to academic research or association-related activities.

In some cases, the worker

will need to submit a form explaining the reasons, location and duration of such activity that would be handled by the Gaming Inspection, and Coordination Bureau (DICJ).

In other cases, prior approval will be required from the DICJ, based on the submission of documents by the entity regarding the training or special work to be done.

TAIWAN BUSTS ONLINE GAMBLING SYNDICATE

TAIWAN'S cybercrime police unit have busted another illegal online gambling ring falsely claiming to be connected to a Macau casino operator.

The telecom division of Taiwan's Criminal Investigation Bureau (CIB) announced last week the arrest of 29 individuals suspected of involvement in an illegal online gambling operation that catered primarily to customers in mainland China and other Asia-Pacific markets.

Acting on a tip, police raided an office complex in Taichung City where they discovered a major online gambling software design and technical support service. Police seized 57 computers, 102 monitors, 12 mobile phones, a number of bank cards and the equivalent of around \$20,000 in various currencies.

The online gambling operations had falsely suggested a connection to the Sands Macao casino, via the use of the property's logo. It also featured images of the Galaxy Macau property.

Macau casino operators routinely find their brands abused by online gambling sites.

According to gambling news website Calvin Ayre, Taiwan has a growing reputation as a tech support hub for China-facing online gambling operations. In September, the CIB disrupted what they described as a "one-stop industrial chain" for several large online gambling sites that reportedly handled a combined annual turnover of \$700 million. **DB/CALVIN AYRE**

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JAPAN

Ruling party lawmaker arrested in casino bribery scandal

TOKYO prosecutors arrested a ruling party lawmaker on suspicion of receiving bribes from a Chinese company seeking to invest in the casino industry, dealing a blow to already unpopular plans to open the country to the gaming industry.

Liberal Democratic Party politician Tsukasa Akimoto, who had served as a vice minister in charge of promoting the establishment of casinos in the country, was arrested Wednesday on suspicion of receiving payoffs of about 3.7 million yen (\$34,000), the Tokyo Public Prosecutor's office said. The bribes included cash, plane tickets and hotel rooms, it said in a statement.

The company was not named in the indictment and prosecutors didn't indicate what he did in return for the bribes. Three others who were related to the company were also arrested, prosecutors said.

The Chinese firm suspected of paying the bribes runs online casinos and is headquartered in the southern city of Shenzhen, according to Kyodo News of Japan. It's also suspected of smuggling several million yen in cash into Japan without declaring it to customs,

according to the report.

Akimoto became the first sitting lawmaker to be arrested in about a decade, according to Kyodo.

"I was not involved in any wrongdoing," Akimoto said on his Twitter feed before the arrest.

The Chinese firm suspected of paying the bribes runs online casinos and is headquartered in the southern city of Shenzhen

The nation legalized casino gambling in 2016 to great excitement in the industry, where many have long tried to get a foot in the door in a potential \$20 billion gaming market. Companies including MGM Resorts International and Las Vegas

Sands Corp. have spent heavily to get access to a gaming market that could become Asia's second-largest after Macau.

Three years later, some of that enthusiasm is wearing off. A number of casino executives, who declined to speak publicly because of the sensitive nature of the casino approval process, told Bloomberg News that the procedure in Japan has been more difficult compared with other markets that have built gaming industries. At least one company, Caesars Entertainment Corp., has pulled out.

Japan's law allows for the establishment of three casino resorts, and Osaka, Yokohama and Tokyo are among the local governments seeking to attract a casino or considering doing so, according to the country's tourism authority. Opinion polls show that the public opposes the idea. **BLOOMBERG**



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LRT RECORDS SECOND MINOR INCIDENT SINCE OPENING

RENATO MARQUES

A Light Rapid Transit (LRT) train failed to stop at Jockey Club station after departing from the terminal station Ocean Gardens last weekend, the LRT Company informed in a statement.

According to the statement, the train was being operated in manual mode and upon its arrival at its first stop, Jockey Club Station, it failed to stop in the designated area. As a result, the LRT doors remained closed and passengers could not get on or off the train.

The LRT Operations Control Center decided to stop the train as a precautionary measure, and instructed staff to move the 60 or so passengers on board to another train to continue the trip.

As a result of the incident, the LRT service was slightly affected, and the train involved in the incident was removed from circulation and taken to the LRT Depot for inspection to ascertain the cause of the incident.



This was the second minor incident since the LRT Taipa line opened to the public on December 10. The first incident occurred on opening day, when a train suffered a malfunction within the first hour of operation. Passengers were asked to disembark at Lotus Checkpoint Station. Later,

the LRT Company explained that the incident was caused by system safety measures and was related to the overloading of one of the carriages.

The LRT was also altered just a few days after opening due to security measures for Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Macau

from December 18 to 20.

The suspension of service started before President Xi's arrival and lasted throughout his three-day stay. In a statement, the operator said that the decision had been made "in coordination with the special security measures of the government."

AIRPORT EXPECTS PASSENGER GROWTH TO REACH 15%

THE Macau International Airport is expecting to finish the year with an aggregate growth in the number of passengers of at least 15%, said Eric Fong, Director of the Marketing Department of Macau International Airport Company Limited (CAM), as quoted by gaming news website GGR Asia.

Fong estimated that the total number of passengers transported via the local airport could reach some 9.5 to 9.6 million by the end of the year. This figure represents an increase of around 15% when compared to 2018, when the airport handled a total of 8.26 million passengers.

The results, if confirmed, represent a significant revision of forecasts made earlier in the year, when CAM said only around 8.7 million passengers were expected in 2019.

Fong said that according to CAM's forecasts, approximately 26,000 daily passenger journeys relied on the local airport in 2019, as well as over 200 daily flight departures and arrivals.

According to the same source, next year the Macau airport will see two additional airlines begin offering flights to and from Macau.

These two new companies will join the 30 airlines reportedly operating via the Macau airport, according to the latest CAM quarterly report. They are linked to a total of 58 destinations in mainland China, and southeast and northeast Asia. RM

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Bishop Lee encourages believers to resist consumerism

MACAUI Bishop Stephen Lee has conveyed the annual traditional Christmas message, encouraging the public to stay away from consumerism and materialism, as previously conveyed by Pope Francis.

The Pope often reminds the public to live a simple life, not a culture of profligacy and abandonment.

"Since the market tends to promote extreme consumerism in an effort to sell its products, people can easily get caught up in a whirlwind of needless buying and spending," the Pope has said, as cited in the second encyclical of Pope Francis. "Indeed, if we do not correct our mindset and allow consumerism and materialism to spread, people will become even more possessive."

Building on this idea, Bishop Lee further remarked that the public needs to understand that the meaning of life is not only in material



Macau's Sé Cathedral seen at night

possessions, but also love, which is the bread of life, quoting a bible verse.

For the Bishop, the key to changing this unhealthy culture cannot be based on technology alone, but rather "should come from a change in man. Otherwise, it will only cure the symptoms and

not the root cause."

He also referenced Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, whom he said "asks us to replace consumption with sacrifice, greed with generosity, wastefulness with a spirit of sharing, and asceticism which entails learning to give, and not

simply to give up."

"In this Christmas season, I encourage you to imitate Jesus in the manger and approach the people around you with a simple, warm heart and attitude. Let us first give more time to infect our family and friends around us with the spirit of joy, gratitude and care," the Bishop said.

"I would also like to remind everyone that the spiritual value of the universal Christmas celebration is the most important and worthy of repeated emphasis," he added.

Further, Pope Francis also delivered a message on Christmas Eve about the essence of Christmas. He called for the believers to remember to do good to their neighbors and the Church.

The Pope frequently emphasizes his call for "personal conversion" in his reform-minded papacy, believing that true reform cannot be imposed from high, but discerned from within. LV

AFFORDABLE HOUSING CRITICIZED BY ASSOCIATION OF SYNERGY

THE Housing Bureau's (IH) application procedures for affordable housing have been criticized by the President of the Association of Synergy of Macao, Lam U Tou, in a letter seen by the Times. The association president claims that some of the practices may be illegal.

In the letter, Lam cited several local residents who complained about IH requiring self-employed applicants and business owner applicants to submit proof of income and a financial report prepared by a registered accountant. Lam said that such requirements never existed in the past.

The association president pointed out that to involve a registered accountant to certify a financial report means that IH is not the only authority to review affordable house applications. In Lam's opinion, IH thereby violates the affordable housing regime.

Lam argued that the SAR government has been encouraging local youth to start businesses and that Macau's self-employed residents generally have small and unstable incomes. Lam also claimed that registered accountants can charge substantial fees.

In conclusion, Lam said that the Housing Bureau's requirements are not aligned with the purpose of the affordable house law, which is intended to assist Macau residents of specific income levels to solve their housing problems. JZ

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ARSONIST EXECUTED OVER KTV FIRE

An arsonist who set a fire in a KTV bar in Guangdong Province that killed 18 people was executed on Tuesday. The death sentence of Liu Chunlu has been reviewed and approved by the Supreme People's Court, the country's top court. At about midnight on April 24, 2018, due to personal dissatisfaction, Liu removed the oil pipe of his motorcycle parked on the first floor of a KTV bar in the city of Yingde, allowing oil to flow onto the ground, and ignited the oil with a lighter. The fire engulfed the lounge, leaving 18 people inside dead, one seriously wounded and two others slightly injured. Liu's close relatives met him before the execution.

SIX DEAD IN BUILDING FIRE

Six were killed in a building fire in Guzhen Township, the city of Zhongshan, south China's Guangdong Province, the local government said. At 2:03 a.m. last Sunday, the local fire department received a report that a fire broke out in a residential building on Jinnan road in the township. The fire was put out at around 3 a.m. So far, six were killed. Further investigation into the cause of the fire is underway.

130 DETAINED OVER TELECOM FRAUD

Police in the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen said they had detained 130 telecom and online fraud suspects in a case involving the infringement of citizens' personal information. In November, police found that bank and mobile cards, as well as citizens' personal information, had been sold by individuals online. According to the police, selling bank cards can enable the scammers to get into the accounts of the victims and use their money, and through phone calls, the suspects can steal money and personal information from the victims.

GUANGZHOU SCIENTISTS FIND HUGE METEOR CRATER IN NORTHEAST CHINA

A team of Chinese scientists, led by the Guangzhou Institute of Geochemistry under the Chinese Academy of Sciences, has discovered a meteor crater with a diameter of 1,850 meters and a depth of 150 meters in Yilan County, northeast China's Heilongjiang Province. The findings were published online on the Chinese Science Bulletin on Tuesday.

Located in the southwestern Lesser Khingan Mountains, the bowl-shaped impact crater is mostly well preserved, with just one-third of its edges eroded. Most of the pit area is covered by white birch.

The findings noted that the Yilan crater was formed on Cretaceous granite bedrock, but the exact date of its formation needs further study. Meanwhile, the lacustrine deposits at the bottom of the crater indicate that there was once a lake at the spot, which disappeared around 10,000 years ago.



This file photo shows an impact crater in Italy

The discovery can provide new evidence of low-altitude glaciers in northeast China in ancient times, and serve as a "natural crater lab" for the future study of planetary science and geology, according to Chen

Ming, a professor with the institute.

Chen determined that such a crater may be found in Yilan County through analyzing satellite images in early 2019.

There are around 190 confirmed impact craters across the world including one in northeast China's Liaoning Province, according to the Earth Impact Database. The Liaoning impact crater was also discovered by a team headed by a researcher of the Guangzhou Institute of Geochemistry.

The meteor craters are significant research tools to better understand the shaping of the Earth today, reported Chinese media. DB/XINHUA

AD

Academic Year 2020/2021

Central Registration for Children Entering Kindergarten for the First Time



Aims: To optimise schools' enrolment mechanism, simplify the procedures that parents complete for their children entering kindergarten for the first time and enable parents to confirm which school to enrol their children as early as possible. Eligibility: Macao residents aged 3 by 31st December, 2020, who will enrol in infant education in Macao for the first time.

Timeline (Year 2020)

Table with 2 columns: Event and Date/Details. Rows include: Enrolment information (Starting from 1st January onwards), Central Registration (Parents register on the DSEJ website or at the DSEJ counters between 6th and 20th January), Schools release the interview date and time (Between 18th and 21st February), School admission interviews (Between 1st and 29th March), Release of the admission list and the period for online confirmation (Release of the admission list on the DSEJ website and at schools on 3rd April), Parents of admitted students register at schools in person (Between 6th and 8th April), Release of the admission list of waitlisted students and parents of waitlisted students go in person to process registration / school transfer procedures (Between 9th and 29th April), Enrolment at other schools (If children have not been admitted to any school until 14th April, i.e. after schools release the admission list of waitlisted students, or parents want to enrol their child in other schools, parents can visit the DSEJ website to check the status of K1 places available at different schools, and go to the schools that still accept enrolment for enquiries and registration).

Gentle Reminder:

- To enrol in Macao schools, non-Macao residents must possess a stay or residence permit for over 90 days issued by the authorised entity of the Macao SAR. Parents must process the registration at any of the DSEJ counters. Schools set no limit to the number of registrants and interviewees. There is also no priority for early registration in the Central Registration system. Therefore, parents do not need to rush to be the first to register. Parents only need to bring the identification document(s) of their children to the school to process the registration or school transfer procedure according to the requirement of the schools. The DSEJ will provide "Service of consultation and arrangement of school places" to parents who are in need.

For enquiries : 8397 2309 For details, please browse DSEJ website : www.dsej.gov.mo



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HK residents eye homes overseas as protests drag on

SHAWNA KWAN, EMILY CADMAN & NATALIE WONG

RESIDENTS of Hong Kong are hunting for homes all over the world as tense anti-government protests look set to drag into the new year.

Real estate brokers from Australia to Canada have seen a surge in interest over the past few weeks, with the desire to secure a safer future prompting many to look beyond the Asian financial hub.

"There's been an increase in capital outflows from Hong Kong-based investors into other major global real estate markets, with Australia, Singapore, Japan and the U.S. all seeing an increase in purchasing activity," said Ben Burston, Knight Frank LLP's Aus-

tralia-based chief economist.

Pro-democracy protests that erupted in June have crippled the city's economy and caused huge inconvenience to people's daily lives. The police have fired more than 16,000 rounds of tear gas over the past six months while black-clad protesters have vandalized transport facilities and pro-China shops.

Thousands of demonstrators swamped the central business district Monday opposing the arrest of four people connected to a group that helps the protest movement. Hong Kong has even canceled its traditional New Year's Eve fireworks over security concerns, the latest popular event to be scrapped.

Fed up, some residents are planning a move elsewhere.

"I have to come up with a back-

up plan," said Cat Liu, a salesperson in her 40s who's considering buying an apartment in Taiwan or Malaysia, partly because of the current political situation. "The situation hasn't gotten any better. Both sides are standing firm and there's no way to reach a compromise."

Even though Asian destinations offer more affordable investment opportunities for the middle class in Hong Kong, the more affluent tend to opt for properties in the West. Australia is also an attractive choice.

"Buyer interest from Hong Kong has stepped up considerably compared to what we've seen in the past two years," said CBRE Group Inc.'s Australia residential director, Colin Griffin. "Safety concerns for families due to the recent riots have been driving the

increased interest, with Australia viewed as a safe haven."

CBRE expects the high-end residential sector will be supported by overseas investors, particularly those from Hong Kong and mainland China.

To that end, it recently launched an offering called The Penthouse Collection, with a focus on luxury apartments in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and the Gold Coast. The units will boast extras such as private lifts, wine cellars and rooftop pools, in addition to valet and concierge services.

CBRE in Australia plans to work with CBRE offices in Hong Kong and mainland China to target prospective purchasers. The properties average AUD20 million (\$13.8 million), with some costing upwards of AUD30 million.

"These buyers are looking at trophy homes and are prepared to pay a premium in order to secure top-end properties," Griffin said.

Generally through, most Hong Kongers are looking at the under AUD2 million price point, he said. Around AUD1 million will buy you a two-bedroom apartment that's not too distant from a capital city's center. Inquiries are increasingly from people wanting to live in the units, rather than use them as investment properties.

"Normally in Hong Kong we have people talking about yields and what rentals can be achieved," Griffin said. "Now people are talking more about schooling, where their children can stay, how far properties are from transport and travel times to the city. They're asking very different questions to what they've done over the past few years."

Canada is another popular destination.

David Ho, a Vancouver-based senior vice president at CBRE, travels frequently to Asia, including Hong Kong and Macau, to meet with buyers as well as potential investors.

"They're 35 to maybe 45, young families. A lot of people are just trying to learn about Canada and set up a conference call with immigration consultants, education consultants, mortgage brokers, accountants that give them a broad view of everything," Ho said.

They're looking to buy homes worth up to CAD1 million (\$760,000) and are "average Joes," he said.

The larger number of inquiries hasn't always translated into more transactions, however.

"While inquiries have gone up, the amount of transactions and the amount of people taking money offshore are at similar level" to this time last year, said Mark Elliott, Hong Kong-based head of international residential for Savills Plc. **BLOOMBERG**

HONG KONG

Malls targeted by protesters during Christmas break

ANNIE LEE

HONG Kong's shopping malls have become a flash point for protests during the Christmas holiday.

Pro-democracy demonstrations have been called for the afternoon of Boxing Day at shopping centers in areas including Causeway Bay, Mong Kok and Tsim Sha Tsui, according to notices distributed through social media. The protesters are hoping to attract attention

to their cause by forcing malls and stores to close, according to the notices.

Shopping centers have been among the sites of confrontations between protesters and police in each of the past two days. Police fired tear gas to disperse demonstrators inside a mall in Kowloon Bay on Christmas Day, according to local broadcaster Cable TV. Malls were also the scene for some of the clashes that occurred Christmas Eve, which left about two do-

zen people injured.

The tumult over the holiday adds to what has been an abysmal six-month period for Hong Kong's retailers. Not only has the unrest dissuaded many of the city's residents from visiting stores, it's also sapped the flow of tourists, especially those from mainland China. The most-recent data for retail sales in Hong Kong, once a mecca for shoppers, showed a record 24.3% plunge.

Protests are also set to

continue heading into the New Year holiday. Gatherings are already scheduled for the New Town Plaza in Sha Tin on Friday and in Sheung Shui, an area near the Chinese border, during the weekend.

The Civil Human Rights Front, organizer of some of Hong Kong's biggest peaceful protests, is calling for a Jan. 1 march through the city's center. The organizer said it has applied for a police permit. **BLOOMBERG**



BLOOMBERG



SHOPPERS IN ASIA WANT EUROPE'S HANDBAGS, NOT ITS SUPERMARKETS

REBECCA SMITH

EVEN as global consumer brands grow more dependent on Asia for sales of everything from fancy handbags to baby formula, European retailers keep retreating from the world's fastest-growing markets.

The U.K.'s Tesco Plc, which said this month that it's weighing a sale of its Thailand and Malaysia operations, is just the latest. Earlier this year, Germany's Metro AG and France's Carrefour SA offloaded their big-box stores in China. Britain's Marks & Spencer Group Plc beat them to the exit by completing a regional pullback last year.

The retrenchment, which reverses a two-decade expansion, contrasts with continuing growth for European luxury companies including LVMH and Kering SA, which have ridden a wave of demand for Louis Vuitton bags and Gucci fashions in China. While

producers of mainstream goods such as baby formula makers Danone and Reckitt Benckiser Group Plc have reported hiccups in China, they're also increasingly reliant on Asia.

European grocers and big-box store chains have decided they can do without the hassle of operating in a Chinese market where consumer spending is easing amid a trade war with the U.S. For many of them, more immediate challenges loom closer to home, ranging from Brexit to protests and strikes in France.

"The companies that have a luxury or premium position are doing much better in Asia" than those that sell everyday items, said Ray Gaul, senior vice president of Retail Insights at research firm Kantar. "Everyday supermarket operators have struggled."

LOCAL RIVALS

While western big-box retailers have mostly avoided political

pitfalls that have ensnared some luxury brands and the National Basketball Association, they've struggled to differentiate themselves in a market where local rivals such as Yonghui Superstores Co. are expanding.

Tesco, the largest British retailer, folded its China business into a joint venture in 2013 and exited South Korea two years later. The company could use proceeds from a sale of its Malaysia and Thailand operations, which analysts have estimated could fetch more than \$9 billion, to restructure its U.K. business, which has cut thousands of jobs and shifted to new formats including checkout-free stores amid tough competition from discounters and Brexit-related pricing pressure.

Many European chains "have had to redirect investment to protect their core operations," said Nick Miles, head of Asia Research at the Institute of Grocery Distribution.

Starting in the 1990s, Carrefour opened more than 200 so-called hypermarkets selling everything from food to hardware in China before reversing course. In June, it sold 80% of its Chinese operations to local rival Suning.com Co., marking the latest Asian exit for the company after India, Japan and South Korea. Carrefour five years ago pulled out of India, a market where burdensome regulations have kept many foreign retailers at bay.

Metro agreed in November to offload its China business to Wumei Technology Group Inc. Its Japan, India and Pakistan units have been cited as potential divestments by analysts.

M&S CLOSINGS

Marks & Spencer sold its Hong Kong retail operations last year after closing unprofitable outlets in mainland China and elsewhere, pointing to a fragmented store portfolio and lack of scale.

The rapid advance of online shopping has challenged European retailers in a market where some regional rivals have moved more decisively. China's largest hypermarket chain, Sun Art Retail Group Ltd., two years ago sold a 36% stake to internet giant Alibaba Group Holding Ltd. for \$2.9 billion, boosting its digital capabilities.

A few western retailers are bucking the trend and expanding in Asia - often with the help of local players with critical market expertise. France's Auchan Retail SA, for example, boosted its stake in Sun Art as Alibaba invested in the Hong Kong-listed retailer.

In November, Walmart Inc. unveiled plans to open about 500 stores and depots over five to seven years in China. The Bentonville, Arkansas-based company has a partnership with local online retailer JD.com Inc.

DISCOUNT BAIJIU

Walmart's membership-based Sam's Club has thrived in China by going upscale and offering foreign goods to increasingly affluent shoppers. Rival Costco Wholesale Corp. in August drew crowds for the opening of its first outlet in the country, in Shanghai, offering Kweichow Moutai Co.'s fiery baijiu liquor at a discount.

U.K. online supermarket Ocado Group Plc has also focused on partnerships for boosting its international presence, most recently announcing an alliance with Japanese retailer Aeon Co. to set up robotic warehouses for online grocery sales.

Luke Jensen, CEO of Ocado's technology arm, said working with a partner like Aeon is invaluable because "they have a deep understanding of their customers, and we can configure our technology to meet the specific challenges and opportunities of the Japanese market." **BLOOMBERG**

CORPORATE BITS

MGM Cotai to host NYE party at the Spectacle



This New Year's Eve, the Spectacle at MGM Cotai will be transformed into a 360-degree music extravaganza countdown party to ring in 2020. The spirit of the party is curated by Yusuke Hatano, the

awardee of the Best Original Film Score at the Hong Kong Film Awards, who will join hands with pop singers and bands for the celebration.

From 10:30 p.m. on the night of December 31, the

Spectacle will be transformed into a countdown party site, amid its LED walls, lighting effects, fizzing champagne and a wide selection of delicacies. According to organizers, the party is open to everyone with free admission.

Meanwhile, owning the best views of the Spectacle, Aji and Grill 58 at MGM Cotai will offer their own versions of a New Year's Eve dinner set. Macau's only Peruvian Nikkei restaurant Aji will serve an eight-course dinner menu that packs an array of Aji signatures and creative dishes. On the other hand, Grill 58's seven-course dinner features a wide range of thoughtfully crafted seasonal and luxurious ingredients.

Venetian and Parisian offer NYE countdown parties



The Venetian Macao and The Parisian Macao are hosting New Year's Eve countdown parties for end-of-year revelers hoping to bid farewell to 2019 and welcome in 2020 in style.

From 8 p.m. on Dec. 31, guests and visitors can en-

joy non-stop entertainment right up to midnight and beyond at The Venetian Macao. The lagoon area will feature live music with Andy Frasco & The U.N. from the U.S. and in-house favorites the Blue Note band.

Visitors can also enjoy a

specialty created New Year's Eve countdown projection light show across the façade of The Venetian Macao which will be followed by a fireworks display to welcome in 2020. Live performances and dance acts will continue until 1 a.m.

Further down the Cotai Strip, partygoers will be able to enjoy an evening at The Parisian Macao, at the Le Jardin garden opposite the Eiffel Tower accompanied by the tunes of Supper Moment from Hong Kong. Urban Soul Orchestra from the U.K., and dance acts including renowned DJ LuLu will keep the party jumping until 1 a.m. The New Year countdown will conclude with a fireworks extravaganza.

AP PHOTO



China, Japan, South Korea meet on North Korea, free trade

ZHANG WEIQUN, CHENGDU

LEADERS from China, Japan and South Korea reiterated their commitment to ending North Korea's nuclear and missile programs at a trilateral summit Tuesday that comes against the backdrop of increasing demands by Pyongyang for sanctions relief.

Free trade and economic cooperation were also at the forefront of the meetings between Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and South Korean President Moon Jae-in in the southwestern Chinese city of Chengdu.

Li said the three agreed that "dialogue and consultation is the only effective way to solve the issues of Korea Peninsula."

"We three countries are willing to work together with the international community to solve the issue of Korea Peninsula in a political way," Li said at a joint news conference following the meeting.

The North has threatened to take unspecified action if sanctions relief is not forthcoming by the end of the year. Speculation has centered on the possibility of conducting a new missile test, possibly of an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of delivering a nuclear warhead.

The North has said that what "Christmas gift" it gives the Uni-

ted States depends on Washington's actions.

Li, Abe and Moon also said they discussed furthering regional cooperation on the economy, the environment and people-to-people exchanges.

"We all advocate for free trade and promote economic integration. China holds that safeguarding free trade benefits the protection of multilateralism, of world peace," Li said.

Moon said the sides agreed to support efforts to restart talks between Washington and Pyongyang so that "denuclearization and peace ... could actually advance."

Abe echoed that stance, criticizing North Korean missile launches as violating U.N. resolutions and seriously threatening regional security.

"For that purpose, it was confirmed that full implementation of U.N. Security Council resolutions remains important, and we need to maintain the momentum of the U.S.-North Korea process," Abe said.

Although China is North Korea's most important source of investment, diplomatic support and economic aid, it has shown little success in convincing Kim

Jong Un's government to abandon its nuclear arsenal. The U.S. has demanded steps toward complete denuclearization before any sanctions can be lifted, while Beijing favors a multi-stage approach.

The trilateral summits between China, Japan and South Korea date back to the fallout from the 1997 Asian financial crisis, which devastated businesses across the region and prompted

Li, Abe and Moon also said they discussed furthering regional cooperation on the economy, the environment and people-to-people exchanges

moves toward greater economic integration. The three countries account for about 24% of world trade and have tightly bound supply chains, with more than \$720 billion in trade moving between them last year.

With the Trump administration's abandonment of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, China has led a push for an alternative 16-nation grouping, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. Momentum toward a final agreement hit a snag this year

when Chinese rival India said it would not participate, and the future of the pact remains unclear.

There is friction among the three nations that met Tuesday as well.

While Japan and China have lately set aside their historical differences, South Korea and Japan continue to feud over Japan's colonization of the Korean Peninsula in the last century, a dispute now spilling over into their vital economic relationship.

Moon and Abe later met for a one-on-one summit, where the South Korean president described the two countries as "closest neighbors, historically and culturally" and expressed hope that they

could sort out their differences through dialogue.

But the meeting ended without a breakthrough, with the leaders failing to narrow their differences over South Korean court rulings that called for Japanese companies to compensate aging South Korean plaintiffs for their World War II forced labor, which has been a major sticking point between the countries.

Moon's office said he repeated Seoul's demands that Tokyo reverse its moves to downgrade

South Korea's status as a trade partner and tighten controls on shipments of Japanese chemicals that are used by major South Korean companies to produce computer chips and smartphones, which are key export items for the country. Abe, in response, said that the countries should sort out the problems through talks between trade officials, South Korea's presidential Blue House said.

Li, who is chiefly responsible for overseeing China's economy, acknowledged the frictions between Japan and South Korea, but said that would not alter China's commitment to free trade and open markets. Although China has been accused of "weaponizing" trade in political disputes and unfairly backing its major state companies, it has been a leading voice against protectionism amid its ongoing tariff war with Washington.

"We invite South Korean and Japanese enterprises to take an advantageous position, grasp the broad opportunities, win more business opportunities and better realize mutual success," Li said.

Moon stressed how industrial transformation, climate change and trade protectionism require that the three countries strengthen cooperation.

"The three countries over the past 20 years have cooperated in various fields, including business, diplomacy, culture, people-to-people exchanges and the environment," Moon said. "We now form a core cooperative body in Northeast Asia that contributes to international peace and prosperity." AP

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

GOV'T VOWS FREER MOVEMENT FOR WORKERS BY RELAXING 'HUKOU' SYSTEM

CHINA outlined plans late Wednesday to promote the freer movement of labor as authorities look to cushion slowing growth in the world's second-biggest economy.

The policy statement issued by the State Council, China's cabinet, included a pledge to relax the country's household registration system, which has been criticized as discriminatory and a deterrent to urbanization. Authorities will also make it easier to move between employers and improve incentive systems aimed at encouraging workers to go to less developed regions.

These are the latest in a slew of policy announcements Beijing has made in the final weeks of 2019 after President Xi Jinping led a December meeting of top officials to plan out the coming year's economic priorities. The readout from that conclave signaled both an aversion to broad-based stimulus and an emphasis on spurring "new drivers of growth" through reform.

In addition to labor, the State Council has in the past week also unveiled steps to improve the efficiency of state-owned enterpri-



ses, stabilize employment, and bolster the role of private-sector businesses in the economy. Premier Li Keqiang also pledged last week to give foreign investors greater access to the country's service sectors including finance and health care.

Xi, in an article published Dec. 15 in Qiushi magazine, also tou-

ted the importance of so-called city clusters as part of China's urbanization strategy. In it, he describe the need for policies that promote the fair and reasonable movement of the factors of production - capital, land, enterprise and labor - so that they can aggregate effectively.

China's household registration

system has been cited by a number of economists as one hurdle to such movement. It ties the ability of Chinese citizens to access public services to the city where their household is registered. The difficulty of changing that registration, commonly known as a person's hukou, has left many migrants unable to fully benefit from

public services for education and health.

The steps outlined by the State Council would eliminate the hukou system in cities with less than 3 million residents and relax it in cities with populations of 3-5 million. For cities home to more than 5 million, such as Beijing and Shanghai, the household registration system will be simplified, it said, without giving details. These steps mirror policies released by the National Development and Reform Commission in April.

This policy change would effectively eliminate the hukou hurdle for most of China. Out of almost 300 prefecture-level cities, only 27 have populations exceeding 3 million, according to I-City Media, which analyzed data from the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development.

Markets reacted positively to the news. An index tracking shares of property developers listed in Shanghai rose by 2.9%, the most since September 4, while China's benchmark CSI 300 index gained 0.9% on Thursday.

"It's the first time the central government has announced clear-cut detailed hukou reform," said Yan Yuejin, lead analyst at E-House China Enterprise Holdings Ltd.'s research institute. "Loosening hukou may spark home-buying demand in some tier-3 and tier-4 cities." **BLOOMBERG**

AD

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Malaysia may reopen Mongolia murder case as Najib vows innocence

TERRENCE EDWARDS
& YANTOULTRA NGUI

MALAYSIA'S top prosecutor will look into reopening the case of a murdered Mongolian woman allegedly linked to former premier Najib Razak, as the victim's father says he's pinning his hopes on the country's new government to find justice.

Two former police guards for Najib had been convicted of the 2006 murder of Altantuya Shaariibuu.

"Everybody knew that it just did not make sense for the two of them to be solely culpable," Attorney-General Tommy Thomas said in a Friday interview. "So we knew that the story was incomplete."

The courts that sentenced the two men to death had grappled with their lack of motive, while Azilah's recent statement indicates there may in fact be a reason for the murder, Thomas said. "It's more for the police to investigate and we will look into it," he said, when asked if he will reopen the case.

One of the convicted men, Azilah Hadri, is seeking a retrial after penning a sworn statement accusing the former prime minister of ordering him to covertly arrest and destroy her because she was a foreign spy and a threat to national security. Najib has denied any involvement. On Friday, he made a religious oath that he didn't give the order and had never met her.

The prosecutor's stance will be

BLOOMBERG



Attorney-General Tommy Thomas

a relief to Shaariibuu Setev, who has spent more than a decade seeking closure over his daughter's death. He is campaigning for Malaysia to commute the men's sentences via a plea deal so that Australia, where one of the men had fled to seek asylum from the death penalty, would agree to bring them together to tell what he says could be the true story behind the murder.

Shaariibuu said he doesn't wish the death penalty on them. "Executing these officers is an awkward way to eliminate evidence," he said in an interview in

Ulaanbaatar on Oct. 3.

Australia's Department of Home Affairs declined to comment on individual cases in an email on Nov. 15.

Altantuya was a linguist who spoke Russian and Chinese, as she grew up studying in Russia and Mongolia, before traveling to China to study economics, Shaariibuu said.

Witnesses in the murder trial in 2007 said Altantuya worked as a translator and was privy to the government's purchase of Scorpene-class submarines, which is now the subject of investigations

by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission and French authorities.

Altantuya died in Malaysia after being led to a secluded spot in the jungle by the two convicted men. Police reports show she was shot and then blown up using C-4 explosives, which her father believes was used to hide evidence, he said in the interview.

Najib's former adviser Abdul Razak Baginda, who admitted to an affair with her, was acquitted of abetting the killing due to lack of evidence.

Shaariibuu has filed a civil suit

against Malaysia to seek damages for her family. That's proving difficult as local courts refused to use evidence presented in the criminal trial for the civil case, requiring him to seek funds to fly in witnesses from Mongolia, the U.S. and Australia to testify. A retired university teacher, he has sought donations to help pay for his legal fees and the costs of reconstructing evidence presented in the criminal case.

"It's up to Malaysia to resolve this," Shaariibuu said. "It's their reputation, and the reputation of their court system." **BLOOMBERG**

Japan executes first foreigner in 10 years in family murder

MARI YAMAGUCHI,
TOKYO

JAPAN executed its first foreigner in 10 years yesterday, a Chinese man convicted in the 2003 murder and robbery of a family of four.

Wei Wei, 40, was hanged yesterday at a detention center in Fukuoka where he had been on death row for more than 16 years, Justice Minister Masako Mori said.

Wei was convicted of robbing and killing a clothing store owner and his wife and two children at their home in Fukuoka. He and two Chinese accomplices dumped the bodies into the ocean after attaching wei-

ghts to them, Mori said at a news conference.

Japan has maintained the death penalty despite growing international criticism.

Mori said she signed the execution order after careful examination, taking into consideration the international anti-execution movement. She said Japan was a law-abiding country and the execution was based on its criminal justice system.

"It was an extremely cold-blooded and cruel case, in which [Wei] killed four innocent members of a happy family," she said.

Wei's two accomplices were tried in China, where

one was sentenced to death and the other was given life imprisonment, according to Japan's Kyodo News agency.

Japan and the U.S. are the only two countries in the Group of Seven advanced nations that retain the death penalty. A survey by the Japanese government showed an overwhelming majority of the public supports executions.

Japan now has 112 people on death row, including 84 seeking retrials, according to the justice ministry.

Executions are carried out in high secrecy in Japan, where prisoners are not informed of their fate until the morning they are

hanged. Since 2007, Japan has begun disclosing the names of those executed and some details of their crimes, but disclosures are still limited.

Since Prime Minister Shinzo Abe returned to power in 2012, his government has executed 39 people. Last year, Japan hanged 15 people, including the guru of the Aum Shinrikyo cult and 12 former followers convicted in a deadly Tokyo subway gassing.

Some lawmakers, including governing party members who oppose executions, recently launched a group to promote public discussion of the death penalty. **AP**

AP PHOTO



Japan's Minister of Justice Masako Mori speaks at a press conference on the execution of a convict

US

TRUMP SENATE IMPEACHMENT TRIAL FINDS SCANT

MIKE DORNING

BILL Clinton's impeachment two decades ago set the modern template for President Donald Trump's upcoming trial in the Senate. But the process may be even more contentious this time given sharper tribal divisions in Washington.

Clinton's four-week proceeding in 1999 riveted the nation. Thirteen Republican House managers marched across the Capitol to present articles of impeachment, led by the silver-maned chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Henry Hyde. An old-school grand orator, he cast Clinton's impeachment as a matter of national honor and invoked the sacrifices of war dead.

Chief Justice William Rehnquist presided, clad in a custom robe adorned with gold stripes he had designed based on a costume from a Gilbert & Sullivan comic opera.

Monica Lewinsky, the White House intern who had an affair with the Democratic president, gave video testimony. And Arkansas Senator Dale Bumpers rebutted with a folksy drawl the managers' argument that the case was about principle rather than merely

a titillating scandal: "When you hear somebody say, 'This is not about sex,' it's about sex."

Partisan strife threatens to engulf the Senate once again as the chamber prepares a trial for two articles of impeachment against Trump, accusing him of abusing his power and blocking Congress's investigation into that abuse.

The rancor in 1999 eventually subsided as leaders from both parties moved to contain the damage. But they were navigating political cross-currents that produced very different incentives than their counterparts face today.

PARTISAN VENDETTA

Senate leaders in the Clinton trial recognized that their own interests diverged from their party allies. The Democratic White House wanted the entire process discredited as a partisan vendetta, but many Democrats were at the same time repulsed by the president's conduct and didn't want to defend it. Republican senators, meanwhile, were acutely aware of GOP losses in the midterm House election, held

in the middle of the process and widely seen as a repudiation of the drive to impeach the president.

This time there's little sign that Senate Republicans feel the need to distance themselves from the White House. Trump holds a firmer grasp over his party than Clinton did -- the biggest political threat to Republican incumbents is primary challengers, not Democrats.

Senate rules don't even set a standard of evidence for conviction, unlike criminal trials in which a defendant must be proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt

Unlike the last impeachment, Trump is almost certain to lead the national Republican ticket again in 2020, tying the fortunes of lower-level office-holders more closely to his standing. Underscoring the point, Senate Majority Leader Mit-

ch McConnell has openly declared he's coordinating with the president's lawyers to set procedures for the trial. And precedent isn't binding on McConnell.

"He has a lot of latitude," said Trent Lott, the Republican Senate majority leader during the Clinton trial. "There is nobody who knows the rules of the Senate like Mitch McConnell. He also knows this is a different time, a different set of facts."

LIKE IT OR NOT

The day after the House passed the articles of impeachment against Clinton, Lott picked up the phone at his home in Pascagoula, Mississippi, and called his Democratic counterpart, South Dakota Senator Tom Daschle.

"I remember very vividly," Lott said in an interview. "I said, 'Tom, whether we like it or not, this issue is in our lap.'"

The Constitution imposes only a few requirements for a presidential impeachment. The Senate has to have a trial. The chief justice must preside. And it takes a two-thirds vote to convict.

Senate rules don't even set a standard of evidence for conviction, unlike criminal trials in which a defendant must be proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. Senators only must swear to dispense "impartial justice."

ORATORY SKILLS

Since Richard Nixon resigned before he was formally impeached, the only precedent before Clinton was Andrew Johnson's impeachment trial in 1868.

Johnson's trial lasted almost two months as orators showed off their speaking skills to packed galleries. The Senate heard from 25 prosecution and 16 defense witnesses. Lawyers for Johnson, who was known for intemperate public remarks, persuaded him not to appear at the proceeding. He was instead defended by a team of attorneys, but still gave press interviews during the trial. He avoided conviction by one vote.

Lott had good reason for caution. The Clinton impeachment battle in the House had already dragged down two Republican leaders and sullied another. House Speaker Newt Gingrich

A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains

星槎 萬里

千里江山圖 3.0

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18/12/2019 — 15/03/2020

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PRECEDENT IN HISTORY

BLOOMBERG



quit after the fall election losses. His presumptive successor, Bob Livingston, announced his resignation the day of the impeachment vote after it was disclosed that he'd had multiple extramarital affairs. And Hyde, an anti-abortion crusader and renowned champion of conser-

vative morality, was humiliated by the revelation that he had an affair with a married beauty stylist when he was in his 40s.

The tawdry sexual details that Kenneth Starr, the independent counsel who led the investigation into Clinton, included in his report to Congress also pro-

voked a public backlash, and Clinton's popularity soared to an all-time high around the time of the impeachment vote.

GANGING UP

From the start, Lott was determined not to risk live testimony on the Senate floor, especially

from Lewinsky. The fear was that it could veer into sexual details that would alienate the public or make it look like Republican lawmakers were ganging up on a vulnerable young woman.

"The greatest danger is that you lose control of it," Lott said. "Where does it stop?"

Despite the partisan firestorm, Democratic leaders were wary of appearing to excuse Clinton's conduct. One adviser remembers fearing that five or six Democratic senators could vote for conviction and potentially build momentum to bring more along.

But both sides also had partisan bases clamoring for an all-out fight at the trial. The House impeachment managers were demanding a long trial, with witnesses called to the Senate floor. The prospects for an agreement on procedures didn't look good.

"We both thought it was going to be uphill given how much of a partisan fight it turned out to be in the House," Daschle said in an interview. "I think people were probably betting against us initially."

At one point, Lott reached an agreement with Daschle for a short trial with no witnesses, only to be rebuffed by Senate conservatives.

"Some of my friends did everything but stone me and throw me out on the street," Lott recalled.

DANGER SUBSIDES

Ultimately, the leaders and their staffs prepared the way for a unanimous agreement on trial procedures, finalized in a closed-door session in the Old Senate Chamber. It skirted the issue of witnesses until later, initially giving each side 24 hours on the floor to make their cases. Senators then were allowed to pose questions to each side, sending them up in writing for the chief justice to read aloud.

Robert Byrd of West Virginia, one of the Democrats the president's team had been most worried about losing, moved to dismiss the case after the initial phase. Though the move failed on a largely party line vote, it showed Clinton wasn't in danger.

The House impeachment managers won a vote to take videotaped depositions from Lewinsky, Clinton's friend Vernon Jordan, and White House aide Sidney Blumenthal. They were allowed to play excerpts to the Senate. But the testimony didn't change the dynamic.

When the senators voted one by one, neither of the two articles of impeachment won a majority, much less the two-thirds required.

"It was a tragic time, it was a difficult time, historic," Daschle recalled. "But nonetheless, I think we were able to rise to the occasion." **BLOOMBERG**

AD

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TV canal macau

13:00	TDM News (Repetição)
13:30	Telejornal RTPi (Diferido)
15:00	Água de Mar
15:30	Bing
15:40	Os Ursos Boonie na Neve
15:55	Reformas Internas da China
16:45	Portugueses Pelo Mundo Sr.1
17:30	Literatura Agora
18:00	Império (Repetição)
19:00	ModaLisboa Collective
19:30	Ouro Verde Sr.1
20:30	Telejornal
21:15	Volta ao Mundo
21:50	Solteira e Boa Rapariga
22:20	Império
23:15	TDM News
23:50	A Viagem do Sr. Ulisses
01:10	Telejornal (Repetição)
01:55	RTPi Directo

Offbeat

WISCONSIN CITY MULLS DUMPING OLD BAN ON THROWING SNOWBALLS

For decades, those who have participated in snowball fights in one Wisconsin city have risked getting in trouble with the law. But that may be about to change.

A 1962 ban on throwing projectiles in Wausau lumps snowballs into the same category as rocks and other items that can cause serious harm.

City Council President Lisa Rasmussen said that recent negative national attention over the rarely used ordinance has raised questions about whether it could be time to take snowballs off the naughty list.

"Maybe it's worth giving a look to see if that list could be amended, to mitigate that odd news story that keeps coming up like a bad penny," Rasmussen said.

Wausau police and the mayor even made a video showing officers having a snowball fight.

"A fun snowball fight is a fun snowball fight," Deputy Chief Matt Barnes says in the video, "and that's not something (for which) we enforce this ordinance."

The video ends with Barnes clocking Wausau Mayor Robert Mielke in the back of the head with a snowball.

Barnes said the department has used the ordinance to write about 10 tickets in the last 15 years, according to Wisconsin Public Radio News. The citations included cases of people shooting crossbows into a neighbor's yard, dropping sandbags off the roof of a downtown parking ramp and, on two occasions, throwing snowballs at passing cars.

The City Council will consider decriminalizing snowball fights at a meeting next month.

cinema

CINETEATRO

27 - 31 Dec



STAR WARS:THE RISE OF SKYWALKER

ROOM 1
2:15, 7:00, 9:45pm
Room 2
4:30

Director: J. J. Abrams

Starring: Carrie Fisher, Mark Hamill, Adam Driver, Daisy Ridley

Language: English

Duration: 141min



MY TYRANO: TOGETHER FOREVER

ROOM 1

5:00

Director: Kobun Shizumo

Starring: Kaori Ishihara, Shin'ichirô Miki, Aoi Yûki

Language: Cantonese

Duration: 108min

A SHAUN OF THE SHEEP

ROOM 2

2:30, 7:30pm

Director: Richard Phelan, Will Becher

Language: Chinese

Duration: 108min



BOMBSHELL

ROOM 2

9:30 pm

Director: Jay Roach

Starring: Charlize Theron, Nicole Kidman, Margot Robbie

Language: English

Duration: 108min



CATS

ROOM 3

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

Director: Tom Hooper

Starring: James Corden, Jason Derulo, Taylor Swift

Language: English

Duration: 123min

this day in history



2004 YUSHCHENKO WINS UKRAINE ELECTION RE-RUN

Election officials in Ukraine have declared opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko the winner of the country's presidential elections by a clear margin.

With more than 98% of the votes counted, Mr Yushchenko is eight points ahead of the Prime Minister, Viktor Yanukovich.

The election was a re-run of a vote last month, won narrowly by Mr Yanukovich, but annulled due to fraud.

There have been accusations of dirty tricks throughout the campaign, including allegations of a plot to murder Mr Yushchenko.

Doctors recently confirmed that Mr Yushchenko, who developed a disfiguring skin condition in September, had been poisoned with dioxin.

Mass demonstrations in the capital, Kiev, against the first result have continued all month.

Mr Yushchenko declared victory at midnight GMT while counting was still in its early stages.

"Today, in Ukraine, a new political year has begun," he told a jubilant crowd of supporters.

"This is the beginning of a new epoch, the beginning of a new great democracy."

Thousands of demonstrators, many wearing the campaign's trademark orange, celebrated with a concert and fireworks display.

Many have spent the last weeks camping in Kiev's Independence Square despite sub-zero temperatures.

International observers from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) which is monitoring the elections say the re-run has been much fairer than the earlier rounds.

"The people of this great country made a great step forwards to free and fair elections by electing the next president of Ukraine," said the head of the OSCE monitoring mission, Bruce George.

Ukraine has been plunged into bitter political crisis over the elections.

The first election result gave Mr Yanukovich 49.46% and Mr Yushchenko 46.61%. But Western poll observers complained of serious irregularities and said the vote failed to meet international standards.

As demonstrations mounted and the political tension heightened, the Supreme Court investigated and ruled the results invalid, paving the way for fresh elections.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The outgoing Prime Minister, Viktor Yanukovich, refused to resign and appealed against the result.

However, on 30 December the Supreme Court rejected his complaints and his appeal. He finally resigned on 31 December.

The final result, declared on 11 January, gave 51.99% of the vote to Mr Yushchenko and 44.2% to Mr Yanukovich. Mr Yushchenko was sworn in on 23 January 2005.

Mr Yushchenko's victory has become known as the Orange Revolution. However his presidency has been marked by increasingly bitter in-fighting and a power struggle which led to him sacking his entire government in September 2005.

Meanwhile, the constitution is being amended to give more power to the parliament and prime minister.

The optimism that followed the Orange Revolution has faded for many Ukrainians. Economic growth has slowed and prices have risen.

In parliamentary elections in March 2006 Viktor Yanukovich's party topped polls. Yuliya Tymoshenko's took second place, leaving President Yushchenko's party trailing in third.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

This is not the best time to start off in new directions — so either slow down or make sure that you're putting off whatever plans you had made for today. Things should snap back into place tomorrow!



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You've got one big problem that you can't solve on your own. Now is the time to hit up a friend and at least get them to listen to you. They may not have the solution, but they know who can help.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Communication is your specialty, but today brings a fog of uncertainty that makes you second-guess yourself. It's a good time to let misgivings lie, as better understanding should come later on.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

It's too easy to get distracted today — but if you let yourself wander, you may make a huge discovery! Your great energy should point you in the right direction, and it gets better from there.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Keep reading until you're satisfied you've mastered the material — but even then, trust your gut. It's a good day to integrate both sides of your brain to reach the right balance.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Your relationships are getting a little bumpy today — but it's not time to change course! Just check in with the right people and make sure that you're all still committed to making things work.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

You've got way too much going on today — try to pull back from at least one major project or lengthy appointment. If the day seems quiet, you'd better duck! Something big is coming.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

It's a great day for creative endeavors — so see if you can get your people to join you for some brainstorming or a craft project. Whatever you do, expect something really wild and wonderful!



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

This isn't a day for progress — but you can at least keep yourself from sliding backward. Things are looking up for you and yours, but first you've got to make it past this long, slow day.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Think outside the box and win! If you surprise the competition, you can be sure that you are going to come out ahead. All you really need is one creative idea, but keep the flow going if you can.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Don't trust your sense of what's going on with your bank account. It's one of those days when assumptions can cost you quite a bit, so check and double-check before committing to purchases.

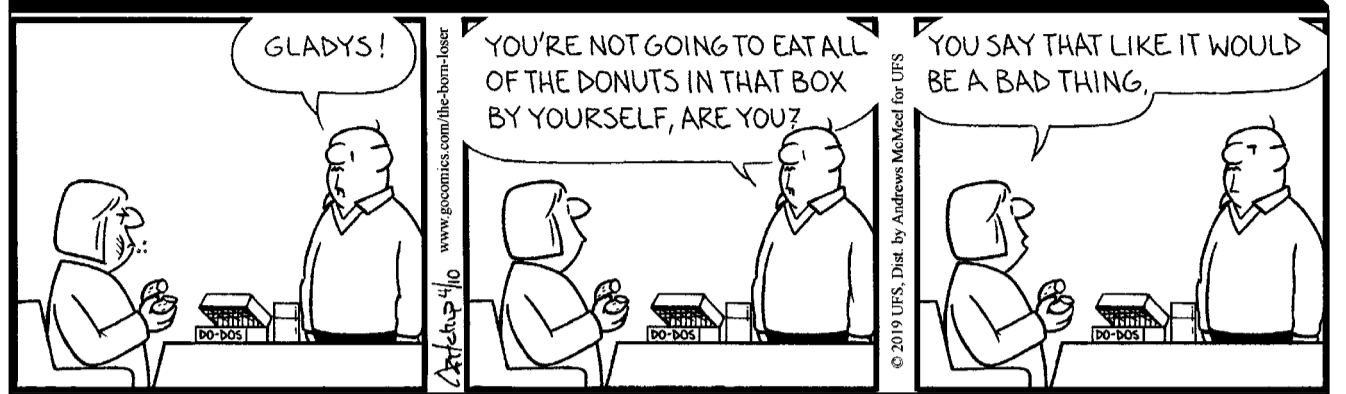


PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Your innermost self is closer to the surface today — so make sure that you're paying attention! You may be surprised at what's been going on down there, but it's all positive.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

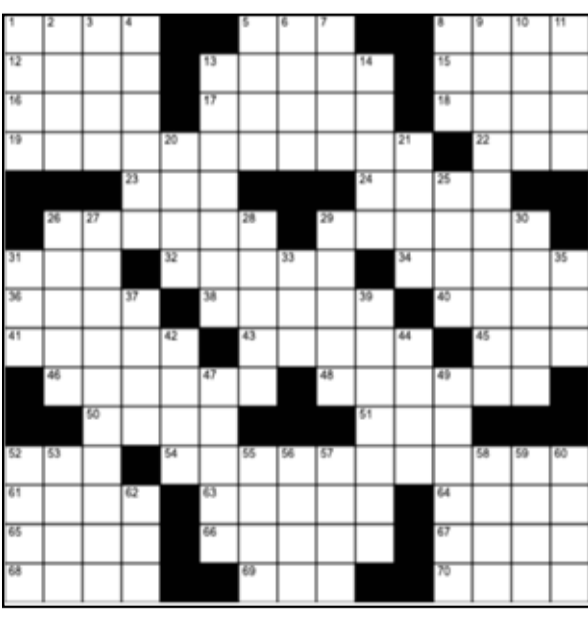
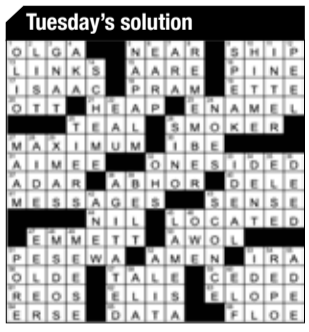
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-2	9	clear
Harbin	-17	-4	clear
Tianjin	2	11	clear
Urumqi	-3	7	clear
Xi'an	5	17	clear
Lhasa	0	19	cloudy
Chengdu	10	16	clear
Chongqing	12	20	cloudy
Kunming	9	21	clear
Nanjing	7	23	cloudy
Shanghai	12	20	cloudy
Wuhan	8	24	clear
Hangzhou	9	22	clear
Taipei	17	21	cloudy
Guangzhou	14	27	clear
Hong Kong	20	25	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	-1	4	clear
Frankfurt	0	6	drizzle
Paris	2	9	moderate rain
London	7	9	drizzle
New York	-3	1	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1-Paint crudely; 5- IV units; 8- Italian treats; 12- Rights advocacy org.; 13- Cathedral; 15- Routine; 16- "Darn!"; 17- Work ____; 18- Editor Wintour; 19- Nostalgic; 22- Leg, slangily; 23- Mined mineral; 24- Den of wild animals and dragons; 26- Lady of Spain; 29- Flag; 31- One-time link; 32- Chilly; 34- Motherless calf; 36- Deep wound; 38- Legal wrongs; 40- Decrease gradually; 41- Dominant; 43- Lively dances; 45- Disapproving sound; 46- Cease; 48- Small sofa; 50- Russo of "Get Shorty"; 51- Actress Vardalos; 52- Martini liquor; 54- Hand tool; 61- Indigo plant; 63- One tenth, usually; 64- "Le Roi d'Ys" composer; 65- Slothful; 66- Lustful deity; 67- Scandinavian capital city; 68- To ____ (perfectly); 69- ____ Crucis; 70- Paper purchase;

DOWN: 1- Pops; 2- Farmland unit; 3- ____ Bator, Mongolia; 4- Clothing fastener; 5- Adorable; 6- Mindy of "The Facts of Life"; 7- Struck, old-style; 8- George's brother; 9- Assemble; 10- Sicilian mount; 11- Clothes line?; 13- Mark given for offense; 14- Central Florida city; 20- Fairway choice; 21- Ground; 25- ____ pronounce you...; 26- Rise to one's feet; 27- Orientalize; 28- Nautical direction; 29- Units of computer memory; 30- Wash lightly; 31- "...and seven years ____"; 33- Opposite of post-; 35- A mouse!; 37- Stockings; 39- Thin; 42- Fasteners; 44- Show signs of life; 47- Religious offshoots; 49- Fit with clothes; 52- Big party; 53- ____ the finish; 55- 100 dinars; 56- Kett of the comics; 57- Reasons; 58- Flower holder; 59- Scat queen; 60- Chamber; 62- Caustic substance;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

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- 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

DANCER BORN WITH ONE HAND MAKES RADIO CITY ROCKETTES HISTORY



A dancer born with one hand is the first person with a visible disability ever hired by New York's famed Radio City Rockettes.

"I don't want to be known as the dancer who has one hand, and not because that's a bad thing," Sydney Mesher, who joined the Rockettes this season, told Newsday. "But because I've worked very hard to be where I am."

Mesher, 22, is missing a left hand because of symbrachydactyly, a rare congenital condition.

The Pace University graduate from Portland, Oregon, was hired by the

Rockettes after her fourth audition. She said she has been "mesmerized" by the troupe, which dates to 1925, ever since first seeing them on TV in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

Mesher said she started dancing as a child and attended a performing arts high school. In the Radio City Christmas Spectacular, audiences caught up in the show might not notice her missing hand, even where there are minor modifications to the act to accommodate her. In one number where the Rockettes ring a bell in each hand, she rings just one.



LINDSEY VONN GOES SOCIAL WITH P.K. SUBBAN MARRIAGE PROPOSAL

Lindsey Vonn popped the question to hockey star P.K. Subban.

"Merry Christmas and happy holidays everyone!! On our 2 year anniversary, in a "non traditional" move, I asked PK to marry me and he said, Yes," Vonn tweeted on Christmas Day. "Yes (bashful emoji) ! Women aren't the only ones who should get engagement rings!"

The former ski racer closed the tweet with the hashtags "MerryChristmas" and "equality."

Vonn linked a picture of herself and Subban with the ring, with the couple wearing matching striped pajamas in

front of a Christmas tree with three dogs in the foreground. She also posted a close-up of Subban flashing the ring, with the words "Drip drip" and a blue teardrop.

Vonn also said on social media in August that they were engaged.

The 35-year-old Vonn recently retired from a skiing career that included three Olympic medals, four overall World Cup titles and 82 World Cup race wins, a record for a woman.

Vonn had a high-profile relationship with Tiger Woods. She previously was married to former ski racer Thomas Vonn, and kept his last name after they separated.

OPERATION HOLIDAY EXPRESS BRINGS GIFTS TO US TROOPS IN SYRIA

HUNDREDS of American troops based in Syria have received Christmas gifts thanks to Operation Holiday Express, launched by U.S.-led coalition forces from across the border in neighboring Iraq.

This year, Santa's sleigh and reindeer were apparently swapped for a workhorse CH-47 Chinook helicopter. But coalition forces still donned jolly red caps as they unloaded boxes of gifts at five locations in eastern Syria, as seen by The Associated Press.

In addition to the presents, Christmas tunes were provided by a military band from

the 1st Infantry Division, flown in from Fort Riley, Kansas. The soldiers received stockings stuffed with candies, toiletries and other gifts. Most were donated by military support organizations in the U.S., as well as churches and charity organizations, coalition spokesman Col. Myles Caggins said.

The U.S. at one point had some 2,000 service members in Syria, mostly taking part in battles against the Islamic State group. The number has dropped since the extremists' defeat in March, when they lost their last sliver of territory to Kurdish-led fighters backed by Washington.



AD



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JOSEPH WILSON, BARCELONA

FOOTBALL

EVEN though Barcelona and Real Madrid have yet to dominate like in past seasons, the two heavyweights are at the top of the Spanish league for the winter break.

Lionel Messi's Barcelona will head into 2020 with a two-point advantage over second-place Madrid after completing 18 of 38 rounds.

Barcelona got off to a slow start with only two wins in the first five rounds before newcomer Antoine Griezmann started to click with Messi and Luis Suárez, and the Catalan club ended the year without a loss in seven rounds.

"There are times when you win the league by a wide margin and when everyone expects you to wrap it up months in advance that it loses excitement," Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde, who is seeking a third consecutive league crown with the team, said Tuesday.

"It is better when you win the league on the last round and by one point."

Madrid has only one loss - a 1-0 defeat at Mallorca in October - but it has drawn seven games, including its last three. Its continued scoring problems since Cristiano Ronaldo left two summers ago have left it without a goal in five encounters.

"We had difficulties at the beginning of the season, but now we are much better and strong defensively, improving every day," Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane said after Sunday's 0-0 home draw with Athletic Bilbao. "Today we couldn't score, but the important thing is to create the chances and we're going to turn this around in 2020 for sure."

A Sevilla side that has been revitalized by former Madrid and Spain manager Julen Lopetegui, and by the new players brought in by sporting director Ramón "Monchi" Rodríguez, is in third place at five points back.

Diego Simeone's Atlético Madrid has experienced trouble up front after losing Griezmann in the summer, but its revamped defense has kept it in fourth place, seven points behind Barcelona.

PLAYER OF THE SEASON SO FAR

Messi leads the league with 13 goals in just 13 appearances due to an injury that kept him out of the opening games. He is also credited with six assists by the league as he continues at age 32 to be the team's best scorer and playmaker.

An honorable mention goes to Karim Benzema for stepping up his play after the injury-hit Eden Hazard failed to make an impact since joining Madrid on a club-record transfer from Chelsea.

Benzema is second in the league with 12 goals in 17 matches.

Barca and Madrid lead in Spain at winter break despite flaws

AP PHOTO



SURPRISE OF THE SEASON

The breakout player is Real Sociedad midfielder Martin Odegaard, who is playing at the Basque club on loan from Madrid.

Odegaard has excelled as a precise passer and is leading one of the most attractive attacks in the league. Sociedad is in fifth place, just one point behind Atlético.

Sevilla continues to introduce talented newcomers in powerful defender Diego Carlos and physical forward Lucas Ocampos, both of whom have stood out and are likely on the radar of bigger clubs.

GOAL OF THE SEASON

Suárez scored not only the best goal so far this season in Barcelona's 5-2 rout of Mallorca on Dec. 7 but one of the best in his goal-studded career.

The Uruguay striker wowed Camp Nou when he used an audacious strike with the back of his right heel to scoop the ball around the diving goalkeeper and just inside the far post from a tight angle.

The goal put the perfect finish to a flowing passing combination between Frenkie de Jong and Sergi Roberto to break down Mallorca's tightly packed defense.

It unquestionably goes into the annals of Barcelona's most beautiful goals.

WHO WILL BE CHAMPION?

With Messi, defending champion Barcelona is favored to edge

a Madrid team that has yet to replace Ronaldo's missing firepower.

Messi has led Barcelona to 10 league titles in 15 seasons.

"We haven't reached our ceiling," Griezmann said after scoring the opening goal in Saturday's 4-1 win over Alavés. "I am feeling good before the holidays. Messi is the best in the world. We have a great squad, and when we need a push, Messi provides it."

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE QUALIFICATION

While Barcelona and Madrid will surely get Champions League spots, Sociedad and a Valencia side that is coming on strong after

a tumultuous coaching change could threaten Sevilla and Atlético for the other two berths.

Getafe, which was in the running for a top-four finish last season until faltering late, cannot be ruled out despite its modest profile.

WHO IS GOING DOWN?

Espanyol earned Europa League qualification last campaign, but it has been in a mess since both top scorer Borja Iglesias and ex-coach Francesc "Rubi" Ferrer left for Real Betis in the summer.

The Barcelona-based club is in last place after winning just two of 18 matches and it fired Pablo Ma-

chín, its second coach of the season, on Monday.

Espanyol has yet to win at home in the league this season and its fans are asking for a goal-scorer - in addition to yet another coach - in the January transfer market.

Leganés and Mallorca are likely to also feature in the relegation fight.

Celta Vigo has been the biggest disappointment of the season so far and is also near the bottom. But with Spain striker Iago Aspas and former Barcelona midfielders Rafinha and Denis Suárez it has the talent to rebound if it shores up its defense. AP

SURVEY FINDS SPANISH FOOTBALL GIANTS BEST PAID TEAMS IN THE WORLD

FOOTBALL players at Spanish powerhouses Barcelona and Real Madrid and Italy champion Juventus are on the best-paid teams in world sports, according to a survey published this week.

The 10th edition of the Global Sports Salaries study by sportingintelligence.com placed Barcelona top of the list with an average basic salary of a first team player of \$12.8 million. That figure is down on last year when Barcelona was also first with an average of \$13.7 million, swelled by the basic pay check of Lionel Messi, which exceeds \$65 million.

Real Madrid retains second place with an average of \$11.6 million and Juventus, ninth on the

list last year, is up to third with \$10.54 million. The other football teams in the top 20 are PSG at No. 12 and Manchester City at No. 13.

The figures used in the survey represent basic annual pay and do not include signing bonuses, performance bonuses and other extras.

Teams from the NBA fill the remaining seven spots in the top 10 and take 15 of the top 20 places.

Among teams ranked 21 to 30 this year, nine are from the NBA, joined by German soccer champion Bayern Munich at No. 22.

Juventus was ranked No. 32 in 2017 but leapt to 10th place last year with the signing of Cristiano Ronaldo and other high-priced players. MDT/AP

OPINION

Bizcuits

Leanda Lee



GIFTS OF CRISIS

While Macau has been centre-stage of unequivocal messages of national sovereignty during the 20th Anniversary events, I am in Australia and Australia is burning.

Multiple times a day, my phone buzzes with alerts on the VicEmergency App with news of incidents in the immediate area. The Country Fire Authority (CFA), the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and State Emergency Services coordinate this information in one place. Buzz, there it goes again.

I am not even in a bushfire zone. While much of the country yearns for any whisper of moisture, our place still has some green in the paddocks, and yet "Fire - Not Yet Under Control" incidents keep popping up among the "Watch and Act" warnings. There were 23 fire-services' vehicles attending a grass fire beside suburban housing up the road the other day. This is not normal.

It is Christmas and it is a Total Fire Ban. No prawns on the barbie. No driving through grass or crops. No welding, grinding or soldering. And my app buzzes again. No wonder we have restrictions.

The fires started early this year. On 11th November, volunteers from four of our local fire brigades joined the CFA Task Force of 50 fire Tankers to Goulburn in New South Wales. A Catastrophic Fire Rating level was called for 12th November for the first time since the 2009 February Black Saturday Fires in which 180 people died, 450,000 hectares burned, and 2,029 homes were destroyed.

Since then, fires have raged through 5-million hectares in a continent-scale emergency, sometimes combining into mega-blazes. In NSW which usually has 280,000 hectares burnt in a season, 3.41 million hectares have gone up already, only half-way through the season. A third of the grapevines in the Adelaide Hills have gone. We have lost rainforests that don't normally burn. The human toll remains low, but tragically nine people are lost to their families and communities, two of whom were volunteer firefighters, both young fathers.

A family member, driving along the roads from Sydney to Melbourne to join Christmas dinner, told of the sights. There are miles of blackened earth, and yet more blackened earth with patches of brown in places where there was no vegetative fuel to start with, interspersed by charred trunks of trees with canopies all shrivelled. Unscathed farmhouses stood incongruously in their fresh intactness in the flat never-ending landscape of black and brown. Every single house saved. Not the sheds, not the outhouses. But every single home stood, testament to our country fire brigades.

Nearly 35,000 firefighters and 21,000 support staff are volunteers. In seasons past firefighters from California have helped with backup but now that fire seasons overlap, those resources are not so available. The valour, exhaustion, sacrifices over Christmas by these heroes are not lost on anyone. Our communities come together in such times of crisis. Together, we are resilient.

And in Macau, parenthetically, restrictions on freedom of the press, movement and public gatherings have raised the ire, angst and fear of what the first may impose upon the second system. Now that we have experienced what is possible, and now ever more likely should the road to the integration of the two systems be bumpy, a fire has been put in the bellies (there goes that buzz again) on both sides of the socio-political divide. Pseudo-intellectuals have been contesting the so-called ideologies of others with little more than big words, long, long sentences and the smugness that only opinionated tribal support can provide. Such has been the banter that outsiders have rightly characterised as penis-measuring contests.

In times of crises, whatever the fight, well-endowed and diverse groups of citizens need to work together in collaboration, with knowledge, experience and fact-based expertise. One cannot fight coercion with opinion, let alone divided opinion. Those words that only result in pitting groups of residents against each other - the infighting both online and in the print-media - serve Macau poorly. In their divisiveness, they are worth little more than bumfodder.

BRAZIL INVESTIGATES CHRISTMAS EVE ATTACK OVER NETFLIX SHOW

THE BUZZ

A video on social media in Brazil shows three masked people claiming they carried out a gasoline bomb attack to protest a Christmas program on Netflix that some critics have described as blasphemous.

A man in the video, whose voice is digitally altered, says the Christmas Eve attack on a video production house in Rio de Janeiro targeted Brazilian humorist group Porta dos Fundos for its Portuguese-language program.

The man claims to speak for a group he calls the Command of Popular National Insurgency. The video, which was circulating

yesterday, also shows three people throwing gasoline bombs into the building.

There were no injuries in the overnight attack and a security guard extinguished the flames, according to Porta dos Fundos. Police are investigating.

The comedy group's short film, called The First Temptation of Christ, depicts Jesus returning home on his 30th birthday and insinuates he is gay. Religious groups bristled at the depiction. An online petition that was launched in Brazil called for the film to be banned and drew more than 2 million signatures.

FROM NEW YORK TO MOSCOW, HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS SHARE MEMORIES



Holocaust survivor Mikhail Spekt, 86, shows a photo of him as a Soviet Army officer

JEFFREY SCHAEFFER & ANGELA CHARLTON

HOLOCAUST survivors sang at Jerusalem's Western Wall, danced in Paris and lit candles in other cities to celebrate Hanukkah together, recalling Nazi horrors that Jewish community leaders fear are fading from the world's collective memory.

An 86-year-old man in Moscow described being forced by Nazi occupiers into a ghetto as a child. Elderly survivors in New York shared stories Sunday at the Museum of Jewish Heritage, in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty.

They worry that today's youth in many countries don't recognize names of Nazi death camps, fall prey to anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, or don't realize that 6 million Jews were killed in Hitler's World War II extermination campaign.

Lighting the Hanukkah candelabra, France's chief rabbi, Haim Korsia, told survivors in Paris, "What you are, each of you, is exactly like the light. [...] We will never put out the first flame. When we transmit the knowledge, your experience and when we transmit it to others, it takes nothing from us and it gives to others."

With folk dancing, festive songs and shared meals, the ceremonies Sunday and Monday also aimed to combat the solitude and other

difficulties many survivors face in old age.

Some 400,000 Holocaust victims are estimated to still be alive, about half of them in Israel — and as many as 40% are living in poverty, said Ruediger Mahlo of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, which organized the events.

"We want to make this public in order to help them and in order that other people help them as well," he told The Associated Press.

With tears in their eyes, survivors sang Israel's national anthem together at the Western Wall, the holiest site in the world where Jews can pray. The mood turned joyous by the time candles were lit, with survivors joining hands, dancing in circles and laughing.

"For me, the holiday of Hanukkah is a holiday of victory, and it's very important for me to see the light of victory," said Amnon Elkiev, a survivor originally from the Netherlands who came to the ceremony with his wife.

Renowned Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld was among those attending a bitter-sweet ceremony in Paris, where young and old sang and prayed together.

Anna Sterman described being "hunted ... like mice" as a child near Lyon. Sarah Saragoussi, whose parents were deported to camps, said: "We thought they would come back nonetheless.

We didn't think they were leaving to their deaths."

The gathering in New York included some 200 survivors, some wearing winter caps, others wearing kippas. Some smiled as they listened to speeches; others looked on pensively. They touched on recent anti-Semitic attacks in the U.S. and on concerns that younger generations of Americans know little about what they went through.

Hand-in-hand with a rabbi, survivor Mikhail Spekt said a prayer and lit a Hanukkah candelabra in Moscow. He then took the microphone and sang for members of Russia's Jewish community, accompanied by a fiddler and accordion player.

As a child when the war began, Spekt said, he didn't realize what was going on.

When the Nazis came, he recalled his grandfather telling him that they were "a civilized nation, they wouldn't do anything to us."

But he and his family were taken to a ghetto on Ukraine's western edge and held there from 1941 until the Red Army liberated it in 1944.

"We were all sleeping on the floor. We lived on the territory [of the ghetto], isolated from the city by barbed wire. The entrance was guarded by Nazi soldiers and policemen," he said. "People who dared [to leave] were indeed shot." AP

Japan executed its first foreigner in 10 years yesterday, a Chinese man convicted in the 2003 murder and robbery of a family of four. Wei Wei, 40, was hanged yesterday at a detention center in Fukuoka where he had been on death row for more than 16 years, Justice Minister Masako Mori said. More on p13



Australia Firefighters battling wildfires in Australia's most populous state attempted to make headway yesterday amid favorable conditions, before an "extreme heatwave" hits embattled areas on the weekend.



Iraq The president refused yesterday to designate the Iran-backed parliamentary bloc's nominee for prime minister after he was rejected by anti-government protesters, and said he was prepared to submit his resignation to Parliament.

Turkey's highest court yesterday ruled in favor of Wikipedia, saying the Turkish government's two-year ban on the online encyclopedia constitutes a violation of freedom of expression, the state-run news agency reported. Turkey blocked Wikipedia in April 2017, accusing it of being part of a "smear campaign" against the country, after the website refused to remove content that allegedly portrayed Turkey as supporting the Islamic State group and other terrorist organizations.



Israel The governing Likud party held a primary vote yesterday in the first serious internal challenge to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in his more than a decade in power. Veteran politician Gideon Saar hopes to unseat Netanyahu, arguing that he will be better placed to form a government in national elections in March after Netanyahu failed to do so in two repeat elections this year.