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A MAGNITUDE 3.5 EARTHQUAKE WAS DETECTED EARLY YESTERDAY WITH ITS EPICENTER ABOUT 30 KILOMETERS OFF ZHUHAI'S XIANGZHOU DISTRICT

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SHOCKING MOTOR ACCIDENTS ON AMIZADE BRIDGE IN PAST DAYS

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MACAU'S NEW ECONOMY CHIEF SAID HE IS CONFIDENT ABOUT THE CITY'S ABILITY TO WEATHER THE CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE GROWTH

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AP PHOTO



Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen convened a meeting of top defense officials and urged them to be on a lookout for military developments concerning China following a helicopter crash that killed the island's top military officer and other prominent personnel. [More on p 11](#)

AP PHOTO



Japan said it would tighten immigration procedures in the wake of Carlos Ghosn's dramatic escape from the country after skipping bail, and ordered an investigation on how the former Nissan Motor Co. chief disappeared. [More on p 13](#)

Iran Thousands took to the streets of Baghdad for the funeral procession of Iran's top general Saturday after he was killed in a U.S. airstrike, as the region braced for the Islamic Republic to fulfill its vows of revenge. [More on p14-15](#)

AP PHOTO



Venezuela Opposition leader Juan Guaidó faces a major test of his leadership today as he asks lawmakers to re-endorse his flagging campaign to oust President Nicolás Maduro. The opposition-controlled National Assembly will decide whether to keep Guaidó as its leader for a second year in a special session inaugurating the final year of its 2015-2020 legislative period.

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WUHAN PNEUMONIA

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CHINA REPLACES TOP LIAISON OFFICIAL FOR HONG KONG

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FIRE ALARM AT ST. REGIS RESULTS IN EVACUATION OF 70 PEOPLE

A fire alarm at the St. Regis hotel last week resulted in the evacuation of 70 people, the Fire Services Bureau (HB) reported. According to the HB, a pile of burning construction materials in the hotel ballroom triggered the fire alarm. The hotel's fire system began extinguishing the fire before the HB arrived. The HB deployed seven rescue vehicles and 28 people to handle the case. The 70 people reportedly all remained calm during the incident. The HB initially suspected that some people had deliberately left the source of the fire in the hotel ballroom, causing the fire. The HB has already forwarded the case to another investigation department to follow up on the cause of the fire.

55 WORKS PLANNED ON MAJOR ROADS THIS YEAR

In 2020, the local government will carry out 55 engineering projects on Macau's major roads, the Transport Bureau (DSAT) reported on Friday. The DSAT's road work coordination team has already received 301 (three more than in 2019) road work plans submitted by governmental departments and public affairs organizations. There will be two fewer projects on major roads. The 55 projects will involve roads including Avenida de Demetrio Cinatti, Avenida do Alm. Lacerda, Rotunda da Amizade, Avenida da Praia Grande and Avenida do Doutor Rodrigo Rodrigues. The works mainly include cable laying, flood prevention, drainage, sewer reorganization, road network reorganization and construction of flyovers.

CASES OF JUMPING RED LIGHTS GROW 200%

The number of traffic prosecutions against jumping red lights increased by about 200% last year, the Public Security Police Force (PSP) reported on Friday in its traffic violation statistics report release. In total there were 2,265 cases of traffic prosecutions, the PSP issued 140 prosecutions against drink driving, nine more than in 2018. In April and July 2019, the PSP installed and started operating road junction comprehensive detection systems at 14 intersections. Last year, the PSP recorded 13,691 traffic accidents, a slight decrease of 0.52% year-on-year. Nearly one-quarter (about 3,400) of the accidents were caused due to insufficient distance between vehicles. Approximately 21% of the accidents were caused when drivers did not pay attention to road conditions when turning or reversing. The PSP also reported a 48.2% decrease in taxi infractions. In 2019, some 3,172 taxi violations were recorded (6,126 cases in 2018). Overcharging decreased by 50.6% to 1,900 cases. The number of cases of taxis refusing to accept passengers also halved to 675 cases. The new taxi regulation came into effect on June 3, 2019.

MAGNITUDE 3.5 EARTHQUAKE RECORDED NEAR ZHUHAI

EARLY yesterday, a magnitude 3.5 earthquake was recorded by geophysical authorities in the Greater Bay Area. The epicenter was located 12 kilometers underground and 30 kilometers off the coast from Xiangzhou District in Zhuhai.

The quake occurred at 6:55 a.m. yesterday in the seas under the administration of the Xiangzhou District. The authorities in Guangdong Province recorded

two aftershocks with the most severe reaching magnitude 2.1.

Social media users living in both Special Administrative Regions (SARs) of Macau and Hong Kong posted acknowledgements of the tremor. The Hong Kong Observatory recorded reports from 1,200 people indicating their personal accounts of the quake.

Although severe earthquakes are rarely seen in

Guangdong Province, minor ones are quite common. Deng Zhihui, director of the Research Center of the Guangdong Province Earthquake Administration, told Hong Kong's Chinese newspaper Sing Tao Daily, "Earthquakes as severe as magnitude 4.9 have been recorded in this area. They happened several hundreds of years ago."

Sing Tao Daily also reported that after the quake, mainland experts assured

the reliability of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge. The bridge can withstand earthquakes up to an intensity of magnitude 8.0.

The Pearl River Estuary sits in the middle of the southern China coastal seismic belt. Minor earthquakes are a common occurrence in this area, according to experts from the Zhuhai Earthquake Administration. However, they are relatively rare in the Macau SAR. AL

GOVERNMENT

TWO POLICE FORCE BILLS TO ENTER LEGISLATURE

THE Security Secretariat has completed the amendment of two bills related to human resources in the city's various security departments, according to the Office of the Secretary for Security.

In a reply written by the Director of the Office, Cheong Ioc Ieng, addressed to lawmaker Agnes Lam, it was revealed that the security authority has completed an amendment on the

general principles of the militarized personnel of Macau's security forces and on the general rules for staff of the prison police force.

For the militarized personnel regulations, the Office has already submitted the latest amendment draft to the relevant administration and justice entities for further analysis and review. After the administration and justice entities complete their review,

the draft will be submitted to the Executive Council for further discussion.

The security authority focused on setting up a new post between the basic and senior ranks of the security forces, on corresponding promotion courses, and on standardizing the education background required for the performance of duties.

Considering the opinions of the customs authority, the

security authority decided to include customs officers into the regulations.

Simultaneously, the security authority has basically completed an amendment draft of the regulations of prison police officers. The draft will undergo further improvements.

The security authority aims to start the legislative procedure for the bill as soon as possible.

Therelevant amendment aims to further

improve the entry and promotion system for prison officers, increasing the promotion mobility for prison officers, and making the position more attractive in the employment market in order to solve the staff shortage problems.

Currently, the Correctional Services Bureau is conducting an examination process for 73 prison officer vacancies (53 for men and 20 for women). JZ

ARTS

FRINGE FESTIVAL TO HOLD ADDITIONAL PERFORMANCES

THE 19th Macao City Fringe Festival will hold additional performances of Binaural Dinner Date and Property Guide at Lou Kau Mansion on January 10 and January 15 due to popular demand.

With the annual festival set to run from January 10 to 19, the two programs have already been sold out, the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) announced in a statement.

The festival will present 17 programs and 13 outreach activities under the theme, "Boundless creation will show you around!"

This year, the festival has launched a special series with two sub-themes named "Crème de la Fringe." The subtheme "On Site" features three dance performances, "ImprovFlashMob," "Body Traveller" and "A Step to Theatre: Put out the

Flame," as well as dance workshops and a sharing session.

From the street to the theatre, artists will use their bodies to present different physical movements.

The second subtheme, "Puppet and Object Theatre Festival in Coloane," will feature three contemporary puppet theatre productions, "Fragile," "Story Market" and "Nightwalk: Pourquoi?" pre-

sented by artists from Macau, Taiwan and Canada, as well as extended workshops.

Also among the programs is "Kaleidoscope in Motion" by Stella & Artists, an interdisciplinary work that blends dance, projection and digital elements. In the co-production "Wearing My Untold Stories" by the Soda-City Experimental Workshop Arts Association and the Artis-

try of Wind Box Community Development Association, artists will convey their feelings through the use of cloth.

"Each year's local productions, which promise great potential, are invited to the stage of the Macao Arts Festival for the following year, and will also be recommended for overseas events," the IC president, Mok Ian Ian, said. LV

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Health warning raised to 'serious' in face of Wuhan scare

THE government last night elevated the health threat of a mysterious pneumonia illness, following further reports of possible contamination in nearby regions.

The health threat now stands at "Level III (Serious)", meaning that the risk of threatening situations is "medium", according to a statement from Macau's health authority. The warning warrants the "strengthening of prevention and control measures immediately," instructed the Health Bureau (SSM).

Since the start of the year, the SSM has detected five cases of individuals with a suspected or confirmed viral infection, who had been to Wuhan City in the 14 days prior to the onset of symptoms. However, the SSM stressed that, as of last night, Macau had not reported any cases of the Wuhan-related "pneumonia of unknown origin."

Meanwhile, Hong Kong health authorities said yesterday that the city had detected eight possible cases and activated its own "serious response" warning. At least 44 people are believed to have contracted the illness in Wuhan, an inland city west of Shanghai, with 11 cases deemed "serious."

The director of the SSM, Lei Chin Ion, said last week that although viral pneumonia is a common infection in winter, the frequency of the reports stemming from Wuhan should be considered an abnormal situation.

The exact nature of the infectious disease has not been ascertained by health authorities.

The outbreak, which emerged last month, has revived memories of the 2002-2003 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic that started in southern China and killed more than 700 people in the mainland, Hong Kong and elsewhere.

NEW PREVENTIVE MEASURES

In Macau, the elevation of the threat level was decided at a meeting convened yesterday by the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Ao Ieong U, in order to evaluate the threat of the pneumonia believed to have originated in Wuhan, capital of China's Hubei Province.

At the meeting, representatives of the Public Hospital Conde São Januário and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention presented the control measures currently in force, and recommended future disease monitoring mechanisms to be employed by the various governmental agencies of Macau.

Among the many measures



agreed at the meeting, it was noted that the security entities of the Public Security Police Force and the Unitary Police Services would render their assistance to the SSM in implementing isolation measures and improving response mechanisms when infections are detected.

The Fire Services will now use a constant reporting mechanism to maintain close communication with the SSM, and make "preliminary preparations" with ambulance staff.

Meanwhile, the Customs Service has installed temperature measuring equipment at two unofficial border posts and cooperated with the Municipal Affairs Bureau to strictly combat animal food smuggling at border posts and strengthen public health.

The Education and Youth Affairs Bureau has implemented

a notification mechanism and treatment measures and has sent letters to schools, educational institutions and tutoring rooms to call for compliance with infectious disease prevention measures.

The tourism authority has pledged to strengthen contact with entities in the tourism sector and distribute updated SSM guidelines to frontline professionals so that they may better know how to deal with people who are unwell.

At the same time, the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau will work to assist casinos to purchase body temperature detectors. It noted that some casinos have already purchased and installed such technology.

Also agreed at yesterday's meeting was that the Social Welfare Bureau should inspect the temperature measurement equipment of all the social facilities in Macau

and carry out immediate inspections should incidents be reported.

The Civil Aviation Authority will continue to assist the SSM in conducting temperature measurements for airport passengers and refining the relevant airport response protocols.

UNDER INVESTIGATION

Late last week, the SSM announced it had started screening passengers on flights from Wuhan with temperature control devices.

Since January 1, 2020, the Health Services have evaluated 5 people who have been in Wuhan City for the past 14 days prior to the onset of symptoms. Four were diagnosed with a viral infection such as influenza or the common cold.

One new case, currently under investigation, involves a 44-year-old Macau resident who had traveled to Wuhan with her son

between December 23 and 25 last year.

On the night of January 4, she was admitted to the public hospital for medical treatment because of respiratory problems. The SSM noted that the respiratory test result was negative, but the patient will nevertheless remain in isolation until further clinical examination can be performed. At present, her state of health is considered mild and she has not presented any pneumonia or other serious conditions.

The infection is also being monitored by the World Health Organization, which said it is in active communication with its counterparts in China, where an investigation is underway to determine the cause of the infection.

"China has extensive capacity to respond to public health events and is responding proactively and rapidly to the current incident in Wuhan – isolating patients, tracing close contacts, cleaning up the market, and searching for the cause and for additional cases," the WHO said.

In Wuhan, several of the infected were reported to work at a fresh seafood and produce market in the city, raising the possibility that the disease could be transmitted by animals.

Pathogen studies have ruled out more common respiratory diseases, including influenza, avian flu and adenovirus, Wuhan health authorities said.

The Wuhan seafood market, which has since been closed, also sold birds, pheasants, and snakes, along with organs of rabbits and other wildlife, said the University of Minnesota's Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy, citing media reports.

The animal connection has triggered concern about the potential jump of an unknown virus to humans - reminiscent of SARS. The Wuhan Institute of Virology didn't respond to an emailed request for comment on the infectious source.

It's not known whether a SARS-like "coronavirus" has been identified, although there have been "numerous unsubstantiated reports mentioning a novel coronavirus that is SARS-like," the International Society for Infectious Diseases' ProMED-mail program wrote in an email, cited by Bloomberg. **DB/BLOOMBERG**



An aspect of yesterday's meeting

TRAFFIC ACCIDENT ON AMIZADE BRIDGE KILLS ONE

RENATO MARQUES



ANTHONY LAM

A car crash on the Amizade Bridge yesterday involving a seven-seater and an open-roof truck has killed a foreign worker.

Early investigation by the police raised the possibility that the truck lost power while climbing the slope of the bridge. Two workers disembarked from the truck to try to push it forward.

In the meantime, the driver of the seven-seater drove the car out from its original lane in an attempt to overtake the car in front, but only spotted the slow moving truck once it was too late to avoid contact.

The two workers were hit by the seven-seater, with one sustaining severe injuries. Im-

ages taken by Chinese-language news outlets showed the worker lying on the ground without any signs of movement. A large amount of blood was also seen around his body.

The other worker sustained minor injuries. Both workers were sent to the hospital. The severely injured worker was reported dead later.

Video footage showed that no obvious damage was caused to the truck, but the seven-seater was seriously damaged. The seven-seater was carrying a passenger, who sustained light injuries and was also sent to the hospital.

The seven-seater is owned by a VIP gaming promoter. The paint on the truck, on the other hand, indicates that it is owned by a laundry company. The po-

lice disclosed that both drivers are local residents and both have passed the post-accident alcohol test.

Disembarking a vehicle on major roads such as those on the Amizade Bridge, can be extremely dangerous. A guideline on car breakdowns issued by the Transport Department of the Hong Kong SAR government notes that, in case their vehicles break down, drivers should "leave their vehicle (by the left-hand doors) only if they are sure they can safely get clear of the carriageway. If in doubt, remain in the vehicle wearing a seat belt until the emergency services arrive."

On Saturday, another crash involving a seven-seater occurred in the parking lot of Galaxy Entertainment Group's Cotai

property. The driver, who works as a valet parking agent at the resort, was injured. The Fire Services Bureau deployed a team to rescue him before sending him to the hospital.

Information from the police indicated that the driver was a male local resident aged 46.

The accident took place in the underground parking lot of the resort. Images showed that the car crashed against a wall, causing significant damage to the front of the vehicle. Gasoline leaked out from the car, and all airbags were deployed.

Although police believed further investigation was required to determine the cause of the crash, it was suspected at the scene that the driver failed to turn the car after going down a slope.

COLLISION RESULTS IN TWO BURNED TOURISM BUSES

A huge fire broke out on the Amizade Bridge on Friday morning after two tourism buses crashed.

The 10 a.m. incident occurred when a small tourism bus crashed into the rear of a larger shuttle bus belonging to a casino operator.

According to the Public Security Police Force (PSP), the bigger bus's driver said he was driving slowly on the bridge when the small bus hit from the back.

The six passengers on board the larger shuttle bus were immediately evacuated. Meanwhile, in the shuttle bus there was only the driver, a 56-year-old female local resident, who sustained light injuries and was sent to the hospital.

After the incident, the two buses began to let out smoke before eventually catching fire. The Fire Services Bureau was called to the scene but upon arrival found that the buses had already been "swallowed" by fierce flames.

The Fire Services Bureau (HB) opened three fire hoses, deployed 10 ambulances and 30 fire fighters. It took the fire fighters about 20 minutes to put out the fire.

The minibus was completely burned, with all its glass windows broken. The casino shuttle bus's back seats were also burned.

Both vehicles had passed annual examinations and were considered safe to drive.

The inferno paralyzed traffic on the bridge as residents stopped to take pictures and film the incident. By 10:15 a.m. the heavy traffic has caused the authorities to place restrictions on accessing the bridge, which were not completely lifted until almost 1 p.m. on the same day.

Another two notable car crashes were reported last week. In one accident, eight people were injured after three vehicles collided in the evening near Oceanus at Jai Alai. **JZ**

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Secretary Lei Wai Nong 'cautiously optimistic' about Macau's economy

ANTHONY LAM

LAST year's 3.4% contraction in gross gaming revenue should not be overstated, according to Macau's Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, who stressed that 2019 still remains the fifth-highest year of earnings for the casino sector since the liberalization at the start of the century.

Secretary Lei has said that he remains "cautiously optimistic" about the overall economic development of Macau.

Last year, Macau's casinos recorded an accumulated gross gambling revenue of 292.4 billion patacas, marking a drop of 3.4% from that of 2018.

VIP play contributed 46% of the revenue, while the mass market contributed 54%.

For the secretary, the slight drop was noteworthy but not a matter of concern.

He explained that despite the drop, the revenue generated by the mass market has recorded a 17% increase, along with an increase in slot machine revenue. Revenue generated from VIP play, however, recorded a drop of 19%.

Referring to the overall picture, Lei stressed that the mass market was reliable and stable. Its ongoing development was sustainable. He deemed that a prominent foundation for the long-term development of the



Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong

entire industry.

Moreover, he revisited the problems caused for the economy back in 2008 by external factors, as well as in 2014 when the city faced large fluctuations in its gambling revenue. The former trend lasted for a year and the latter covered approximately three years.

Based on these experiences, Lei expressed his faith that Macau residents and companies will be able to weather similar

Macau residents and companies are, in the secretary's opinion, psychologically prepared for a change in the economic winds of the city

challenges in future. They are, in the secretary's opinion, psychologically prepared for any possible change in the economic winds of the city.

Lei also said that change in the external environment is to be expected. With regards to casino development in other jurisdictions across Asia, Lei felt con-

fident that operators in Macau will adjust accordingly to cope with the competition as it arises.

He also took the chance to highlight Macau's stability. Healthy employment levels and a buoyant tourism market are cornerstones for economic development, said Lei.

He pledged that the government would closely monitor and prepare for any changes in the external environment. It was also disclosed that further infrastructural projects would be unveiled to support the economy. Internal demand is the key, according to the secretary, to economic stability.

Meanwhile, the secretary offered no update on the retender process of the gambling licenses, which are due to expire in June 2022.

In spite of a fall in gross gambling revenue, the visitor count in 2019 stood about 10% higher than a year earlier, amounting to 39.4 million visitors. The total narrowly missed the 40-million figure, previously earmarked as the city's maximum "carrying capacity."

In 2019, mainland tourists continued to top the list as the largest source market with a total of 28 million visitors.

Some 194 million crossings of the borders of Macau were recorded in 2019, a 9% increase from that of 2018. Some 75% used the city's most popular checkpoint, the Border Gate.

Federation of Trade Unions calls for retention of croupier privileges

JULIE ZHU

THE Macao Federation of Trade Unions (FAOM) has called on the new government led by Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng to retain a policy barring non-locals from taking up work as casino dealers and occupational drivers.

Macau currently protects certain occupations from foreign labor as a means of keeping the unemployment rate low. The latest data provided by the Statistics and Census Service showed the unemployment rate of local residents was 2.3% in the three-month period from September to

November 2019.

More than a dozen FAOM members paid a courtesy call to the Chief Executive on Friday to voice its opinions on workers' policies. During the meeting, FAOM members introduced Ho Iat Seng to the association's work in the past three years and then presented the association's work plan for the upcoming three years.

The workers' representatives asked Ho to continue Macau's traditional labor policies of not allowing non-local workers to work as casino dealers and occupational drivers. According to Lee Chong Cheng,

president of the FAOM and member of the Executive Council, Ho assured the group of the continuation of these two policies.

In April, Ho will present his first policy address at the Legislative Assembly. Before that, Ho will visit the Macau Federation of Trade Unions to listen to the sector's opinions on Macau's workers' policies, including opinions on the amendment of the labor rights law.

Before Ho's first policy address, the FAOM will submit to Ho its opinions on illegal workers, tour guides, and construction workers.

In April, the Legislative Assembly rejected, for the

10th time, the establishment of a trade union law in Macau.

During Friday's meeting, the association did not raise topics concerning the trade union law nor the cash handout scheme.

Instead, the federation raised its concerns about the vulnerability of workers to the unidentified influenza outbreak on the mainland.

The FAOM recommended that Ho carefully monitor the recently unidentified influenza cases reported in mainland China, and to specifically care about casino workers. According to the FAOM, the local gover-



ment has already issued instructions to local casinos to carry out measures to prevent relevant influenza cases from spreading in Macau. Casinos should measure the temperature of certain types of visitors.

The FAOM explained that casino workers, such as dealers, are in contact with a large number of visitors on a daily basis, and

are therefore at a higher risk of becoming infected with influenza.

The association hopes the local government will allow casino workers to wear masks on duty to avoid being infected. Casinos should also enhance sterilization practices at their facilities, in addition to keeping fresh air in circulation.



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BLOOMBERG



Outgoing Hong Kong liaison office director, Wang Zhimin

China names new HK liaison head

CHINA replaced its top liaison official for Hong Kong, signaling Beijing's growing frustration with pro-democracy protests that have dragged on for months.

Luo Huining will take over from Wang Zhimin as the Hong Kong liaison office director, the government said in a two-sentence statement that didn't elaborate on the changes in the semi-autonomous financial hub.

The new official served as Shanxi party secretary from 2016 until November, and became deputy chairman of the financial and economic committee of the National People's Congress a month later.

"Luo's appointment probably signals a hard-line policy from Beijing - that we don't give a damn about your feelings," said Chen Zhao, co-founder of the Montreal-based research firm Alpine Macro, who has insights on China after attending university with some of the nation's high-ranking officials. "He's just a party boss - he has no connection with Hong Kong and no foreign affairs expertise."

Compared with Luo, his pre-

decessor was the former director of China's liaison office in Macau before he was appointed the top representative in Hong Kong in 2017. Hong Kong, a former British colony, was handed back to China in 1997 and is now a special administrative region of the country, while Macau was returned two years later by Portugal.

Hong Kong has been gripped by more than six months of protests by activists demanding greater autonomy from Beijing, with the protests often turning violent with subway stations, shops and banks vandalized. China's government has consistently backed Chief Executive Carrie Lam, including on a mid-December visit to Beijing where she met Chinese President Xi Jinping.

"Luo has no relationship with the business community or political arena in Hong Kong," Zhao said. "I think it will be very difficult for him to be helpful for the Hong Kong government, whereas the previous guy knew Carrie Lam well."

With support for the protests undiminished after months of violent unrest, speculation of Wang's removal from the position

has been growing, particularly after pro-government candidates suffered a resounding defeat in Hong Kong district council elections in November. While the polls were for what's considered to be the lowest rung of the city's government, the results demonstrated the underlying public sentiment.

"Wang's dismissal was long predicted because he appeared to be associated too closely with the pro-Beijing elites and business leaders, without reaching out widely to all social sectors especially the poor and the needy," Sonny Lo, a Hong Kong-based political commentator, said Saturday. "His miscalculations of Hong Kong" may have led to his downfall, particularly after the elections.

Lam praised Wang for his "staunch support" for the government's efforts "to curb violence and uphold the rule of law," according to a statement. She also welcomed Luo and said that under his leadership the liaison office worked to promote "prosperity and stability" and "the integration of Hong Kong into the overall development of the nation and the positive development of the relationship between the mainland and Hong Kong."

Luo worked for the Anhui government between 1982 and 1999. In 2010, he was appointed governor of Qinghai before being made party secretary in the province in 2013. **MDT/BLOOMBERG**

HONG KONG

RETAIL SALES WEAKEN AGAIN AS TOURISM PLUNGES

HONG Kong's retail sales posted another double-digit decline in November as visitor arrivals to the financial center plunged.

Retail sales by value retreated 23.6% in the month from a year earlier, extending the run of declines to ten months. The decline in November was slightly better than economists' expectation and the record contraction in October. By volume, sales contracted 25.4%, according to a government release.

Retailers large and small are among those suffering the most amid persistent protests in the city since June. Consumption data continued to weaken in November as a perceived period of calm following a landslide election victory for pro-democracy local candidates came at the end of the month.

The figures also serve as an ominous lead in to the critical December holiday period, seen by many shopkeepers as a make or break shopping and spending season. Sales of jewelry, watches and clocks and valuable gifts fell 44% from a year earlier in November.

"Retail sales continued to fall sharply in November as the local social incidents turned extremely violent, causing very severe disruptions to tourism- and consumption-related activities and further dampening consumption sentiment," a government spokesman said in the statement. Near-term outlook for retail continues to hinge on how the social incidents will evolve, according to the spokesman.

Arrivals from Mainland China, which account for the vast majority of all visitors to Hong Kong each month, plummeted a record 58% in November to extend the low set in October. Overall visitor numbers fell below 3 million for the first time since February 2011, according to data compiled by Bloomberg from the Hong Kong Tourism Board. **BLOOMBERG**

HONG KONG

HKD SURGES TO STRONGEST SINCE 2017 AS SHORTS UNWIND

THE Hong Kong dollar advanced to its strongest level since April 2017, as traders unwound short positions on expectations that borrowing costs will rise amid seasonal demand for cash and potential new stock listings.

The currency, which is pegged to the greenback, rallied as much as 0.16% to 7.7770 per U.S. dollar on Friday. It has been driven by bets that funding costs will increase, given seasonal cash demand ahead of the Lunar New Year holiday later this month. Continued mainland capital inflows into Hong Kong stocks and the local exchange's discussion of potential secondary listings by Chinese technology firms have also offered support.

Along with the potential for large stock listings and heightened cash demand, the gains were also supported by investors seeking haven assets amid rising Middle East tensions, said Alan Yip, a senior foreign-exchange strategist at Bank of East Asia Ltd, who sees the currency strengthening to 7.76 per greenback in the next few weeks.

Capital inflows into Hong Kong stocks also helped send the currency higher, according to Gao Qi, a strategist at Scotiabank in Singapore. Mainland investors bought shares listed in the city for a 35th consecutive day on Friday through the stock connect, the longest buying streak since September.

Friday's advance follows the Hong Kong dollar's largest monthly rally since 2008 in December, which was fueled by a seasonal spike in interbank interest rates.

The recent strength is a far cry from the most of the past two years, when the Hong Kong dollar repeatedly touched the weak end of its trading band as investors sold the currency to buy the higher-yielding greenback. **MDT/ BLOOMBERG**

ALAN SUDERMAN, RICHMOND

GAMING | UNITED STATES

CASINOS could be coming soon to Virginia, but a brawl over just how many, where they would go, and who would run them is on tap first.

Gambling-related issues are set to be one of the hottest topics at the state Capitol when lawmakers return to the Richmond next month to kick off the 2020 legislative session. Lawmakers will decide whether to legalize online sports betting and whether to regulate betting machines that have proliferated in convenience stores in recent years.

But the biggest focus will be on casinos. Virginia is currently one of only a handful of states that forbid any type of casinos, but it has been inching towards legalizing them in recent years. Advocates have pressed the case that large-scale resorts with casinos in economically disadvantaged areas will create new jobs and boost tax revenues.

"It's a no-brainer," said Portsmouth Democrat Sen. Louise Lucas, long the most outspoken casino advocate at the legislature.

Conservative groups have countered that the societal costs of casinos, like increased gambling addictions and higher crime rates, outweigh the benefit. But their influence has dwindled, and GOP leaders in the state House of Delegates who have slowed efforts to legalize casinos were swept out of power in November when Democrats won a majority at the General Assembly for the first time in more than two decades.

Legalizing casino legislation, however, won't be as simple as an up-and-down vote. Lawmakers will also need to decide how competitive the market should be.

Deep-pocketed and influential groups have spent heavily on campaign donations and hiring lobbyists to make sure they have a seat at the table when decisions are made. Key power players include Jim McGlothlin, a wealthy

ALL BETS ARE ON? VIRGINIA WEIGHS LEGALIZING CASINOS



coal industrialist who wants to build a Hard Rock casino and resort in Bristol, and the Pamunkey Indian Tribe, which is eyeing a potential casino in Richmond or Norfolk.

Casinos were heavily debated during the 2019 session before lawmakers directed the legislature's research arm to study the impact of putting casinos in five localities, mostly stretched along the state's southern border: Bristol, Danville, Richmond, Norfolk and Portsmouth.

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission issued a report recently that found that resort-style casinos in those locations could produce about \$260 million a year in new state gaming taxes while creating at least 5,000 jobs.

But it's unclear if this legislature will be content just considering casinos at those five locations.

JLARC's report said a casino

in northern Virginia, home to much of the state's population, would add about \$155 million in gaming taxes and employ about 3,200 people. It would also com-

pete with gambling behemoth MGM Resorts International, which three years ago opened a \$1.4 billion resort and casino in Maryland just across the Poto-

mac River from Virginia and next to Washington.

JLARC's report also identified a key point of tension in Virginia's current debate: new casinos would hurt the state's horse racing industry.

Two years ago, the legislature allowed the operator of the state's only horse track, Colonial Downs, to operate slot-like machines both at the track in New Kent County and at satellite locations around the state. Part of the money generated helps fund live horse-racing.

Sheila Hargrove, a Richmond resident who regularly plays the historic horse-racing machines at a Richmond location, said she'd much prefer going to a casino.

"It's better than driving all the way to Maryland," she said.

Aaron Gomes, the chief operating officer of Colonial Downs Group, said his company doesn't oppose legalizing casinos but said allowing a competitor to open a casino in Richmond would be catastrophic to the company's bottom line. JLARC's report predicted a 45 percent hit in historic horse-racing revenues if casinos were legalized.

"Our philosophy is live and let live," Gomes said. "We don't live at a 45 percent decline in revenue." **AP**

OKLAHOMA TRIBES SUE GOVERNOR OVER CASINOS

THREE of the most powerful tribes in Oklahoma filed a federal lawsuit against the state's governor last week, asking the court to help resolve a dispute over gambling at tribal casinos.

The Cherokee, Chickasaw and Choctaw nations want a federal judge to determine whether the state compacts that allow gambling exclusively at tribal casinos automatically renew on January 1 for another 15-year term. The tribes contend all the conditions have been met for the compacts to renew.

Oklahoma's new Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt contends the gaming compacts expire on January 1 and that casino gambling after that date will be illegal. Stitt has signaled he wants to renegotiate

the compacts to give the state a larger slice of revenue.

Under the existing compacts, approved by Oklahoma voters in 2004, tribes pay the state "exclusivity fees" between 4% and 10% on gambling revenue in exchange for the exclusive right to operate casinos. Those fees generated nearly \$139 million for the state in the 2018 fiscal year, most of it earmarked for education, on roughly \$2.3 billion in revenue from games covered under the compacts.

Since the compacts were approved, casino gambling has exploded in Oklahoma with more than 130 casinos dotting the state, ranging from gas station annexes to resort-style casinos. **MDT/AP**

GAMING | JAPAN

Ex-minister denies receiving China money in alleged bribery case

JAPAN'S former defense minister Takeshi Iwaya has denied receiving money from a Chinese company involved in a casino bribery scandal.

Iwaya, a ruling Liberal Democratic Party member who has a seat in the Lower House, was one of five lawmakers questioned by

Tokyo prosecutors on a voluntary basis for their alleged receipt of cash from a Shenzhen-based company, reported The Japan Times.

"I absolutely deny it," Iwaya, a politician from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, said in a televised press conference Saturday. "From the perspective of

laws regulating political funds as well, it's impossible that I received donations from a foreign firm."

Local media reported earlier the Chinese company under investigation said that five lawmakers including Iwaya had also received around 1 million yen (\$9,252) each.

Iwaya has been a member of the ruling party's gambling resorts project team.

Tokyo prosecutors arrested a ruling party lawmaker last month on suspicion of receiving bribes from the Chinese company seeking to invest in the casino sector. The

payoffs may have amounted to about 3.7 million yen (\$34,000), the Tokyo Public Prosecutor's office said, with the bribes including cash, plane tickets and hotel rooms.

According to Bloomberg, the case has dealt a blow to already unpopular plans to open the country to the gaming industry.

Japan 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. **DB/AGENCIES**



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Property of the Week



Jade Garden Spacious Family Home

HK\$18,000,000 3,180 ft² 4 1/2 3 1/2

Stunning property with fabulous outdoor spaces. Quiet complex with parking available for sale as well. Renovated throughout to a very high standard. Beautiful kitchen with modern built in appliances and well designed bathrooms.

Property Hotlist



Lakeview Tower, Central Macau

\$11,000,000

1,344 ft²

3 1/2 2 1/2



SCAN ME



Taipa Village with Balcony

\$4,950,000

787 ft²

2 1/2 1 1/2



SCAN ME



Furnished Apartment, Macau

\$12,500/mth

700 ft²

2 1/2 1 1/2



SCAN ME



New Studio, Taipa

\$8,500/mth

426 ft²

1 1/2



SCAN ME

More Listings

For Sale

- [Taipa] Hoi Wan Garden 2 1/2 1 1/2 900 ft² **\$5,100,000** (ref: 19106003)
- [Macau] Unique Loft 2 1/2 2 1/2 2,200 ft² **\$9,990,000** (ref: 15115464)
- [Taipa] Manhattan Luxury 3 1/2 2 1/2 1,720 ft² **\$12,980,000** (ref: 19096006)
- [Coloane] Large 3/4 room 2 1/2 3 1/2 2,530 ft² **\$13,800,000** (ref: 19096000)
- [Cotai] One Grantai 4 1/2 2 1/2 2,556 ft² **\$25,600,000** (ref: 19096001)

For Rent

- [Taipa] Manhattan High Floor 4 1/2 2 1/2 2,305 ft² **\$26,800/mth** (ref: 19091003)
- [Taipa] New studio 1 1/2 470 ft² **\$9,500/mth** (ref: 19101002)
- [Taipa] Nova Grand 2 1/2 1 1/2 935 ft² **\$17,800/mth** (ref: 19091005)
- [Taipa] Ocean Garden 4 1/2 4 1/2 3,700 ft² **\$35,000/mth** (ref: 18040674)
- [Cotai] One Grantai 3 1/2 3 1/2 2,122 ft² **\$23,000/mth** (ref: 19030001RT)

Recent Movements

Rented Vai Fung Triplex, Macau,
2 beds, 2 bath

Rented Nam Long, Taipa
645 ft², 2 bed, 1 bath

Rented Macau apartment,
2 bed, 1 bath

SOLD



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LI LINHAI, SHI YU

AS winter arrives on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the extreme cold doesn't seem to bother winter sports lovers heading to the mountains in northwest China's Qinghai province for skiing and other wintertime activities.

In recent years, Qinghai has been pushing for the development of winter sports in anticipation of the upcoming 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games which gives its tourism industry an off-season boost.

NEW WINTER SPORTS HUB

In the past, the winter sports industry was concentrated in northern China, especially the three northeastern provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning. Today, as China steps into the winter sports promotion fast lane, winter sports have become more popular in other parts of the country, including the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.

With unique topographical and climate features perfect for winter sports, Qinghai has witnessed a burst of activity in the industry over the past few years.

According to a development plan, the local government is striving to shape the province into a new winter sports hub by building arenas, introducing winter sports to the locals, and hosting major athletic events.

Since 2016, the Qinghai International Curling Elite held at the Duoba National Highland Sports Training Base has been one of the highlights for worldwide curling fans, as top curlers from around the world gather to battle for the title.

With world-class facilities, the competition was drawn last year into the global team ranking points system of the World Curling Federation and is now recognized as one of the world's top curling tournaments.

"We appreciate the international-level facilities that the Elite offers and the professionalism of the staff," said Lim Myung-sup, coach of South Korea's men's team, on the sidelines of the 2019 curling event.

Other than the yearly curling competition, the province has also been planning for an elaborate calendar of winter sports

Qinghai betting on winter sports for tourism buzz



Tourists play with snow tubing in Xining, capital of Qinghai Province

events, including curling, skiing, figure skating, snowboarding, ice skating and ice hockey; for both competitive athletes and amateur enthusiasts.

At the end of 2019, a brand-new ice hockey rink and a curling arena, equipped with professional facilities, was opened to public in the provincial capital Xining. With more and more residents, especially kids trying out winter sports, the city is planning on forming its own teams and hosting the provincial winter games in 2021.

OFF-SEASON TOURIST MAGNETS

With the temperature dropping below freezing, wind howling and roads getting slippery with ice, Qinghai usually sees a huge dip in tourists in the winter months. But in recent years, with more ski resorts and skating rinks built in the

province, winter visitor numbers have risen to compete with peak season figures.

Some 35 kilometers from the provincial capital Xining, the Kangle skiing resort, first of its kind in the province, is one of the most sought-after destinations

Endowed with abundant ice and snow resources, Qinghai wants to raise its tourism profile through the development of winter sports

during the region's off-season. It attracts around 70,000 visitors each winter, mostly beginners who wish to try out skiing for the very first time.

But the province, endowed with abundant ice and snow resources, especially lots of snow-

capped mountains, is aiming much higher as it strives to turn winter sports into off-peak tourists magnets and build more high-end destinations.

Qilian County, located in Qinghai's Haibei Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, has been given the prestigious nickname "Oriental Switzerland" for its breathtaking scenery. The county also makes the perfect traveling destination with mountains, forests, grasslands and glaciers all in one location.

"The county boasts ideal natural conditions and huge potential to bring in high-end visitors," said the county magistrate Long Yongsheng, adding that the county is building a ski resort in a bid to raise the region's global tourism profile.

Winter sports tourism is poised to boom in the coming years. In a recent report, the China Tourism Academy expects visitor numbers to rise to 340 million in the 2021-22 winter season, while it forecasts that winter tourism revenues would soar to 680 billion yuan (about \$97 billion) by the same time.

"Qinghai should seize the moments and make good use of its unique advantages to turn its ice and snow into white treasure," said Zhu Zhiqiang, principal of Harbin Sport University.

THE 2022 OLYMPIC VISION

Two years away from the first ever Winter Olympic Games on Chinese soil, the country is making rapid advancements in winter sports across the country, as it is trying to enrich mass ice- and snow-based activities and achieve the goal of involving 300 million people in winter sports.

Winter sports are no longer beyond reach for people in remote areas like Qinghai. Zhang Yujie, 17, is one of those young talents, who are training hard, hoping to earn pride on home turf.

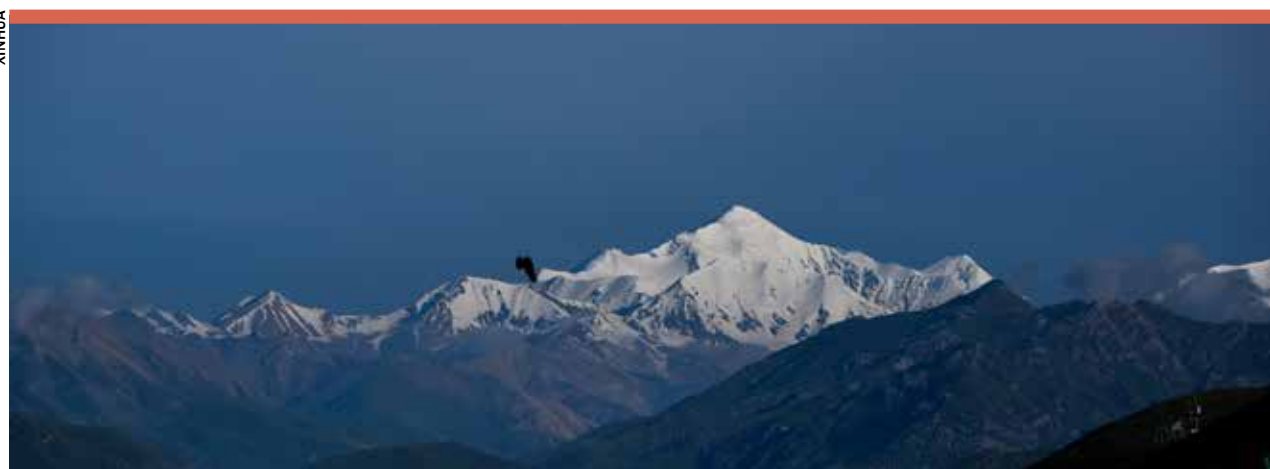
Two years ago Zhang became one of the first members of the provincial curling team. During the 2019 Qinghai International Curling Elite at the Duoba Base, she watched every minute from the stands, watching and learning.

"Training is hard, but I love more the pride and excitement when I step on the ice," said the young girl with pride in her eyes as she saw the Chinese team claim another victory.

At over 2,200 meters above sea level, the Duoba National Highland Sports Training Base not only plays hosts to the yearly curling event, but is also a home to gold medalists, as many Chinese winter sports world champions spend time here training.

The base is now building a 160-hectare ski resort, which is scheduled to train athletes, as well as provide a venue for the public in the future.

"As the ice and snow industry is expected to boom around the 2022 Olympics, Qinghai should seize the opportunity by nurturing young talent," said Liu Xinghai, vice-director of the provincial sports bureau. **XINHUA**



AP PHOTO



In this March 2019 file photo, Taiwanese top military official Shen Yi-ming salutes as he is introduced to journalists during a press conference in Taipei

Taiwan defense officials meet after crash kills top officer

TAIWANESE President Tsai Ing-wen convened a meeting of top defense officials and urged them Friday to be on a lookout for military developments concerning China following a helicopter crash that killed the island's top military officer and other prominent personnel.

In a tweet, Tsai said the morning conference focused on ensuring military morale, security in and around the Taiwan Strait and the importance of "complete equipment inspections."

The meeting followed the grounding for inspection of Taiwan's 52 UH-60M Black Hawk choppers belonging to the air force, the army and the National Airborne Service Corps., the agency responsible for search and rescue operations.

Thursday morning's crash in forested mountains outside the capital Taipei killed eight people, including chief of the general staff Gen. Shen Yi-ming. A former pilot and air force chief, Shen, 62, had since July been largely responsible for overseeing the self-governing island's defense against China.

"The best way for us to honor the memory of the fallen is to ensure Taiwan's security and maintain military morale," Tsai wrote.

In a video handout from the Presidential Office, Tsai is shown asking officials including the defense minister to "please be vigilant and pay close attention to military developments around the Taiwan Strait."

"We need to respond quickly to any military deployments to ensure security across the strait," Tsai said.

The helicopter's flight data re-

corder was recovered on Friday morning and, if it was not damaged, an analysis should be completed within 24 hours.

Others killed in the crash included both pilots, the deputy head of the Political Warfare Bureau and the deputy chief of the General Staff for Intelligence, while two lieutenant generals and a major general were among the five survivors.

Tsai and her two rivals in the Jan. 11 presidential election suspended their campaigns to observe a period of mourning.

The crash, which is under investigation, is not expected to affect the holding of the election, which Tsai is highly favored to win, but will require an urgent reshuffling of top military staff. Questions have also been raised as to why so many high-ranking officers were aboard a single flight.

China threatens to use military force if necessary to annex what it considers part of its territory. A vacuum within Taiwan's military leadership could embolden it to step up its military intimidation.

Shen's death comes as Taiwan's military is undergoing a substantial upgrade with the arrival of the most advanced version of the U.S. F-16V fighter jets, along with tanks, missiles and improved military software.

Local media reported that rescuers were able to swiftly arrive at the scene because Chen Ying-chu, a correspondent with the Military News Agency who was on board and survived, sent a series of messages to a chat group reporting the crash and giving the chopper's location. **AP**

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MGM Utilizes Cutting-edge Technology to Lead the Way in Food Waste Management

With a long-standing commitment to environmental protection, MGM constantly incorporates eco-friendly elements into different aspects of its operation. Recognizing that predictable organic waste makes up a big portion of its business, MGM launched a food waste composting program in 2018 to turn food scraps to landscaping compost. As the first company to deploy multiple solutions to tackle food waste in Macau, MGM recently went a step further by being the first enterprise in Macau to introduce the innovative ORCA technology, allowing the Company to treat organic waste in the most cost-effective and environmentally conscious manner.



Introducing ORCA to Macau

The ORCA program implemented in MGM MACAU is a food waste digester that uses an aerobic digestion process along with micro-organisms to treat food waste on-site, transforming it into an environmentally-friendly liquid within 24 hours. The system significantly reduces MGM's need to truck its waste to incineration facility, and subsequently lowers diesel fuel usage of garbage trucks. Diverting food waste disposal from incinerators, which are nearing their maximum capacity, also helps ease their burden and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.



Transforming Food Waste to Fertilizer

MGM has an exceptional track record in optimizing its food waste management system. The Company bought a composting machine in 2018 to turn organic waste into nutrient-rich compost that fuels plant growth and restores vitality of soils. Biodegradable compost generated from its food composting program has been applied to over 100,000 plants at MGM properties. MGM sends the rest of its biodegradable compost to local SMEs who offer horticultural supplies to the Company, enabling them to use less chemical fertilizer. With MGM's latest application of an efficient, clean alternative to traditional waste disposal, the Company not only achieves a breakthrough in its fight against climatic change, but also wards off rotting food smells and nasty pests that may come from accumulated food waste.



Moreover, MGM also continuously raises team members' awareness of reducing food waste. A "Let's Fight Food Waste" campaign was held at employee dining rooms of MGM MACAU and MGM COTAI to encourage team members to plan their food consumption well in advance. Those who finished the food on their plates were rewarded with a prize.

ISO 14001 Certified

MGM's adherence to the best practice framework in environmental protection has been highly praised over the years. Recently MGM obtained the ISO14001:2015 Environmental Management System Certification, which truly recognizes its great endeavors in achieving environmental sustainability. ISO 14001:2015 is a globally recognized standard that maps out a framework a company or organization can follow to set up an effective environmental management system. The certification is gained through implementing policies, procedures and systems that follow and meet ISO standards.

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AUSTRALIA

PRIME MINISTER DEFENDS RESPONSE AS WEATHER BRINGS RESPITE IN FIRES

AUSTRALIAN Prime Minister Scott Morrison defended his leadership and his government's record on climate change yesterday as milder temperatures brought hope of a respite from wildfires that have ravaged three states, claiming 24 lives and destroying almost 2,000 homes.

Morrison has faced widespread criticism for taking a family vacation in Hawaii at the start of the wildfire crisis, his sometimes distracted approach as it has escalated and his slowness in deploying resources.

He was heckled last week when he visited a township in New South Wales in which houses had been destroyed and which was home to one of three volunteer firefighters who have died in the crisis so far.

On Saturday Morrison announced that, for the first time in Australian history, 3,000 army, navy and air force reservists will be thrown into the battle against the fires. He also committed \$14 million to leasing fire-fighting aircraft from overseas.

But those decisions attracted complaints that he had taken too long to act as fires have burned through millions of hectares in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, an area twice the size of Maryland.

Morrison told a news conference yesterday it was not the time for blame.

"There has been a lot of blame being thrown around," Morrison said. "And now is the time to focus on the response that is being made. [...] Blame doesn't help anybody at this time and over-analysis of these things is not a productive exercise."

Morrison has been chided for past remarks that appear to minimize the link between climate change and Australia's escalating threats of drought and wildfires.

AP PHOTO



"There is no dispute in this country about the issue of climate change globally and its effect on global weather patterns and that includes how it impacts in Australia," he said.

"I have to correct the record here. I have seen a number of people suggest that somehow the government does not make this connection. The government has always made this connection and that has never been in dispute."

Cooler temperatures and lighter winds yesterday brought some relief to threatened communities, a day after thousands were forced to flee as flames reached the suburban fringes of Sydney.

Thousands of firefighters fought to contain the blazes but many continued to burn out of control, threatening to wipe out rural townships and causing almost incalculable damage to property and wildlife.

As dawn broke over a blackened landscape yesterday, a picture emerged of disaster of unprecedented scale. The Rural Fire Service said 150 fires were active in the state, 64 of them uncontrolled.

"It's not something we have experienced before," New South Wales Premier Gladys Berejiklian said.

The latest fatality occurred at Batlow in New South Wales, where

a 47-year-old man died Saturday night while defending the home of a friend from encroaching fires. New South Wales police said the man was found unconscious in a vehicle and could not be revived.

Earlier Saturday, a father and son who were battling flames for two days died on a highway on Kangaroo Island, off South Australia state. Authorities identified them as Dick Lang, a 78-year-old acclaimed bush pilot and outback safari operator, and his 43-year-old son, Clayton. Their family said their losses left them "heartbroken and reeling from this double tragedy."

Lang, known as "Desert Dick,"

led tours for travelers throughout Australia and other countries.

The deadly wildfires, which have been raging since September, have already burned about 5 million hectares (12.35 million acres) of land. That's more than any one year in the U.S. since Harry Truman was president.

Morrison's handling of the deployment of reservists also came in for criticism yesterday. Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, who is leading the fight in New South Wales, said he learned of the deployment through media reports.

"It is fair to say it was disappointing and some surprise to hear about these things through public announcements in the middle of what was one of our worst days this season with the second-highest number of concurrent emergency warning fires ever in the history of New South Wales," he said.

Morrison was also forced to defend a video posted on social media Saturday, which promoted the deployment of reservists and the government's response to the wildfires.

The non-partisan Australia Defence Association said the video breached rules around political advertising.

"Party-political advertising milking ADF (Australian Defence Force) support to civil agencies fighting bushfires is a clear breach of the non-partisanship convention applying to both the ADF and ministers/MPs," the association said.

In a tweet, Morrison said "the video message simply communicates the government's policy decisions and the actions the government is undertaking to the public."

Meanwhile, Australia's capital Canberra was enveloped in a smoky haze yesterday and air quality at midday was measured at 10 times the usual hazardous limit.

In New Zealand the skies above Auckland were tinged orange by smoke from the bushfires and police were inundated with calls from anxious residents. **MDT/AP**

AUSTRALIA

Half a billion animals potentially killed in wildfires

CLOSE to half a billion animals in Australia's New South Wales state may have been killed in wildfires since September - and the number could climb.

Research, led by the University of Sydney's Chris Dickman, said many of the estimated 480 million affected mammals, birds and rep-

tiles would have been directly killed by the fires or indirectly through loss of habitat.

"Prior research indicates that in severely burned areas the resulting lack of shelter, lack of food, and incursions by invasive predators - red foxes and feral cats - lead to further drastic but indirect reductions of animal numbers,"

Dickman said Friday.

Distressing images of injured or dead Australian native animals - including koalas and kangaroos - have been flooding social media streams as the wildfires sweep through southeastern Australia, destroying vast tracts of land and homes. The human death toll since the fire season began months ago

in the southern hemisphere winter stands at 20.

Koalas have been particularly affected, according to Environment Minister Sussan Ley who told local radio that up to 30% of the population on the mid-north coast of New South Wales may have been killed.

Nature Conservation Council ecologist Mark

Graham also highlighted the plight of koalas last month when he spoke at a state parliamentary inquiry into the diminishing population.

"With the type of fast-moving crown fires that we have been experiencing, koalas really have no capacity to move fast enough to get away," he said. "There is such a big

area now that is still on fire and still burning that we will probably never find the bodies."

Even still, the 480 million figure really only provides a rudimentary indication of the true scale of ecological destruction, according to Dickman, who highlighted it was a conservative estimate. **MDT/BLOOMBERG**

Japan to tighten immigration procedures after Ghosn's escape

JAPAN said it would tighten immigration procedures in the wake of Carlos Ghosn's dramatic escape from the country after skipping bail, and ordered an investigation on how the former Nissan Motor Co. chief disappeared.

Justice Minister Masako Mori said authorities were "promptly" asked to find out how Ghosn left Japan without detection once she became aware of the incident. She also told the immigration agency to strengthen its departure controls to avoid similar events in the future, according to a statement yesterday.

It's the first time a Japanese official has commented since news emerged on New Year's Eve that the fallen auto titan has fled to Lebanon. Authorities are under immense pressure to find out how one of the country's most high-profile suspects in recent years escaped despite being under round-the-clock surveillance.

Prior to his escape, Ghosn leveraged his fame to draw unwanted attention to Japan's entire legal

AP PHOTO



system, criticizing what he described as vast freedoms for prosecutors to force bogus confessions out of suspects.

The 65-year-old multinational was arrested in Japan on allegations of financial misconduct on Nov. 19, 2018, while he was chief executive officer of Renault SA and chairman of Nissan. After

lengthy prison stays, Tokyo's district court let Ghosn post bail last March, overruling prosecutors' objections that he was a flight risk.

The justice minister said she believed Ghosn left Japan illegally as there were no records of him exiting the country. She vowed to take all possible steps so the nation's criminal procedures will be

implemented properly.

Details of how Ghosn fled remain thin. Japanese media reported surveillance footage shows he left the house alone on the day of his disappearance but didn't return, contrasting with speculation that he was smuggled from the premises inside a large musical case brought in earlier.

Ghosn was flown to Istanbul on a private jet and then on another to the capital of Lebanon, where he has citizenship, protecting him from extradition back to Japan. The two planes that transported him were deployed illegally using falsified records that didn't mention Ghosn was a passenger, the aircraft's operator said.

After making his escape, Ghosn released an email decrying the "injustice and political persecution" of the Japanese judicial system. He also faced charges of raiding corporate resources for personal gain. Ghosn has said the charges are false and were trumped up by Nissan executives, Japanese prosecutors and government officials who opposed his plans to more deeply integrate Nissan and Renault.

Mori and Tokyo prosecutors said Ghosn's actions can't be justified and are "very regrettable." Mori also revealed that Ghosn's bail was revoked and the International Criminal Police Organization, or Interpol, issued a Red Notice upon request of the Japanese government.

Ghosn plans to give a press conference on January 8 in Beirut to provide his version of events. He has said his family played no role in aiding his flight, and that he alone organized his departure.

MDT/BLOOMBERG

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Rockets fired after day of mourning for slain

QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA
& SARAH EL DEEB, BAGHDAD *

THOUSANDS took to the streets of Baghdad for the funeral procession of Iran's top general Saturday after he was killed in a U.S. airstrike, as the region braced for the Islamic Republic to fulfill its vows of revenge.

The day of mourning in the Iraqi capital ended Saturday evening with a series of rockets that were launched and fell inside or near the Green Zone, which houses government offices and foreign embassies, including the U.S. Embassy.

Iran has vowed harsh retaliation for the U.S. airstrike ordered early Friday by President Donald Trump that killed Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the head of Iran's elite Quds Force and mastermind of its regional security strategy, and several senior Iraqi militants. The attack has caused regional tensions to soar, raising fears of an all-out war, and tested the U.S. alliance with Iraq.

Trump, meanwhile, warned that the U.S. too was ready to respond if Tehran strikes back. He said Saturday that he U.S. had already "targeted 52 Iranian sites (representing the 52 American hostages taken by Iran many years ago), some at a very high level & important to Iran & the Iranian culture."

Trump did not identify the targets but added that they would be "HIT VERY FAST AND VERY HARD."

Trump says he ordered the strike, a high-risk decision that was made without consulting Congress or U.S. allies, to prevent a conflict. U.S. officials say Soleimani was plotting a series of attacks that endangered American troops and officials, without providing evidence.

Soleimani was the architect of Iran's regional policy of mobilizing militias across Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, including in the war against the Islamic State group. He was also blamed for attacks on U.S. troops and American allies going back decades.

Though it's unclear how or when Iran may respond, any retaliation was likely to come after three days of mourning declared in both Iran and Iraq. All eyes were on Iraq, where America and Iran have competed for influence since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion.

After the airstrike early Friday, the U.S.-led coalition has scaled back operations and boosted "security and defensive measures" at bases hosting coalition forces in Iraq, a coalition official said on the condition of anonymity according to regulations. Meanwhile, the U.S. has dispatched another 3,000 troops to neighboring Kuwait, the latest in a series of deployments in recent months as the standoff with Iran has worsened.

In a thinly veiled threat, one of the Iran-backed militia, Asaib Ahl al-Haq, or League of the Righteous, called on Iraqi security forces to stay at least 1,000 meters away from U.S. bases starting Sunday night. However, US troops are invariably based in Iraqi military posts alongside local forces.

"The leaders of the security forces should protect their fighters and not allow them to become human shields to the occupying Crusaders," the warning statement said.

By Saturday evening, as the funeral processions were still taking place, a series of rocket attacks on bases that house U.S. forces were launched. A Katyusha rocket that fell inside a square less than a kilometer from the U.S. Embassy, according an Iraqi security official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to reporters. The U.S.-led coalition confirmed the attack, saying indirect fire landed outside of its facilities. No troops were hurt.

Rockets also landed in the vicinity of Balad air base, about 40 miles north of Baghdad, the coalition said, adding that no troops were hurt. Earlier an Iraqi official said three rockets fell in a farm area outside the base.

"We have increased security and defensive measures at the Iraqi bases that host [anti-Islamic State] Coalition troops," said spokesman Col. Myles B. Caggins, who said the troops have come under 13 different attacks throughout Iraq in the past two months.

Another rocket in Baghdad landed about 500 meters from As-Salam palace where the Iraqi President Barham Salih normally stays in Jadriya, a neighborhood adjacent to the Green Zone, the Iraqi official said.

Meanwhile, a spokesman for the Iraqi armed forces said Saturday the movement of coalition forces, including U.S. troops, in the air and on the ground will be restricted, conditioned on receiving approval from Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi, the commander in chief of the armed forces.

It was not immediately clear what the new restrictions would mean, given that coalition troops were already subject to limitations and had to coordinate with the Joint Operation Command of top Iraqi military commanders.

Iraq's government, which is closely allied with Iran, condemned the airstrike that killed Soleimani, calling it an attack on its national sovereignty. Parliament arranged an emergency session yesterday, and the government has come under mounting pressure to expel the 5,200 American troops who are based in the country to help prevent a resurgence of the Islamic State group.

AP PHOTOS



Top general, Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani, considered the architect of Iran's policy in Syria

Also Saturday, NATO temporarily suspended all training activities in Iraq due to safety concerns, Canadian Defense Minister Harjit Sajjan said.

Amid the rising tension, the funeral procession for Soleimani and his aides lasted all of Saturday, moving from Baghdad to two of Shiite Islam's holiest cities, Najaf and Karbala.

In Baghdad, thousands of mourners, mostly men in black military fatigues, carried Iraqi flags and the flags of Iran-backed militias that are fiercely loyal to Soleimani at Saturday's ceremony. They were also grieving for Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, a senior Iraqi militia commander who was killed in the same strike.

The mourners, many of them in tears, chanted "No, No, America," and "Death to America, death to Israel." Mohammed Fadl, a mourner dressed in black, said the funeral is

an expression of loyalty to the slain leaders. "It is a painful strike, but it will not shake us," he said.

Helicopters hovered over the procession, which was attended by Abdul-Mahdi and leaders of Iran-backed militias. As the procession later made its way to the holy city of Karbala, the mourners raised red flags associated with unjust bloodshed and revenge.

The slain Iraqi militants will be buried in Najaf, while Soleimani's remains will be taken to Iran. More funeral services will be held for Soleimani in Iran today, before his body is laid to rest in his hometown of Kerman.

The U.S. has ordered all citizens to leave Iraq and temporarily closed its embassy in Baghdad, where Iran-backed militiamen and their supporters staged two days of violent protests in which they breached the compound. Britain and France have warned their citizens

to avoid or strictly limit travel in Iraq.

No one was hurt in the embassy protests, which came in response to U.S. airstrikes that killed 25 Iran-backed militiamen in Iraq and Syria. The U.S. blamed the militia for a rocket attack that killed a U.S. contractor in northern Iraq.

Tensions between the U.S. and Iran have steadily intensified since Trump's decision to withdraw from the 2015 nuclear deal and restore crippling sanctions that have devastated Iran's economy and contributed to recent protests there in which hundreds were reportedly killed.

In an apparent effort to defuse tensions, Qatar's foreign minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, made an unplanned trip to Iran where he met with Rouhani and other senior officials.

Qatar hosts American forces at the Al-Udeid Air Base and shares

Iranian leader



Mourners carry the coffin of Soleimani during his funeral in Karbala, Iraq



Protesters demonstrate over the U.S. airstrike in Iraq



Palestinians step on U.S. and Israeli flags as they attend a mourning house held by Palestinian factions for Soleimani

a massive offshore oil and gas field with Iran.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo spoke with various world leaders including Iraqi President Barham Salih, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, of the United Arab Emirates. "I reaffirmed that the U.S. remains committed to de-escalation," Pompeo tweeted.

In Tehran, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani visited Soleimani's home to express his condolences. "The Americans did not realize what a great mistake they made," Rouhani said.

As threats of revenge against the U.S. loomed, major streets in Iran were filled with billboards and images of Soleimani, who was widely seen as a national icon and a hero of the so-called Axis of Resistance against Western hegemony.

"I don't think there will be a war,

but we must get his revenge," said Hojjat Sanieefar. America "can't hit and run anymore."

Another man, who only identified himself as Amir, was worried.

"If there is a war, I am 100% sure it will not be to our betterment. The situation will certainly get worse," he said.

In a sign of his regional reach, supporters in Lebanon hung billboards commemorating Soleimani in Beirut's southern suburbs and in southern Lebanon along the disputed border with Israel, according to the state-run National News Agency.

Both are strongholds of the Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group, whose leader, Hassan Nasrallah, had close ties to Soleimani. A picture of Nasrallah hang in Soleimani's home.

Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip, including the territory's Hamas rulers, opened a mourning site

for the slain general and dozens gathered to burn American and Israeli flags.

The killing of Soleimani was "a loss for Palestine and the resistance," said senior Hamas official Ismail Radwan.

*** ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITERS JOSEPH KRAUSS IN JERUSALEM, JON GAMBRELL AND AYA BATRAWY IN DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES; AMIR VAHDAT IN TEHRAN, IRAN; ZEINA KARAM IN BEIRUT AND FARES AKRAM IN GAZA CITY, GAZA STRIP CONTRIBUTED.**

US DEPLOYS FAST-RESPONSE FORCE TO KUWAIT

HUNDREDS of U.S. soldiers deployed Saturday from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to Kuwait to serve as reinforcements in the Middle East amid rising tensions following the U.S. killing of a top Iranian general. Lt. Col. Mike Burns, a spokesman for the 82nd Airborne Division, told The Associated Press 3,500 members of the division's quick-deployment brigade, known officially as its Immediate Response Force, will have deployed within a

few days. The most recent group of service members to deploy will join about 700 who left earlier in the week, Burns said. The additional troop deployments reflect concerns about potential Iranian retaliatory action in the volatile aftermath of Friday's drone strike that killed Gen. Qasem Soleimani, the head of Iran's elite Quds Force who has been blamed for attacks on U.S. troops and American allies going back decades.

what's ON

RED DECEMBER – EXHIBITION OF CARLOS MARREIROS

TIME: 10am-9pm
UNTIL: 13 February 2020
VENUE: Tap Seac Gallery, located at No. 95, Avenida do Conselheiro Ferreira de Almeida
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 8988 4000

MOVE! INTO THE WILDLIFE

TIME: 12pm-8pm
UNTIL: February 9, 2020
VENUE: 2/F, Broadway Macau
ADMISSION: MOP120
KONG SENG TICKETING SERVICE: 2855 5555

MACAU SCIENCE CENTRE

TIME: 10am-6pm daily (Except on Thursdays; open on public holidays)
VENUE: Macau Science Center
ADMISSION: MOP25 (Exhibition Centre)
MOP60 (Planetarium 2D dome or 2D sky shows)
MOP80 (Planetarium 3D dome or 3D sky shows)
ENQUIRIES: (853) 2888 0822

MANDARIN'S House

TIME: 10am-6pm daily (Last admission at 5:30pm; closed on Wednesdays, open on public holidays)
ADDRESS: No. 10, Travessa de António da Silva
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 2896 8820

TREASURE OF SACRED ART OF ST. JOSEPH'S SEMINARY

TIME: 10am-5pm daily (Closed on Wednesdays, open on public holidays)
VENUE: St. Joseph's Seminary and Church, Rua do Seminário
ADMISSION: Free
ENQUIRIES: (853) 2835 7911

Offbeat

MAN LEFT DRUGS, GUN IN DESIGNER BAGS AT CONVENIENCE STORE

Louisiana authorities are perplexed over why a man left apparent designer bags holding drugs, a gun, cash and a digital scale in a convenience store.

The man went into the store early Thursday and put the Louis Vuitton and Gucci bags on a chair, according to a news release Friday.

"The employee said he offered her \$100 to 'keep his bag,'" Lt. Brennan Matherne, spokesman for Lafourche Parish Sheriff Craig Webre, said in an interview. "I don't know if his intention was for her to hold onto the bag until he came back or what."

The worker declined, and the man walked out without the bags, the news release said. A customer later pointed out that one of them held a handgun, which turned out to be stolen from neighboring Terrebonne Parish. It also held cash and a digital scale, while the other bag held the drug Suboxone and suspected methamphetamine, according to the statement.

Surveillance cameras got photos of the man and deputies hope to identify him.

"We haven't positively identified him ... but have gotten a couple tips already," Matherne said after the release and photos were posted on the sheriff's web and Facebook pages. "These images are pretty good, so we feel confident we'll be able to get him identified."

TV canal macau

13:00	TDM News (Repetição)
13:30	Telejornal RTPi (Diferido)
15:00	Água de Mar
15:30	BING
15:45	Os Ursos Boonie na Neve
16:00	História a História com Fernando Rosas
16:30	Quem Quer Ser Milionário
17:45	Império (Repetição)
18:35	Semana Internacional (Repetição)
19:10	Resumo Liga dos Campeões 2019/2020
19:30	Ouro Verde Sr.1
20:30	Telejornal
21:10	Macau 20 Anos
21:25	TDM Talk Show
21:55	Livros com João Guedes
22:05	Viagens Gastronómicas
22:30	Império
23:15	TDM News
23:50	Justiça de Chicago - Fim
00:35	Telejornal (Repetição)
01:20	No Ar

cinema

CINETEATRO

03 - 08 Jan



RICHARD JEWELL
ROOM 1
2:15, 4:45, 7:05, 9:30pm
Director: Clint Eastwood
Starring: Sam Rockwell, Kathy Bates, Jon Hamm, Olivia Wilde
Language: English
Duration: 141min



ASHFALL
ROOM 2
2:15, 4:45, 7:05, 9:30pm
Director: Lee Hae-Jun, Kim Byung-Seo
Starring: Lee Byung-hun, Ha Jung-woo, Ma Dong-Sock
Language: Korean
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



1994 MYSTERY ASSAILANT ATTACKS TOP US SKATER

An unknown man brandishing a metal crowbar has attacked American figure-skater Nancy Kerrigan.

The 24-year-old skater was forced to withdraw from the US national championships in Detroit after the incident, which left her with severe bruising to her right knee.

The competition was expected to decide who would represent the United States in the forthcoming winter Olympics in Lillehammer, Norway, next month. But that now hangs in the balance.

Normally the top two finishers in these championships would qualify for the Olympics, although the US Figure Skating Association does have some discretion in the electoral process.

The attack happened as Ms Kerrigan, who won a bronze medal in the 1992 Olympics, was leaving the ice after a practice session at Cobo Hall, Detroit.

An eye-witness said: "Before she could say anything, a guy ran by, crouched down, whacked her on the knee and kept running.

"Nancy just dropped and started screaming and sobbing."

Ms Kerrigan's agent, Jerry Solomon said: "Nancy sustained quite a blow, physically and mentally.

"This could really affect her mental approach which is so important on the ice."

Police investigating the incident have been told by witnesses that the attacker had been video-taping Ms Kerrigan as she skated before he struck.

It is understood that he was wearing official credentials around his neck but detectives still have no identification.

The attack comes just eight months after tennis player Monica Seles was stabbed by a spectator with a kitchen knife as she played on a court in Hamburg, Germany.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Tonya Harding, 23, went on to win the US Ladies Figure Skating Championship finals in Detroit. But within days police began investigating allegations that the attack had been arranged and carried out by associates of Ms Harding.

Ms Harding's former husband, Jeff Gillooly, her bodyguard, Shawn Eckardt, and two other men were charged with conspiracy but the skater herself denied any involvement in the plot.

Eventually she admitted trying to cover up the Kerrigan attack and was fined \$100,000 and given three years' probation.

Both skaters were selected to represent the US team in the Lillehammer Olympics. Ms Kerrigan went on to win a silver medal but Ms Harding performed poorly. In June of the same year the US Figure Skating Association stripped Tonya Harding of her 1994 national championship title and banned her from the organisation for life, which meant she could not compete in any future Olympic Games.

In October 1999 she returned to the ice, coming second at an ESPN event in Huntington, West Virginia, for professional skaters ineligible for Olympic competition.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Opening yourself up to a new romantic opportunity also means that you're opening yourself up to emotional intensity and upheaval, so be careful. Don't do anything for a new heartthrob.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

There's a nice, warm place in your heart where you keep special memories and nostalgic ideas, but it's not an infinite space, and right now you need to make some room.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

You are living proof that a person doesn't have to be an Olympic gymnast to be extremely skilled at balance! Rest easy knowing that there's nothing in this day you can't handle with grace.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

When you come across a person from your past today, rely on your good memory to help you come up with a great conversation starter. In just a few moments, you'll know exactly what subject to bring up.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Buying things to make yourself feel better may provide temporary relief, but in a couple days whatever has been bothering you will still be bothering you.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

After months or even years of going back and forth in a relationship, you could reach a major turning point today, thanks to a revelation. Sometimes things come to an abrupt ending.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Men are going to be the primary actors in today's dramas, or the people around you will be displaying stereotypically masculine traits like aggressiveness and competitiveness.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

There's a lot to be said for being direct, but today the more rewarding type of communication for you to explore will be much more subtle: eavesdropping



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Put your feet up and relax for a while. It won't be as boring as you think, and you will learn how to prevent more stress and pressure in your life. Your mind is still very active, so don't worry.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Beautiful words will turn anyone's head today, so if you've been working up the courage to make your move on a certain someone, today is the day to do it! Get creative.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Today, the devil will be not only in the details but also in the fine print. Keep that in mind when you're looking over any sort of contract. This includes credit card receipts and application forms.

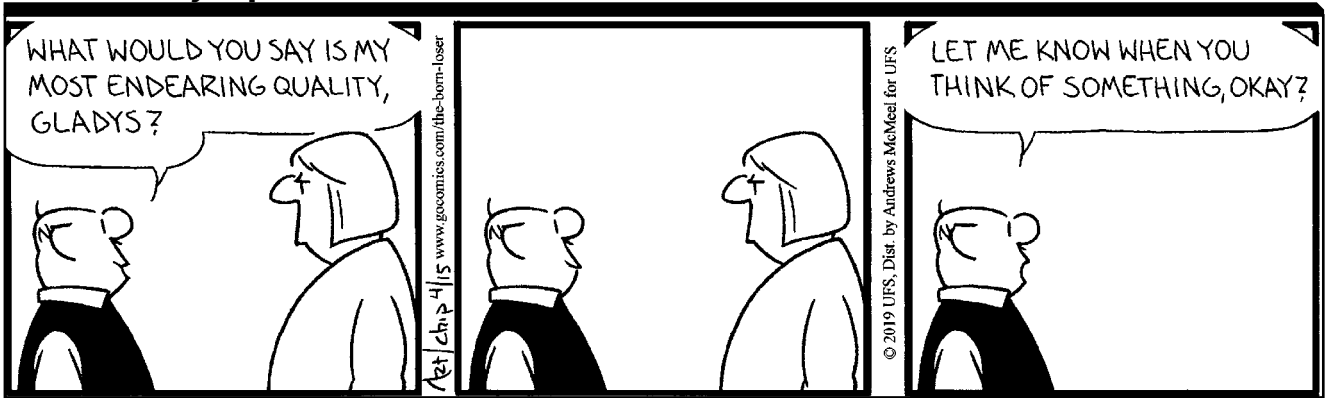


PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Itchy fabrics, spicy foods, and atonal music. Any (or all) of these off-kilter experiences will be just the ticket for you today. What you need most is stimulation!

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Lathers; 6- Cricket equipment; 10- Corporate VIP; 13- Golfer with an army; 14- Long poem, such as those attributed to Homer; 15- ___-vroom!; 16- Girder; 17- Actress Merrill; 18- Yeah, right!; 19- Zoologist Fossey; 20- Short drama; 22- Trifles; 24- Lets up; 28- Falls-jumping fish; 31- Responsibility; 32- Before; 34- Part of the Holy Trinity; 36- "Peter Pan" pirate; 37- Copy; 38- Wandering; 41- Miscalculate; 42- Petty quarrel; 44- Large bowl-shaped pan; 45- Large and dense; 47- Wading bird; 49- Metamorphosed limestone; 51- Fake; 53- Joined by treaty; 56- Very alert person; 59- Fervor; 61- Big East team; 64- Chits; 65- Indian millet; 66- Looking up; 67- Portrayal by an actor; 68- Reliable; 69- Washington bill; 70- ___ out a living (barely got by); 71- Beginnings;

DOWN: 1- Stated; 2- Regular course; 3- Lend ___; 4- Tickler of the ivories; 5- Religious sch.; 6- Mad confusion; 7- Capital city of Western Samoa; 8- Very small; 9- Milan's La ___; 10- Taxi; 11- Genesis name; 12- Muesli morsel; 15- Essential parts; 20- Head rest; 21- Kind of tide; 23- Futile; 25- Gets under control; 26- Abrasive mineral; 27- Psychic; 29- Honshu port; 30- Tacit assent; 32- Higher; 33- Approaches; 35- Agile; 37- Tennis great Arthur; 39- Pop's partner; 40- Equal a bet; 43- Warm and cozy; 46- Convulsion; 48- Advanced degree?; 50- Elevated; 52- Congo, once; 54- Uncanny; 55- Called one's bluff; 57- Corner piece; 58- Whimper; 60- Scottish boys; 61- All for; 62- Euripides drama; 63- Lao-___; 65- Skid row woe



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Emergency calls 999

Fire department 28 572 222

PJ (Open line) 993

PJ (Picket) 28 557 775

PSP 28 573 333

Customs 28 559 944

S. J. Hospital 28 313 731

Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333

Commission Against

Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300

IAM 28 387 333

Tourism 28 333 000

Airport 59 888 88

Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283

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FOR SALE

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2,200 ft² \$9,990,000 (ref: 15115464)

[Taipa] Manhattan Luxury 3 2 2
1,720 ft² \$12,980,000 (ref: 19096006)

[Coloane] Large 3/4 room 2 3 2
2,530 ft² \$13,800,000 (ref: 19096000)

FOR RENT

[Taipa] Manhattan High Floor 4 2 2
2,305 ft² \$26,800/mth (ref: 19091003)

[Taipa] New studio 1 1
470 ft² \$9,500/mth (ref: 19101002)

[Taipa] Nova Grand 2 1 1
935 ft² \$17,800/mth (ref: 19091005)

[Cotai] One Grantai 3 3 3
2,122 ft² \$23,000/mth (ref: 19030001RT)

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FROM GERVAIS TO J.LO, WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE GOLDEN GLOBES

THE Golden Globes are famously unpredictable, but a few sure things seem to be in store for Sunday's awards: Streaming services will play a starring role; five-time host Ricky Gervais will snicker at his own jokes; and Brad Pitt is all but assured of taking home an award.

Plenty of question marks remain for the 77th Golden Globe Awards, though. Will Jennifer Lopez score her first Globe? Who will win best song in the faceoff between Beyoncé, Taylor Swift and Elton John? Just how many "Cats" jokes are too many?

But whatever the cat drags in Sunday, the Golden Globes — Hollywood's most freewheeling televised award show — should be entertaining.

They also might be unusually influential. The 87 voting members of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association have traditionally had little in common with the nearly 9,000 industry professionals that make up the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. The HFPA is known for calculatingly pa-

AP PHOTO



cking its show with as much star power as possible, occasionally rewarding even the likes of "The Tourist" and "Burlesque."

But the condensed time frame of this year's award season brings the Globes and the Academy Awards closer in proximity. Balloting for Oscar nominations began Thursday; voters will be watching.

The Golden Globes will

begin at 8 p.m. EST and be broadcast live on NBC from the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, California.

Netflix comes into the Globes with a commanding 34 nods — 17 in film categories and 17 in television categories. Noah Baumbach's "Marriage Story" leads all movies with six nods, including best film, drama. Martin Scorsese's "The Irishman,"

with five nominations, is up for the same category. The box-office smash "Joker" may be their stiffest competition.

The path is more certain for Quentin Tarantino's "Once Upon a Time ... in Hollywood," which is competing in the comedy or musical category. It could easily take home more trophies than any other movie, with possible wins for Pitt, Leonardo

DiCaprio — a 12-time Globes nominee and three-time winner — and Tarantino's script. Tarantino is also up for best director, though he faces formidable competition in Scorsese and "Parasite" filmmaker Bong Joon Ho.

The dearth of nominations for female filmmakers has stoked more backlash than anything else at this year's Globes. Only men were nominated for best director (just five women have ever been nominated in the category), and none of the 10 films up for best picture was directed by a woman, either.

Time's Up, the activist group that debuted at the black-clad 2018 Globes, has been highly critical of the HFPA for the omission, calling it "unacceptable."

Last year, eventual Oscar best picture winner "Green Book" took best comedy, while "Bohemian Rhapsody" unexpectedly won best drama. This year, one of the likely best picture nominees at the Academy Awards wasn't eligible. Despite being an organization of foreign journalists, the HFPA doesn't


include foreign films in its top categories, thus ruling out the South Korean sensation "Parasite."


On the TV side, series like "Fleabag," "The Crown," "Succession" and "Chernobyl" are among the favorites. The recently launched Apple TV Plus also joins its first major awards show with "The Morning Show," including nominations for both Jennifer Aniston and Reese Witherspoon.

Last year's telecast, hosted by Andy Samberg and Sandra Oh, held steady in TV ratings, averaging 18.6 million viewers. Along with the returning Gervais, scheduled presenters include Tiffany Haddish, Will Ferrell and last year's best actress winner, Glenn Close.

Tom Hanks, also a nominee for his supporting turn as Fred Rogers in "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood," will receive the Cecil B. DeMille lifetime achievement award. The Carol Burnett Award, a similar honorary award given for television accomplishment, will go to Ellen DeGeneres.


AD






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






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TENNIS

Djokovic clinches Serbia's win; Nadal's Spain beats Georgia

JOHN PYE

NOVAK Djokovic got more than he bargained for in his first competitive match of 2020 before fending off Kevin Anderson 7-6 (5), 7-6 (6) late Saturday to secure Serbia's win over South Africa at the ATP Cup.

The No. 2-ranked Djokovic, winner of a record seven Australian Open titles, was able to feed off the large Serbian crowd at Pat Rafter Arena in Brisbane to ensure his country got the new, season-opening team event started with a victory in Group A.

But he also had to remonstrate with the crowd when things got tense in the first tiebreaker, as spectators called out during rallies on consecutive points and Djokovic yelled toward the stands before holding his finger to his lips to demand quiet. The chair umpire also intervened to ask the crowd to "show good sportsmanship."

"That was the Serbian crowd that



Novak Djokovic

was a little bit too excited," Djokovic said. "It was in the heat of the moment and I'm sorry if I offended anybody, but it happened a couple of points in a row — I really didn't need them interfering in the point."

"But I'm really thankful for their support. I thought the atmosphere was Davis Cup-like."

Top-ranked Rafael Nadal had an easier time clinching Spain's win over Georgia, beating Nikoloz Basilashvili 6-3, 7-5 in Perth after Roberto Bautista Agut crushed No.

678-ranked Aleksandre Metreveli 6-0, 6-0.

But No. 4 Dominic Thiem went down in an upset to Bornic Coric, who clinched Croatia's win over Austria with a 7-6 (4), 2-6, 6-3 win in Sydney. Marin Cilic took the opening singles 6-7 (4), 6-4, 6-4 over Denis Novak.

"I'm really disappointed but I think it was a typical first match of the year. I'm always a little bit struggling with the first match," Thiem said. "I hope that it's going to be

much better on Monday."

The night-time matches in Groups A, B and E all ended 3-0.

Former No. 5 Anderson was coming off an injury-plagued season, including surgery on his right knee last September, and couldn't initially keep up as Djokovic dropped just two points in the first three games and raced into a 4-1 lead.

But the 6-foot-8 South African warmed to the task and broke Djokovic's serve in the seventh game when he chased down a drop shot and produced a forehand winner. Then he saved five breakpoints in the eighth game to get back on serve, heightening tension in the crowd and sparking chants of "Nole, Nole, Nole" from the pro-Djokovic crowd, referring to his nickname.

The second set also went to a tiebreaker, with Anderson getting a chance to serve for the set at 6-5. But he netted a forehand, and Djokovic finished him off with a curling forehand winner to set up match point before hitting a

winning volley.

"I started off extremely well, Kevin raised his game. His quality of tennis was high," said Djokovic, who now leads Anderson 9-2 in career meetings, including the 2018 Wimbledon final. "I was pleased with the way I managed to weather the storm."

Dusan Lajovic beat Lloyd Harris 3-6, 7-6 (4), 6-3 to give Serbia a 1-0 lead and the sweep was completed with a straight-sets win in the doubles.

In the earlier Group A match, Gael Monfils secured France's victory over Chile with a 6-3, 7-5 win over Cristian Garin after Benoite Paire's 6-7 (3), 6-3, 6-3 victory over Nicolas Jarry.

Chile cut the final margin to 2-1 when Jarry and Garin combined to win the doubles.

Japan won both singles and the doubles against Uruguay in a Group B tussle in Perth. Go Soeda beat Martin Cuevas 6-1, 6-3 and Yoshihito Nishioka had a 6-0, 6-1 win over Pablo Cuevas.

Argentina needed a win in the doubles to edge Poland 2-1 in a Group E match in Sydney. Guido Pella gave Argentina the lead with a 6-2, 2-6, 6-2 victory over Kamil Majchrzak before Hubert Hurkacz leveled with a 4-6, 6-2, 6-3 win over Diego Schwartzman.

Maximo Gonzalez and Andres Molteni then beat Hurkacz and Lukasz Kubot 6-2, 6-4. **AP**

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OPINION

Tax Matters

Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa



THE MACAU SAR BUDGET FOR 2020

The Macau SAR Budget for 2020 was approved by Law 22/2019, published in the Official Gazette in December 31st, 2019 (the "2020 Budget"). Again, as is usual in the annual budgets, the 2020 Budget sets forth some tax benefits for Macau resident individuals and companies. As I mentioned one year ago, I think that the Macau SAR Government should consider including such tax benefits in the general tax statutes, at least in such cases where they are recurrently approved in successive annual budgets. The main tax benefits inserted in the 2020 Budget are the following:

1. Total exemption from Industrial Tax (Contribuição Industrial). Industrial Tax is levied annually and payable by all entities (natural and legal persons) that perform any kind of commercial or industrial activity – it is a one-off payment of a fixed pre-determined amount. This exemption has been long granted by the successive Macau SAR Annual Budgets. Notwithstanding the exemption from the payment of Industrial Tax, the taxpayers are required to present their tax returns.

2. Regarding Stamp Duty (Imposto do Selo), several exemptions are granted by the 2020 Budget: (i) exemption for insurance policies and banking operations; (ii) exemption on the transfer of real estate for dwelling purposes, up to a transfer amount of MOP\$3,000,000.00, provided that some requirements are met by the purchaser (e.g. must be of legal age and cannot own any other immovable property in the Macau SAR); (iii) exemption on auctions of goods or assets; (iv) exemption on shows, exhibitions or amusements of any kinds; (v) exemption on the issue or purchase of public debt securities.

3. Tourism Tax – exemption granted to the majority of tourism operators.

4. The display of advertising and propaganda material will be exempt from licencing fees and Stamp Duty.

5. With respect to the Personal Income Tax ("PIT" – Imposto Profissional), the 2020 Budget sets forth that: (i) there will be a deduction of 30% to the tax payable; (ii) the tax-exemption threshold will be of MOP\$144,000.00 (instead of MOP\$95,000.00, as established in the PIT Regulations); (iii) there will be a tax withholding exemption for salaries of up to MOP\$16,000.00 per month; (iv) the tax-exemption threshold for employees with more than 65 years or with a permanent disability equal or above 60% will be of MOP\$198,000.00 (instead of MOP\$135,000.00). Also, the 2020 Budget establishes a reimbursement for Macau residents, in 2020, of 60% of the PIT paid with respect to the year 2018, up to a maximum amount of MOP\$14,000.00.

6. The 2020 Budget provides also for a tax deduction, in a fixed amount of MOP\$3,500.00, to the real estate property tax payable by resident individuals who are not entrepreneurs. Additionally, for 2020 the real estate property tax rate over leased property is reduced from 10% to 8%.

7. Regarding the Corporate Income Tax ("CIT" – Imposto Complementar de Rendimentos) applicable to companies and to individuals that carry on an industrial or commercial activity, the tax-exemption threshold for income obtained in the 2019 financial year is increased to MOP\$600,000.00, whereas income above that threshold is taxed at a 12% rate.

8. The 2020 Budget also creates higher deductions for expenses related to innovation, science and technology activities, and sets forth a CIT exemption for income obtained or sourced in Portuguese-speaking countries, provided that it was taxed in said countries.

Further to the above, it is worth noting that major changes are expected in 2020 on Stamp Duty. The Legislative Assembly already approved the law containing extensive amendments to the Stamp Duty Regulations and Chart, but it was not published in the Official Gazette yet.

GERMANY REVIEWS THREAT LEVEL AFTER IRAN GENERAL'S KILLING

Germany's security services have reviewed domestic and international threat levels following the killing of Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani in Iraq this week.

The Interior Ministry confirmed a media report Saturday that revised guidance has been circulated to police in Germany's 16 states so they can take "appropriate security measures" to protect American and Jewish facilities.

The ministry provided no details on the guidance disseminated by the Federal Police Office.

Weekly newspaper Welt am Sonntag reported several German states have already raised their alert levels.

Germany's parliament recently voted in favor of a complete ban on activities in the country by the Iranian-backed Lebanese militant group Hezbollah.

THE BUZZ

AP PHOTO



60 DEAD IN LANDSLIDES, FLASH FLOODS IN INDONESIA'S CAPITAL

NINIEK KARMINI, JAKARTA

Landslides and floods triggered by torrential downpours have left at least 60 people dead in and around Indonesia's capital, as rescuers struggled to search for people apparently buried under tons of mud, officials said Saturday.

Monsoon rains and rising rivers submerged a dozen districts in the greater Jakarta area and caused landslides that buried at least a dozen people.

National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman Agus Wibowo said most of the fatalities included those who had drowned or been electrocuted since rivers broke their banks early Wednesday after extreme torrential rains hit on New Year's Eve. Three elderly people died of hypothermia.

It's the worst flooding in the area since 2007, when 80 people were killed over 10 days.

Rescuers recovered more bodies as flash floods and mudslides destroyed several villages in Lebak, a district in neighboring Banten province, Wibowo said. Rescuers were still

searching for two villagers reportedly missing in the landslide, he said.

The number of fatalities was expected to increase, with rescuers and villagers also searching for at least three people believed to be buried in another landslide in Cigudeg village in Bogor district, said Ridwan, the village's secretary, who goes by a single name.

Rivers broke their banks after extreme torrential rains hit on New Year's Eve

Ridwan said bad weather, blackouts and mudslides were hampering rescue efforts. He said rescuers on Saturday managed to reach eight hamlets that had been isolated for days by cut-off roads and mudslides and rescued more than 1,700 villagers in weak condition.

Four days after the region of 30 million people was struck by flash floods, waters have receded in many middle-class districts, but conditions remain grim in narrow riverside alleys where the city's poor live.

Government data showed that some 92,200 people were still unable to return home and were crammed at damp emergency shelters, mostly in the hardest-hit area of Bekasi. The number was sharply reduced from 173,000 as the muddy waters which submerged much of the city up to 2 meters (6.5 feet) high were receded.

Indonesia's Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency said that more downpours were forecast for the capital in the coming days, and that the potential for extreme rainfall will continue until next month across the vast archipelago nation. The government on Friday started cloud seeding in an attempt to divert rain clouds from reaching greater Jakarta to prevent possible flooding, the agency said.

Indonesia is hit by deadly floods each year, and Jakarta, the capital of Southeast Asia's largest economy, is not immune. But this year's floods have been particularly bad, with about 397,000 people seeking refuge in shelters across the greater metropolitan area as floodwaters reached up to 6 meters (19 feet) in some places. AP

AP PHOTO



Australia American pop singer Pink says she is donating \$500,000 to help fight the deadly wildfires that have devastated parts of Australia. The death toll in the wildfire crisis is now up to 23 people.

Austria's Foreign Ministry says its IT systems are the target of a "serious cyberattack" and authorities have taken counter measures. The ministry said yesterday that "due to the severity of nature of the attack it cannot be ruled out that this is a targeted attack by a state actor."

AP PHOTO



Russia Belarus has reached an agreement with Russia for limited oil supplies after Moscow earlier this week stopped supplying crude amid stalled talks on strengthening economic ties between the neighboring countries.

AP PHOTO



Italy A drunken driver plowed into a group of young German tourists in northern Italy yesterday, killing six people and injuring 11 others, Italian authorities said. The deadly crash occurred in a village of Valle Aurina, northeast of Bolzano in the Alto Adige region, shortly after 1 a.m. as the Germans gathered to board their bus. They were between the ages of 20-25.

AP PHOTO



France The French general overseeing the reconstruction of fire-devastated Notre Dame Cathedral says the Paris landmark is not saved yet because there's still a risk its vaulted ceilings might collapse.