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THE GOV'T IS MULLING A PROPOSAL THAT WOULD MAKE RENT FEES BY BANK TRANSFER THE SOLE MANDATORY PAYMENT METHOD P2

AP PHOTO



Myanmar The United Nations' top court announced yesterday that it will issue a decision next week on a request to order Myanmar to halt what has been cast as a genocidal campaign against the southeast Asian country's Rohingya Muslim minority. The West African nation of Gambia, on behalf of a large organization of Islamic nations, asked the International Court of Justice last month to take "all measures within its power to prevent all acts that amount to or contribute to the crime of genocide."

AP PHOTO



Japan Popular environment minister said yesterday that he will take paternity leave when his first child is born later this month to be a good example for working fathers in Japan, where men are largely absent from child rearing. With Japan facing an aging population and a dwindling birthrate, the government recently began promoting paternity leave. Last month, it adopted a policy allowing public servants to take more than a month of paternity leave.

Egypt The military says one of its fighter jets crashed in the Sinai Peninsula where the country's forces have been battling militants and that the pilot was killed. The Islamic State group claimed it downed the aircraft. According to a tweet by Egypt's military spokesman, Tamer Refai, the jet crashed during a training exercise on Tuesday. He said that an investigation into the crash was underway.

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XINHUA

BLOOMBERG



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ABUSE OF AMBULANCE SERVICES MORE COMMON LAST YEAR P7

GOV'T SAYS NO AIR DETERIORATION FROM ZHUHAI EXPLOSION

Major air quality deterioration in Macau owing to the explosion that took place yesterday at a Zhuhai petrochemical plant is unlikely, noted the Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) and the Meteorological and Geophysics Bureau (SMG) in a joint statement. As of press time, easterly winds were recorded by the SMG in all 12 anemometers across the city. The affected plant in Zhuhai is located about 40 kilometers west of Macau. The SMG forecasts easterly winds today. Accordingly, it said that there was no obvious threat to the air quality in Macau. An explosion hit a petrochemical plant in Zhuhai around noontime Tuesday, causing a large fire and black smoke. The neighborhood was evacuated. Emergency personnel had been deployed reportedly from as far away as Guangzhou, the provincial capital.

NEW DSSOPT DIRECTOR GIVEN MONTHS TO SOLVE ACCUMULATED PROBLEMS

Yesterday, the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau's (DSSOPT) director Chan Pou Ha was sworn into her position. Between 2009 and 2015, Chan was a Deputy Director at the DSSOPT. Since 2015, she has been a chief senior consultant at the bureau. Chan says she will improve the overall work efficiency of the DSSOPT, enhance communication with the public, improve administration transparency, and bring innovative thinking to the bureau. Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raimundo Arrais do Rosário thanked Chan for taking the job under difficult circumstances. Rosário hopes that, together with Chan, the DSSOPT can complete the accumulated projects, such as the urban planning draft, within several months.

MORE E-PAYMENT OPTIONS WANTED FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Lawmaker Ella Lei has written an interpellation urging the government to introduce new electronic payment systems for the collection of fares in the public transport sector. Lei pointed out that MPay and Macau Pass are only accepted on buses, whereas on the Light Rapid Transit the only valid forms of payment are via the LRT pass or purchase of a ticket. Lei asked about the timetable of the introduction of e-payment on the LRT. She also demanded an answer as to whether the government will grant discounts for all passengers who use various forms of e-payment. The lawmaker believes that e-payment arrangements will make it more convenient for residents to take public transport and pay for parking.

HENGQIN: JLL OPTIMISTIC ABOUT FUTURE DEMAND

LYNZY VALLES

THE potential for property development in Hengqin is significant, as is local residents' access to such real estate, said Jones Lang LaSalle's chief operating officer (COO) for Greater China, Gavin Morgan, citing the expansion of Hengqin Port as one of the main factors.

Speaking to the press on the sidelines of an Inter-Chambers Business Lunch conducted by Britcham, Amcham and the France Macau Chamber of Commerce, Morgan said that the interconnection between Hengqin and Macau would increase synergy between the two cities.

Although there have been several developments and focus on specific sectors, the JLL official said that there is still a significant amount of land that could cater to future developments.

"There's huge optionality there to still play around with mixes and zoning to make it the place that it needs to be based on future demand, which is one of the reasons why I remain optimistic," Morgan told the press.



"If the demand comes and the development and expansion of this area transpires, we believe that [...] the opportunity is definitely there to facilitate it," he added.

During Morgan's seminar, he restated that Hengqin could be a solution to the lack of office space in Macau in the future.

JLL data shows that Macau

has less than four million square feet of Grade A office gross floor area, while there is less than 24 million square feet of non-Grade A office space.

Thus, the real estate expert said that the local market, which has a low vacancy rate and almost a non-existent future supply pipeline, may form synergies with its neighboring region

to meet the demands for space to accommodate workers that want to be based in Macau.

Meanwhile, Morgan described Macau's resident market as "healthy."

"The reason why I see it being healthy is [that] it's slightly unusual in that it predominantly caters for domestic purchasers, relatively speaking, when you compare with other markets in the Greater Bay Area," he said.

"There's probably less speculation here than [other] domestic players right now. [...] In that respect, it's definitely healthy," Morgan added.

Commenting on Hong Kong's current real estate market, the COO said that despite the ongoing social unrest that has been occurring over the last several months, it is likely that Hong Kong will return to "big peaks and troughs" in the future.

"Hong Kong has become less volatile over the last decade, which is why you've seen a much gentler motion in all sectors of the property market," he said.

JLL is also not seeing a significant dip in commercial and residential market pricing, nor it is detecting any signs of panic-buying of properties from residents seeking to unload properties in Hong Kong.

"It still feels like quite a robust market," he added.

Gov't considering making rent payments by bank transfer mandatory

RENATO MARQUES

THE government is considering making the payment of rent fees by bank transfer mandatory. The policy proposal was floated by the Secretary for Administration and Justice, André Cheong on Tuesday at the Legislative Assembly, during a debate over the existing problems between tenants and landlords.

According to Cheong, making rents mandatorily paid by bank transfer would help to ensure proof of payment in cases where there are conflicts regarding unpaid or



late payment of rent fees as well as deposits collected, among other issues.

The debate was set in motion by the questions of lawmaker Mak Soi Kun, who has long been calling on the government to find a solution to what he calls "scamming tenants," as well as sol-

ving water leaks, a common issue in apartment buildings in Macau.

Mak wanted to know whether the new government will present measures aiming to expedite judicial cases involving rental contracts. On previous occasions, he has claimed that landlords

sometimes wait years to regain possession over their units after cases of non-compliance with rental contracts.

Cheong then admitted that the government may revise the legislation on that topic to minimize conflicts between the two parties. The secretary suggested the creation of a "provision that clearly states that rents must be paid through bank accounts within the defined deadline," adding that the government will first study the feasibility of such a provision, as well as listening to the opinions of the public.

The measure would

also tackle a suspected large number of rental contracts not registered or reported to the financial authorities. It would seek to prevent landlords from being able to earn an income without reporting it and paying tax on it.

In the past, the government enforced a similar measure concerning the payment of wages to domestic workers, making it mandatory that each worker's wages be deposited in a bank account in the name of that worker as a guarantee that workers receive the amounts they are entitled to.

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Times

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For subscription and general issues: general@macaudailytimes.com | Printed at Welfare Printing Ltd

Tourism regulator forecasts 3% fewer visitors in 2020

ANTHONY LAM

MACAUI visitor arrivals will drop by 3% in 2020, according to a prediction by Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, director of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), at the Office's annual press conference yesterday.

When asked for a forecast of this year's visitor numbers, the director said, "This is the first year, since I assumed this position, [that] I have to forecast negative growth." The director announced the information in a measured manner. "As far as I can remember, I have never announced a forecast of negative growth," Fernandes added.

She then recalled the double-digit drop in visitor arrivals in the last two months of last year and revealed that she and her team had prepared themselves for a drop in 2020.

Another factor that has led the Office to make such a forecast was the 6% drop in visitor arrivals during last year's four-day Grand Prix period.

As for the Chinese New Year period, which will warrant a seven-day holiday period in mainland China, the MGTO senses a drop in visitor arrivals. The Office forecasted a drop of about 6%.

Last year, the Chinese New Year holidays saw about 1.2 million visitor arrivals. "A 6% drop will leave about 1.1 million for this year,"

Fernandes said. "Although we forecast a drop, servicing 1.1 million people over a seven-day period is really not that bad."

She further explained that a lot of factors could cause the same results. "It could be the Trade War or other external factors," she said, adding that it is more important to be well-prepared for fluctuations.

"We also saw that more people opt for destinations [further away] during longer holidays," Fernandes said.

The slow pace of growth in overnight tourists has long been a concern for Macau. The office, however, has worked to extend the stay of tourists. Looking to the future, the director reiterated it is an area they will continue to work hard on.

"There are still new hotel rooms being completed in the coming years," advised Fernandes. "Focus will be placed on origins farther away from Macau. [The distance] makes staying overnight necessary [for tourists from those places]."

Macau currently has 41,000 hotel rooms, and there will be several thousand new rooms coming onto the market.

The office introduced smart traffic management last year. Information technology and big data were used to divert tourist traffic to less crowded spots.

"Besides obtaining tourism-related data from other government departments, this year we

also hope to invite our industry members to upload data to the platform for everyone's use," explained Ricky Hoi, deputy director of the MGTO, also present at the press conference.

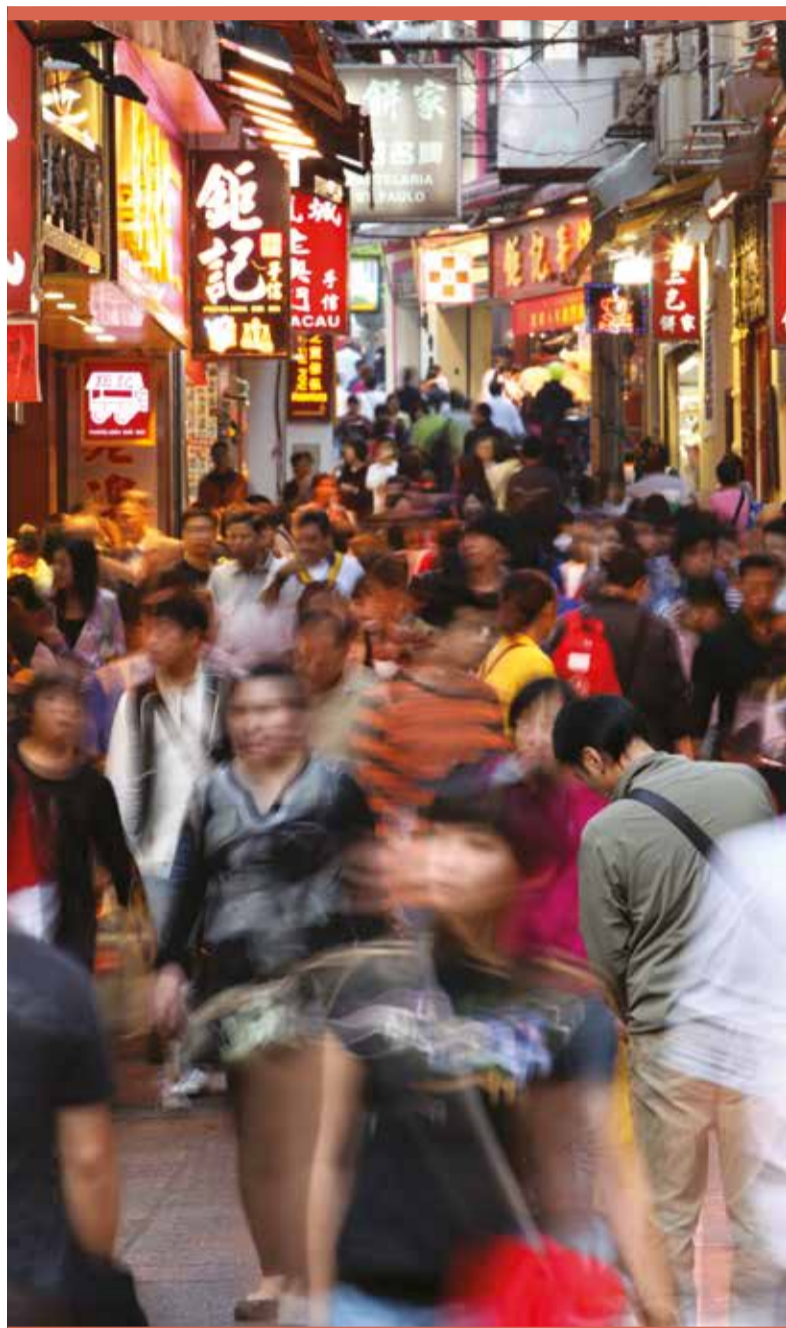
Macau was recently rated second last in an evaluation conducted by a British insurance company to measure the friendliness of different cities for backpacking tourism. The rating based its evaluation on the cost per day in the evaluated city. Macau is rated as less expensive than only Tokyo.

"One of our major plans this year is to commence smart itinerary planning," revealed Fernandes. "I believe this [will be] a helpful service for backpackers [to plan their trip in Macau]."

"Furthermore, we have received applications for about 1,000 budget accommodation rooms," Fernandes further disclosed. "I am not saying that all backpackers will opt for budget accommodation, but it can provide more options, definitely."

Meanwhile, a core plan for the Office this year is to reopen the Grand Prix Museum, which has been closed for expansion and renovation. The expansion has necessitated the relocation of the Wine Museum, which was adjacent to the Grand Prix Museum. Fernandes said her Office is still looking for a site for the relocation of the Wine Museum.

Responding to the preparation for the cessation of Air Macau's concession in November this year, Fernandes stressed that work is always being done with airlines, both in and out of Macau, to market the city. "The cessation should not be considered a trigger to a sudden addition of marketing efforts," emphasized the director.



Artyzen to develop lifestyle hotel in China's Chongqing

THE company responsible for managing Grand Lapa, Macau and Grand Coloane Resort has signed a hotel management agreement with a Chongqing firm to develop a hotel under the lifestyle hotel brand Artyzen Habitat in Yubei District in Chongqing.

Artyzen Hospitality Group announced in a statement that the agreement had been signed with Yuelai Liangjiang International Hotel and Convention Management Co., Limited.

With the inclusion of this new project, the Artyzen Hospitality Group has eight hotels in the pipeline and six hotels operating in Beijing, Shanghai, Macau and Hawaii.

Artyzen Habitat is a new

lifestyle sanctuary that caters to the high-end market. The project encourages guests to 'live like a local,' whether in or out of its hotel, in a bid to obtain a "deeper cultural experience of the destination, feeling the social and cultural vibes of the local community."

The hotel is located in the Liangjiang New Area of Yubei District, close to Yuelai International Convention Centre.

Robbert van der Maas, president of Artyzen Hospitality Group, says, "We realize that the needs of modern travelers are forever evolving. They are looking for local art, cultural inspirations and enriched travel experiences."

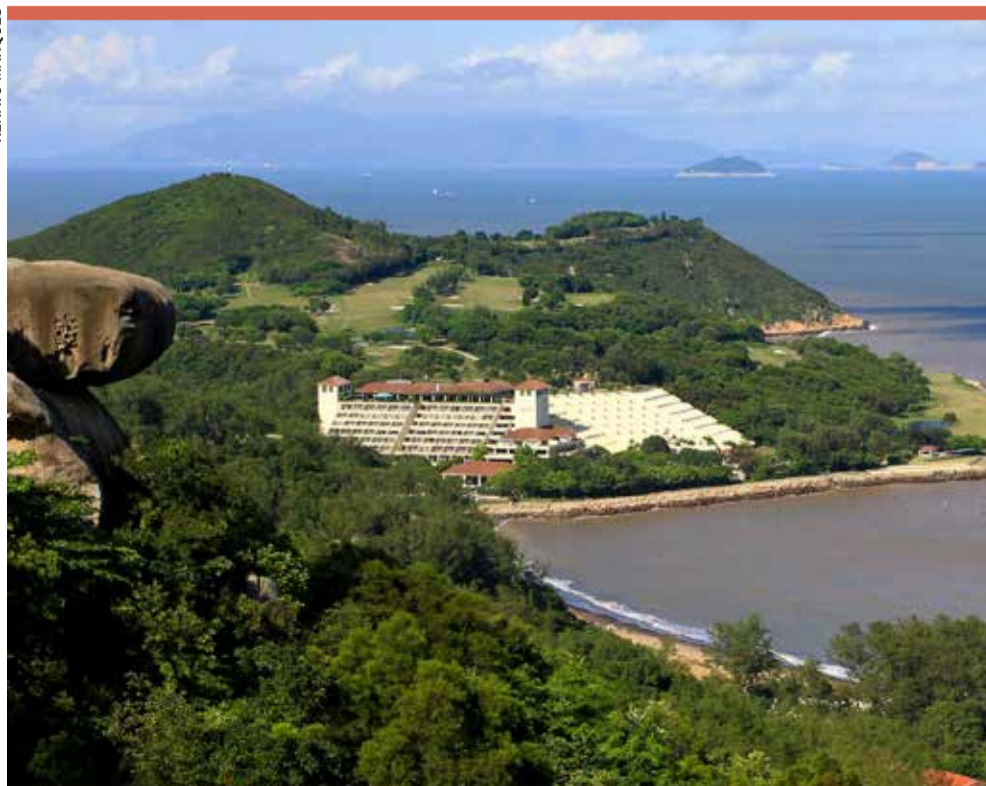
"Chongqing is develop-

ing rapidly and is a strategic and logical addition to our growing portfolio. We are thrilled to announce the development of Artyzen Habitat Yuelai Chongqing, as it is truly one of our milestones," he added.

Artyzen has recently announced its expansion plan, which will extend their footprint across Australasia with projects under discussion in Australia, Thailand, Vietnam, Japan and South Korea, as well as further afield in the Maldives and Portugal.

In addition, the Greater Bay Area remains a key focus of the group, with Zhuhai, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Dongguan and Hong Kong being strategically targeted. LV

RENATO MARQUES



AD



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School of Hospitality Management / School of Tourism Management

Assistant Professor in Computer and Management Information System (1 vacancy) – Ref. No. 001/AC/2020

should be able to teach and develop specific subjects such as Management Information System, Computer Applications and Smart Technologies for Tourism.

Assistant Professor in Culinary (2 vacancies) – Ref. No. 002/AC/2020

should be able to teach/develop theory and practical classes such as Food Preparation courses, Food Safety, Menu and Recipe Development, Kitchen Management, and Kitchen and Restaurant Design among others.

Candidates are expected to engage in research and industry collaborations, and teach/develop the subject areas above. For a full list of subjects in the current curriculum and details of the academic unit, please visit www.ift.edu.mo.

Requirements:

Must have:

- (1) at least a Master's degree in the relevant area and
- (2) at least 4 years of full-time teaching experience as Lecturer

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The selection panel consists of the relevant head of academic department, coordinators and faculty members. Outside members may also be invited. Selection will be based on (1) documentary evaluation, (2) mock teaching and interview.

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- Copies of graduate certificates of all academic degrees awarded and transcripts for the academic qualifications required as above
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- Identity card or passport copy
- Full resume
- Cover letter
- List of academic journals or articles published (if available) with ISBN

Applications will not be considered if the required qualifications and teaching experiences are not supported by certificates, employment testimonials and/or documents listed above or no identity card or passport copies are provided at the time of submission of application.

Application closes on 4 February 2020

- The selected candidates are expected to assume duty in August 2020.
- Final result name list will be announced on IFTM website around second-quarter of 2020 or earlier.
- Please note that ALL application materials must be received by the closing date (Macao time). Application received by IFTM after the closing date will only be included in the next round of recruitment, if applicable.
- Personal data provided by applicants will be kept confidential and used for recruitment purpose only.

For application details, please visit <http://www.ift.edu.mo/visitors/job-vacancies>.

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ANALYSTS: JANUARY GGR MIGHT BE BETTER THAN EXPECTED

MACAU gross gaming revenue since the opening of the year seems to be holding much steadier than what analysts had earlier predicted. Total GRR for the first twelve days of this month was approximately MOP10.3 billion.

In a memo – seen by GGRAsia – issued by JP Morgan Securities (Asia Pacific), the brokerage firm suggested that the VIP and mass market segments had both showed signs of a solid recovery from recent months.

Gaming revenues typically decline before the Chinese New Year period.

However, due to a strong start to January, analysts hinted that Macau's GGR this month may end positive in year-on-year terms.

“That said, given strong month-to-date trends and seemingly solid Chinese New Year hotel bookings, we wouldn't be surprised to see January printing flat or even marginally positive growth in GGR,” said JP Morgan analysts DS Kim, Derek Choi and Jeremy An.

The city's gaming revenue in the first half of December saw its worst year-on-year decline since March 2016.

January is faring much better, with mass market GGR trending some 10% higher year-on-year, while the VIP segment was “dropping only low/mid-teens” during January 1 to 12.

“While year-on-year comparison is difficult due to a calendar shift in Chinese New Year holidays, this

is undoubtedly a robust number for a non-holiday period and better than what we and the market expected,” said the analysts.

The analysts also suggested that the improved performance might be due to the “pent-up demand,” as temporary visa and travel restrictions were lifted following the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Meanwhile, JP Morgan still keeps its GGR predictions at -2% year-on-year, as a sharp pre-holiday slow-down may occur in the next two weeks.

Brokerage Sanford C. Bernstein, which recorded a month-to-date average daily rate of MOP885 million in January, said that they estimate -1% to +2% year-on-year for both January and February. LV

MGM TEAMS UP WITH SPORTS LEAGUE ON BETTING DEAL

THE National Lacrosse League is the latest U.S. sports association to embrace gambling.

The league is teaming up with Roar Digital, a joint venture between MGM Resorts International and GVC Holdings Plc, to let users bet on games – a deal the companies described as a first for the sport of lacrosse in the U.S.

Since the U.S. Supreme Court legalized sports gam-

bling nationwide in 2018, leagues have been partnering with casino and betting companies to get a piece of a fast-growing market. Fourteen states have begun allowing bets, and six others are preparing to do so.

Roar Digital's platform, called BetMGM, lets customers place bets before and during games with more than 100 leagues using phones or computers.

The burgeoning interest

in lacrosse should bring an eager customer base to the partnership, NLL Commissioner Nick Sakiewicz said in a statement.

“The growth of our league as a sports and entertainment property and the amount of engagement we will be able to generate through this innovative partnership with MGM Resorts and Roar Digital will be very exciting,” he said.

MDT/BLOOMBERG

Gov't science fund to offer millions for R&D

AS much as MOPI million will be given to the winners of three awards by the Science and Technology Development Fund, alongside other incentive programs encouraging research and development.

The awards are officially known as the Science and Technology Award. About a dozen are given out to winners each year.

There are three categories of awards, namely the Natural Science Award, Technological Invention Award and Science and Technology Progress Award. Three tiers of prizes are awarded in each category.

On the sidelines of a public briefing yesterday, Ma Chi Ngai, president of the Executive Council of the Fund, was asked to comment on the quality of last year's projects. Ma was unable to comment, as the evaluation process is still underway. "It is too early to say whether more or fewer awards will be given," said Ma.

This year's jury has seen some adjustments. Ma revealed that the chief juror for the Science and Technology Award is now Yang Wei, ex-president of the National Natural Science Foundation of China. In addition, many national-level researchers are on the jury this year.

ANTHONY LAM



Ma Chi Ngai, president of the Executive Council of the Science and Technology Development Fund

Ma believes the fund will be able to benefit from the participation of these researchers, specifically in the evaluation of

recipients of the awards, grants and sponsorships. In the course of the evaluation, the quality of science and technology research

and projects in Macau can be ascertained and thus compared with that of the mainland, the president suggested.

Referencing the growing number of projects submitted for evaluation, the president believes that the number of projects passing the threshold will not be small. He also expressed his hope that he would see an improvement in the quality of Macau projects.

This year, the fund will also issue subsidies for the building of a laboratory and research and development (R&D) center, as well as fostering young researchers and post-doctorate researchers.

Ma hopes to attract post-doctorate researchers from the world's top 200 institutions to work in Macau. Extra requirements were added to research papers submitted by applicants.

Other requirements are related to the human resources of the laboratory. For example, the fund aims to encourage local laboratories and centers to build collaboration with world-class award winners, such as Nobel Laureates or Fields Medal winners.

Such collaborations would include the use of their names at the laboratories or centers for an undisclosed but extended period of time, and on-site instruction by the world-class award winners for no fewer than 30 days per year. **AL**

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TAXI DRIVERS WANT GOV'T TO PAY FOR RECORDING SYSTEMS

THE city's taxi drivers are maintaining their position demanding the local government pay for the recording and tracking devices required to be installed inside their vehicles.

Last year, in December, the local government outsourced the installation and maintenance of the taxi management systems contract to New Leader Tecnologia Informatica (Macau), Lda.

The local government will pay the company 150 patacas per car every month, which covers GPS, voice and video recording devices. Taxi drivers are required to pay 300 patacas per month to maintain these devices.

Yesterday, during a TDM radio program, Tony Kuok Leong Son, president of the Macau Taxi Drivers Mutual Help Association, said that the Transport Bureau (DSAT) promised to meet with taxi drivers to discuss installations and fees. Kuok stated that maintenance fees should not be paid by the taxi drivers, but instead be fully covered by the SAR government.

There are nearly 1,900 taxis in Macau. Together with the 150 pa-



tacas to be paid by the local government, the taxi sector and the local government will pay over 10 million patacas per year for the devices.

Kuok accused the local government of delaying the approval of taxi drivers' request for a taxi fare increase, having also claimed that taxi drivers have not seen their salaries increased in three years.

In addition, taxi drivers are also calling for an extra service fee on the first three days of the Lunar New Year.

The new law proposes canceling a driver's license if the driver records four violations within five years. According to Kuok, as of today, two taxi drivers have seen their license canceled and another two have already recorded three violations.

Kuok suggested that the local government offer further guidance to taxi drivers on the details of the new law. He also indicated his expectations that taxi drivers will be able to operate in accordance with the law. JZ

TWO RESIDENTS COMMIT SUICIDE IN LESS THAN 24 HOURS

RENATO MARQUES

THE Judiciary Police (PJ) has reported two cases of suspected suicide involving local residents in less than 24 hours.

The first case occurred on the evening of January 13 around 11 p.m., when a 55-year-old man was found lying on the ground outside the building where he resided.

It was the family of the deceased who alerted the authorities with a call to the emergency hotline at 11:08 p.m.

After arriving on the scene, the responding firemen found the man to be severely wounded and alerted the PJ. After being taken to the hospital, the man eventually died.

A preliminary investigation by the PJ found that the deceased fell from the rooftop of his residence. Injuries found on his body were consistent with falling from such a height. No suicide note was found at the scene. According to his family's testimony, the man had a history of suicide attempts, but the

PJ is still investigating the case and are not yet ruling out other possibilities.

The second case, reported by the same police force, occurred at around 2:30 p.m. on January 14, when the PJ received advice from the Public Security Police Force that a woman had been found in the podium of a building located at Fai Chi Kei neighborhood in Macau.

The woman, identified as a 22-year-old local resident, was suspected to have fallen from a height and was certified dead after being taken to the hospital.

Upon investigation, the PJ learned that a resident from the same building heard a loud noise around 2 p.m. and, upon looking out of his window, spotted a person lying on the floor of the building podium.

He informed the PJ that he was the one who called the police for help. He also told the PJ that he knew the person, as she was a resident from his building.

The PJ is still investigating the cause of this incident.

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Abuse of ambulance services more common in 2019

DURING 2019, the Fire Services Bureau (CB) ambulance service responded to more calls for ambulances due to an increase in reports of fever, stomach ache, and dizziness, among other symptoms.

In 2019, 41,958 calls for ambulances were answered, representing an annual increase of 5.2% compared to 39,883 calls in 2018.

From 2015 to 2019, the number of calls for ambulances have grown continuously. In addition to marking the fifth consecutive year of growth, 2019 also recorded the sharpest increase over the last five years.

According to the CB commissioner, Leong Lok Sam, between January and June of last year, more people called for ambulance services for fever, dizziness, and stomach ache.

Leong urged the public not to misuse the CB's ambulance services. According to the CB commissioner, the bureau maintains its own statistics of ambulance misuse. However, he did not reveal the numbers, having claimed that it is difficult for ambulance officers to determine whether a case is a misuse of the ambulance service or not, as a medical professional's judgment is needed to make that determination.



ded to make that determination.

Nonetheless, he revealed that the misuse of ambulance services has remained steady in recent years.

Besides firefighting and the dispatch of ambulances, the CB also offers special services, including unlocking doors and rescuing entrapped victims.

In 2019, the CB handled 239 cases of people trapped in lifts and provided assistance in order to open doors in 408 cases. These two numbers in total represent 46.5% of the total number of special services the CB provided in 2019.

On Tuesday, an explosion occurred at a petrochemical plant in Zhuhai. Leong said that the CB remains in communication with the Zhuhai government regarding the explosion.

The commissioner of the CB told local media that, after being made aware of Tuesday's explosion, the CB immediately contacted the relevant Zhuhai departments in order to be informed of the situation. According to the commissioner, as of noon yesterday, the Zhuhai government was still working to clean up in the aftermath of explosion.

The situation at the petrochemical plant is currently under control and has not resulted in any injuries. The CB will review the speed of communication between fire service authorities in Macau and Zhuhai.

In addition, updates were provided on Macau's handling of the Wuhan pneumonia outbreak. Currently, across various borders, and at the airport, CB will make a record of people with recent Wuhan travel history and who develop fever as potential cases. As of yesterday, four people, who were suspected of having Wuhan flu, were transferred from the CB.

MACAU AND MAINLAND UPDATE AGREEMENT ON JUDICIAL COOPERATION

THE government of the Macau Special Administrative Region (SAR) and the Supreme People's Court of the People's Republic of China have signed an amendment to an agreement that allows for the sharing of judicial documents and evidence in civil and commercial court cases.

Among the most significant changes is the option for the electronic transmission of documents on judicial cooperation, via the establishment of a network platform for judicial cooperation between the mainland and the Macau SAR.

The amendment also grants the authorization to Intermediate People's Courts and basic-level courts on the mainland – particularly those basic courts within the mainland cities constituting the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area (GBA) – to apply directly to Macau's Court of Final Appeal for the service of judicial documents, as well as the option for inclusion of video or audio recordings as testimony.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, held on January 14 at the government's headquarters, the Secretary for Administration and Justice, André Cheong said, "the amended agreement is a significant step towards the realization of the aspirations laid out by President Xi Jinping – during his December visit to Macau – [namely on] enhancing the effectiveness of legal cooperation in civil and commercial matters within the GBA."

Representing mainland judicial authorities, Yang Wanming, vice-president of the Supreme People's Court, said that the amended agreement was an important measure to deepen judicial cooperation using information technology, and would minimize costs stemming from judicial cooperation, thereby safeguarding and guaranteeing the legitimate rights and interests of the parties involved.

This new version of the agreement originally signed in 2001 will become effective from March 1. **RM**

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total: 9 horas/hours
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data/dates:
07, 14, 21/02/2020

início/starts: 07/02/2020
fim/finishes: 21/02/2020

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SINGAPORE COMPANIES ABANDON HOME TO LIST IN HONG KONG

ZHEN HAO TOH

HONG Kong remains the top listing venue for Singapore companies.

CTR Holdings Ltd., a provider of engineering services, is the latest example. It's the second Singaporean company that's picked Hong Kong over its home ground this year, even with the ongoing anti-government protests in the financial hub. In 2019, 10 Singaporean firms debuted in Hong Kong, raising \$155 million, a 25% increase from 2018, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

Hong Kong and Singapore have been vying to be the number one financial hub in Asia. After losing e-com-



real estate investment trusts. Out of the \$2.2 billion raised in that city last year, 98% came from REITs, data compiled by Bloomberg show. By contrast, Hong Kong saw its first REIT IPO in six years with China Merchants Commercial Real Estate Investment Trust's debut in December.

The amount raised by non-REIT companies in Singapore is a fraction of what they are raising in Hong Kong. In Singapore, six of them raised a total of \$31.9 million last year, 21% of what was raised by Singaporean companies in Hong Kong, the data show.

The Singapore exchange announced earlier this month that it will be removing quarterly reporting for companies, except for those associated with higher risk. The bourse mentioned that this is to be in line with other global markets including Hong Kong, Australia, the U.K. and other European countries.

"It helps save a lot of work as well as unnecessary share price movements for the companies," said Jarick Seet, an analyst at RHB Bank Bhd. in Singapore. "I don't think this will cause a major factor in the decision-making process but it's a slight positive. The overall decision will still depend on the sector and valuation of the market for that company." **BLOOMBERG**

UPCOMING LISTINGS

Company	Exchange	Size
Shanghai Gench Education Group	Hong Kong exchange	\$78m
Central Retail	Thailand stock exchange	Up to \$2.65b
Huijing Holdings	Hong Kong exchange	\$195m
I-Mab Biopharma	Nasdaq exchange	Up to \$111m
Phoenix Tree Holdings	New York Stock Exchange	Up to \$175m
Lizhi	Nasdaq exchange	Up to \$53m
Mr D.I.Y Group	Bursa Malaysia	Up to \$500m
Shenzhen Leoking Environmental Group	Hong Kong exchange	TBD

merce giant Alibaba Group Holding Ltd. to the New York Stock Exchange in 2014, Hong Kong's bourse introduced a number of listing reforms, including one allowing companies with a dual-class share structure to list there. That's enabled smartphone maker Xiaomi Corp. and food-delivery giant Meituan Dianping to complete mul-

tibillion dollar initial public offerings in Hong Kong.

The Singapore Exchange followed shortly after, revising its listing rules to allow companies to offer shares with different voting rights. But so far, no firm listing on the bourse has adopted the structure.

Singapore remains the preferred listing venue for

TRADE, INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY INITIATIVE ISSUED IN GUANGZHOU

THE Nansha Initiative on Trade and Intellectual Property was signed yesterday in Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong Province, as the two-day Forum on Global Trade, Technology Innovation and Intellectual Property concluded.

The initiative covers six aspects including raising awareness, strengthening protection, integrating coordination and upgra-

ding service in regards with intellectual property, according to Xinhua.

The theme of this year's forum was "platform economy and IPR," which discussed the meaning of higher-level and wider-range intellectual property rights (IPR) against the background of booming trade globalization and the platform economy.

Digital platforms offer more

opportunities for trade and economic growth, but at the same time pose new challenges to the administration and law enforcement of global IPR, WTO Deputy Director-General Yi Xiaozhun said at the opening ceremony.

Chong Quan, chairman of the China Society for WTO Studies, said China has built an IP legal system that is in accordance with

the international rules and China's national conditions.

Chong said China has established IP courts in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, as well as IP tribunals in 19 cities.

The healthy development of the digital platform economy can't be separated from high-level innovation in internet technology and the IP system's strict protection of platform technology, said

Han Xiucheng with the National Intellectual Property Administration.

The initiative was co-signed by departments of the market administration, customs and free trade zone offices in Guangdong to facilitate trade and create a better business and innovation environment in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area. **XINHUA**

AD



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

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

WAYNE PARRY

ATLANTIC City's casinos won almost \$3.3 billion from gamblers in 2019, helped by surging sports and internet bets as the seaside resort continued to rebound from a mid-decade meltdown that saw five casinos close.

Figures released Tuesday by the New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement show the nine casinos collectively won \$3.29 billion in 2019, an increase of over 15% from 2018.

When an additional \$300 million in sports betting revenue is added to the equation, the casinos and two racetracks that offer sports betting won \$3.46 billion last year, a figure that does not include money from horse racing bets.

It marked the first year since 2012 that Atlantic City's casinos had won more than \$3 billion from gamblers.

That was right before a brutal stretch from 2014 to 2016 that saw five of the then-12 casinos shut down, and more than 11,000 jobs lost.

The reopening in 2018 of the former Trump Taj Mahal as Hard Rock and the former Revel as the Ocean Casino Resort has brought added revenue and jobs to the market.

But those same two new casinos also are diluting the profitability of the seven casinos that were in business before they reopened. For the first three quarters of 2019, the nine casinos reported a cumulative gross operating profit of \$484 million, down 4.5% from the same period in 2018.

"The revenue increase is a positive," said David Schwartz, a gambling historian with the University of Nevada Las Vegas. "Right now the industry should be in 'grow-the-market' mode rather than seeking to consolidate profits, so a decrease in profits isn't necessarily the worst news we could get. Overall, what Atlantic City needs right now is to improve its image and market-

AP PHOTO



Rebounding Atlantic City casinos see \$3.3 billion revenue in 2019

ting and become a destination in a crowded Northeast casino market."

Rummy Pandit, a gambling analyst with Stockton University, said Atlantic City has successfully diversified its gambling offerings, particularly through sports betting and internet gambling. Those two products, developed since November 2013, now account for more than 18% of Atlantic City's winnings, he said.

The news was not all positive. Five of the nine casinos won less money in 2019 than they did in 2018. Tropicana was down 8.2% to \$349.5 million; Harrah's was down 6.1% to \$312.6 million; Bally's was down 5.4% to \$181.5

million; Caesars was down 3.7% to \$270.9 million; and Resorts was down 3.2% to \$178.4 million.

"What Atlantic City needs right now is to improve its image and marketing and become a destination in a crowded Northeast casino market"

DAVID SCHWARTZ
GAMBLING HISTORIAN

The Golden Nugget was up 15.4% to \$378.4 million. It finished the year as the No. 2 casino in Atlantic City in terms of revenue. The perennial leader, Borgata, was up 3.5% to \$797.8 million.

There was no year-to-year comparison for the newest casinos, which had not been open for a full year in 2018. For 2019, Hard Rock won \$350 million, and Ocean won \$238 million.

New Jersey had a banner year at sports betting, with nearly \$4.6 billion wagered on pro and college games.

The state won a landmark U.S. Supreme Court case in 2018, clearing the way for all 50 states to offer legal sports betting should

they so choose. Since the first bets were taken in New Jersey in June 2018, more than \$5.8 billion has been wagered on sports, putting the state right behind Nevada in the race to lead the bur-

geoning market.

The Meadowlands Racetrack in East Rutherford, just outside New York City, was the runaway leader in sports betting revenue with just under \$150 million. It is partnered with the FanDuel sportsbook. The other racetrack to offer sports betting, Monmouth Park in Oceanport, won nearly \$26 million in sports bets. Resorts Digital, which is affiliated with the DraftKings online sports book, won nearly \$80 million on sports.

Internet gambling also continued to be a bright spot in 2019, with \$482 million won online from gamblers, an increase of more than 61% over 2018. In the month of December, nearly \$558 million was wagered on sports in New Jersey, the second-best month ever, trailing only November's total of nearly \$563 million. AP

CORPORATE BITS

Prada unveils pop-up store at Shoppes at Four Seasons



Milanese luxury brand Prada is back in Macau to unveil a new pop-up store inside Shoppes at Four Seasons for the upcoming Chinese New Year. The store, which opened to the public last week, will be at Four Seasons until March 8.

Covering a total area of

just 80 square meters, the project's exterior features a glass coffer where the Prada logo, decorated in gold, envelops the entire transparent external surface.

The interior, paved with the iconic black and white check motif, is embellished with 50s Italian design sea-

ts and jewel tables, where a special selection of the Prada women's and men's collections, including ready-to-wear leather goods, footwear and accessories, is offered.

A representative of Prada told the Times that several exclusive items are on offer at the pop-up store.

In addition to several classic pieces with the iconic and authentic look of the 1990s Prada, the Italian luxury brand also offers trendy AirPods or earphones cases made from ostrich skin coming in green, blue and yellow. There is a limited number of the exclusive items.

Sands China volunteer team visit elderly in annual event



A group of around 120 Sands Cares Ambassadors visited the homes of about 100 elderly living at Seac Pai Van public housing in Coloane Sunday, in an annual spring-cleaning volunteer service activity ahead of the Chinese

New Year. The ambassadors also offered haircuts to the elderly residents while there for the annual activity.

Sands China began the goodwill act in 2010, and has since donated a total of over MOP2 million, benefiting

nearly 9,300 elderly citizens to date.

Sands China Ltd. President Dr. Wilfred Wong said, "the contributions made by Macau's elderly population should not be forgotten. Sands China is grateful to our Sands Cares Ambassadors for caring for and serving this important segment of our community during this festive time of Chinese New Year."

The Sands Cares Ambassador program was established in August 2009 to give Sands China employees an outlet for serving the local community by organizing community activities and initiatives that work toward creating a better Macau.

YANAN WANG, BEIJING

PNEUMONIA OUTBREAK

THE possibility that a new virus in central China could spread between humans cannot be ruled out, though the risk of transmission at the moment appears to be low, Chinese officials said yesterday.

Forty-one people in the city of Wuhan have received a preliminary diagnosis of a novel coronavirus, a family of viruses that can cause both the common cold and more serious diseases. A 61-year-old man with severe underlying conditions died from the coronavirus on Saturday.

While preliminary investigations indicate that most of the patients had worked at or visited a particular seafood wholesale market, one woman may have contracted the virus from her husband, the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission said in a public notice.

The commission said the husband, who fell ill first, worked at the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market. Meanwhile, the wife said she hasn't had any exposure to the market.

It's possible that the husband brought home food from the market that then infected his wife, Hong Kong health official Chuang Shuk-kwan said at a news briefing.

But because the wife did not exhibit symptoms until days after her husband, it's also possible that he infected her.

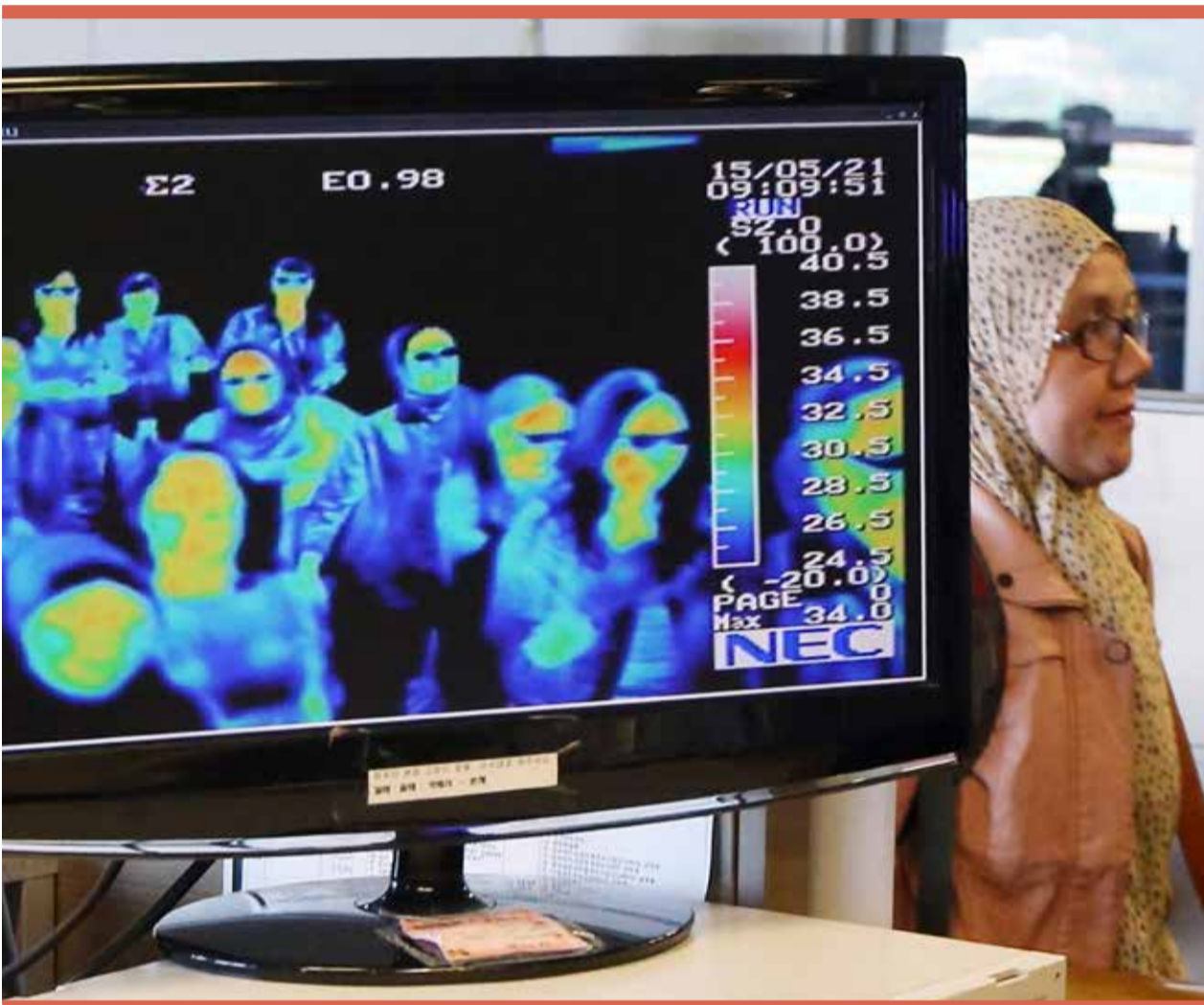
Chuang and other Hong Kong health officials spoke to reporters Wednesday following a trip to Wuhan, where mainland Chinese authorities briefed them on the outbreak.

The threat of human-to-human transmission remains low, Chuang said, as hundreds of people, including medical professionals, have been in close contact with infected individuals and have not been infected themselves.

She echoed Wuhan authorities' assertion that there remains no definitive evidence of human-to-human transmission.

The outbreak in Wuhan has raised the specter of SARS, or severe acute respiratory syndrome. SARS is a type of coronavirus that first struck southern China in late 2002. It then spread to more than two dozen countries, killing nearly 800 people. AP

AP PHOTO



Russia says US Indo-Pacific strategy is to contain China

ASHOK SHARMA,
NEW DELHI

RUSSIA yesterday criticized the United States for introducing a new Indo-Pacific concept it said was aimed at containing China.

Addressing a global conference in the Indian capital to discuss the most challenging issues facing the world community, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that Asia-Pacific cooperation until now was centered on Southeast Asia.

The Indo-Pacific concept being pushed by the United States, Japan and others was to reconfigure the existing structure, he said.

"Why do you need to call Asia-Pacific as Indo-Pacific? The answer is evident — to exclude China. Terminology should be



unifying, not divisive," Lavrov said.

The United States says the Indo-Pacific engagement framework supports sovereignty, transparency, good governance and a rules-based order among other things. By using Indo-Pacific, the U.S. also wants to propagate the idea that it's a region that stretches far beyond China's backyard and the tiger economies of East Asia, and includes the Indian Ocean.

In 2018, the U.S. Pacific

Command became the Indo-Pacific Command.

China's assertive territorial claims in the South China Sea, through which a third of global shipping passes, have drawn rebuke from the United States and become a flashpoint for a region in which Southeast Asian nations Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei all have rival claims.

Yesterday, Lavrov also accused Western countries of not strictly following the United Nations charter for discussions based on sove-

reign equality of states, noninterference in internal matters, territorial integrity and peaceful resolution of disputes.

"Western friends are using international law less and less. Instead, they have coined a new concept which they call as a rules-based world order," he said.

He said that Russia was very much concerned with the situation in the Persian Gulf region and suggested that Gulf countries start thinking about a collective security mechanism as a confidence-building measure.

Lavrov said Iran had proposed a non-aggression pact to other Gulf states. Russia recently held military exercises with China and Iran in the region to see how to ensure safe shipping, he said.

Russia hopes the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council plus the European Union and Organization of Islamic Cooperation would participate in the collective security mechanism. AP

GOV'T SAYS TAIWAN POLICY INTACT DESPITE ELECTION RESULTS

A Chinese official said yesterday that Beijing will not change its policy of annexing Taiwan through its "one country, two systems" framework, despite the heavy turnout in favor of pro-independence candidates in last weekend's presidential and legislative elections.

Ma Xiaoguang, spokesman for the Cabinet's Taiwan Affairs Office, said China would continue to insist on the so-called "'92 Consensus" that acknowledges both the self-governing island and the mainland as part of a single Chinese nation.

"We do not insert ourselves into or critique Taiwan's elections. This round of Taiwan's local elections cannot change the status of Taiwan as a part of China," Ma said.

Ma did not overtly repeat communist-ruled

China's threat to bring Taiwan under its control by force, but said Taiwan's government needs to "think deeply," asserting calls for such moves have been growing among the Chinese public.

Differing political systems are neither "an obstacle to unification nor an excuse" for maintaining the current state of Taiwan's de-facto independence, Ma Xiaoguang said at a bi-weekly news conference yesterday.

Taiwan's independence-leaning President Tsai Ing-wen won re-election by a landslide on Saturday, while her Democratic Progressive Party maintained its majority in the legislature. The result has been seen as a strong rebuke of China's policies toward Taiwan, a former Japanese colony which split from the mainland amid civil war in 1949. AP



Official blasts human rights report, praises current situation

CHINA has blasted a report from Human Rights Watch that accused it of constructing a surveillance state at home while seeking to silence critics abroad. Foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang yesterday said he had not read the report but that such documents routinely “turned a blind eye on facts and confused right and wrong with no objectivity at all.”

Geng said the Chinese people

had the final say on the state of human rights in the country, which he described as “in the best period of history.”

Under strongman leader Xi Jinping, China’s ruling Communist Party has stepped up campaigns to crush political critics and extend its control over academia, religion and civil society. In recent years, Beijing has also been accused of seeking complete control over students and other Chinese living abroad, as well as

influencing media and politicians in countries such as Australia and the U.S.

On Tuesday, the head of Human Rights Watch, Kenneth Roth, accused China of carrying out “the most intense attack on the global system for enforcing human rights since that system began to emerge in the mid-20th century.”

Roth held a news conference at the United Nations Correspondents Association in New York after being denied entry to Hong

Kong, the semi-autonomous Chinese city where he had been scheduled to release the rights group’s annual report. China has designated Human Rights Watch as one of the organizations it accuses of fomenting months of anti-government protests in Hong Kong.

To avoid a global backlash against surveillance, internet censorship and oppression at home, Beijing is trying to undermine international institutions designed to protect human rights, Roth said.

While other governments commit serious human rights violations, “no other government flexes its political muscles with such vigor and determination to undermine the international human rights standards and institutions that could hold it to account,” he said.

China is accused of locking up more than 1 million Uighurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities in its northwestern Xinjiang region in camps where they are subjected to political indoctrination and pressured to give up their religion. China denies any abuses and calls the camps centers for job training and de-radicalization.

Roth also referred to what he called severe challenges to Hong Kong’s limited freedoms in the “one country, two systems” framework under which it returned to Chinese rule in 1997. Clashes between police and anti-government demonstrators that began in June have been fueled largely by concerns that Beijing is eroding civil liberties guaranteed to the former British colony under the terms of its handover.

A Hong Kong government spokesman said in response that “one country, two systems” has been “fully and successfully implemented,” and that the local government is committed to safeguarding human rights and freedoms. The spokesman, who was not identified by name, said the government remains committed to allowing universal suffrage in elections for the territory’s chief executive and legislature. Beijing has retained the right to vet candidates in the elections.

Violence was solely the result of police “carrying out enforcement actions in strict accordance with the law,” the spokesman said.

He said foreign organizations “should not interfere in any form” in Hong Kong’s internal affairs. **AP**

Beijing’s ties with key European ally nosedive over Taiwan

PETER LACA

CHINA’S relationship with a country that was supposed to be a key proponent of its interests in Europe is growing increasingly caustic.

The Czech Republic, an ex-communist member of the European Union, once hoped to become a gateway for investment to the continent. But spats over Chinese territorial claims, Huawei Technologies Co. and espionage have strained ties to the breaking point.

Czech President Milos Zeman, so far the staunchest backer of closer rela-

tions, has even canceled a planned visit.

The latest tension came as the local government in Prague signed a partnership treaty this week with the Taiwanese capital, Taipei. Prague had already ended a sister-city agreement with Beijing after rejecting demands to sever ties with Taiwan and Tibet.

The Taiwan pact angered China, with Shanghai announcing Tuesday it was suspending official contacts with Prague. It accused the Czech capital of interfering in Chinese internal affairs and acting inappropriately on issues “that bear

on the core interests” of the Asian nation.

“We urge the administration of Prague to realize its mistakes as soon as possible, remove the negative impact through concrete actions, and adhere to the One China principle,” Shanghai’s municipal government said in a statement.

Although the Communist Party claims Taiwan as part of the People’s Republic of China, Beijing has never extended its control across the Taiwan Strait. China has stepped up efforts to diplomatically isolate Taiwanese President Tsai

Ing-wen, who reaffirmed her stance that the island is already an independent country after winning re-election to a second term Saturday.

China requires countries to accept that both sides are part of “one China” as a precondition for diplomatic ties. Chinese regulators and nationalism-charged social media campaigns have forced global airlines, hotel chains, clothing manufacturers and others to alter products and services to ensure that places like Hong Kong, Taiwan or Tibet aren’t treated as countries.

Prague has long been a

bastion of support for Tibet, with politicians repeatedly hosting the exiled Dalai Lama - who Beijing considers a separatist leader. Upon taking office in 2018, the new liberal administration restored late President Vaclav Havel’s practice of flying the Tibetan flag from city hall.

The national government had taken a different tone. Police suppressed peaceful protests and forced people to remove Tibetan flags from their homes when Chinese President Xi Jinping visited in 2016.

But there have been signs of strain. The Czech

Republic’s top intelligence agency last year in November that China had increased its efforts to recruit agents and destabilize state institutions as it and Russia continued to threaten the nation’s security.

On Sunday, Zeman canceled an April visit to the 17+1 summit between China and countries from central and eastern Europe, saying the Asian nation had failed to deliver on pledges of billions of dollars in investments. “I don’t think the Chinese side has fulfilled what it promised,” Zeman said in an interview streamed online. **BLOOMBERG**



AP PHOTO

DESPITE RISKS, VILLAGERS MADE PHILIPPINE VOLCANO THEIR HOME

AARON FAVILA
& JIM GOMEZ, TALISAY

IT'S the second-most active volcano in the Philippines, a designated permanent danger zone long declared off-limits to human settlements. Yet to more than 5,000 people the Taal volcano is home.

A lush island dotted with dozens of craters in the middle of a shimmering lake, the volcano roared into action Sunday with a mighty eruption that shot rocks, ash and steam miles into the sky just hours after the inhabitants of its four villages fled on a flotilla

of boats. A man who defied official warnings about the ongoing eruption to sneak back to the island to check on his pigs, says there is complete devastation.

"Almost everything was destroyed," Christian Morales told The Associated Press, adding that he was only able to get his bearings after seeing the cross of a mud-encrusted Catholic church where he used to hear Mass. "If anybody defied orders and stayed behind, he would have been killed without a doubt."

So far no one has been reported killed in the eruption, but the disaster is spotlighting the longstan-

ding dilemma of how the government can move settlements away from danger zones threatened by volcanoes, landslides, floods and typhoons in one of the world's most disaster-prone countries.

Sometimes, as is the case with Taal, the settlements are in violation of laws that have not been enforced.

"It's an accident waiting to happen," Renato Solidum, head of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, said of the villages on the island.

He said his agency has repeatedly warned against living on the island, which it has declared

a permanent danger zones where people are forbidden from setting up homes. The area was also in the 1960s declared a government-protected area and later a national park, meaning it should be off-limits to permanent settlers.

That has never been enforced, however, and Taal's destructive explosions have proven deadly in the past, including a 1965 eruption that killed more than 200 people and ravaged the island's villages.

Nevertheless, poverty, a lack of land and desperation have driven people over the years to the island despite the danger, said Gerry

Natanauan, the mayor of Talisay town who has jurisdiction over two of the four island villages.

"It may be difficult to declare the island a no man's land because like in the past, when that was attempted, it was hard to stop people because when they go hungry, they will always find a way," Natanauan told the AP.

Another driving factor keeping people on Taal is tourism.

The picturesque island and surrounding region, which sit in Batangas province only 65 kilometers south of Manila and are known for their idyllic views, pine trees and cooler climate, have become a major draw for those seeking a quick escape from the pollution-choked capital.

Areas overlooking the 62,000-hectare lake and volcano island, which has its own crater lake, have turned into boom towns of hotels, restaurants and spas. Visitors can go on tours by boat and horse-back, hike trails with sweeping views and hire guides to take them bird watching.

"It's quiet and clean and there is no trouble and traffic," Natanauan said. "When you're able to climb to the peak, it's really like paradise when you see the entire island with its swarms of birds."

Many of those living on Taal have found work in the industry, and Natanauan estimated tourism brings 16 million pesos (\$314,000) in revenue each year to those on island.

What happens next is unclear.

Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana has recommended that the thousands of residents should not be allowed to return to the island for good.

"I strongly believe [...] that Taal island will be declared a no man's land," Lorenzana said Tuesday during the televised emergency meeting. "We should not allow people to return there because if there are more violent explosions, people will perish on that island." AP

Thai army chief signs intelligence pact with Indonesia

BUSABA SIVASOMBOON,
BANGKOK

AN intelligence-sharing agreement signed by the army chiefs of Thailand and Indonesia is unlikely to significantly help Thailand end a Muslim separatist insurgency in its deep south, analysts said yesterday.

More than 7,000 people have died since the insurgency flared up in 2004.

The pact signed Tuesday in Indonesia's Aceh province extended a cooperation agreement launched in 2008. Thai army chief Gen.

Apirat Kongsompong said it increases cooperation in tracking fugitives across borders and provides for the exchange of visits and training.

Apirat said he sought during his visit to understand how Indonesia reached a settlement with Muslim insurgents in Aceh province in 2005. He said he met with the former leaders of the Free Aceh Movement, which fought a bitter war for autonomy for decades.

Indonesia's peace agreement with the insurgents gave Aceh province a sig-

nificant amount of autonomy, an approach that Thai authorities have not seriously considered. The insurgency is active in Thailand's three southernmost provinces, the only ones with Muslim majorities in predominantly Buddhist Thailand. Indonesia and Aceh province are predominantly Muslim.

Indonesian army chief Gen. Andika Perkasa said Apirat also met the Wali Nanggroe — Aceh's symbolic head of state — to exchange views that "would be useful to apply in dealing

with the insurgency in southern Thailand."

The director of a think tank monitoring the conflict said the Thai government is still focusing on military approaches to counter the insurgents and is paying less attention to social issues such as poverty and inequality that fuel the insurgency.

Srisompob Jitpiromsi, director of Deep South Watch, told The Associated Press that in 2017, Thai authorities began focusing suppression efforts on the most active insurgent

group, the Barisan Revolu- si Nasional to pressure it to join ongoing peace talks.

Srisompob said he doubted the extension of the pact with Indonesia would help Thai authorities engage with the BRN, which has closer links with Thailand's southern neighbor, Malaysia.

An independent scholar specializing in the southern insurgency, Rungrawee Chalermripinyorat, said she believes Thailand's deal with Indonesia could signify that military suppression will remain the dominant

mode of conflict management in the deep south.

"Judging from budget allocations, it seems that the government has given little importance to the formal peace dialogue," she said.

The most recent violence in the conflict occurred on Sunday, when a group of armed men attacked a military outpost in Narathiwat province. A Thai village defense volunteer and a suspected insurgent were killed during a shootout and 11 other defense volunteers were wounded. AP

CAMBODIA

Treason trial begins of opposition leader Kem Sokha

SOPHENG CHEANG,
PHNOM PENH

THE trial of a top Cambodian opposition leader charged with treason began yesterday, more than two years after he was arrested in what is widely seen as a politically motivated prosecution.

Kem Sokha was head of the Cambodia National Rescue Party when he was arrested in September 2017 on the basis of an old video showing him at a seminar where he spoke about receiving advice from U.S. pro-democracy groups.

He could be imprisoned for up to 30 years if found guilty. His party was dissolved by Cambodia's Supreme Court in November 2017 on the same basis.

The actions were seen as intended to ensure victory by long-serving Prime Minister Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party in the 2018 general election by eliminating the only credible opposition force. Cambodia's courts are con-



AP PHOTO

sidered to be under government influence.

"I know strongly that I am totally innocent so I have to go to the court and challenge the charge and demand that they drop the case," Kem Sokha told The Associated Press yesterday. "I have never done anything wrong so the court has to drop the charges."

It was unclear whether the public would get a fair account of Kem

Sokha's testimony, as the court had earlier announced there would be no room for journalists in the courtroom.

Chan Chen, one of Kem Sokha's lawyers, told reporters after the morning court session that the case's political nature requires that it be solved by talks among politicians rather than in court.

"My colleagues and I know that Kem Sokha's case is one about poli-

ticians' differing points of view, and needs to be solved through political means," he said, alluding to a past political settlement that ended a civil war with the communist Khmer Rouge.

The morning session was occupied by legal formalities as evidence was introduced for the trial. Chan Chen said that when the video clip was introduced, the defense noted that it was an abbreviated, edited version of their client's remarks, and they would be presenting a complete version.

The human rights group Amnesty International called for the charges against Kem Sokha to be dropped.

"After two years held in arbitrary detention, the authorities have not presented a shred of credible evidence to support a charge of treason," said Nicholas Bequelin, the group's regional director.

"The non-existent crime was politically manufactured to further the suppression of the opposition party. The Phnom Penh Court must

acquit Kem Sokha to bring an end to this mockery of justice," he said.

The trial begins at a politically delicate time for Hun Sen, as Cambodia faces likely trade sanctions from the European Union.

Hun Sen has been in power for 35 years and has vowed to serve two more 5-year terms in office.

His party swept all the seats in the National Assembly in the 2018 polls, but drew condemnation from human rights groups and Western nations, which charged that the election was neither free nor fair.

The EU began a process that could result in its withdrawal of preferential duty-free and quota-free status for imports from Cambodia because of deficiencies in labor and human rights. It is due to announce its decision in February.

The threatened action could badly hurt the Cambodia economy, which depends heavily on exports of low-cost textiles and footwear. The EU accounts for almost half of Cambodia's exports.

Cambodia is one of several developing nations with whom the EU has an "Everything But Arms" — or EBA — program granting preferential access to the European market for products other than weapons.

Hun Sen has publicly said he won't let Cambodia be pushed around and its low-cost export industries can survive without the benefit of the trade privileges. AP

AD

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RUSSIA

PUTIN ANNOUNCES CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM, HIS PM STEPS DOWN

VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV,
MOSCOW

PRESIDENT Vladimir Putin accepted the resignation of his prime minister yesterday after proposing constitutional amendments that could herald his intention to carve out a position that would let him stay at Russia's helm after his presidency ends.

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, who served as a placeholder president in 2008-2012 to allow Putin to observe term limits, said in televised comments that he needed to resign in light of his mentor's proposed changes in government.

Putin thanked Medvedev for his work and appointed him as the deputy head of the presidential Security Council.

In his state of the nation address earlier in the day, Putin suggested amending the constitution to allow lawmakers to name prime ministers and Cabinet members. The authority to make those appointments currently belongs to Russia's president.

"It will increase the role of parliament and parliamentary parties, powers and independence of the prime minister and all Cabinet members," Putin told an audience of top officials and lawmakers.

At the same time, Putin argued that Russia would not remain sta-

ble if it were governed under a parliamentary system. The president should retain the right to dismiss the prime minister and Cabinet ministers, to name top defense and security officials, and to be in charge of the Russian military and law enforcement agencies, he said.

Putin emphasized that constitutional changes must be put to a nationwide vote.

Putin's current term expires in 2024, and Russia's political elites have been abuzz with speculation about his future plans.

The 67-year-old Putin has remained at the helm for more than 20 years — longer than any other Russian or Soviet leader since Josef Stalin. He will have to step down after his term ends under the current law, which limits the president to two consecutive terms.

Political analyst Kirill Rogov said that Putin's proposals indicate his intention to remain in charge while re-distributing powers between various branches of government.

"Such a model resembling the Chinese one would allow Putin to stay at the helm indefinitely while encouraging rivalry between potential successors," Rogov said on Facebook.

Alexei Navalny, the most prominent Russian opposition leader, tweeted that the president's speech signaled Putin's desire to continue calling the shots after his term ends.

"The only goal of Putin and his regime is to stay in charge for life, having the entire country as his personal asset and seizing its riches for himself and his friends," Navalny alleged.

Putin's proposals indicate his intention to remain in charge while re-distributing powers between various branches of government

Putin served two presidential terms in 2000-2008 before shifting into the prime minister's seat for four years to observe the term limit. Medvedev kept his seat warm and then stepped down after just one term to allow his mentor to reclaim the top job in 2012. While in office, Medvedev raised the presidential term from four to six years.

While Putin continued calling the shots during Medvedev's presidency, he wasn't quite happy

with his performance. He was particularly critical of Medvedev's decision to give the green light to the Western air campaign over Libya in 2011 that led to the ouster and the killing of long-time dictator Moammar Gadhafi.

Medvedev's decision to step down after one term to let Putin return to the presidency also sparked massive protests in Moscow in 2011-2012 in a major challenge to the Kremlin.

Observers speculated that Putin may stay in charge after 2024 by shifting into the prime minister's seat after increasing the powers of parliament and the Cabinet and trimming presidential authority.

Political analyst Dmitry Oreshkin said Putin's speech made it clear he was pondering the move to premiership.

"Putin is advancing the idea of keeping his authority as a more powerful and influential prime minister while the presidency will become more decorative," Oreshkin said.

Other potential options include a merger with neighboring Belarus that would create a new position of the head of a new unified state — a prospect rejected by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.

In his address, Putin said the constitution must also specify the authority of the State Council consisting of regional governors and top federal officials.

Some analysts have theorized that Putin may try to continue pulling the strings as head of the council after stepping down as president in 2024.

Putin also emphasized the need to amend the constitution to give it a clear priority over international law.

"The requirements of international law and treaties and decisions of international organs can only be valid on the territory of Russia as long as they don't restrict human rights and freedoms and don't contradict the constitution," he said.

He also said that the constitution must be tweaked to say that top government officials aren't allowed to have foreign citizenship or residence permits.

Putin focused his state of the nation address on the need to encourage population growth by offering additional subsidies to families that have children.

The Russian leader said that Russia would remain open for cooperation with all countries while maintaining a strong defense capability to fend off potential threats.

He added that new weapons systems would protect Russia's security "for decades ahead."

"For the first time in history, we aren't trying to catch up with anyone," Putin said. "On the contrary, other leading nations are yet to develop the weapons that Russia already has." AP

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Iran warns Europe as diplomat says officials 'lied' on crash

NASSER KARMI,
JON GAMBRELL
& EMILY SCHMALL, TEHRAN

IRAN'S president warned yesterday that European soldiers in the Mideast "could be in danger" after three nations challenged Tehran over breaking the limits of its nuclear deal. Tehran's top diplomat meanwhile acknowledged that Iranians "were lied to" for days following the Islamic Republic's accidental shoot down of a Ukrainian jetliner that killed 176 people.

President Hassan Rouhani's remarks in a televised Cabinet meeting represent the first direct threat he's made to Europe as tensions remain high between Tehran and Washington over President Donald Trump withdrawing the U.S. from the deal in May 2018.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif's admission, which came at a summit in New Delhi yesterday, represents the first time an Iranian official referred to earlier claims from Tehran that a technical malfunction

AP PHOTO



tion downed the Ukraine International Airlines flight as a lie. The shoot down — and subsequent days of denials that a missile had downed it — sparked days of angry protests in the country.

The current tensions between Iran and the U.S. reached fever-pitch two weeks ago with the American drone strike in Baghdad that killed the powerful Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani. The general had led Iranian proxy forces abroad, including those

blame for deadly roadside bomb attacks on U.S. troops in Iraq.

Iran retaliated with a ballistic missile strike targeting Iraqi military bases housing U.S. forces early last Wednesday, just before an anti-aircraft battery shot down the Ukrainian airliner taking off from Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport.

Amid all of this, Britain, France and Germany launched the so-called "dispute mechanism" pertaining to Iran's 2015 nuclear deal

with world powers. Speaking before his Cabinet, Rouhani showed a rarely seen level of anger in his wide-ranging remarks.

"Today, the American soldier is in danger, tomorrow the European soldier could be in danger," Rouhani said. "We want you to leave this region but not with war. We want you to go wisely. It is to your own benefit."

Rouhani did not elaborate.

European forces have been deployed alongside Americans in Iraq and Afghanistan. France also maintains a naval base in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, while Britain has opened a base in the island nation of Bahrain.

European Commission spokesman Peter Stano told reporters that officials were aware of the threats, but the European Union had no plans to leave Iraq. Italian Defense Minister Lorenzo Guerini told lawmakers his government has plans to increase Rome's troop levels at the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which 20%

of all oil passes.

German Defense Minister Annetegret Kramp-Karrenbauer made an unannounced visit yesterday to the Azraq base in Jordan, where German troops serving in the fight against the Islamic State group are based. Germany wants to resume training Iraqi forces.

Rouhani separately criticized Europe's "baseless" words regarding the nuclear deal. Iran had been holding out for Europe to offer a means by which Tehran could sell its oil abroad despite U.S. sanctions. However, a hoped-for trading mechanism for other goods hasn't taken hold and a French-pitched line of credit also hasn't materialized.

After Soleimani's killing, Iran announced it would no longer abide by any of the nuclear deal's limits, which had been designed to keep Tehran from having enough material to be able to build an atomic bomb if it chose. However, Iran has said it will continue to allow the United Nations' nuclear watchdog access to its nuclear sites. Rouhani also reiterated a long-time Iranian pledge that Tehran doesn't seek the bomb.

The European nations reluctantly triggered the accord's dispute mechanism on Tuesday to force Iran into discussions, starting the clock on a process that could result in the "snapback" of U.N. and EU sanctions on Iran. 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, located at No. 95, Avenida do Conselheiro Ferreira de Almeida

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8988 4000

EXHIBITION OF WORKS BY TAM CHECK WUN AND LAO CHON HONG, ARTISTS WINNING THE GRAND PRIZE OF THE JURY AWARD OF THE COLLECTIVE EXHIBITION OF MACAU ARTISTS 2017

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

UNTIL: March 1, 2020

VENUE: Exhibitions Gallery and the Nostalgic House of the Taipa Houses

ADMISSION: Free

KONG SENG TICKETING SERVICE: 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

EXHIBITION BY LIO MAN CHEONG

TIME: 3pm-8pm (Mondays)

12pm-8pm (Tuesdays to Sundays)

UNTIL: February 9, 2020

VENUE: A2 Gallery, Albergue SCM, No.8, Calçada da Igreja de São Lázaro

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2852 2550

"TASTE OF CELEBRATION" EXHIBITION

TIME: 10am-10pm

UNTIL: February 9, 2020

VENUE: Macau Tower

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 2893 3339

ROOSTER, TIGER, SHEEP BY SNAKE

TIME: 11am-8pm

UNTIL: February 9, 2020

VENUE: Shop 100 and 107, Emerald Lobby, MGM Cotai

ADMISSION: Free

ENQUIRIES: (853) 8806 8888

Offbeat

GROUP HOPES TO PREVENT 'OPOSSUM DROPPING' ON NEW YEAR'S EVE

A movement is growing in North Carolina to prevent the act of so-called "opossum dropping."

The practice involves suspending an opossum in a transparent box on New Year's Eve and slowly lowering it the ground as people count down to midnight.

The Raleigh News & Observer reported that a western North Carolina town had conducted opossum drops for 24 years.

Brasstown in Clay County dropped its last opossum in 2017. But the organization Animal Help Now wants to prevent anyone from doing it elsewhere. That will require a change to state law that allows people to do anything they want to opossums for five days each year.

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
16:15	As Novas Viagens Filosóficas
16:45	Portugueses Pelo Mundo Sr.1
17:30	LiteraturAqui
18:00	Império (Repetição)
18:55	Semana Internacional (Repetição)
19:30	Ouro Verde Sr.1
20:30	Telejornal
21:15	TDM Talk Show
21:50	Livros com João Guedes
21:55	Viagens Gastronómicas
22:20	Império
23:15	TDM News
23:50	5 Para a Meia Noite
01:40	Telejornal (Repetição)
02:25	RTPi Directo

cinema



CINETEATRO

09 - 15 Jan



BAD BOYS FOR LIFE

ROOM 1

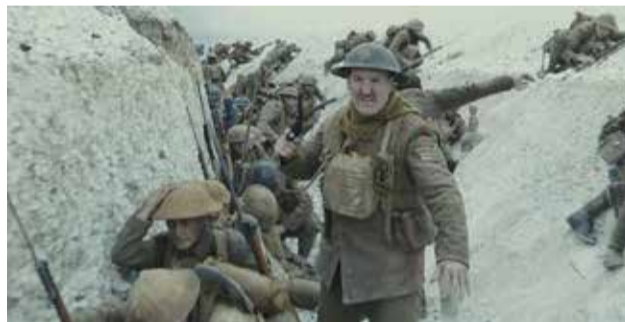
2:30, 4:45, 7:15, 9:30pm

Director: Adil El Arbi, Bilall Fallah

Starring: Will Smith, Alexander Ludwig, Vanessa Hudgens

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 123min



1917

ROOM 2

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

Director: Sam Mendes

Starring: Dean-Charles Chapman, George MacKay, Daniel Mays

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 119min



JUDY

ROOM 3

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

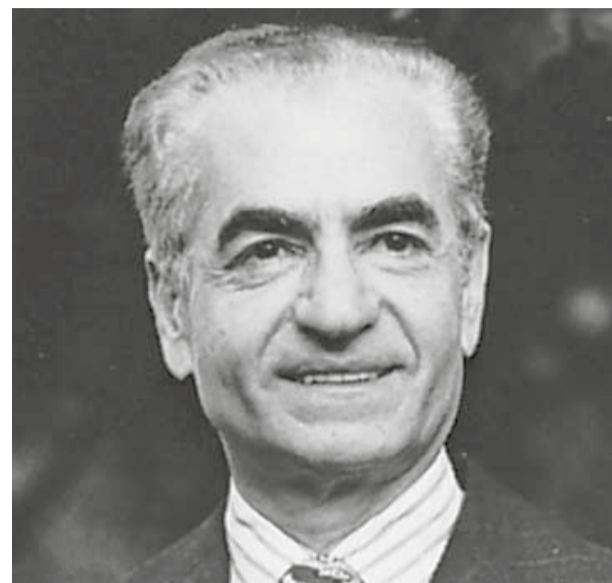
Director: Rupert Goold

Starring: Renée Zellweger, Jessie Buckley, Finn Wittrock

Language: English (Chinese)

Duration: 118min

this day in history



1979 SHAH OF IRAN FLEES INTO EXILE

The Shah of Iran has fled the country following months of increasingly violent protests against his regime.

Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi and his wife, Empress Farah, left Tehran and flew to Aswan in Egypt.

The couple's three youngest children were flown to the United States yesterday.

Official reports say the Shah has left for a "vacation" and medical treatment. In fact, he was asked to leave by the man he appointed prime minister earlier this month.

Over the past few months, there have been an increasing number of violent clashes between security forces and anti-Shah demonstrators.

Opposition to the Shah has become united behind the Muslim traditionalist movement led by Iran's main spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ruholla Khomeini, from exile in France.

There have been calls for the Ayatollah's return - and news of the Shah's departure was greeted with mass celebrations across Iran.

British and United States' ex-patriates living in Iran - regarded as symbols of westernization - have been the frequent target of attacks. Thousands have left the country.

Martial law was declared in many cities on 8 September. But later that month, industrial action by thousands of Iranian workers culminated in a mass strike by employees in the oil industry.

The strike sparked riots and rallies across the country in support of the Ayatollah.

Western governments, like the US, UK and West Germany, have continued to express support for the Shah.

The Shah appointed a new military government in early November. But it failed to stem the rising tide of support for the Ayatollah.

Earlier this month he appointed a new prime minister, Dr Shapur Bahktiar. When, on 13 January, the Ayatollah declared a revolutionary Islamic council to replace what he called the "illegal government" of Iran, Dr Bahktiar persuaded the Shah it was time to leave.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The Shah never returned to Iran. He died in exile in Egypt in 1980. Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran on 1 February after 14 years' exile.

He threw out Dr Bahktiar's government on 11 February and, after a referendum, declared an Islamic Republic on 1 April.

Khomeini guided his country's revolutionary social, legal, and political development until his death in 1989.

He presided over the country during the Iran/Iraq war, only reluctantly agreeing a ceasefire. He also issued a fatwa against author Salman Rushdie.

Two decades later, liberals ushered in a period of transformation with their election victory in 2000 over the conservative elite.

But reformist president Mohammad Khatami was at odds with hard-liners, including the supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, and failed to make good on his promises.

He was replaced by the ultra-conservative Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in June 2005.

President Bush declared Iran part of an "axis of evil" in 2002. Washington accused Tehran of attempting to develop nuclear weapons, although Iran says its nuclear ambitions are peaceful.

Tehran resumed its uranium conversion process in 2005, provoking a diplomatic showdown with the international community.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

You need to boost your energy into high gear, and dancing the night away is the perfect way to do it. Even if you feel the need to hibernate at home, it would be wise for you to get out into the world tonight.

TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Small energy bursts might pop up here and there, but overall it could be snoozy. However, if you wake up feeling full of conviction, this day will surge forward and you'll have to do your best to hold on.

GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Make sure everyone understands what needs to happen up front, before things move into high gear. Unless you draw up a road map, some people could get lost, and quite a few tempers could blow.

CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You're feeling extremely good today, and boy, oh boy, does it show! Your intense positive energy is amplifying your sex appeal. You're getting noticed in a way you may have never have been noticed before.

LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

You have excellent self-control right now, but are you using it for the right reasons? Resisting temptation is a good way to use this strength you have, but subjugating your emotions is not.

VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

A recent addition to your family or household could offer a new outlet for affection. Now is a good time to expand your ways of thinking about who, and how, you love.

LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

If you suddenly have an urge to take your coffee or tea a different way this morning, go for it! Try a new blend, skip the sugar, add more milk, whatever your mood dictates you should follow.

SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

A friend may have a project for you that could be lots of fun. Pitch in and give them some of your time today. Your involvement guarantees some positive energy, and they understand that.

SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Your fiery enthusiasm for what you believe in is powerful. You can always make things happen with your emotional conviction, but today, rein in that power and keep it to yourself.

CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Listening to other people is a lot easier than listening to yourself right now. There's a lot of internal chatter going on in your brain, and it might not be making too much sense to you.

AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

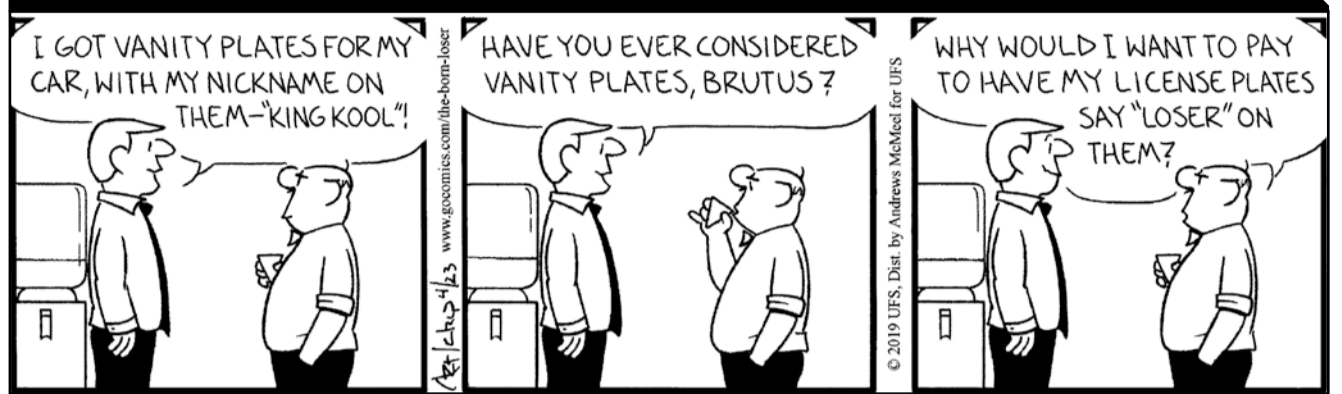
If you have a regular physical exercise routine, try to mix it up a bit today. Doing the same thing over and over again is boring for you, and it's boring for your body.

PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Thinking ahead can be daunting. There's no such thing as a crystal ball, and sometimes when you plan too narrowly, you end up making dangerous assumptions.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

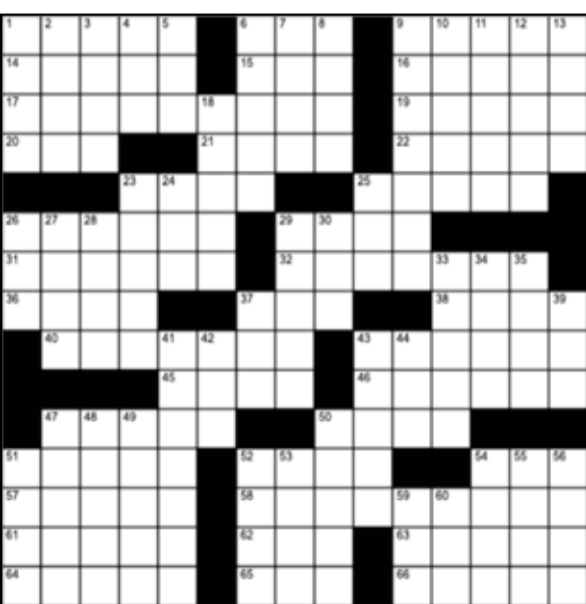
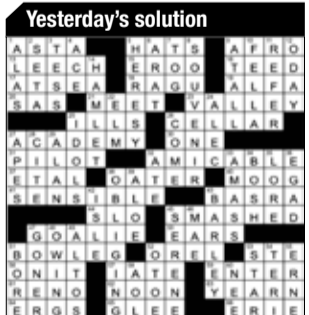
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-7	3	cloudy
Harbin	-27	-12	clear
Tianjin	-4	3	cloudy
Urumqi	-12	-7	flurry
Xi'an	-2	6	cloudy
Lhasa	-3	12	clear
Chengdu	5	9	cloudy
Chongqing	8	12	overcast
Kunming	4	20	clear
Nanjing	2	4	drizzle
Shanghai	6	7	drizzle
Wuhan	0	5	overcast
Hangzhou	4	7	drizzle
Taipei	17	19	overcast
Guangzhou	16	24	drizzle
Hong Kong	18	23	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	2	6	drizzle
Frankfurt	3	7	drizzle
Paris	3	9	clear
London	5	7	clear
New York	-5	3	drizzle

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Arrogant; 6- Country bordered by Canada and Mexico; 9- Communion plate; 14- Unfettered; 15- Ingot; 16- Monetary unit of the former Soviet Union; 17- Swiss horn; 19- Eat away; 20- You betcha!; 21- Omnium-gatherum; 22- Worked with wicker; 23- Brief; 25- Conger catcher; 26- Esteem; 29- Due; 31- One stroke under par; 32- Tedium; 36- Dies ___; 37- Peg used on the first in golf; 38- Atop; 40- Tidal river; 43- Gather into a bundle; 45- "Is ___ it?"; 46- BB, e.g.; 47- Trunk line; 50- Beams; 51- Golfer with an army; 52- Overwhelmed; 54- Links org.; 57- Helicopter part; 58- Abandonment; 61- Cathode's contrary; 62- High-pitched; 63- Red fluorescent dye; 64- Two-footer; 65- Rx writers; 66- African sir;

DOWN: 1- Drama; 2- Acting part; 3- Klutz's cry; 4- Employment; 5- Cub Scout group; 6- Metal fastener; 7- Delhi wrap; 8- Florence's river; 9- Come before; 10- Hearing-related; 11- Steak order; 12- Senior; 13- Penury; 18- Multitude; 23- A trainee in a profession; 24- One of the Four Forest Cantons; 25- Always; 26- Slugger's stat; 27- Hibernia; 28- Mardi ___; 29- Follows orders; 30- Heartache; 33- Affairs of honor; 34- Iridescent gemstone; 35- Relocate; 37- Prefix with angle; 39- After taxes; 41- Spoken; 42- Eureka!; 43- Club alternative; 44- Yol; 47- Rice-___; 48- Successful; 49- ___ Janeiro; 50- Reposes; 51- Graceful horse; 52- Madam, I'm ___; 53- Unite; 54- Galileo's birthplace; 55- Enter; 56- Editor Wintour; 59- Graycoat; 60- Haul;



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PRIYANKA CHOPRA JONAS JOINING AMAZON'S SPY SERIES 'CITADEL'

PRIYANKA Chopra Jonas will star opposite Richard Madden in the U.S. edition of "Citadel," a drama series to be produced in conjunction with programs from several other countries.

"The idea is to create a truly global, action-packed spy series," Amazon Studios chief Jennifer Salke said. "It's a totally innovative, multifaceted international approach to storytelling, and we can't wait to tell you more as it comes together."

Local-language productions are being done in Italy and India, with another announced Tuesday in Mexico. Amazon called the U.S. version the "motherhip" of the project, with production set to begin this summer.

Film star Chopra Jonas was in the ABC TV series "Quantico." Madden starred in the award-winning BBC and Netflix series "Bodyguard."

The other "Citadel" productions will "enhance the experience of engaging with the show," Salke said. Further details and release dates were not announced.



AP PHOTO

Also announced by the streaming service during its presentation at a TV critics meeting:

— Meagan Good is among the stars of an upcoming Amazon comedy from "Girls Trip" creator Tracy Oliver.

The untitled, half-hour series revolves around four African American college friends in pursuit of their dreams, the streaming service said.

Good ("Star," "Think Like a Man") plays the "stylish, sunny" Camille, who tea-

ches an anthropology course on sex and love at Columbia University. Also starring are Grace Byers ("Empire"), Jerrie Johnson ("Good Trouble") and Shoniqua Shandai ("I Am the Night").

Byers plays trust-fund baby and fashion designer Quinn; Shandai portrays aspiring singer Angie and Johnson plays Tye, described as "an alpha fierce, queer successful app developer."

The series reunites Oliver with "Girls Trip" director

Malcolm D. Lee, who will direct the first two episodes. Pharrell Williams is joining the show's executive producers, which include Oliver and Amy Poehler.

— Amazon is touting the cast of a new "The Lord of the Rings" series as multi-generational actors "from around the globe," including British-Iranian actress Nazanin Boniadi and Australian actor-musician Tom Budge.

But the streaming service declined to say which characters — or the races — they or other cast members announced Tuesday will be playing. Other details of the production also are being kept under wraps but "everything is moving forward," Salke said.

The series will "explore new storylines" preceding J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Fellowship of the Ring," Amazon said.

Other actors in the series based on Tolkien's works include Joseph Mawle, who played Benjen Stark on "Game of Thrones," Morfydd Clark ("His Dark Materials") and Ismael Cruz Cordova ("Ray Donovan," "Mary Queen of Scots").

SPRINGSTEEN SHOWS UP FOR SON'S SWEARING-IN AS FIREFIGHTER

BRUCE Springsteen's son was sworn in Tuesday as a firefighter with the Jersey City Fire Department, along with 15 others.

Sam Springsteen was joined by his famous father and mother, Patti Scialfa, at City Hall along with Mayor Steven Fulop and other city officials.

The Boss and Scialfa sat in the front row as their 25-year-old son was sworn

into the newest class. "We're very proud," Bruce Springsteen told reporters at the ceremony. "We're just excited for him today."

Jersey City officials say this is the fire department's 10th class since Fulop took office. More than 200 firefighters have been hired since 2013. The department now has 666 members, its largest number ever.



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'Armless Archer' Stutzman and his disarming sense of humor

MATT Stutzman has no arms. He was born that way. But he has — pardon the pun — a disarming sense of humor.

The American is known as the "Armless Archer," a silver medalist from the 2012 Paralympics who will be among the favorites for gold at this year's Tokyo Paralympics.

Asked in a visit to Tokyo what sport he would pursue if he weren't an archer, Stutzman replied: "I want to be a champion arm wrestler."

This from a guy who has no arms, but only small stumps protruding from his shoulders.

"I want people to know that I'm just a normal guy, and I like to laugh. And I like to make people laugh," Stutzman said in an interview with The Associated Press.

If normal means commonplace, or ordinary, that's not Stutzman. A better word is "extraordinary."

He uses humor to put people at ease, or poke fun at misconceptions they have about disabilities.

"The other day I was walking up a flight of stairs and I passed a

guy and he says: 'Whoa, how are you doing that?' I mean, I have legs. Because I don't have arms people sometimes assume I can't do anything — ever. Including walking, apparently, or thinking."

Stutzman can do everything he says, except — and here comes the humor again — wash dishes, vacuum or change diapers. Actually he can do those chores, too, but jokes about his disability as a way out.

With no arms or hands, he has learned to use his feet. He shaves with his feet, drives a car with his feet, and eats with his feet. In fact,

he said he can also use chopsticks with his feet.

"I'm not that efficient," he said, much like any chopstick beginner.

His house where he's raising three sons as a single father has no modifications, which is the way his father and mother — Leon and Jean Stutzman — raised him when they adopted him at 13 months.

He also shoots a bow and arrow with his feet. He sits in a chair, uses a strap around his chest that lets him grab the arrow. To draw back the bow, he pushes his leg away from his chest. Then sets

himself and releases.

He has beaten all comers — archers with disabilities and the rest — and holds a record for the longest, most accurate shot by an archer — 310 yards. He has also hit targets at 500 yards, and even 800 yards — though these are not official records.

Unable to find work and trying to support a family, Stutzman went deer hunting about a decade ago to put food on the table for his family in Fairfield, Iowa, in the southeastern part of the state. It was his early experiment with the bow.

"People at the time would say if I had arms they would hire me," he explained. "I'd say, I can't just grow arms. Just give me a chance to show what I can do."

He took to the bow so well that by 2012 he had won a Paralympic silver medal in London. He came up short in Rio de Janeiro, partly because of a defective piece of equipment. But he's become increasingly famous, picking up sponsors and motivational speaking engagements.

"Archery changed my life," he said. "I went from living off of Social Security, which was \$600 a month, to now I don't need Social Security. I can take care of my kids. Now people know who I am. This is bigger than archery now."

Stutzman said he lost about 60 pounds (about 27 kilograms) since Rio and is training harder than ever to get the gold medal.

"I could live without it, but kind of like redemption a little bit," he said.

What really matters now is the way he can reach people, who recognize him because of the Paralympics and intense media coverage.

"My main focus is people who don't have a physical disability, and kids," he said. "People who think they have it rough and you look at them and they are completely fine. That gets under my skin because I have an excuse to sit at home and do nothing. But you are perfectly fine and you are sitting on the couch complaining. That's dumb." AP

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OPINION

Sheyla Zandonai
The Stranger



BRAIN IMPORTER

The University of Macau (UM) is planning to fill up approximately 75% to 80% of its undergraduate program offers with Macau residents this year. This rate is high if one considers that the resident population is always being squeezed by the arrival of new immigrants, as well as a recent policy from the public university to admit more students from the Greater Bay Area.

It is a statement of sorts about the institution's commitment to the local population. UM has been under pressure for years for not recruiting enough residents as part of its academic staff, and comments by its Rector, Song Yonghua, which indicate the university will prioritize residents for its undergraduate options, is probably received as reassuring.

But things look different if one examines the university's recruitment policy at different levels. While most of the administrative staff is constituted of Macau residents, the majority of professors and researchers come from institutions abroad and its graduate and postgraduate programs, tacitly or not, often target foreign talent.

A few years ago, under fire by the government for not offering enough opportunities to local students, the university created the UM Postdoctoral Fellowship, designed for Macau residents – with insiders indicating, though, that consideration for the position meant the candidate had to be Chinese. It offered a three-year contract to successful candidates, who would also have to secure a one-year post-doc position in a “top university” abroad during the period. I do not have data on how many students the university managed to accept under this fellowship, but it is likely to be low: the number of PhD graduates in Macau is not high. Indeed, back in 1999, less than 10% of Macau's employed population had a tertiary education at all; plus, the mandatory year abroad would likely create a hurdle for early career scholars to secure the position.

Increased access to education over the years in Macau, with the opening of new universities and the expansion of old ones, could have helped greatly increase the number of local graduates. But the expansion of the gambling industry, followed by a large offer of generous starting-pay jobs in casinos – for people barely out of high school – has undoubtedly undermined the potential of Macau's youth, who grew up under the gambling boom to achieve more than an undergraduate degree, if any.

Now, the higher education institution has launched another call under its Macau talent program, which promotes virtually the opposite of its previous fellowship. Applicants for the UM Macau Postdoctoral Fellowship and Associateship should have received their PhDs in under two years from top-ranked universities listed in the “THE/QS ranking, or ... under the Double First-Class Initiatives and Programmes in Mainland China.” This would exclude any graduate from the university proper, since it is not listed among the top 200 universities featured in the relevant rankings, nor as part of China's Double-First Class initiative, as a piece in this publication has previously noted.

There is a clear drive from the university's top body to improve the institution's performance, which has not been particularly remarkable despite recent efforts, to attain better positioning in such rankings. But not opening opportunities to Macau residents is also a discriminatory stance, and one that does not praise talent for what it is. Although a highly-ranked institution may produce competent and talented scholars and scientists, it is not the only place that breeds them. Human intelligence is a factor of many combined intellectual and emotional skills. It does not come with a specific university diploma. But UM, again, chooses to ‘import’ quality instead of fostering it. Some heads think better than others.

POLICE: MAFIA RIPPED OFF EU FOR MILLIONS IN FARM AID

THE BUZZ

Italian authorities allege say crime clans of the Sicilian Mafia have defrauded the European Union of more than 10 million euros (\$11 million) in agricultural aid.

Officers from the Italy's paramilitary Carabinieri and financial police fanned out across Sicily at dawn Wednesday to execute 94 arrest warrants.

National anti-Mafia Prosecutor Federico Cafiero de Raho said thousands of hectares (acres) of farmland in eastern Sicily fraudulently qualified for aid.

Some of the land in the alleged fraud scheme is within the

Nebrodi public parkland, a hilly region popular for grazing. Local public administrators and a notary public were arrested with suspected mobsters near Messina.

In past years, farmers who refused to be involved with fraudulent practices reported threats from Cosa Nostra.

Authorities planned to give details at a news conference in Messina later Wednesday.

Suspects were arrested for investigation of belonging to the Mafia or aiding it, extortion and fraud involving public funds, among other accusations.

AP PHOTO



Hungary Police yesterday recommended filing drug dealing charges against two Dutch men arrested in August at a popular music festival. Budapest police said they found 20 kilograms of pre-rolled marijuana cigarettes and ecstasy pills with a street value of around \$335,000, most of it stashed away in a small van they were using and which was parked outside the festival grounds.

Poland The European Union executive has come to the aid of Poland, which is involved in a bitter dispute with Russian President Vladimir Putin over Poland's role in World War II. EU Commissioner Vera Jourova told the parliament yesterday that she “rejects any false claim” that paints Poland as a perpetrator instead of a victim of the 1939-1945 war. She said she “will not tolerate these attacks on Poland.”

EXPERTS SEEK ANSWERS BEHIND CONSTANT QUAKE IN PUERTO RICO

DANICA COTO

SEISMOLOGISTS in southern Puerto Rico gingerly walked around a patch of dirt that marks the location of recently buried sensors they hope will reveal answers behind the constant and unusual shaking in the region that has terrified residents.

Alena Leeds with the U.S. Geological Survey stopped in front of the sensors on Tuesday afternoon and scrutinized the information that popped up on the screen in front of her.

“Here comes one! There's an aftershock,” she said as the software showed red, blue and green lines that squiggled up and down.

More than 1,280 earthquakes have hit Puerto Rico's southern region since Dec. 28, more than two dozen of them magnitude 4.5 or greater, according to the USGS. Among them was a 6.4 magnitude quake that hit on Jan. 7, killing one person and injuring nine others, and a 5.9 magnitude aftershock that occurred Saturday, causing further damage. Government officials say the quakes have caused a preliminary \$110 million in damage, toppled part of a famed rock formation landmark and damaged or destroyed more than 550 homes.

The seismic activity that experts say is unusual but not unexpected has unleashed scientific debate about what's causing it and drawn international attention to the

area, where more than 4,000 people have sought shelter as they wonder when the ground will stop trembling.

“I don't plan on stepping foot in the house for any reason until this stops,” said Adrián Santos, a 45-year-old mechanic who has been living in a tent in the southern coastal city of Ponce for nearly a week with nine other relatives. “The shaking is unbearable.”

Scientists say they don't yet know much about the faults causing the quakes, although some experts believe at least three faults are involved, including the Punta Montalva one in southwest Puerto Rico that students and professors at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayaguez discovered in the early 2000s.

“There are a lot of different opinions but not a lot of data,” said Elizabeth Vanacore, an associate research professor at the university, which also houses the island's Seismic Network.

Overall, Puerto Rico is located in a very seismically active area, with the North America and Caribbean tectonic plates converging at a rate of about 2 centimeters a year, said Gavin Hayes, a USGS research geophysicist. To the north part of the island, the North America plate is moving past and sinking below Puerto Rico, while in the southern region, the Caribbean plate is sinking into the mantle underneath the island.

“Essentially, the island

is being squeezed between these two tectonic plates,” he said.

In the last 50 years, 10 earthquakes of magnitude 4 and higher have occurred within 50 kilometers of the recent 6.4 magnitude epicenter prior to Dec. 28, said Lindsay Davis, with USGS's earthquake disaster assistance team manager.

She said the rate of aftershocks following the 6.4 magnitude quake is higher than expected, but still within normal range. She also said Saturday's 5.9 magnitude quake was within the range of what was expected for the aftershock sequence.

Experts say the likeliest scenario is that the frequency of aftershocks will decrease in the next 30 days, noting that moderately sized ones could still further damage structures. A less likely scenario is another earthquake just as strong as the 6.4 one occurs in the same area, an event known as a doublet. A much less likely scenario is that an earthquake significantly larger than the 6.4 one hits Puerto Rico.

Meanwhile, scientists are still investigating the reason behind the constant shaking, fascinated that the aftershocks — in a departure from normal behavior — seem to be occurring along several faults, including the Punta Montalva one.

“Some of them we don't even know they're there until they talk,” said Leeds, the USGS seismologist. “And now it's talking very loudly.” AP

AP PHOTO



UK The estranged father of Meghan, Duchess of Sussex could be called as a defense witness in her lawsuit against the Mail on Sunday newspaper, court papers reveal. Meghan is suing the newspaper and its parent company Associated Newspapers for publishing a letter she wrote to her father, Thomas Markle. The civil lawsuit accuses the newspaper of copyright infringement, misuse of private information and violating the U.K.'s data protection law with the publication of the letter.

AP PHOTO



Vatican City Pope Francis has tapped an Italian lawyer to be the first woman to hold a management position in the Vatican's most important office, the Secretariat of State. Francis yesterday named Francesca Di Giovanni, a 27-year veteran of the Vatican, as undersecretary for multilateral affairs. In that role, she will be responsible for running a division that coordinates the Holy See's relations with the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations.