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NEARLY ONE-THIRD OF MAINLAND VISITORS WERE MILLENNIALS OR YOUNGER, DATA FROM CHINA'S LARGEST TRAVEL SERVICE PROVIDER SHOW P5

THREE MORE LOCALS WHO VISITED WUHAN TESTED FOR MYSTERIOUS ILLNESS P3

CHINA'S NEW LIAISON OFFICE CHIEF IN HONG KONG SAID HE IS CONFIDENT THE RESTIVE CITY WILL SOON STABILIZE P8

China President Xi Jinping lauded Kiribati yesterday for "standing on the right side of history" during his first meeting with the Pacific island nation's leader since it severed ties with Taiwan. Kiribati switched allegiances to Communist Party-ruled China in September, leaving Taiwan with just 15 allies as Beijing has steadily siphoned them off through billions of dollars in aid since Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen took office in 2016. [More on p11](#)



Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte ordered the military to prepare to deploy its aircraft and ships "at any moment's notice" to evacuate thousands of Filipino workers in Iraq and Iran should violence break out, reflecting Asia's growing fears for its citizens in the increasingly volatile Middle East. Other Asian nations with large populations of expatriate labor may face similar decisions amid the rapidly escalating tensions between the United States and Iran following last week's U.S. airstrike that killed Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad. [More on p14](#)



Indonesia A court in Bali sentenced two Australian men yesterday to nine and 12 months in jail for possessing cocaine. Former Melbourne nightclub promoters William Cabantog and David Van Iersel were arrested last July in a police raid at the Lost City Club in the island's trendy Canggu neighborhood with 1.12 grams of cocaine in the pocket of Cabantog's jeans.

More on backpage

SIX IRANIANS ATTEMPT ENTRY ON FAKE PASSPORTS

LEV VENTURA

THE SIX, WHO ARRIVED IN MACAU VIA THREE DIFFERENT FLIGHTS IN A 24-HOUR PERIOD, POSSESSED AUTHENTIC-LOOKING PASSPORTS AND CLAIMED NOT TO KNOW EACH OTHER P2



CYBER RETALIATION: LESSONS FROM 2014 CYBERATTACK ON SHELDON ADELSON



P6

TWO PEDESTRIANS INJURED IN TRAFFIC ACCIDENT

Two people were injured in a traffic accident near San Ma Lou on Sunday night. The two people wounded were both from mainland China. They were crossing the road next to the bus stop of Kam Pek Community Center when a bus hit them. Both suffered mild head injuries. The woman, aged 38, sustained an injury to her forehead, while the man, aged 47, injured the back of his head. Both were sent to the Conde S. Januário Hospital, where they were conscious upon arrival. This was the second injurious traffic accident that took place on Sunday, following a fatal car accident.

NEW MACAU CALLS FOR MONITORING OF PUBLIC INVESTMENT PROJECTS

The New Macau Association (ANM) has delivered a letter to Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng, urging the government to monitor public capital invested funds. Yesterday, a group of ANM members, including lawmaker Sulu Sou, submitted the letter to the government headquarters. The association urged the government to legislate the supervision of public capital enterprises and autonomous funds, and to explain the specific functions and tasks of the newly established Public Assets Supervision and Planning Office. Shortly before he stepped down from office, former Chief Executive Chui Sai On proposed the establishment of a 60 billion pataca Macau investment and development fund. However, yesterday Sou expressed that before the relevant special legislation procedures are carried out, the local government should conduct a public consultation on the fund and should suspend the establishment of other public capital enterprises and autonomous funds.

2,691 APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED FOR NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSES

The Housing Bureau has received 2,691 applications for affordable houses in New Urban Zone A. According to statistics released by the bureau, from November 27 to January 3, some 2,388 applications were submitted with all the required documents. Some 42% of the total number of applications were made by families consisting of only one member. Meanwhile, 36.5% of the applications were submitted by families with three or more members. Families of two represented 21.5% of the total number of applications. Applicants aged 25 to 44 years old, 45 to 64 years old, and 18 to 24 years old accounted for 60.9%, 26.5%, and 8.5% of the total respectively.

CRIME

SIX IRANIANS FLY TO MACAU USING FAKE PASSPORTS

JULIE ZHU

SIX Iranians recently arrived in Macau on different flights within a 24-hour period of one another, each holding fake passports of four supposed nationalities, the Public Security Police Force (PSP) reported yesterday.

The first three suspects arrived at the Macau International Airport via a flight from Kuala Lumpur at 8:10 p.m. on January 4.

The three suspects presented one fake Swedish passport and two fake Israeli passports upon crossing the border to enter Macau. The PSP found their appearances inconsistent with their nationality and took them to the PSP police station for further investigation. The PSP then confirmed that the three were holding fake passports.

Suspecting further cases, the PSP investigated other flights arriving in Macau after this one. At 8:30 p.m., the PSP found another two Iranians on a flight from Beijing to Macau, who claimed to be married, using fake Italian passports.

Then, at 12:30 p.m. on the following day, another flight from Beijing to Macau carried one Iranian in possession of a fake Spanish passport.

The six held fake passports



which looked the same as genuine Swedish, Israeli, Italian and Spanish passports.

They all told the PSP they had paid between 8,000 and 9,000 euros in their home country for the fake passports as well as help getting into Europe.

According to the PSP, all six Iranian nationals also carried their real Iranian passports with them.

Despite arriving in Macau on separate flights on the same day, the six told the PSP they did not know each other; claims that the

PSP has accepted provisionally. The police force was unable to confirm that the two suspects on the second flight were married.

The six provided the PSP with the names of those who had arranged their trips to Europe via Macau. The names provided were all different, according to the PSP.

The suspects told the PSP they did not have tickets booked for their next trip, meaning they did not know where their next destination would be. Their "agents" had also failed to inform them of

their next destination. The suspects said they were planning to arrive in Macau before booking their next flight.

The six suspects are aged between 24 and 34 years old, and comprised four men and two women.

They claimed their final destination was Europe, where they would work and live, but they did not specify the precise countries.

They were all transferred to the prosecution authority by the PSP that same day.

DRUNK PSP OFFICER HAS MOTORBIKE ACCIDENT

A senior police officer of the Public Security Police Force (PSP) had an accident while driving his motorbike under the influence of alcohol.

The accident took place at midnight on January 5 at Avenida do Comendador Ho Yin. The PSP officer involved is male, surnamed Chow, in his 40s. When the PSP officers arrived at the scene, alcohol testing could not be conducted because Chow was injured and was already in an ambulance.

At the Conde S. Januário Hospital, Chow finally underwent blood alcohol testing, which indicated he had

a blood alcohol concentration of 2.4 milligrams per liter.

Chow admitted that he had been drinking wine earlier in a restaurant in Fai Chi Kei.

Chow began serving in the PSP in 1999. The security authority has already initiated a disciplinary investigation against him and will pursue legal action.

Yesterday, the PSP reaffirmed that the bureau attaches importance to the ethical conduct of police officers, and requires police officers abide by the law and have a high level of awareness in their daily lives. The PSP said it would not tolerate any violations. JZ

MAINLAND REAL ESTATE AGENT FAKES REPORT TO POLICE AUTHORITY

A 27-year-old self-proclaimed real estate agent from the mainland filed a fake report about a robbery to the police authority.

On January 4, security at a Cotai casino reported to the Public Security Police Force (PSP) that a customer was claiming to have been robbed inside a casino hotel guestroom. The alleged victim, or the suspect, told the PSP he had won some money gambling and had decided to exchange his winnings into another currency, inviting a money exchanger to his hotel room.

He said that the money ex-

changer stole a total of 800,000 Hong Kong dollars from him inside the hotel room.

A police investigation revealed that the self-proclaimed victim had fabricated the story about the money exchanger, as well as the stories about meeting in the casino and the guestroom. In fact, the robbery never even occurred.

It turned out that the man had lost 600,000 Hong Kong dollars gambling. Believing he would not be able to explain the loss upon his return to mainland China, he invented the story as an excuse. JZ

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HEALTH

Three more locals who visited Wuhan examined for pneumonia

AS of yesterday afternoon, Macau had recorded a total of eight cases of people who had both developed influenza symptoms and visited Wuhan City in China's Hubei Province in the past 14 days. However, the territory's Health Bureau (SSM) said that so far, the mysterious Wuhan pneumonia troubling parts of East Asia has not been detected in Macau.

Of the eight people received by the city's medical institutions since the start of January, seven of them were diagnosed with an influenza-like viral infection or common cold, while just one remains in isolation.

Of the three new cases, all were Macau residents aged between 19 and 22 years. The two men and one woman had visited Wuhan before the symptoms had manifested. They said that they developed fever and a cough between January 1 and 4, however, upon testing, the presence of influenza virus was confirmed rather than pneumonia.

The person still in isolation is a 44-year-old tourist from Wuhan. A statement from the government said that although her situation is stable, doctors are currently awaiting the results of further testing before authorizing her release.

AP PHOTO



On Sunday, the government elevated the territory's health threat to "Level III (Serious)", following further reports of possible contamination in nearby regions. A similar measure was taken in Hong Kong, while main-

land China and Singapore are also taking cautionary measures.

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.

The exact nature of the infectious disease has not been ascertained by health authorities, but it has been confirmed that it is not

SARS, nor Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome (MERS).

Yesterday, the Macau government said it was receiving up-to-date information from the National Health Commission on the epidemic situation in Wuhan. Fifty-nine cases of viral pneumonia of unknown origin have been reported in the mainland city west of Shanghai (more on p11).

The director of Macau's 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.

In Macau, the six gaming concessionaires have started to measure temperatures of visitors at different casino entry points, as earlier requested by the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau. The bureau said it has supported companies in the purchase of equipment, which is expected to be installed progressively as they were acquired in large numbers at short notice.

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

Since January 4, several government departments have implemented new measures aimed at detecting the presence of the mysterious illness, including at Macau's various border crossings, as well as in its schools and tourism facilities.

Frontline medical teams have been instructed to remain vigilant, promptly notify the authorities of suspected cases and take appropriate infection control measures. **DB**

Food working group monitoring pig price and quality

A task force of importers, exporters and retailers in the food sector known as the Interdepartmental Working Group on Food Prices has said it is paying particular attention to the quality and prices of live pigs in the Macau SAR over the Chinese Lunar New Year period.

Its meeting comes in response to the outbreak of African swine fever last year, which caused a notable reduction in the global pork supply.

The working group, which also includes representatives of the Directorate of Economic Services, the Municipal Affairs Bureau and the Consumer Council, convened yesterday to discuss the supply, quality and prices of food products ahead of the Chinese Lunar New Year period at the end of January.

In a statement posted on

AP PHOTO



the government news portal, the working group said it was aware of the recent increase in the supply of live pigs in mainland China, where prices have recently

fallen. It called on industry operators and retailers to stabilize fresh food prices.

Currently, the wholesale price of imported live pigs is 2,830 patacas per picul,

a traditional Asian unit of weight equal to about 60 kilograms.

The current quantity of live pigs is sufficient for meeting Macau's daily

needs, but due to the lack of piglets last year, the supply of live pigs over the next two months will be tight, implying there will be some pressure in supply and therefore price.

One-third of China's pig population was culled in response to last year's African swine fever outbreak, equal to about 100 million pigs from the world's largest pork market.

A staple of Chinese cuisine, analysts had warned its scarcity could damage the country's social stability. In September last year, the Chinese government tapped into pork reserves to remedy the shortage.

Currently, just two pig farms in the province of Guangdong are qualified to export pigs to Macau. The working group notes that this constitutes some supply risk and advises the govern-

ment that more producers should be accredited to supply the special administrative region in future.

In the meantime, the pig distributors say they will be "highly responsive to the demands of the governments of the two regions" and will work to devise contingency plans to ensure the supply of live pigs in Macau during the Chinese Lunar New Year period.

The quality of the pork was also addressed at the meeting as it has been criticized by some customers for its excessive fat content.

Retailers at yesterday's meeting said that the fat content of the animals was hindering sales and affecting the sector's business. Wholesalers said this problem only affected a small minority of the pigs and that they were largely "individual cases." **DB**

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

HOTEL OCCUPANCY DROPPED 2% IN NOV



A total of 1.16 million guests checked into hotels and guesthouses in November 2019, down by 2% year-on-year, according to a statement released by the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC).
Guests coming from mainland China (797,000) decreased by 4.0%, while those from the Republic of Korea (42,000), Hong Kong (140,000) and Taiwan (37,000) grew by 5.1%, 24.5% and 9.6% respectively.

The average occupancy rate of guest rooms went down by 2.2 percentage points year-on-year to 91.8%. The average length of stay of guests was 1.5 nights, up by 0.1 nights year-

-on-year, according to the DSEC report.

There were 121 hotels and guesthouses operating at end-November 2019, an increase of five year-on-year; however, the number of available guest rooms decreased by 1.7% to 38,000 as a consequence of renovations in some hotels.

The occupancy rates for three-star hotels (94%) and five-star hotels (92.9%) dropped by 0.8 percentage points and 2.3 percentage points respectively.

Data from the Public Security Police Force shows that Macau recorded 39 million visitors in 2019, an increase of 10% compared to last year. LV

THAI WORKERS TO JOIN SANDS CHINA IN PARTNERSHIP DEAL

THE government of Thailand will take the lead in recruiting workers from the country to work in Macau, among other destinations, in order to protect the interests of its labor force, Thai media outlet the Bangkok Post has reported.

According to the report, the Kingdom's Labor Ministry will recruit a group of 70 workers at first. They will be sent to work in casinos and hotels in Macau.

The Bangkok Post reported that Sands China, operator of Sands Macao and the Venetian Macao, among other properties in the region, had come to an agreement with the ministry on the workers.

The report detailed pre-

cisely how many would be recruited and how much they would earn in Macau.

A total of 70 workers will be employed by the Macau arm of the global casino operator. They will earn about 11,000 patacas per month in Macau, according to the Thai report.

Workers will also be sent to Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, Israel, as well as other countries this year.

The ministry said it selected these countries and territories because of their strong labor markets and training programs. It hopes that workers who gain experience in these places will later improve the quality of the labor market in Thailand. AL



GALAXY TO AWARD DISCRETIONARY BONUS ON JAN. 23



GALAXY Entertainment Group (GEG) announced that a 2019 discretionary bonus equivalent to one month's salary will be awarded to eligible employees at the level of senior manager or below.

According to a statement issued by the gaming operator, the 2019 discretionary bonus will be made payable to eligible employees on January 23.

Eligible employees who joined Galaxy between January 2 and October 3, 2019 will receive the discretionary bonus on a pro-rata basis.

According to the statement, the bonus is "in recognition of team mem-

bers' hard work and contribution."

"Expecting that the market will remain challenging and competitive in 2020, GEG looks forward to team members' continued dedication [...] and their full collaboration to support the Cotai Phases 3 and 4 projects," the gaming operator said.

GEG's third quarter group net revenue dropped to HKD12.7 billion, down 2% year-on-year and down 4% quarter-on-quarter.

In August 2019, Galaxy's management said the first part of Galaxy Macao Phase 3 would probably open in late-2020, rather than mid-2020 as had been said previously. LV

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REPORT

Chinese 'millennials' account for large part of local tourism

CHINESE "millennials" and other young people account for nearly one-third of all mainland arrivals in Macau, according to data recently released by China's largest travel service provider Ctrip.

The data was released in several recent reports analyzing the overseas travelling preferences of mainland tourists.

The reports found that mainland residents born after 1980 accounted for 31% of Macau's mainland visitor arrivals.

The data also showed that Macau was popular for mainland tourists born after 1995, who would today be younger than 25. It showed that these visitors were making repeat visits to the special administrative region.

Meanwhile, 19% of mainland visitors to Macau were born between 1970 and 1980.

Millennials are usually defined as those born between the years 1981 and 1996, who share a set of characteristics not widely held by those from older and younger generations.

The term is typically applied to Western societies, while Chinese millennials are more commonly called the 1980s and 1990s generations. According to some researchers, the rate of socio-economic changes in China has produced new generations with distinct characteristics at a faster rate than in the West.

One Ctrip report attributed some of Macau's popularity to its family-friendly facilities, adding that they have made Macau the preferred destination for young families. Ctrip reported that 33% of Ctrip users who booked services to Macau were families.

Another report noted

160% growth seen in the number of tourists who repeatedly visited the same destinations in one year.

Macau is among the most frequented tourist destinations for Chinese youth visitors born after 1995. Other popular destinations for repeat visits are Japan, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia and Singapore.

While the Macau local government's statistics show that Guangdong province is Macau's top source of tourists from mainland China, Ctrip's data indicated that just three cities in the province - Zhuhai, Shenzhen and Guangzhou - are among the top 10 cities of origin for mainland visitors. According to Ctrip, Shanghai, Beijing, Hangzhou, Wuxi, Nanjing, Ningbo and Tianjin are the seven other cities in Macau's top 10. **DB/JZ**

AIRPORT CONFIRMS 9.6 MILLION PASSENGERS IN 2019



THE number of passengers served by the Macau International Airport grew to 9.6 million in 2019, setting a new a record, the airport management company has confirmed.

The press release from the Macau International Airport Company boasted that the passenger count last year was about 14 times the city's total population. Compared to 2018, last year's passenger count rose 16%.

Apart from the record-breaking passenger

count, the airport also saw new highs in the number of flights handled. Some 77,000 flights flew in and out of the airport last year, about 18% more than in a year earlier.

Currently, a total of 34 airlines connect Macau with the Asia-Pacific region, including countries such as mainland China, Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, North and South Korea, the Philippines and Taiwan.




Last year, 13 new des-

tinations were connected to the airport, with the majority being in mainland China.

Meanwhile, total visitors to Macau in 2019 grew 10% compared with 2018, reaching a record 39.4 million visitors. The total was just under the 40-million mark, which was 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. **AL**

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IRAN'S CYBERATTACK ON BILLIONAIRE SHELDON ADELSON PROVIDES LESSON ON STRATEGY

ALYZA SEBENIUS,
KARTIKAY MEHROTRA
& WILLIAM TURTON

AS the U.S. awaits possible retribution over a recent airstrike that killed a top general, there's at least one American businessman who can attest, in detail, to what happened after he provoked Iran.

In October 2013, Sheldon Adelson, the casino magnate and prominent supporter of conservative politicians and Israel, appeared on a panel in New York in which he suggested that the U.S. could send a message to Iran, regarding its nuclear ambitions, by detonating an American warhead in the middle of the Iranian desert.

"You want to be wiped out? Go ahead and take a tough position," said Adelson, who later became a major supporter of President Donald Trump. His comments infuriated Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who two weeks later said America "should slap these prating people in the mouth."

Months later, in February 2014, hackers inserted malware into the computer networks of Adelson's Las Vegas casino. The withering cyberattack laid waste to about three quarters of the company's Las Vegas servers; the cost of recovering data and building new systems cost \$40 million or more.

A year after the attack, the top U.S. intelligence official confirmed that Iran was behind it.

Now, as Iran vows revenge for the airstrike, the U.S. faces an aggressive adversary in which digital warfare may be among its best options to strike directly at the American population. In the years since the Sands incident, Iranian hackers have continued their attacks, targeting a U.S. presidential campaign, universities, journalists, and even a dam in suburban New York.

"I'm sure the Iranians are asking their hackers for a list of options," said James Lewis, senior vice president at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, who oversees the policy research group's cybersecurity program. "Cyberattacks can be tempting if they can find the right American target."

Milan Patel, former chief technological officer of the FBI's cyber division, said he was worried about what may come next since Iran has shown interest in targeting critical infrastructure. "Power generation like hydro and electric, that's where they can cause the most real world damage," said Patel, now the chief client officer at the cybersecurity firm BlueVoyant.

A representative for Las Vegas

AP PHOTO



Sands Corp. didn't return a message seeking comment.

Iran is hardly the only U.S. cyber adversary. China has allegedly stolen so much intellectual property from U.S. companies, including by hacking, that FBI Director Christopher Wray accused the country of trying to "steal their way up the economic ladder at our expense."

But cyberattacks can also be used to create disruptive effects that can impact millions. In a computer-dependent world, hackers can clog ports, shut down transportation networks, and open dams.

Iran has shown a willingness to use those types of digital attacks - targeting some of the U.S.'s biggest banks, the world's top oil producer, and Adelson's casino empire.

DESTRUCTIVE ATTACKS

Cyber adversaries, including Iran, have generally aimed attacks at targets unlikely to fully draw a response from the U.S.'s own potent cyberwarfare arsenal.

Evidence of possible retaliation of the American drone strike emerged late on Jan. 4 when the website for the little-known U.S. Federal Depository Library Program was hacked and defaced with "pro-Iranian, anti-U.S. messaging," confirmed a spokesman for the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. The site

has since been taken down.

"At this time, there is no confirmation that this was the action of Iranian state-sponsored actors," reads a statement issued by CISA, part of the Department of Homeland Security.

"The big question is: will they do something symbolic, like the bank attacks? Or try for both symbolic and disruptive, as they did with Sands?"

JAMES LEWIS

CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

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TIT-FOR-TAT FEARS

Given the heightened tensions, a major digital strike by Iran could trigger the kind of escalating, tit-for-tat strikes that fling the two sides toward the brink of war. The U.S. is widely believed to have the ability to shut down power grids, interrupt air travel and create chaos at ports through digital strikes alone. Iran's hackers and digital arms are less sophisticated, cybersecurity experts say, but the number of U.S.-related targets available to them is huge.

The digital feud between the

U.S. and Iran dates back more than a decade, to when a devastating digital worm called Stuxnet crippled an Iranian uranium processing facility. That attack has been attributed by multiple media outlets to the U.S. and Israel.

Partly in response, Iranian hackers launched attacks starting in 2011 that overwhelmed the websites of Bank of America Corp., Wells Fargo & Co. and others over a period of months. The attacks eventually proved little more than an inconvenience for online customers, but financial institutions spent millions of dollars to keep their websites up and running over the period of the attacks.

LEARNING PERIOD

Those early Iranian attacks are now seen as part of a learning period, as the country's hackers worked to catch up with the sophistication of other cyberpowers before beginning to target physical infrastructure like pipelines and dams.

In 2013, Iranian hackers breached the control system of a small dam in Rye, New York, according to a federal indictment. While the hackers were successful in gaining access to the dam's systems, which allowed them to see information like water levels and the dam's settings, they were unable to operate the gate that con-

trols water levels because it had been manually disconnected for maintenance. It isn't known if the Iranian hackers intended to release water from the dam.

More recently, Iranian government-linked hackers tried to infiltrate email accounts of a U.S. presidential candidate, current and former U.S. officials and journalists, Microsoft Corp. reported last year. The New York Times and Reuters reported that President Trump's re-election campaign had been targeted.

While the presidential campaign wasn't among those compromised, that attempted breach, and the many others, has provided experience to a group of hackers that may now be assigned with seeking revenge on the U.S.

Norman Roule, a former CIA official who also served as national intelligence manager for Iran, said cyberattacks "will almost certainly increase" in the coming months. Iran's cyber strategy will likely seek to accomplish three goals: punishing the U.S., deterring the U.S. from future attacks and allowing Iran to save face, he said.

Lewis, from the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said if the Iranians decide to retaliate with a cyberattack, they will likely "want something dramatic" in choosing a target.

"The big question is: will they do something symbolic, like the bank attacks?" he said. "Or try for both symbolic and disruptive, as they did with Sands?" **BLOOMBERG**

UM develops Cantonese-Mandarin machine translator to further GBA integration

STAFF REPORTER

A new online machine-translation system has been developed by a research team, the University of Macau (UM) has recently announced. It was developed, the university explained, to facilitate the integration of cities within the Greater Bay Area (GBA).

The system focuses on the translation of texts between Cantonese and Mandarin. "The system can efficiently and accurately translate text between the two [languages]," the university said in a statement.

As one of the most culturally diverse regions in the People's Republic of China, Guangdong Province has one of the greatest diversity of languages in the country, separated into three major categories: Cantonese, Hakka and Hokkienese (Fujianese).

A recent report compiled by the Guangdong Provincial People's Government found that about 40 million people within the province use Cantonese, or its sub-categories, regularly. As for the other two, Hakka, including its sub-categories, is used regularly by



The University of Macau's research team

approximately 15 million. Hokkienese is regularly used by about 17 million in Guangdong.

The UM statement pointed out that Cantonese-Mandarin translation belongs to the category of dialect translation. Although the two dialects bear some similarities, there are differences in grammar and many other aspects.

In order to facilitate the system, the UM proposed a novel Unsupervised Neural Machine Translation (UNMT) model by introducing Pivot-Private embeddings and coordinating the learning of word representations from both the encoder and decoder in a layer-wise

approach, to model the commonalities and diversities of Cantonese and Mandarin at different levels.

As explained in the statement, this approach can greatly enhance translation quality and both machine self-evaluation and human evaluation have confirmed the new approach's relatively high degree of accuracy.

There are everyday cases in which Cantonese and Mandarin speakers misunderstand each other. The differences between the two languages can be confusing or even humorous, whereby completely normal pronunciation in one can constitute foul language

in the other.

The Cantonese-Mandarin translation system was developed by UM's Natural Language Processing & Portuguese-Chinese Machine Translation Laboratory (NLP2CT).

The multidisciplinary team at the lab has won numerous awards for their achievements, including a second prize at the Macao Science and Technology Awards in the Science and Technology Progress Award category for their project that studied the technologies related to Chinese/Portuguese machine translation systems and the applications of the systems. The system is now available online.

FOSHAN CROSSES TRILLION-YUAN GDP THRESHOLD

Foshan city of Guangdong province became a trillion-yuan city last year, following in the footsteps of China's information technology hub, Shenzhen, and the provincial capital, Guangzhou. Although the final data is not out yet, preliminary figures indicate the city is on track to reach its goal. Last year, the city generated nearly 794 billion yuan in the first three quarters. This performance surpassed both national and provincial averages in terms of percentage growth and puts the city on track to exceed one trillion by the year-end. During this period, the city performed 7% better than it did in the previous year. Foshan excels in three areas: home appliances, furniture and ceramics. Exports in each area rose by 7%, 15% and 9% respectively. Importers from Europe and countries along the Belt and Road Initiative have helped to make up for part of the lost demand too.

SHENZHEN BOURSE RISES TO MARKET VALUE OF 23.7 TRILLION YUAN

The total market value of the Shenzhen Stock Exchange, one of the major bourses in China, came in at 23.7 trillion yuan (about \$3.4 trillion) in 2019, the exchange said in a statement. The initial public offering (IPO) applications of 78 companies were approved last year, bringing the number of listed companies on the Shenzhen bourse to 2,205. A total of 508.93 billion yuan was raised in 2019 through stocks on the Shenzhen bourse, according to the exchange. The bourse pledges strict enforcement of the revised securities law, continued advance of capital market reform and strengthened supervision to promote high-quality development of the economy.

GUANGZHOU UNVEILS 15-YEAR RAIL TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The southern Chinese city of Guangzhou last week unveiled a 15-year development plan to build a multi-layer urban rail network, according to local authorities. The plan was approved by the standing committee of Guangzhou's municipal committee of the Communist Party of China in December 2019, and aims at increasing rail's share of public transportation to 80 percent by 2035. By building high-speed direct railway tracks, travel time between major cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area will be reduced to less than 60 minutes, the municipal bureau of planning and natural resources said. Two new metro lines will be added, together with an east-west high-speed subway track linking downtown Guangzhou with the neighboring cities of Foshan and Dongguan.

MACAU VISITOR PASSES NOW AVAILABLE 24/7 IN GUANGZHOU

MAINLAND residents can now apply for Macau and Hong Kong visitor permits at the new automated facility at Guangzhou South Railway Station, the Police Department of Guangzhou has announced.

The service is now available 24 hours a day, seven

days a week, facilitated by an automated service parlor. The parlor was officially opened on Sunday.

Mainland residents can use the service kiosks to apply for visitor permits to Macau and Hong Kong, mainland identity cards, as well as pay fees and fines.

According to a report by local Chinese newspaper Macao Daily News, the parlor provides a wide range of other services.

Residents can register their residential information and pet information, as well as handle immigration and transport-related

applications.

A virtual reality machine was also installed, providing users with safety information and virtual experiences.

Other services include business registration, social security, real estate, insurance and taxation. Cash machines are also available for the convenience of parlor users. All services are conducted on automated machines. **AL**



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

The Greater Bay project is coming and it will bring both opportunities and challenges to our little-big town. Macau Daily Times wants to hear your voice. We invite our readers to write in with Letters to the Editor on the topic of the Greater Bay Area.

Please email your letters to gba@macaudailytimes.com

AD

NATALIE LUNG, IAIN MARLOW & CATHY CHAN

NEW HONG KONG LIAISON CHIEF CONFIDENT CITY WILL STABILIZE

CHINA'S new top official in Hong Kong said he is certain the city will stabilize following months of political unrest, backing leader Carrie Lam and her administration in his first public comments since being appointed.

"I am fully confident about this," Luo Huining, the new director of the Hong Kong Liaison office, said at a media briefing yesterday. "Everyone fervently hopes that Hong Kong can get back on track. As President Xi Jinping said in his New Year's address, without a harmonious and stable environment, how could there be a peaceful home? I sincerely wish Hong Kong and Hong Kongers well."

The installation of Luo, a Communist Party stalwart known for faithfully executing Xi's anti-corruption campaign, signals Beijing's intention to restore law and order after nearly seven months of political unrest. He takes over from Wang



Luo Huining, director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, stands during a press conference

Zhimin, the Chinese government said in a Saturday statement that didn't elaborate on the move.

Luo served as party secretary in China's Shanxi province until Novem-

ber, and became deputy chairman of the financial and economic committee of the powerful National People's Congress last month. While Chinese media has credited him

with enforcing the central government's campaign to purge corruption and weed out disloyal officials in Shanxi, he has no direct experience in Hong Kong.

"Luo seems to have had the experience to end chaos and restore stability in Shanxi," said Victoria Hui, associate professor of political science at the University of Notre Dame. "Since the outbreak of anti-extradition protests, Beijing has been trying to rein in Hong Kong."

"It's not clear why a strongman like him was not picked earlier," she said.

Chinese and Hong Kong officials have frequently been caught off guard by developments during the unrest. Communications between Beijing and Hong Kong are mainly conducted through the Liaison Office, which was established in 2000 to replace the New China (Xinhua) News Agency, Beijing's unofficial representative during the British colonial era.

The Liaison Office, which reports to China's State Council, is a powerful but mysterious institution that represents Beijing's interests in the former colony. A former head of the office's research department wrote in 2008 that the office's staff, as well as other mainland officials working on Hong

Kong issues, constitute a second "governing team" that functions alongside Hong Kong's formal government. The office also helps supervise Chinese state-owned enterprises in the city and manage media and real estate holdings.

Speculation about Wang's removal had been growing, particularly after pro-government candidates suffered a resounding defeat in Hong Kong district council elections in November that reportedly caught Beijing by surprise. While the polls were for the lowest rung of the city's government, the results amounted to a public rebuke of Beijing.

Chief Executive Carrie Lam said in a statement Saturday that she had worked briefly with Luo when he was running Shanxi and that she had "no doubt" that he would help promote "prosperity and stability" in Hong Kong. She praised Wang for serving during "unprecedented social unrest" and "providing staunch support" to the city's government.

Wang's dismissal "was long predicted because he appeared to be associated too closely with pro-Beijing elites and business leaders, without reaching out widely to all social sectors," said Sonny Lo, a Hong Kong-based academic and political commentator. Wang's "miscalcula-

tions" may have led to his downfall, particularly following the elections, Lo said.

Despite consistent backing from Beijing, Lam has seen her popularity tumble over months of often-violent protests that show no signs of abating. The unrest has rattled Hong Kong's tourism and retail sectors and risks undermining its reputation as a global business center. Protests continued Sunday as dozens of people were arrested in the Sheung Shui district after an approved march, and police said they fired tear gas in response to a petrol bomb attack on a local train station.

"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. "He's just a party boss - he has no connection with Hong Kong and no foreign affairs expertise." Whereas Wang knew Lam well, he said, "Luo has no relationship with the business community or political arena in Hong Kong."

Luo's appointment follows Xi's New Year's Eve defense of China's system of governance over Hong Kong - an unusually high-profile acknowledgment of the city's political turmoil. **BLOOMBERG**

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THE two bronze lion statues standing guard over HSBC Holdings Plc's main offices in Hong Kong still bear the marks of an attack by protesters, who last week daubed them with red and black paint, setting at least one ablaze. Graffiti declared that HSBC had been dyed the red of China.

HSBC has vowed to restore the iconic lions to their former glory. But the Asia-focused lender may not find it so easy to disentangle itself from deepening tensions in its biggest market at a time when its new leadership must also repair a relationship with Beijing that's been weakened by the Huawei Technologies Co. probe.

The bank became the target of the public's ire in Hong Kong after the police arrested four people linked to a group that helps pro-democracy protesters pay legal fees. HSBC had closed an account used by the group in November.

Bank executives are finding it increasingly hard to keep focused on business and steer clear of politics, said a senior executive in Asia, who asked not to be named discussing internal matters. Political tension on the streets is also causing rifts among HSBC staff. Younger local employees in the Hong Kong office tend to be supportive of the pro-democracy movement, while those with business and personal ties to the mainland are more neutral or pro-Beijing, staff interviewed by Bloomberg said, asking not to be named speaking on a sensitive issue.

With two-thirds of its profit at stake, the London-based firm has previously been able to stay away from controversy as political tensions roiled Hong Kong and dragged in peers including JPMorgan Chase & Co and Citigroup Inc. Chinese retailers and branches of lenders like Bank of China Ltd. have been targeted, while Cathay Pacific Airways Ltd. and the National Basketball Association came under pressure from Beijing after employees supported the demonstrations.

HSBC has said its decision to close the protest-linked account was unrelated to the police action. It's condemned acts of vandalism against its property as "unjustified" and promised to restore the defaced lions, which it said "form parts of the bank's and Hong Kong's history."

The decision was made after finding unusual transactions, people familiar with the matter said, adding that the bank risked being punished by regulators for any negligence. They asked not to be identified because the matter is private.

"HSBC is now joining Cathay Pacific in discovering that politics and business can't always be easily reconciled," said Brock Silvers, managing director at Adamas Asset Management in Hong Kong. The pro-democracy protests are

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People take photographs of a vandalized lion statue outside the HSBC headquarters

HSBC walks tricky political tightrope between HK and Beijing

"doubly negative" in that they "detract from the local market while simultaneously complicating the Chinese market," he said.

A spokeswoman for HSBC didn't comment beyond the statements released by the bank when contacted by Bloomberg.

Navigating the politics of the protests is one of several challenges facing interim Chief Executive Officer Noel Quinn, who is also dealing with the fallout from HSBC's assistance with a U.S. probe into Huawei and the wider impact of the U.S.-China trade war.

HSBC was singled out for contributing to the arrest of Huawei's Chief Financial Officer Meng Wanzhou on charges of violating U.S. sanctions on Iran and Syria. The bank has made the case that it had no choice but to help the U.S. Department of Justice probe. The formal hearings for Meng's extradition to the U.S. begin Jan. 20 in Vancouver.

The bank is working to improve relations with China, launching a public-relations offensive aimed at leaders in Beijing after missing out on several business licenses.

Hong Kong and China together contributed two thirds of HSBC's adjusted pretax profit in the first three quarters last year. The group has \$1.1 trillion of assets across

Asia, according to its interim report last year, with a majority concentrated in Hong Kong.

Born as the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corp. in 1865, HSBC has been shifting more resources to Asia, especially China, since 2015 as part of a strategy initiated by Stuart Gulliver and strengthened under the leadership of John Flint, who was ousted in August. Acting chief Quinn will make his pitch to keep the top job next month as the bank undertakes its biggest overhaul in years.

The lender has warned of write-offs, plans to pare back underperforming businesses and people familiar with the matter have said it will try to sell

its French retail bank.

It's the Asian operations that offer the greatest promise and now, some of the biggest challenges.

Hong Kong is HSBC's single biggest market with 21,000 employees. In China, it has ramped up its investment across financial sectors including commercial banking, credit cards, investment banking and wealth management. The bank now employs more than 8,000 staff as the largest foreign bank in China, according to its website.

As the tensions in the former British colony show few signs of abating, campaigns against the Chinese firms have now expanded to include HSBC. Some protesters

have linked the account closure to the police arrests for suspected money laundering, taking to online forums and rallies claiming HSBC has betrayed the Hong Kong people. Bank's branches and ATMs have been vandalized in areas including Wan Chai and Mong Kok.

One employee who regularly donates to groups that support the protests said she was sad after the lions were vandalized because they are seen as spiritual leaders and HSBC was innocent in this case. She said she won't turn against the protesters, but feared that some of her colleagues would change their mind. **BLOOMBERG**

LOUIS VUITTON TO SHUT A HK STORE

LVMH, the world's largest luxury conglomerate, plans to close a store in Hong Kong's shopping district as overall retail sales dip amid anti-government protests, according to a media report.

The decision comes after Wharf Real Estate Investment Co., the owner of the Times Square mall in Causeway Bay, refused the French retailer's request to lower rents, the South China Morning Post reported Friday, citing unidentified sources.

Representatives for LVMH and Wharf didn't immediately reply to an email and calls seeking comments. LVMH has seven other Louis Vuitton

stores in Hong Kong.

This marks further pullback by the global luxury retailer as the financial hub faces massive civil unrest for the past seven months that has triggered a record decline in retail sales, scared tourists away and threatens worst-ever job losses, after pushing the local economy into a recession.

Sectors ranging from tourism to luxury goods that relied heavily on Chinese spending abroad are now pivoting away from Hong Kong and aggressively expanding within the mainland to court Chinese spenders who account for a third of global demand. **MDT/BLOOMBERG**

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DEBT MOUNTAIN

CHINA VOWS TO 'WIN' BATTLE AGAINST GROWING FINANCIAL RISKS

CHINA pledged to step up measures to shore up its troubled banks and small businesses while continuing a crackdown on shadow banking and property speculation, in a difficult balancing act that risks exacerbating a build up in bad debt at its traditional lenders.

As concerns mount over the state of China's \$45 trillion financial system, the nation's central bank and its top financial regulator used the year's first weekend to unveil fresh details on how to combat risks amid the slowest economic expansion in three decades.

The People's Bank of China, which has been reluctant to prime the stimulus pumps too much, said that it would "resolutely win the battle" against increasing financial risks, underscoring its role as a lender of last resort while directing local governments to step up front-line support.

That followed a statement from the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission outlining

a series of measures including carving out bad loans, setting up a resolution fund, as well as promoting mergers, capital injections and the restructuring of high risk institutions.

"Risk control has always been on the agenda of the authority, but compared with the previous general guidelines regulators have used strong wording in laying out very specific, drastic measures," said Zhao Jian, head of the Atlantis Financial Research Institute in Beijing. "That's a signal policy makers are beefing up efforts to contain financial risks this year."

With the economy also weighed down by a trade dispute with the U.S., Chinese authorities are taking a more coordinated approach to tackling the problems at the more than 3,000 regional and rural lenders, many of which are struggling with a pileup of sou-

red loans, eroding capital and poor internal controls.

Confidence in these institutions has waned since May, when regulators seized control of a lender in Inner Mongolia - the first such move in two decades - and imposed losses on some creditors. Authorities have since orchestrated bailouts of two other banks and intervened to quell at least two bank runs by jittery depositors.

Confidence has waned since May, when regulators seized control of a lender in Inner Mongolia in the first such move in two decades

The CBIRC yesterday approved the rescue plan of one of those lenders, Hengfeng Bank Co. The Shandong-based bank is raising 100 billion yuan (\$14 billion) in new equity from in-

vestors including Central Huijin Investment Ltd., a unit of China's sovereign wealth fund.

The regulator over weekend also said it will continue to press on with its two-year campaign against shadow banking by reducing financial institutions' non-compliant investments in non-standard assets, which are mostly loans disguised as investments. Insurers should

clean up investments that can flow through several products and leveraged transactions between related parties, it said.

It said it would improve risk management in areas such as real estate by preventing speculative housing deals and blocking illegal flows of funds into properties. The central bank, meanwhile, announced it would build a long-term regulatory mechanism to

more closely monitor financing to the sector.

China financial market faces a pivotal year as it opens to full foreign ownership. The regulator, which reiterated its commitment to overseeing the opening, is in part counting on the sharpened competition to instill more discipline in its domestic firms. Starting with its futures and insurance markets this month, the nation is enacting the most sweeping changes in decades to allow the likes of JPMorgan Chase & Co., Goldman Sachs Group Inc. and BlackRock Inc. to expand their footprint in China.

The CBIRC also encouraged the conversion of household savings to more long-term capital investments and a greater development of corporate annuity and endowment insurance businesses. The regulator wants wealth management, insurance and trust products to be directly involved in financing and cultivating long-term investments. **BLOOMBERG**

CHINESE and Hong Kong stocks saw sharp afternoon selling yesterday, in part on fresh worries about U.S.-China trade, and the concerns also pressured the yuan.

After sporting gains much of the morning despite selling in most of Asia, the Shanghai Composite Index fell as much as 0.6% yesterday before ending just 0.01% lower. The Hang Seng Index in Hong Kong was down 1% as of 3:12 p.m. and on pace for its biggest decli-

Stocks fall in sharp selling on fresh trade worries

ne in a month.

The markets' drop to session lows came after Reuters reported the U.S. starting in 2018 pushed for the sale of Dutch chip-manufacturing technology to China to be blocked, culminating this past July 18.

The yuan also hit its weakest level of the day after the report, and it was recently 0.2% weaker

at 6.9780 per dollar in onshore trading. Ten-year government bond futures rose as much as 0.3% while the Hong Kong dollar was 0.1% stronger versus the greenback, adding to its recent gains and sitting at its highest level since April 2017.

"The latest development adds concern on Sino-U.S. relations as

investors were under the impression that the trade tensions would ease going forward," said Alvin Cheung, associate director with Prudential Brokerage Ltd. President Donald Trump said last week that he would sign an initial trade agreement with China on Jan. 15. Bloomberg reported later Monday that the Chinese trade delegation

plans to sign the deal then as well.

Cheung added the equities weakness Monday on the mainland and Hong Kong follow "some decent gains in the past month, so the slightest hint of bad news could prompt funds to lock in profits." The Shanghai Composite has risen 7.4% since the beginning of December, while the

Hang Seng Index has climbed 6.9%.

AAC Technologies Holdings Inc. and Sunny Optical Technology Group Co. were among technology shares that led declines in Hong Kong, falling nearly 4%. In China, heavy-vehicle makers CNHTC Jinan Truck Co. and Sany Heavy Industry Co. fell 4.3% and 3.3%, respectively. **BLOOMBERG**

Pneumonia outbreak widens to 59 amid hunt for source

JASON GALE

A pneumonia outbreak in China that's infected 15 more people doesn't appear to be spreading from human to human, officials said, after ruling out SARS as a potential cause of the mysterious disease.

As of Sunday morning, 59 people had been diagnosed with pneumonia, the cause of which is unknown, the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission said in a statement late Sunday. That's up from 44 on Friday. Seven people are in serious condition. Investigations found some patients are business operators at a seafood market in the central Chinese city.

"As of now, preliminary investigations have shown no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission and no medical staff infections," the commission said in the statement in Chinese. Reported symptoms are mainly fever, while some have had shortness of breath.

Cases involving health-care workers would be a worrying sign that the infectious agent is capable of spreading between people, potentially touching off an epidemic like the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, or SARS, that killed almost 800 people about 17 years ago.

PATHOGEN IDENTIFICATION

Respiratory pathogens such as influenza, avian influenza, adenovirus, SARS and the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome

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coronavirus, or MERS-cov, have been excluded, authorities in Wuhan said. Pathogen identification is still under way, they said.

"The reporting patterns for both SARS and MERS involved high severity illness among health-care workers, particularly in the intensive care units," said James M. Wilson, a pediatrician who has helped monitor health security threats for 25 years. "That is a critical, priority indicator that we are not seeing in this case - a reassuring sign."

Among the 59 patients, the first developed symptoms on Dec. 12 and the latest on Dec. 29. Some 163 people who have been in close contact with cases

have been followed up for medical observation, the commission said.

The situation is being monitored by the World Health Organization, which said it's in active communication with its counterparts in China.

INCREASED PRECAUTIONS

The United Nations agency activated its incident-management system at the country, regional and global level and is standing ready to launch a broader response if it's needed, the WHO's regional office in Manila said in Twitter posts Saturday.

Authorities in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore increased precautions at airports to

prevent any possible spread of the infections.

Hong Kong's Centre for Health Protection said its enhanced surveillance system picked up 16 sick people who had recently traveled to Wuhan. Most of them tested positive for flu. Six had no positive lab results. Authorities have found no discernible link between these cases and the pneumonia cluster in Wuhan.

A 3-year-old girl with a history of travel to Wuhan who was hospitalized in Singapore with pneumonia turned out to have Respiratory Syncytial Virus, a common cause of childhood pneumonia, and isn't linked to the Wuhan pneumonia cases,

the city's Ministry of Health said yesterday.

SARS WORRY

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

That's triggered concern about the potential jump of an unknown virus to humans -- reminiscent of SARS, which was subsequently identified as a coronavirus.

Since then, scientists have discovered other novel coronaviruses, including MERS-CoV, which are now "readily recognized as routine causes of severe respiratory illness," said Wilson, a former chief of operations with the Department of Homeland Security's National Bio-surveillance Integration Center, "This increased awareness is thanks to SARS, MERS, and dramatically improved access to diagnostics," he said.

It's not known whether a SARS-like "coronavirus" has been identified in the Wuhan cluster, although there have been "numerous unsubstantiated reports mentioning a novel coronavirus that is SARS-like," the International Society for Infectious Diseases' ProMED-mail program, an internet service to identify unusual health events, said in an email Friday.

"If test results indicate there is novel respiratory pathogen involved, then China should be commended for rapid detection and response - the epitome of what is supposed to happen," Wilson said. **BLOMBERG**

Xi meets Kiribati leader after switch from Taiwan



AP PHOTO

YANAN WANG

CHINESE President Xi Jinping lauded Kiribati yesterday for "standing on the right side of history" during his first meeting with the Pacific island nation's leader since it severed ties with Taiwan.

Kiribati switched allegiances to Communist Party-ruled China in September, leaving Taiwan with just 15 allies as Beijing has steadily siphoned them off through billions of dollars in aid since Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen took office in 2016.

Tsai is favored to win a second term in this Saturday's election, an outcome that

would likely intensify China's economic, diplomatic and military pressure over her refusal to accept its insistence that Taiwan is a part of China. Since her election, China has increasingly sought to isolate Taiwan diplomatically while ramping up its threat to use force to annex the self-governing island republic.

Speaking to Xi, Kiribati President Taneti Maamau reaffirmed his administration's commitment to the "One China" principle and expressed his "deepest respect" for the Chinese government's sovereignty.

China claims Taiwan as part of its territory and wants

the island to reunite with the mainland, from which it split during a civil war in 1949. Beijing resents Tsai for rejecting its precondition for dialogue that both belong to a single China. It has flown military aircraft near the island and pared back Taiwan-bound tourism to add pressure on her government.

Taiwan has responded by seeking to purchase arms from the U.S., including advanced fighter jets. Despite the absence of formal diplomatic ties, U.S. law requires Washington to ensure Taiwan has the means to defend itself.

Last month, less than two weeks before this weekend's presidential and legislative elections, Taiwan's legislature passed a law aimed at blocking political interference from China. **AP**

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



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Elon Musk plans to come to Shanghai for debut of Made-in-China Tesla

ELON Musk plans to attend a ceremony to mark the first deliveries of made-in-China Tesla Inc. vehicles to customers today, according to people familiar with the matter.

Tesla, which is already churning out more than 1,000 Model 3 sedans a week at its plant on the outskirts of Shanghai, handed over a batch of cars to a select group of employees on Dec. 30, but today marks the first deliveries to the general public. The ceremony is due to start at 3 p.m. local time at Tesla's first factory outside the U.S., a milestone in Musk's plans for the company he founded to go global.

Yet it comes at a challenging time in China's auto market, where forecasts point to a third-straight annual drop in total sales. Electric vehicle sales plunged 42% in November from a year earlier as the government pared back subsidies on purchases. In a bid to lure buyers, Tesla cut the starting price of its China-build Model 3 sedans by 9% so that they'll be more closely aligned to some local EV makers. It may cut prices further mid-year as it increases localization of components, people familiar with the matter have said.

"The demand for our locally-built model 3 is very good," Allan Wang, general manager of Tesla China, said last week. "We are confident about selling all vehicles manufactured in this factory."

Tesla didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

After capturing about 5% of China's car sales, the slowdown for electric vehicles could spell trouble for a launch that investors are watching closely for evidence that Tesla has what it takes to go global. A slow start for sales of its made-in-China cars would put more pressure on the unprofitable manufacturer's finances, giving Musk little room for missteps to support a stock that's hovering at an all-time high.

"Tesla is rushing to start deliveries before other global brands bring in more EVs," said Zhang Yan, an analyst at research firm LMC Automotive in Shanghai. "It's an attempt to conquer the market."

Musk and his team are looking at a market that's very different from mid-2018, when the decision to build a Shanghai plant was announced. Back then, the industry's sales were growing at a roughly 100% clip.

The tough market could mean that Tesla sells just 21,000 China-built Model 3s this year, according to LMC Automotive. That

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would qualify as a sluggish start given the Shanghai facility already builds more than 1,000 cars a week and plans to double production during the next year.

The forecast takes into account Tesla's history of production delays, potential supply-chain constraints and the complexity of manufacturing high-quality cars at scale, LMC Automotive said.

Yet others are more optimistic. Yale Zhang, managing director of Shanghai-based consultancy AutoForesight, said Tesla could sell about 100,000 Model 3 cars. Wang Lei, a Shanghai-based analyst for China International Capital Corp., said Tesla could sell a combined 120,000 Model 3 and Model Y vehicles.

Given Tesla's volatile share price, investors will be hyperfocused on the Shanghai ramp-up.

Success in boosting China sales could propel Tesla to as high as \$500 a share, a Morgan Stanley analyst, Adam Jonas, said in a December note to clients. Tesla climbed to a record \$443.01 on Friday after rising 26% last year. Analysts expect the stock to fetch \$311.41 in 12 months, based on 31 target prices compiled by Bloomberg.

So far, the China project has gone smoothly. Musk's visits helped the company get preferential bank loans and swift approvals

for construction and manufacturing. And while the subsidies are being phased out, the locally built Model 3 still qualified for a sizable handout of as much as about \$3,550 per car.

Tesla, a pioneer in electric cars, probably will have an edge for the next one-to-two years before competition starts catching up

But success requires winning over the consumer. A majority of China's EV purchases — about 70%, according to Sanford C. Bernstein — so far have been to the government and "policy-direct" customers, including taxis, mobility services and other government-affiliated fleet operators. Such buyers typically forgo premium cars like Teslas in favor of cheaper, local models.

"It's a distorted need," said Robin Zhu, an analyst with Bernstein. "And the market won't change much in the next two-to-three years."

Cars that cost less than 100,000 yuan (\$14,300) make up more than half of EV sales in China, according to Bernstein.

"To paraphrase Elon Musk,

demand may be insanely high, but people literally cannot afford to buy them," Zhu said.

To be sure, there is a segment of China's massive population that can afford Teslas. But the Palo Alto, California-based company won't be the sole global EV brand targeting those buyers.

Volkswagen AG's Audi plans to start selling nine new-energy-vehicle models in China during the next two years, with more than half of them being pure battery-electric. The first electric model, the E-Tron, debuted in November at a starting price of about 693,000 yuan.

Daimler AG's Mercedes-Benz EQC electric model became available in October and starts at 580,000 yuan. BMW AG plans to start building the iX3 crossover in China next year and is working with a Chinese partner to electrify its Mini model.

There also is a slew of local upstarts targeting the premium segment. Electric SUVs from NIO Inc. and Guangzhou Xiaopeng Motors Technology Co., or Xpeng Motors, are priced aggressively and already have found fans.

"It will be challenging for car-makers to differentiate themselves and be competitive," said Stephen Dyer, managing direc-

tor at Alixpartners, a global consulting firm.

Tesla, a pioneer in electric cars, probably will have an edge for the next one-to-two years before competition starts catching up, said David Whiston, an analyst at Morningstar Inc. in Chicago. Tesla's vehicles have an industry-leading driving range to go along with the brand appeal.

Boding well for the company, registrations of Tesla vehicles in China rose 14-fold to 5,597 in November. While growing from a low base, the figure suggests healthy demand for its cars even though all the models available thus far have been the pricier imported versions of the Model 3, and the higher-end Model S sedan and Model X SUV.

Tesla also doesn't have to worry about selling traditional internal-combustion vehicles. Its global rivals operate expensive gas-guzzler plants in China and need to make sure their new EVs aren't cannibalizing more profitable gasoline-powered lineups.

"Other multinationals, carrying the legacy of traditional automakers, came into the market reluctantly and lately. They are jumping in the pool they never wanted to swim in," said Bill Russo, chief executive officer of consulting firm Automobility Ltd. in Shanghai. "Tesla is not a conflicted company. They don't have to choose." **BLOOMBERG**

ASIAN COUNTRIES BRACE TO EVACUATE WORKERS IN IRAQ, IRAN

JIM GOMEZ, MANILA

PHILIPPINE President Rodrigo Duterte ordered the military to prepare to deploy its aircraft and ships "at any moment's notice" to evacuate thousands of Filipino workers in Iraq and Iran should violence break out, reflecting Asia's growing fears for its citizens in the increasingly volatile Middle East.

Other Asian nations with large populations of expatriate labor may face similar decisions amid the rapidly escalating tensions between the United States and Iran following last week's U.S. airstrike that killed Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad.

South Korean government ministries have discussed strengthening protections for the nearly 1,900 South Koreans in Iraq and Iran. Indian foreign ministry spokesman Raveesh Kumar said India wasn't planning to evacuate any citizens from the volatile region "yet."

Duterte held an emergency meeting with his defense secretary and top military and police officials Sunday to discuss the evacuation plans.

"President Duterte ordered the Armed Forces of the Philippines to be prepared to deploy military assets to repatriate overseas Filipinos in the Middle East, particularly from Iran and Iraq, at any moment's notice," said Sen. Christopher Lawrence Go, a close ally of the Duterte,



who was at the meeting.

Duterte expressed fears yesterday that the Philippines may have to carry out massive evacuations if violence hits Middle Eastern countries like Saudi Arabia that host large numbers of Filipino workers.

"I'm nervous. Iran seems to be hell-bent on a retaliation, which I think will come. It's a matter of time [...] the cry for blood is there," Duterte said in a speech. He urged Congress to hold a special session on the impact of a possible crisis in the Middle East and set aside contingency funds.

Iran has vowed to retaliate and

President Donald Trump warned that U.S. forces would hit back at 52 Iranian targets if Americans come under attack. Iraq's Parliament has also called for the expulsion of all American troops from Iraqi soil, which could revive the Islamic State group in Iraq, making the Middle East a far more dangerous and unstable place.

Compounding contingency plans is the uncertainty where hostilities could possibly break out.

Military chief of staff Lt. Gen. Felimon Santos Jr. said Philippine forces have identified possible evacuation routes not only in Iraq

and Iran but other hotspots, like Israel.

"There are probabilities like that and we are improving our plans just to cover everything just in case something happens," Santos told reporters in Manila.

Other countries face similar dilemmas. Asians make up 40 percent of the world's migrants, and Middle Eastern countries are a common destination. African migrants are also employed around the Middle East, though the possibility of their home countries arranging evacuations is uncertain.

Gulf Arab states are home to more than 7 million Indian expa-

triate who help drive the region's economy and keep its cities teeming with doctors, engineers, teachers, drivers, construction workers and other laborers. In United Arab Emirates, Indians outnumber Emiratis three to one.

South Korea's Foreign Ministry said yesterday that government agencies had discussed preparations for an escalating crisis in the Middle East but had no immediate plans for evacuations. The ministry said about 1,600 South Koreans are in Iraq, mostly working in construction, while another 280 who live in Iran are businesspeople, students or spouses of Iranians.

On past occasions, China has evacuated its citizens from other countries during times of conflict, political tension or natural disaster. In 2015, the navy transported nearly 500 Chinese out of war-torn Yemen. It evacuated 3,000 from Vietnam in 2014, after the deployment of a Chinese oil rig in disputed waters elicited a wave of anti-China riots.

There are more than 7,000 Filipino workers and their dependents in Iraq and Iran, including many who work in U.S. and other foreign facilities and commercial establishments in Baghdad, the Department of National Defense said.

The workers in Iran and Iraq are a small fraction of the hundreds of thousands of Filipinos who are employed in countries lining the Persian Gulf.

The Philippines is a leading source of labor worldwide, with about a tenth of its more than 100 million people working mostly as household help, construction workers, seamen and professionals. **AP**

Thailand launches full-time clinics dispensing cannabis oil

JERRY HARMER & BUSABA SIVASOMBOON, NONTHABURI

THAILAND yesterday opened its first two full-time clinics dispensing cannabis oil for medical treatment, a step forward in the government's policy of promoting the licensed use of marijuana products to relieve the symptoms of a range of ailments.

About 400 patients, many of them with cancer, were given the oil for free at a flagship clinic at the Public Health Ministry in a suburb of Bangkok.

The initial four formulations handed out are used for treating conditions such as migraines, insomnia, nausea, numbness and pain. The medicines are touted as being based on



traditional remedies.

Thailand was previously known for harsh anti-drug laws, but is now eyeing the economic potential of cannabis. A report last year by Prohibition Partners, which claims to be the leading authority on the subject,

said Asia's medical cannabis market would be worth around \$5.8 billion by 2024.

Around 25 similar clinics have been operating part-time since the legislature agreed in 2018 to amend the country's drug laws to

allow the use and production of medical cannabis.

The Health Ministry clinic and another in Bangkok are forerunners of a planned nationwide network, if they show positive results.

"Marijuana could be an answer. At least the patients' quality of life is improved," said Dr. Prasert Mongkolsiri, the director of a public hospital, who helped advise patients.

"At least it can lessen the side effects of the modern chemical-based medicines that they've been taking for 10 or 20 years," he said, referring to chemotherapy for cancer patients.

Chamroen Nakurai, 57, was diagnosed with lymph node cancer two years ago. She said cannabis oil helps lessen the side effects of her chemotherapy, but un-

til now she had been able to get it only through illegal underground suppliers.

"The treatment isn't widely available and the cost is quite high if you visit underground clinics, but this service is free and anyone can access it," she said.

Nuthjutha Ulpathorn, 29, was born with cerebral palsy that makes her unable to walk and garbles her speech. She began to use cannabis oil two months ago after her mother brought her to a government hospital that started to give out cannabis oil.

"I sleep better, and [am] less cranky," Nuthjutha said with a smile.

Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, the chief architect of the new policy drive, toured the suburban clinic yesterday. He expres-

sed hope that the remedies might be soon added into the National List of Essential Medicine, which allows them to be covered by Thailand's 30-baht (\$1) universal health care scheme. Officials say the policy of free cannabis is likely to be changed.

Anutin is the leader of the Bhumjai Thai Party, a partner in the country's coalition government. The party won 50 seats in March's general election after Anutin campaigned for legalization of the production of marijuana to aid farmers. Moves to allow small-scale private production are moving ahead.

The Public Health Ministry, meanwhile, supervises cannabis production at six locations around the country. **AP**

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

US ambassador leaves Kabul, ends two-year Afghan tenure

RAHIM FAIEZ & KATHY GANNON, KABUL

U.S. Ambassador John Bass left Kabul yesterday as his two-year tenure as America's top diplomat in war-torn Afghanistan ended. His departure comes as U.S. tensions with neighboring Iran have soared following a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad that killed Iran's top general.

Until Bass' replacement is decided, Washington is appointing a chargé d'affaires to the post, according to a statement from the U.S. State Department. Ross Wilson, who has served as America's ambassador to Turkey and Azerbaijan, is expected in the Afghan capital in the coming weeks.

The statement said Bass "skillfully advanced the Trump Administration's goal of reaching a political settlement in Afghanistan that ensures terrorists can never again threaten the United States from Afghan soil while leading a large

AP PHOTO



diplomatic mission in the face of numerous security threats."

In a tweet bidding Afghanistan farewell, Bass said: "My earnest hope is for leaders and citizens across this country to find strength in unity, put aside their differences, and work together to negotiate a political settlement with the Taliban. Afghans and this beautiful country deserve nothing less."

The on-again off-again talks between the United States and the Taliban appear to have again stalled. The negotiations are a key pillar in Washington's goal of reaching a political settlement in Afghanistan. The latest hiccup in the talks appears to be the issue of what a cease-fire or reduction of violence might look like if the insurgents agree on a truce.

The Taliban's ruling council

earlier announced that it would agree to a temporary lull in fighting to allow a peace agreement to be signed, according to Taliban officials. They have said that a reduction in violence is on the table as a topic. But the fighting continues unabated as the insurgents stage near-daily attacks targeting Afghan security forces and their allies, while the U.S. and Afghan forces conduct airstrikes and an-

ti-Taliban operations.

Washington's peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad has been working for more than one year to get a deal signed with the Taliban that would allow Washington to withdraw an estimated 13,000 U.S. troops from Afghanistan. The deal would also include negotiations between the Taliban and representatives of the Afghan government, opposition figures and other prominent Afghans. The Taliban however, refuse to negotiate with the Kabul government.

But the government side is hampered by its own unclear future, as definitive results of the Afghan presidential election in September have still to be announced, although Afghan President Ashraf Ghani claims to be the winner, according to preliminary results.

Also, the Afghan government and opposition politicians, as well as some prominent Afghan figures, have so far been unable to agree on a negotiating team.

The negotiations, according to Khalilzad, will decide the future face of a post-war Afghanistan and would tackle thorny issues such as constitutional reform, women's rights, free speech and the fate of thousands of Taliban fighters as well as militias loyal to Kabul's powerful warlords. AP

AD

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what's ON



RED DECEMBER - EXHIBITION OF CARLOS MARREIROS

TIME: 10am-9pm

UNTIL: February 13, 2020

VENUE: Tap Seac Gallery, Avenida Conselheiro Ferreira de Almeida, No 95

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8988 4000

LINGUA FRANCA - 2ND ANNUAL ARTS EXHIBITION BETWEEN CHINA AND PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

TIME: 10am-7pm (Closed on Monday)

UNTIL: December 8, 2019

VENUE: No. 55-57, Avenida do Coronel Mesquita, known as Green Townhouses; Former Municipal Cattle Stable

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8988 4000

THE WORLD AS WILL AND IDEA - COLLECTIVE EXHIBITION OF EMERGING ARTISTS FROM MAINLAND CHINA

TIME: 10am-7pm (No admittance after 6:30pm, closed on Mondays)

UNTIL: February 23, 2020

VENUE: Macau Contemporary Art Centre - Navy Yard No.1, located at Rua de S. Tiago Da Barra

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8791 9814

Offbeat

BYE-BYE BUOY: LARGE BEACON REMOVED FROM FLORIDA BEACH

A large red navigation buoy that escaped from the Atlantic Ocean for the second time was removed Thursday from a Florida beach where it had become something of a tourist attraction.

Crews with a flatbed truck removed the nearly 7-ton (6.35-metric-ton) buoy from New Smyrna Beach, where it came ashore last week, news outlets reported.

The buoy is originally from South Carolina and broke free of its mooring during Hurricane Irma in 2017, the Daytona Beach News-Journal reported. The buoy landed on Hilton Head Island.

It was put back into commission in the mouth of the Port Royal Sound and stood its ground for a while until sometime after Hurricane Dorian in 2019, when the buoy was forced off its mooring again.

The buoy will be taken to a Coast Guard station for evaluation of whether it can be used again, officials said.

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



1980 GANDHI RETURNED BY LANDSLIDE VOTE

The people of India have voted Indira Gandhi back into power - less than three years after rejecting her "emergency dictatorship".

When the last of the 196 million votes in national elections were counted, her Congress (Indira) party had won 351 of the 525 contested seats in the lower house of parliament, or Lok Sabha.

Mrs Gandhi's triumph virtually wiped out her party's two major contenders. Neither the Janata nor the Lok Dal party gained the requisite 54 seats to qualify for recognition as the official opposition.

Underscoring the extent of her victory, was the election of her son Sanjay, who had been blamed for many of the excesses of the emergency rule. He is out of prison on appeal against his conviction for stealing then destroying the master copy of a film satirizing his mother's rule.

Mrs Gandhi, who had ruled India for 11 years until 1977, successfully appealed to India's rural masses with her two election slogans, "Banish Poverty" and "Law and Order".

During the 63-day campaign, the 62-year-old gave up to 20 speeches a day during a 40,000 mile tour of 384 constituencies.

But Mrs Gandhi's political comeback will be viewed with suspicion. During the 19 months of emergency rule, introduced after she was accused of electoral malpractice, democracy was suspended, many opposition politicians were imprisoned and a compulsory birth control programme was introduced.

When Mrs Gandhi sought to have the regime legitimised through the polls, she was defeated by Morarji Desai's Janata party.

The last time she appeared in parliament was in 1978 when she was expelled on charges involving harassment of government officials during the emergency. She is still under investigation on charges of abuse of power, although the assumption is these will now be shelved.

Her electoral victory is partly due to the break-up last summer of the fragile coalition which formed the Janata party, leaving caretaker prime minister Charan Singh in control.

As news of Mrs Gandhi's victory spread, strings of coloured festive lights were strung up around her New Delhi home.

Thousands of people have converged on the bungalow, which was built for officials of the Raj.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Indira Gandhi's first formal speech after her election victory spoke of compromise, even for her opponents.

She said the nation had to be lifted from the "ruinous state" into which it had fallen.

Her son Sanjay was later killed in an air crash.

In 1984 she ordered the storming of the Golden Temple in Amritsar to flush out Sikh militants who were pursuing self rule for Punjab.













Two months later she was assassinated by her own Sikh bodyguards.

Her eldest surviving son, Rajiv, succeeded her as prime minister. He, too, was assassinated, in 1991, by supporters of the Tamil Tigers in retaliation for ordering the deployment of troops in Sri Lanka.

His widow, Sonia, took over the leadership of the Congress party in 1998.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

<p>ARIES  Mar. 21-Apr. 19 Being intrigued by new people and new cultures will energize you to a point that you might finally understand what you really need to be doing with your life. The blinders are coming off.</p>	<p>TAURUS  Apr. 20-May. 20 Step back, slow down, and try to keep yourself busy just having a good time. Take a long lunch or a long walk - whatever will keep you peacefully distracted.</p>
<p>GEMINI  May. 21-Jun. 21 Go ahead and take the good advice of friends and associates. Who cares if that means they'll know how much influence they have over you?</p>	<p>CANCER  Jun. 22-Jul. 22 Eloquence is right up there, too: The right words will always be right at the tip of your tongue, and you will be in plenty of situations to make the most of your wit.</p>
<p>LEO  Jul. 23-Aug. 22 Your brain is a big and vital organ - and it's nowhere near even half full! Spend some time learning something new today, and you'll be doing something very good for yourself.</p>	<p>VIRGO  Aug. 23-Sep. 22 Too many variables are at play, and the chances that you will emerge from the arrangement without losses are very slim. Define your boundaries today.</p>
<p>LIBRA  Sep. 23-Oct. 22 Your time is extremely valuable. Every minute of your day is as good as money, especially right now, when you are just so busy. Who deserves this valuable commodity more than your family and friends?</p>	<p>SCORPIO  Oct. 23 - Nov. 21 All you need to do is avoid conflict. So try to resist your natural urge to go against the crowd, because it could ruffle a few feathers. Just go with the flow and play nice.</p>
<p>SAGITTARIUS  Nov. 22-Dec. 21 Today, despite the tension that you can sense brewing under the surface, you should just focus on having fun. The impending drama is not something you created, and it is absolutely not your responsibility.</p>	<p>CAPRICORN  Dec. 22-Jan. 19 A door is opening in your career, but it might require you to leave your family for a while. Travel is something that you usually enjoy quite a bit, but this time it could be a lot more work than you were expecting.</p>
<p>AQUARIUS  Jan. 20-Feb. 18 The patterns you have developed in your social life are becoming a little bit boring - what you need right now is a new cast of characters, and a new agenda for fun.</p>	<p>PISCES  Feb. 19-Mar. 20 Today, if you let yourself get drawn into a mystery, you will be giving this mystery power over you. Don't try to figure out why things are happening the way they are happening.</p>

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-2	4	cloudy
Harbin	-17	-9	flurry
Tianjin	-1	3	cloudy
Urumqi	-15	-7	cloudy
Xi'an	1	7	cloudy
Lhasa	-8	9	clear
Chengdu	4	12	cloudy
Chongqing	7	13	cloudy
Kunming	3	18	clear
Nanjing	5	10	drizzle
Shanghai	10	21	drizzle
Wuhan	3	8	cloudy
Hangzhou	11	22	drizzle
Taipei	18	21	cloudy
Guangzhou	19	26	cloudy
Hong Kong	20	24	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	-4	-2	flurry
Frankfurt	0	3	drizzle
Paris	4	7	drizzle
London	3	10	clear
New York	-7	2	clear

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1-With the bow, in music; 5- Conceals; 10- Final Four org.; 14- Make-up artist?; 15- Tennyson's "___ Arden"; 16- Polly, to Tom Sawyer; 17- Bygone Dodge; 18- Inspire anew; 19- It parallels a radius; 20- Adlai's running mate; 22- Charm; 24- Noisy; 27- Class; 28- Roman capital of Palestine; 32- Western; 36- Al Jolson's real first name; 37- Trousers; 39- Put away; 40- Torn clothing; 42- Supple; 44- Sea-going eagle; 45- Iota preceder; 47- Heat home; 49- Feel unwell; 50- Seductively beautiful woman; 51- Proves beyond doubt; 53- Tops; 56- Blues singer James; 57- Composure; 61- To talk, usually in a pompous manner; 65- Oklahoma Native; 66- Together; 69- Rind; 70- Wanting; 71- Plant again; 72- Historical periods; 73- Rock blasters; 74- Night noise; 75- Carry;

DOWN: 1- Sunburn soother; 2- Wheel parts; 3- Pious platitudes; 4- Projecting windows; 5- Not him; 6- One ___ million; 7- Blockhead; 8- Dazzling display; 9- With reserve; 10- Sicken; 11- Coal dust; 12- Editor Wintour; 13- ___ impasse; 21- Work up lather; 23- Wall St. debuts; 25- Orenburg's river; 26- Fabric of jeans; 28- Wagons; 29- Japanese beer brand; 30- Raring to go; 31- Top story; 33- Law of Moses; 34- Journalist Pyle; 35- Staggers; 38- Oil source; 41- Soft-shell clams; 43- Let out; 46- By and by; 48- Fascinated by; 52- Floor covering; 54- Approaches; 55- Ruhr city; 57- Nightclub of song; 58- Molecular component; 59- Coil; 60- Indifferent; 62- Dynamic beginning; 63- Nipple; 64- Additional; 67- And not; 68- Female sheep;

Yesterday's solution

S	O	A	P	S	R	A	T	S	C	E	O
A	R	N	I	E	T	P	I	C	I	V	A
T	B	E	A	M	O	I	N	A	T	B	E
D	I	A	N	P	L	A	I	L	E	T	
T	R	I	V	I	A	A	B	A	T	E	S
S	A	L	M	O	N	B	L	A	M	E	
U	N	T	I	L	S	O	N	S	M	E	
A	P	E	N	O	M	A	D	I	G	E	R
S	P	A	T	W	O	K	M	A	S	S	
H	E	R	O	N	M	A	R	B	L	E	
E	R	S	A	T	Z	A	L	L	I	E	D
S	H	A	R	P	I	E	Z	E	A	L	
P	I	T	T	I	O	U	S	D	U	R	R
R	O	S	Y	R	O	L	E	T	R	I	E
O	N	E	T	K	E	D	S	E	E	D	S

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Emergency calls 999	Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
Fire department 28 572 222	Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
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	



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IN A 24/7 FOOD CULTURE, PERIODIC FASTING GAINS FOLLOWERS

CANDICE CHOI

ON low-carb diets, meat and cheese are OK.

On low-fat diets, fruit and oatmeal are fine.

With the latest diet trend, no foods at all are allowed for long stretches of time.

A diet that forbids eating for hours on end might seem doomed in a culture where food is constantly available, but apps and Facebook groups are popping up for people practicing "intermittent fasting."

Bri Wyatt, a 32-year-old Tennessee resident, tried it this summer.

"At first I was like, there's no way," she said.

But after reading more about it, she thought it might not be that hard. She started by skipping breakfast and night-time snacks, and later moved on to a 60-day challenge of fasting every other day.

Melissa Breaux Bankston, a CrossFit instructor in New Orleans, Louisiana, also tried intermittent fasting as a way to curb her snacking. "I wanted to limit the amount of time that I was eating," she said.

Studies on the potential health benefits of intermittent fasting are still limited, including for its effectiveness with weight loss. But heading into the new year, you may be wondering whether it could help you get in better shape.

WHEN, NOT WHAT

Like other diets, intermittent fasting helps you lose weight by setting boundaries around food. But instead of limiting what you eat, it restricts when you eat.

"It's really another way of fooling your body into eating less calories," said Krista Varady, who studies intermittent fasting at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Proponents say intermittent fasting helps with weight loss in other ways. For instance, they say it forces your body to start burning its own fat for fuel after depleting the energy it normally gets from food. But any effects would depend on the

AP PHOTO



Melissa Breaux Bankston, a CrossFit athletic trainer in New Orleans

specific approach you take, and Varady said there isn't strong evidence yet that intermittent fasting has any unique effects compared with other diets.

Regardless, people should consult their doctor before trying it. It's not advised for children, people on certain medications and people with a history of eating disorders.

FASTING MENU

One of the more popular approaches to intermittent fasting is to limit eating to an 8-hour window and to fast during the day's other 16 hours. This is called time-restricted feeding and isn't as difficult as some other approaches, since the fasting period can include the time you're asleep.

Many people tailor the eating window to be shorter or longer. Some eat just one meal a day, while others fast entire days a couple times a

week. On fasting days, people may allow themselves around 600 calories if needed. But Dr. Jason Fung, who has written books on intermittent fasting, says skipping food altogether might actually be easier, since eating small amounts could stimulate appetite.

Whatever the method, people aren't supposed to gorge when they stop fasting. Fung says it's a myth that fasting leaves you famished.

Sumaya Kazi, who posts about her intermittent fasting online and offers coaching services on the diet, says it seems more difficult than it is partly because overeating has become the norm. "Intermittent fasting is more of a mental challenge than a physical challenge," she says.

But people react differently to diets, and fasting may be a lot harder for some than for others, says Dr. Fatima Stanford, a Harvard Medical School obesity specialist.

"There's no one size fits all," she said.

FASTING ON TRIAL

Obesity experts have become interested in intermittent fasting, but studies on the diet are still emerging. For now, limited research suggests it may not be any better for weight loss than conventional calorie-cutting over the long term.

"Unfortunately, intermittent fasting gets a little hyped," said Courtney Peterson, who studies the diet at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Still, some fasting approaches may be more effective than others. And Peterson notes the difficulty of designing studies that definitively capture a diet's effects. That's in part because so many other variables could be at play.

For instance, researchers are looking at whether any benefits of

intermittent fasting might be tied to when the eating period falls and fluctuations in how well our bodies process food throughout the day.

Some health experts say intermittent fasting might be too difficult for many people. They point to a study of 100 people where those placed in the alternate-day fasting group lost around the same amount of weight as those on conventional calorie-restriction diets over time. But the fasting group had a dropout rate of 38%, compared with 29% for the conventional diet group.

But intermittent fasting may be easier than other diets for people who already skip meals when they're too busy, said Varady of the University of Illinois at Chicago.

To make weight loss stick, she said people should pick diets that resemble how they already eat.

"Different diets do work for different people," she said. AP

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FOOTBALL

Real Madrid set to sign another Brazilian teenager

TALES AZZONI

REAL Madrid is about to add another Brazilian teenager to its squad.

After signing youngsters Vinícius Júnior and Rodrygo in recent seasons, the Spanish club is close to bringing in 17-year-old Reinier from Brazilian club Flamengo. The transfer is expected to be completed in the coming days, according to Brazilian and Spanish media.

"Let's wait and see," Reinier said while training with Brazil's under-23 squad on Sunday.

The pending transfer has dominated the news about Real Madrid, which is in a tight race for the Spanish league title. Madrid won 3-0 at Getafe on Saturday to move level on points with Barcelona at the top of the standings at the halfway point.

Reinier, who will soon turn 18, is a creative attacking midfielder touted as one of the most promising youngsters in Brazilian soccer. He helped Flamengo win last year's Brazilian league and the Copa Libertadores, South America's most important club competition.

Flamengo is the same Brazilian club where Vinícius Júnior played when he attracted Real Madrid's attention as a teenager a few years ago. Reinier scored six goals in 15 matches as a professional with the club, Brazil's most popular.

Like Vinícius Júnior at the time he was signed, Reinier played only a few matches as a professional before impressing Madrid and ge-



Real Madrid's Vinícius Júnior (right)

ting the Spanish powerhouse to make a bet on him.

It was a similar case with Rodrygo, who was at Santos and was also a teen when Madrid came after him. Both initially played with Madrid's "B" team before making their way into the main squad, and that should be the same path for Reinier if he is signed.

Madrid reportedly paid about 45 million euros (\$50 million) each for Vinícius Júnior and Rodrygo, and Brazilian media said it will pay nearly \$35 million euros (\$39

million) for Reinier.

Just like Vinícius Júnior and Rodrygo, Reinier has been a regular with Brazil's youth squads since an early age.

"He has great potential," Brazil left back Filipe Luis, a former Atlético Madrid player who joined Flamengo last year, told Spanish sports daily Marca. "He always makes the right choices on the field."

SPANISH SUPER CUP

Of the four teams playing in the revamped Spanish Super Cup this

week in Saudi Arabia, only Barcelona failed to win its league match this weekend. The league leaders were held to a 2-2 draw at last-place Espanyol.

Atlético Madrid, Barcelona's opponent in the first semifinal match of the "Final Four" format that is debuting in the Spanish Super Cup this year, topped Levante 2-1 at home.

Real Madrid won at Getafe 3-0, while its opponent in the other Super Cup semifinal match - Valencia - defeated Eibar 1-0 at home.

GOALKEEPING PRAISE

Both Real Madrid and Atlético Madrid had their goalkeepers to thank for their weekend victories.

Jan Oblak was crucial in Atlético's 2-1 win over Levante, making a couple of superb saves late in the game at the Wanda Metropolitan Stadium on Saturday.

Earlier in the day, Thibaut Courtois had an outstanding performance to help Madrid keep a clean sheet against Getafe.

Madrid and Atlético have the league's best defense at the midway point, each conceding only 12 goals in 19 matches.

RACISM CLAIMS

Getafe player Marc Cucurella defended himself from accusations he made racist insults against Real Madrid defender Éder Militão on Saturday.

Television images showed what could be interpreted as Cucurella calling Militão a monkey, but the Getafe player gave a different account on Twitter, saying he used a similar-sounding word as monkey while telling Militão to shut up.

The 21-year-old Cucurella, a left back who is a regular in Spain's youth squads, is playing for Getafe on loan from Barcelona.

CHINESE SENSATION

Wu Lei became the first Chinese player to score against Barcelona when he netted an 88th-minute equalizer for Espanyol on Saturday.

"I'm happy to have scored the goal that helped the team earn this important point," Wu said.

In his second season with Espanyol, the forward is enjoying his best scoring streak with the club, with three goals in his last three matches. He scored two goals in the team's 2-0 win over Lleida Esportiu in the Copa del Rey last month. **AP**

HOCKEY

TV mixup has Russian fans celebrating despite losing

SOME Russian hockey fans were celebrating victory despite losing at the world junior hockey championships because of a confusingly timed TV repeat.

Two state TV channels showed Russia-Canada finals at the same time on Sunday. One was live, and the other was from 2011.

While most fans, and Russia's players, commiserated after a 4-3 loss to Canada on Channel One, many Russians watched a nail-biting, 9-year-old 5-3 comeback win on rival broadcaster Match TV.

Some fans posted celebratory messages on social

media, or complained media outlets were reporting the wrong score. It became hard to tell who was genuinely duped and who was in on the joke.

Soccer player Dmitry Tarasov wrote on Instagram: "Well done guys, congratulations on the win." After the post was widely mocked, Tarasov said it was meant as a joke after he forfeited in a board game he was playing with family.

Yana Tarasenko, a lifestyle blogger who is the wife of St. Louis Blues forward Vladimir Tarasenko, posted on Instagram that her husband had watched the 2011

game for 10 minutes in the belief it was live — at least "until he saw himself in the game."

Tarasenko was on the winning Russian team in 2011, but at the age of 28 he is now far too old for world juniors.

It wasn't immediately clear why Match TV decided to show the 2011 final at the same time as the live broadcast. It had shown live world juniors games earlier in the tournament, but the medal rounds were only on Channel One. Match TV didn't immediately respond to a request for comment. **AP**



Russia's players stand on ice after losing the match

OPINION

World Views

Bobby Ghosh, Bloomberg

GOOD RIDDANCE TO QASSEM SOLEIMANI

Qassem Soleimani was never going to die peacefully in his bed. As leader of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, and puppet-master of militias and terrorist groups across the Middle East, he had the blood of hundreds of thousands on his hands: Syrians, Iraqis, Yemenis, Lebanese, Palestinians, Israelis, Americans and fellow-Iranians, among others. His death was hoped for and prayed for by the families of his victims, and plotted by their governments.

It is a measure of Soleimani's brashness that he nonetheless strutted around Baghdad in the company of other wanted mass killers, whose faces, in another age, would be on "Wanted" posters on the walls of local post offices. It was incautious to the point of suicidal that he should have been doing so in the days after his most brazen stunt: the New Year's Eve assault by his Iraqi proxies on the U.S. embassy in Baghdad.

Soleimani's death-by-drone was the predictable denouement of his escalating recklessness over the years. That his top local lackey, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, should have perished with him is appropriate. The Iraqi had been the instrument of Soleimani's decision to step up rocket attacks on U.S. bases, leading to the trigger event of this week's turmoil: the killing of an American contractor at a base near the northern city of Kirkuk.

This escalation in deed matched a similar intensification in word by Soleimani's boss, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, who goaded U.S. President Donald Trump in the manner guaranteed to get his goat: by taunting him on Twitter. "You can't do anything," Khamenei tweeted, after Trump blamed Iran for the embassy attack.

Khamenei and Soleimani seem to have calculated that Trump would respond to their provocations just as the leaders of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have to progressively brazen attacks on their shipping and oil installations. Perhaps they thought he couldn't risk a war, or a crisis that would send oil prices spiking, in an election year. Or perhaps they thought he simply didn't have the stomach for a confrontation.

Whatever their reasoning, playing chicken with the American president was a hideous mistake. Contrary to Khamenei's taunt, Trump could do many things, ranging from tightening the economic sanctions that have already cost Iran dearly, to striking Iran's proxies, as with last Sunday's bombing of Muhandis's Kataieb Hezbollah. These may have been acceptable outcomes for Khamenei: After all, a man who only weeks ago ordered the slaughter of hundreds of Iranians is unlikely to balk at causing more pain to his own people or proxies.

But Khamenei failed to reckon with Trump's own capacity for recklessness. Rather than merely ratchet up sanctions, the president chose to order a drone attack that brought a fiery end to the life and career of one of Iran's most fearsome and important military commanders.

What now? The cycle of recklessness that the supreme leader began leaves him little option except to keep raising the stakes. But he must now do so without his most effective instrument of terror, a commander distinguished for his unquestioned obedience and apparently inexhaustible appetite for violence. Those are qualities Khamenei will surely miss amid the mayhem he has unleashed.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel's governing coalition is starting the new year with a new bout of strife — this time over a conservative ally's call for new faces in the Cabinet.

Markus Soeder, the leader of the smallest party in Merkel's coalition, said in a weekend interview with the Bild am Sonntag newspaper that "we should rejuvenate and renew the government team by the middle of the year" to give it new momentum.

The call was unexpected and apparently unwelcome to his allies. Merkel's spokesman, Steffen Seibert, said Monday that "the chancellor works well and gladly with all of her ministers" — though

he did concede that the government could "increase the speed or dynamism" of its work in some places.

Soeder didn't specify who he thought should go, though he said that "innovation and business should be at the top" of conservatives' priorities.

That was interpreted as a dig at Economy Minister Peter Altmaier and Science Minister Anja Karliczek, both members of Merkel's Christian Democratic Union. Soeder heads that party's Bavaria-only sister, the Christian Social Union, which is a close but sometimes awkward ally.



AP PHOTO

**SEEKING THE CROSS:
 ICY DIPS MARK THE
 FEAST OF EPIPHANY**

VESELIN TOSHKOV,
 SOFIA, BULGARIA

THOUSANDS of Orthodox Christian worshippers plunged into the icy waters of rivers and lakes across Bulgaria on Monday to retrieve crucifixes tossed by priests in Epiphany ceremonies commemorating the baptism of Jesus Christ.

By tradition, the person who retrieves the wooden cross will be freed from evil spirits and will be healthy throughout the year. After the cross is fished out, the priest sprinkles believers with water using a bunch of basil.

The religious holiday of Epiphany is also celebrated in some Western Christian churches as Three Kings Day, which marks the visit of the Magi, or three wise men, to the baby Jesus, and closes out the Christmas season.

At the Vatican, Pope Francis urged the faithful to reject "the god of money" as well as consumerism, pleasure, success and self. In his Epiphany homily Monday in St. Peter's Basilica, Francis encouraged people to focus on serving others, not themselves.

He urged the faithful to

concentrate on the essentials by getting rid of what he calls "useless things and addictions" that numb hearts and confuse minds. Francis said believers should aid those suffering on life's margins, saying Jesus is present in those people.

In Milan, city officials served a hotel lunch to 200 homeless people to mark the day.

In the sleepy mountain city of Kalofer in central Bulgaria, dozens of men dressed in traditional white embroidered shirts waded into the icy Tundzha River on Monday waving national flags and singing folk songs.

Led by the town's mayor, inspired by bass drums and bagpipes and fortified by homemade plum brandy, they performed a slow "mazhko horo," or men's dance, stomping on the rocky riverbed.

Braving sub-zero temperatures, the men danced for nearly half an hour, up to their waists in the freezing water, pushing away chunks of ice floating on the river.

The town of Kalofer has applied to the U.N. cultural agency UNESCO for this traditional ritual to be inscribed as part of the

"intangible cultural heritage of humanity."

In Istanbul, more than a dozen Orthodox men jumped into the frigid waters of the Golden Horn amid heavy rains in a ceremony led by Patriarch Bartholomew I.

Nikolaos Solis from Agrinio in Greece retrieved the wooden cross, the fourth time he has done so. Another Greek man lost consciousness and had to be pulled out of the frigid water and taken to an ambulance.

The Patriarchate in Istanbul is considered the heart of the Orthodox world and dates back to the Byzantine Empire, which collapsed when the Muslim Ottomans conquered the city in 1453.

Epiphany marks the end of the 12 days of Christmas, but not all Orthodox Christian churches celebrate it on the same day.

While the Orthodox Christian churches in Greece, Bulgaria and Romania celebrate the feast on Jan. 6, Orthodox Churches in Russia, Ukraine and Serbia follow the Julian calendar, according to which Epiphany is celebrated on Jan. 19, as their Christmas falls on Jan. 7. **AP**



Australia The government said yesterday it was willing to pay "whatever it takes" to help communities recover from deadly wildfires that have ravaged the country. Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the government was committing an extra AUD2 billion toward the recovery effort in addition to the tens of millions of dollars that have already been promised.



Iran Weeping amid wails from a sea of mourners, Iran's supreme leader yesterday prayed over the remains of a top Iranian general killed in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad, an attack that's drastically raised tensions between Tehran and Washington. The procession for Iranian Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani drew a crowd of mourners and followers, said by police to be in the millions, yesterday in Tehran, where Soleimani's replacement vowed to take revenge for his killing.

Puerto Rico A 5.8-magnitude quake jolted Puerto Ricans out of their beds yesterday morning, the strongest quake yet to hit the US territory that has been shaking for the past week. The quake struck just south of the island at a relatively shallow depth of 10 kilometers, according to the U.S. Geological Service. There was no tsunami threat, officials said.

UK A man described as "the most prolific rapist in British legal history" has been sentenced to life in prison with a possible release after 30 years following his conviction for sexual offenses against 48 men. Authorities said the evidence against 36-year-old Reynhard Sinaga indicates he had many more victims, with roughly 195 men apparently having been filmed while being abused when they were in his apartment. Many were unconscious at the time.