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**Myanmar** Air strikes by the military junta killed as many as 80 people, including singers and musicians, attending an anniversary celebration of the Kachin ethnic minority's main political organization, members of the group and a rescue worker said yesterday. The reported attack comes three days before Southeast Asian foreign ministers are to hold a special meeting in Indonesia to discuss widening violence in Myanmar. The number of casualties at Sunday night's celebration, held by the Kachin Independence Organization in the northern state of Kachin, appeared to be the most in a single hit since the military seized power in February 2021 from Aung San Suu Kyi.

AP PHOTO



**Philippine** authorities allowed a major airport to partially reopen to international and domestic flights yesterday despite the damaged Korean Air plane stuck in the grass near the runway after a near-tragic accident over the weekend. The airport on Mactan island in Cebu province, the country's second-busiest, is reopening from sunrise to sunset to help ease the large numbers of canceled commercial flights and stranded passengers due to the Korean Air mishap Sunday night.

AP PHOTO



**Ukraine** German and European Union leaders gathered experts yesterday to start work on what Germany's chancellor described as a "new Marshall Plan" for the rebuilding of Ukraine. The Marshall Plan was a U.S.-sponsored initiative that helped revive western European economies after World War II. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, whose country currently chairs the Group of Seven industrial powers, first announced plans for the one-day conference in the summer.

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# EMBEZZLEMENT BUREAU

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# EDUCATION CENTER STAFF ACCUSED OF EMBEZZLING CONTINUING EDUCATION SUBSIDIES

LYNZY VALLES

**T**HE Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) has reported another case where a local education center and nearly 170 residents allegedly embezzled over MOP1 million in subsidies from the Continuing Education Development Plan.

The report comes after CCAC discovered a separate case involving the Continuing Education Development Plan in August this year.

The corruption watchdog received a report back in 2020 to the effect that a manager and a staff member at the education center attracted nearly 170 local residents to apply to the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEDJ) for subsidized courses under the plan by offering cash rebates or free enrollment in other courses between 2016 and 2019.

However, the courses in question were never conducted. The

RENATO MARQUES



students, without attending the courses, could receive cash rebates amounting to a half of the subsidy, or take other courses held by the center for free, CCAC noted in the

report.

The person-in-charge and the staff member of the center reported false attendance records to the bureau and colluded with the

instructors and students to forge attendance records. Eventually, the subsidies were granted.

The suspects have allegedly committed fraud, document for-

gery, improper use of identification documents belonging to other persons and computer forgery. The case has been referred to the Public Prosecutions Office for follow-up.

CCAC stated that although the department has already taken measures to eradicate the problems concerning the falsified course enrollments, citizens should still abide by the law when applying for any kind of government subsidy to avoid falling foul of the law due to personal greed.

In August, the watchdog issued a report on a DSEDJ employee who had secretly managed a youth association and allegedly embezzled subsidies for activities from the DSEDJ through false reports of the number of participants and contents of activities.

The case involved more than a dozen activities both inside and outside of Macau and the subsidies embezzled amounted to over MOP500,000 in total.

## DSEDJ increasing inspections of continuing education programs

**T**HE Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) said yesterday that the bureau has been increasing inspections of all those programs.

The statement was in response to a news release from the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) noting the discovery of another fraudulent scheme involving a continuing education program.

Recently, only two suspected violations were found, Luís Gomes, head of the Department of Non-Tertiary Education of DSEDJ, said during the press briefing following the plenary meeting of the Youth Committee yesterday morning.

"We will not ignore any illegal acts and we are always collaborating with the authorities and reinforcing



inspections," Gomes said, adding that "if we notice any illegality, we are going to exclude the institutions concerned from participating in this scheme [continuing education]."

Gomes also noted that since 2020 and until the present, the DSEDJ has conducted over 6,000 inspections (double the rate of the

previous three years).

"Until now [and following the inspections done between 2020 and 2022] we only found two cases [in which the institutions] are suspected of violating the law, a figure that shows a significant reduction [when compared to 2017-2019 when a total of 55 suspected cases were found]." **RM**

## GAMING SECTOR EXPENDITURE RISES 15% IN 2021

**T**OTAL expenditure of the gaming sector rose by 15.2% year-on-year to MOP53.48 billion, driven by a 45.4% increase in operating expenses (MOP14.47 billion).

The sector also recorded 18.1% growth in expenditure on purchases of goods, and commissions paid & customer rebates (MOP11.14 billion); these two items together accounted for nearly half of the total expenditure.

In terms of operating expenses, expenses on complimentary goods/services provided to customers such as hotel accommodation and food & beverage (MOP7.37 billion) grew by 59% year-on-year. Compensation for employees went up by 2% year-on-year to MOP20.10 billion, amounting to 37.6% of the total expenditure.

Gross value added (GVA), which measures the sectoral contribution



to the economy, increased by 49.7% year-on-year to MOP62.65 billion.

The total revenue of the gaming sector amounted to MOP90.81 billion, an increase of 42% year-on-year due to the recovery of tourism activity following a rebound in the number of visitor arrivals to Macau late last year, albeit from a lower base.

Gaming receipts (MOP87.54 billion) grew by 45.1%, whereas interest receipts (MOP2.61 billion) dropped by 1.7%, data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) shows.

Despite a pickup compared to 2020, total receipts in 2021 corresponded to only about 30% of those in 2019. **LV**

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**Times**

DIRECTOR & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF\_Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com  
ASSISTANT EDITOR\_Lynzy Valles  
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS\_Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai

NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS\_Alex Torrão, Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Anthony Lam, Emilie Tran, Grace Yu, Irene Sam, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Jorge Costa Oliveira, Joseph Cheung, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Sérgio de Almeida Correia, Viviana Seguí  
DESIGNER\_Miguel Bandeira | ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS\_JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | NEWS AGENCIES\_Associated Press, MacauHub, MacauNews, Xinhua  
SECRETARY\_Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

A MACAU TIMES PUBLICATIONS LTD PUBLICATION

ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

OFFICE MANAGER\_Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com

ADDRESS\_Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR  
Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84

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# Trade unionist lawmaker criticizes uncoordinated road works

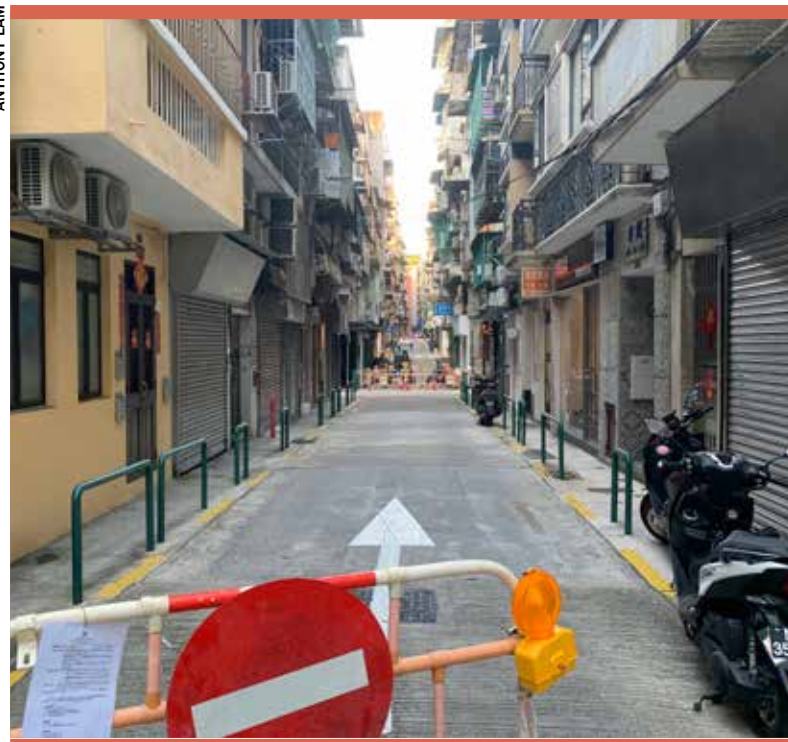
ANTHONY LAM

**L**AWMAKER Ella Lei questioned the government about road works across the city, some of which have been repeated and have resulted in complicated conditions for drivers.

She recapped that road works are frequent in Macau, with summer being the peak period. She said that residents are seeking better coordination of road works and would like to see these projects expedited to lessen the impact on the public.

Lei criticized that many road works that took place this summer occurred on main roads and had long durations and large scopes, causing significant impact to both drivers and pedestrians.

Although the government coordination group for road works has stepped up its efficiency in recent years, the lawmaker pointed out that it was not uncommon for road works to be behind schedule.



Citing earlier replies from the government to lawmakers' inquiries, Lei highlighted that of all public work projects, 57% in 2020 and 46% in 2021 concluded behind

schedule. Various reasons have led to the delays, including adjustments to construction plans, and a combination of sub-projects and delays in tender openings.

The massive number of projects and delays in their conclusions have increasingly led to more severe traffic congestion, with residents reporting repeated road works affecting the same areas or sections of road, the lawmaker noted.

She also cited residents who reported that in some projects, after excavation commenced and equipment was brought to site, progress appeared to stall and few workers were seen to be working.

Based on these observations, the lawmaker set out a few questions for the government. First, she asked how the government would make improvements in evaluating reasonable work delivery periods and monitoring work progress.

Secondly, she requested data about worker placements and progress updates in projects that are underway. She also requested updates about the composition of the Public Road Work Coordination System Executive Regulations.

As cited in the report, the prosecutor said, "I prove that you are false" and reminded her that she has the right to hire a lawyer and remain silent.

Last month during the second session of the trial, Chau told the court that parallel gaming activities in local casino VIP rooms had been taking place for a very long time, even before Macau's handover.

Chau noted that the activity, despite not being legal, could never be conducted in a covert manner and without the knowledge of those involved in the gaming business (namely the concessionaires), as they were needed to facilitate such activities. **LV**

## SUNCITY TRIAL

# Case witness detained for perjury



**A**witness for the junket Amogul Alvin Chau's case was detained by the Public Prosecutions Office yesterday for alleged perjury.

The lower court continued the trial of the Suncity case, involving 21 defendants. A number of witnesses have been called to testify, including former employees of the defunct company.

Yesterday, the fourth witness, a former Suncity marketing employee surnamed Lai, was questioned on whether parallel betting was

part of the junket's operations, to which she responded that it was not.

She was then reminded by prosecutor Lai U Hou to speak the truth as she had sworn to do so. She insisted that Suncity did not operate parallel betting.

The prosecutor then questioned her on whether she had made a false statement, as cited in a report issued by the Macao Daily News.

She was then detained after being accused of fabricating the truth.

## AL COMMITTEE

# TRUST BILL WILL ALLOW CHARITY TRUSTS

**A**LTHOUGH legislation dealing with charitable trusts is not part of the draft legislation, the forthcoming Trust bill will not exclude such trusts, a parliamentary committee said yesterday.

The Second Standing Committee of the parliament finished discussing

the bill yesterday. Committee chair Chan Chak Mo cited responsible government officials who guaranteed that the current bill does not prohibit the possibility of charity trusts.

Chan added that as long as there are legal reasons for establishing a trust and a clear scope of beneficia-

ries, theoretically any type of trust will be possible. In fact, the bill has not categorized the type of trusts.

The latest edition of the bill proposes an expanded set of rights for the trust owner. The owner may have the right to change beneficiaries or even invalidate the trust on the

grounds that the beneficiaries do not desire the assets.

Trustees may also have the right to seek compensations following the invalidation of a trust.

Trustees will be entitled to remuneration agreed upon documentation, but will be required to repay

any loss due to their negligence before receiving remuneration.

Chan noted that a proposal had been added to return the trust's assets to the trust owner or their legal heirs in the case of beneficiaries forgoing the trust's assets or closing the trust upon confirmation that the beneficiaries do not desire the assets.

A date for a debate in the plenary and for a vote will be set in due course. **AL**

## TAOBAO ADOPTS MPAY PAYMENT METHOD

Local payment service provider MPay has announced that an agreement had been made with Chinese internet multinational company Alibaba's shopping site Taobao to allow Macau shoppers to settle their bills using MPay. The local company elaborated that non-mainland users of MPay with 3A and 3B-level credentials will be allowed to pay on Taobao with MPay. Moreover, shoppers will enjoy zero handling charge and a MOP30 discount on purchases of MOP200 or more when paying with MPay. The special offer will be available from 8 p.m., October 31 to midnight, November 3 and from 8 p.m., November 10 to midnight, November 11.

## PROFESSIONAL TAX PAYMENT DUE END-OCTOBER

Professional taxpayers should pay their tax no later than the last day of October, the Financial Services Bureau (DSF) warned in a statement yesterday. Late payment will incur a fine and interest, the DSF added. There are two channels through which tax payers can settle their accounts: online or offline. Online payments can be made on the DSF's mobile app, Macau Tax, or on online banking channels offered by participating local banks. Alternatively, taxpayers can pay the tax at counters of participating banks or at DSF's Praia Grande or NAPE offices, or the Areia Preta and Taipa counters.

## LAWMAKER ASKS ABOUT MAINTENANCE AND RENOVATION OF OLD BUILDINGS

Lawmaker Leong Hong Sai has asked in his recent written inquiry whether the government will adopt a pilot subsidy scheme, similar to that of Hong Kong, to fund elderly and poorer residents to revamp their apartment buildings. The Hong Kong pilot scheme also helps organize volunteers to carry out less major work. In addition, Leong asks whether the government has data on all buildings with structural issues in the city, and how the government intends to handle the problem. He also asks whether, besides repairing old buildings, the government has plans to continue working with the cultural industry to beautify local streets and roads.



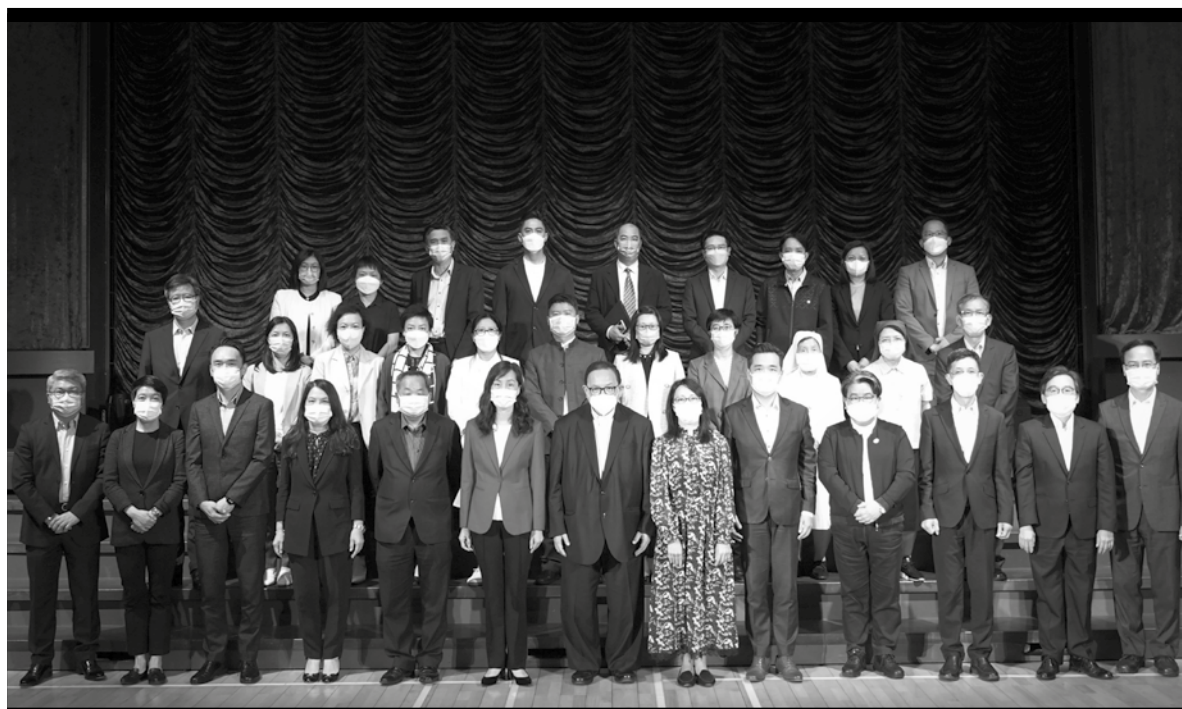
# AO IEONG CONSULTS CHINESE CIVIL SOCIETY ASSOCIATIONS ON LAG23

RENATO MARQUES

**T**HE Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong, has led a delegation from her secretariat to visit 12 civil society associations to hear their views on the policy address for the next year (LAG23), the office of the Secretary noted.

The tour included visits to the Macau Federation of Trade Unions, the Macau Neighborhood Federation, the Macau Women's Federation, the Macau Chinese Chamber of Commerce, the Association of Returned Overseas Chinese of Macau, the Macau Institution of People's Alliance, Macao Economic and Livelihood Alliance, Macao Chinese Education Association, Macao Catholic Schools Association, Macao New Chinese Youth Association, Macao Youth Federation, the General Association of Chinese Students of Macau, as well as the Committees representing the Cultural and Sporting sectors.

According to the release from Ao Ieong's office, the associations have called on the government to keep its focus fixed on pandemic



prevention measures. The associations also made suggestions about residents' mental health, the planning of the Islands Medical Complex, the training of medical personnel, the promotion of youth development, the deepening of education on patriotism, as well as the promotion of "Love for Macau" and the national security law.

The discussions also touched on topics such as the development of students and protection of teachers' rights and interests, the promotion of science education, family-friendly policies, maternal and child services, aged care, support for the disadvantaged, heritage conservation, the development of cultural

industries, the training of local athletes, the planning of facilities related to people's livelihood and Chinese medicine and the development of the health industry as a whole.

The Secretary noted that next year, her team will continue to improve the pandemic prevention work following the strategy

of "preventing import cases and preventing internal recurrence," also adding that they will strictly follow the policy goals of the "Second Five-Year Plan."

With regard to welfare services, Ao Ieong said that the government was continuing to optimize the medical and health system, ensuring investment in education and improvements to educational quality, as well as deepening the work on patriotic education and "Love for Macau."

Care for the disadvantaged and the elderly is also on the Secretary's agenda, as well as the reinforcement of industrial development, specifically the big health industry and cultural and sports-related industries.

Furthermore, Ao Ieong said that her team also collected a large number of written opinions and suggestions from different associations through the debates that took place at each meeting. These will be processed and taken into account in drafting the final guidelines for the 2023 policy for the social affairs and cultural sectors.

According to the release, none of the associations represented Macanese and Portuguese communities, nor were other non-Chinese communities, groups or associations in Macau consulted or visited by the Secretary in the lead up to the presentation of the LAG23.

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CRIME

# Local woman loses RMB6.7 million in online investment scam

RENATO MARQUES

A local woman has reportedly been defrauded in a series of online investments, losing a total of RMB6.7 million, the Judiciary Police (PJ) reported on Monday.

The case dates back to October 2021 when the woman filed a complaint with the PJ concerning the scam.

At the time, she said that a few weeks earlier she had joined a training course to teach the participants how to invest in the mainland. She said that in this course she met one of the teachers who introduced her to a third man, who was supposedly an "Investment Master."

According to instructions from this purported investment master, the woman bought stocks on the Chinese stock exchange and almost immediately earned some RMB50,000.

At this point, the same man also introduced her to a mobile application called "Sports Lottery" which she could use to continually increase her investment earnings.

At the end of October 2021, she finally decided to make a large investment. According to the information provided, she transferred a total of RMB6.7 million into an account on the mainland.

After some transactions using this



Sports Lottery platform, she noted that instead of earning, she had lost almost all her money and she had a balance of only RMB1.6 million. Fearing the loss of the remaining cash, she attempted to withdraw the money using the app, but the system did not allow her to do so. At this point, she also realized she had lost contact with the investment master who had introduced her to the app and was giving her tips on how to use it.

After the PJ received her complaint and opened an investigation, the PJ managed to identify a local resident, who is a 27 year old male restaurant worker, as one of the individuals involved in the scam. The investigation found that some of the money that the woman had trans-

ferred to the mainland had passed through one of his accounts.

According to what the PJ could ascertain, some RMB180,000 had been transferred to this man.

The suspect refused to cooperate with the PJ when taken in for questioning, and did not reveal any details of the case or elaborate on his involvement. However, further investigations into the suspect's bank accounts revealed that of the RMB180,000, some RMB130,000 had been already transferred into other accounts on the mainland while only RMB50,000 remained in his account.

The suspect has been referred to the Public Prosecutions Office to be charged for high value fraud.



## Lusophone-Macau Product Fair to open end-October

THE annual Lusophone-Macau Featured Product Fair will launch at the end of this month with the first stop at the Largo Camões in Taipa.

Officially branded "Chai Chai Pou" (Be Por-

tuguese Together), the event is organized by the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM). The event will be held from October to December.

23 local small and me-

dium enterprises will be participating in the first phase of the event, which will be held between October 28 and 30. Some products featured during the period include alcoholic beverages, coffee, food

items, seasonings, decorative goods and accessories.

Shopping discount offers will be offered at the event. Sessions will also be held to familiarize shoppers with lusophone and Macau brands.

Throughout the entire Chai Chai Pou duration, entertainment and shows will also be presented. The program will include lusophone singing and dancing, culinary skill showcases and artistic workshops. In addition, social media check-in spots will also be set up to attract a wider range of visitors.

Other stops for the Chai Chai Pou festival include the Legend Boulevard at the Macau Fisherman's Wharf and the Complex of Commerce and Trade Co-operation Platform for China and Portuguese-speaking Countries. AL

ADVERTORIAL

# GREAT TIMES

Portuguese Classic "Francesinha"!

ARE your taste buds tingling for Portuguese flavors? Enjoy one of the top 10 flavored sandwiches in the world at Rossio! There's no better date than *Francesinha* at MGM MACAU this season.

Francesinha was created in 1950 and has a long history of Portuguese gastronomy. It is an iconic sandwich from the North of Portugal and the city of Porto. It refers to a sandwich served on a plate, full of flavors with layers of sausage, cured ham, and steak wrapped in melted cheese. It is drenched in a unique sauce with beer and seafood as a base, and French fries on the side to dip in!



According to folklore, locals from Porto came up with a Portuguese sandwich that is bigger, better, and more delicious than many sandwiches around the world. They had taken Francesinha to an entirely new level with their special sauce and ingredients. It is best enjoyed while you are famished and have room for monstrosities!

Now you can get a taste of this Porto's famous dish to satisfy your carnivorous appetite with the Portuguese vibe at the Grande Praça! For more details, please visit [mgm.mo](http://mgm.mo)





INTELLIGENCE

# CHINESE OFFICERS CHARGED IN PLOT TO ALLEGEDLY OBSTRUCT US HUAWEI PROBE

**T**WO suspected Chinese intelligence officers have been charged with attempting to obstruct a U.S. criminal investigation of Chinese tech giant Huawei by offering bribes to someone they thought could provide inside information, the Justice Department announced yesterday [Macau time].

The defendants are accused of paying tens of thousands of dollars in digital currency, along with cash and jewelry, to a U.S. official they thought they had recruited as an asset. But the person was actually a double agent working for the FBI, the department said.

That prosecution, as well as two other cases involving Chinese operatives, was highlighted Monday at a news conference that featured the heads of both the FBI and the Justice Department, a rare joint presence reflecting a concerted American show of force against Chinese intelligence efforts. Washington has long accused Beijing of "meddling in U.S. political affairs and stealing secrets and intellectual property."

Besides the two men, 11 other Chinese nationals have been charged with offenses in the last week, including harassment of individuals in the U.S., FBI Director Christopher Wray said.

In the Huawei case, Guochun He and Zheng Wang, are accused of trying to direct a U.S. official to



U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland (center) flanked by Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco (left) and FBI Director Christopher Wray at a press conference

supply confidential information about the Justice Department's investigation, including about witnesses, trial evidence and potential new charges.

The Justice Department separately announced charges against four other Chinese nationals, accusing them of using the cover of an academic institute to try to procure sensitive technology and equipment as well as interfering with protests that "would have

been embarrassing to the Chinese government."

And it highlighted a case from last week in which two additional people were arrested and five others charged with harassing someone living in the U.S. to return to China as part of what Beijing calls "Operation Fox Hunt."

The case connected to the Huawei probe dates to January 2019. The company, a top executive and several subsidiaries had

just been indicted on U.S. charges of financial fraud, trade secret theft and sanctions violations.

Wang and He, according to prosecutors, were eager for non-public information about the prosecution and the status of the investigation. They reached out to a contact they had known since 2017, but the person — who was not identified by name — began working as a double agent and engaged in a back-and-forth with

the defendants that was overseen by the FBI.

At one point last year, prosecutors say, the person passed to the defendants a single-page document that appeared to be classified and that contained information about a purported Justice Department plan to charge and arrest Huawei executives who were living in China. The person said the document had been secretly photographed during a meeting with federal prosecutors.

The document was prepared specifically for the purposes of the prosecution that was unsealed Monday, and the information in it was neither accurate nor an accurate reflection of any Justice Department plans, officials said.

The company is not named in the charging documents and prosecutors declined at Monday's news conference to name it, though the references make clear that it's Huawei.

Spokespeople for Huawei and the Chinese Embassy in Washington did not immediately return messages seeking comment. Huawei has previously called the federal investigation "political persecution, plain and simple."

"Attacking Huawei will not help the U.S. stay ahead of the competition," the company said in a statement published in 2020.

In the case linked to "Operation Fox Hunt," prosecutors say Chinese agents tried to intimidate an unnamed person and his family to return to China. Part of the plot, the U.S. alleges, involved having the person's nephew travel to the U.S. as part of a tour group to deliver threats that included, "Coming back and turning yourself in is the only way out." **MDT/AP**

HONG KONG

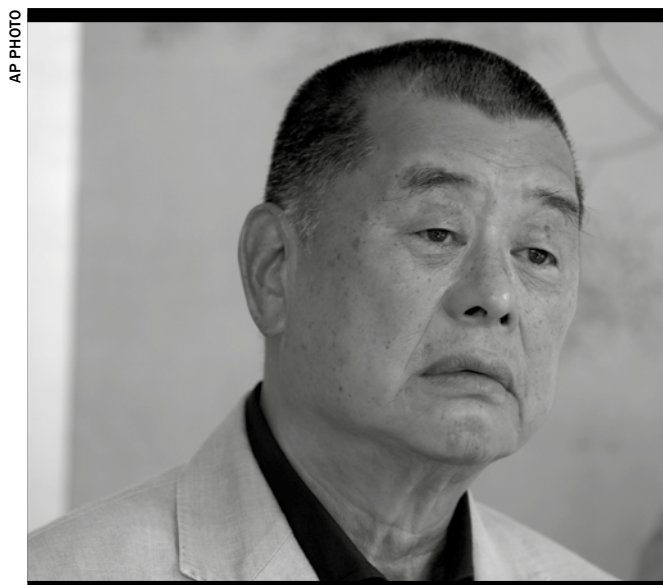
# Pro-democracy publisher Lai found guilty on fraud charges

KANIS LEUNG,  
HONG KONG

**P**RO-DEMOCRACY Hong Kong publisher Jimmy Lai was found guilty yesterday on two fraud charges related to lease violations, the latest in a series of prosecutions apparently aimed at punishing him for his past activism.

Lai was arrested during a crackdown on the pro-democracy movement following widespread protests in 2019 and under the city's sweeping Beijing-imposed National Security Law. He is already serving a 20-month sentence for his role in unauthorized assemblies.

His media company, Next Digital, published the now-shuttered Apple Daily,



Hong Kong's last pro-democracy newspaper.

Lai also faces collusion charges under the National Security Law and a separate sedition charge. His former colleague, Wong Wai-keung,

was also convicted yesterday on a single charge of fraud.

Lai and two former executives at his company were charged with fraud for subletting part of the office

space to a secretarial firm, which was also controlled by Lai, between 2016 and 2020. Their move allegedly violated lease agreements with the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corp. The second fraud count was for letting the same firm use the media outlet's office space in alleged breach of lease agreements from 1998 and 2015.

District Court Judge Stanley Chan Kwong-chi said the firm's business did not conform with what was stipulated in the lease agreements, and ruled that Lai had hidden the fact that the company was occupying space in the building. He said he did not believe Lai had forgotten the business was using the office.

One of the executives,

Royston Chow, made a deal earlier this year to help with Lai's and Wong's prosecution in exchange for exemption from criminal liability.

Lawyers for Lai are asking the United Nations to investigate his imprisonment and multiple criminal charges as "legal harassment" to punish him for speaking out.

Armed with the National Security Law, prosecutors have brought cases against people for clapping in court, sentenced five speech therapists to nearly two years in prison for their role in the publication of children's books deemed seditious, and put on trial a 90-year-old Catholic cardinal and five others accused of failing to register a now-defunct fund set up to

assist people arrested in the mass anti-government protests three years ago.

That has damaged faith in the future of the bustling bastion of finance, with increasing numbers of young professionals responding to the shrinking freedoms by moving abroad.

Electoral reforms have ensured that only those deemed to be "patriots" by Beijing serve in the city's legislature. China has installed John Lee, a career security official, as the city's new chief executive.

Separately, a mainland Chinese man was arrested for allegedly posting three signs carrying "seditious" words at the protest zone of the city's legislative complex on Oct. 15, police said. **MDT/AP**



AUSTRALIA

# New government to raise spending to boost slowing economy

ROD MCGUIRK, CANBERRA

**A**USTRALIA'S new government released plans yesterday for more spending on families, the elderly, defense and its Pacific neighbors as the country braces for an economic slowdown due to rising interest rates, inflation and disastrous floods.

Treasurer Jim Chalmers delivered his center-left Labor Party's first annual budget for the fiscal year that began in July. It is the first budget in nine years by a Labor government and comes as Australia contends with unprecedented levels of debt that has mounted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chalmers said rising inflation was the primary influence on his economic blueprint. Inflation is forecast to peak at 7.75% by December and remain higher for longer than had previously been expected.

"It's framed against a backdrop of a complex combination of a serious economic downturn overseas, damaging and devastating natural disasters here at home, war in Europe, a slowdown in China brought about by COVID -- all of these issues combining at once," Chalmers told reporters.

"We are still optimistic about the future of our economy and the future of our country, but there



is no use pretending that we don't have some difficulty to navigate in the near term," he said.

To get the budget measures through Parliament, compromises may be required.

The previous conservative government had forecast in its last budget in March a deficit of 78 billion Australian dollars (\$49 billion) for this fiscal year.

The new government's forecast more than halves that to AU\$36.9 billion (\$23.3 billion), thanks mainly to extraordinarily high prices for commodities including iron ore and coal. But deficits are expected to rise again as commodity prices normalize.

The economy is forecast to grow 3.25% in the current fiscal year before plummeting to 1.5% in 2023-24 — one percentage point lower than was projected in

March — as rising interest rates hit consumer spending. Growth is then forecast to creep up to 2.25% in 2024-25 and to 2.5% the following year.

Chalmers said a weakening of household spending was "a very concerning development" and inevitable after six consecutive monthly interest rate hikes so far this year.

When the central bank lifted the benchmark cash rate by a quarter percentage point to 0.26% in May, it was Australia's first rate hike in more than 11 years. The bank lifted the rate to 2.6% at its October meeting and said rates would continue to rise, prompting economists to warn of a recession.

Australia's gross debt as a share of GDP is forecast to reach 37.3%, or AU\$927 billion (\$586

billion), by the end of the current fiscal year and to continue to rise through the decade.

The proposed budget would help families cope with higher costs by increasing subsidies for child care and phasing in an increase in paid parental leave from 18 weeks to 26 weeks by 2026.

The government says such spending on families increases the productivity of parents.

Standards and staffing levels will be raised in homes for older people, who will also benefit from higher subsidies for medicines by up to AU\$12.50 (\$7.90) for each prescription.

Defense spending was exempt from budget cuts, increasing by 8% in the current fiscal year to above 2% of GDP with plans to remain at that level or above for years to come, government docu-

ments said.

Australia will announce in March what type of nuclear-powered submarine it wants manufactured as part of a partnership struck with the United States and Britain last year known as the AUKUS agreement. Money to build the new submarine fleet is not yet allocated.

The proposed budget earmarks AU\$213 million (\$135 million) for additional defense spending on the Ukraine over five years. Australia is currently the biggest contributor to the Ukraine war effort outside NATO, having provided AU\$500 million (\$316 million) in weapons and equipment.

The Labor government has promised closer relationships with its Pacific island neighbors after China signed a bilateral security pact with the Solomon Islands early this year that raised fears a Chinese naval base might be established in the South Pacific.

The budget proposes an additional AU\$900 million (\$570 million) in aid for the Pacific region and AU\$470 million (\$297 million) for Southeast Asia.

Australia's economic plight has been worsened by months of rain that has flooded much of the country's southeast, hurting farm export earnings and adding to inflation due to fruit and vegetable shortages. **MDT/AP**

KOREAS

# US vows full military defense of allies against North

**T**HE United States will make full use of its military capabilities, "including nuclear, conventional and missile defense," to defend its allies Japan and South Korea, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman said Tuesday as she warned North Korea against escalating its provocations.

Sherman said North Korea's repeated firings of ballistic missiles and artillery in recent weeks were provocative military actions. North Korea has described them as practice runs for the use of tactical nuclear weapons.

"This is deeply irresponsible, dangerous, and destabilizing," Sherman said in talks in Tokyo with South



**U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman speaks during a talk with her counterpart, South Korean First Vice Foreign Minister Cho Hyundong, at the South Korean Embassy in Tokyo yesterday**

Korean First Vice Foreign Minister Cho Hyundong. The two officials met ahead of a three-way meeting with their Japanese coun-

terpart on Wednesday. It will be second in-person meeting of the three officials since conservative South Korean President

Yoon Suk Yeol took office in May, signaling an improvement in difficult ties between Japan and South Korea. A year ago, Japanese and South Korean vice ministers declined to participate in a joint news conference after three-way talks in Washington, leaving Sherman to make a solo media appearance.

Sherman said North Korea needs to understand that the U.S. commitment to the security of South Korea and Japan is "ironclad."

"And we will use the full range of U.S. defense capabilities to defend our allies, including nuclear, conventional and missile defense capabilities," she said.

Cho, during his talks with Sherman, raised con-

cern that a new North Korean nuclear weapons policy adopted in September increases the possibility of its arbitrary use of nuclear weapons.

"This is creating serious tension on the Korean Peninsula," Cho said.

Sherman met earlier Tuesday with Japanese Vice Foreign Minister Takeo Mori and reaffirmed the further strengthening of the Japan-U.S. alliance and other shared goals, including the complete denuclearization of North Korea and their joint response to China's increasingly assertive actions in the region.

Japanese Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada recently said North Korea

is believed to have achieved a miniaturization of nuclear warheads while significantly advancing its missile capabilities by diversifying its launch technologies, making interceptions more difficult.

Japanese officials have also warned of a possible nuclear test by North Korea in the near future.

The Japanese and South Korean officials met together later Tuesday and discussed ways to improve their countries' ties, which were badly strained over disagreements stemming from Japanese wartime actions, including abuse of Korean forced laborers and coercing girls and young women to work in brothels for Japanese soldiers. **MDT/AP**



UK

# Sunak takes over as prime minister amid economic crisis

JILL LAWLESS, LONDON

**R**ISHI Sunak became Britain's third prime minister of the year yesterday, tasked with taming an economic crisis that has left the country's finances in a precarious state and millions struggling to pay their food and energy bills.

Sunak, who is the U.K.'s first leader of color, met King Charles III at Buckingham Palace, where the monarch officially asked the new leader of the governing Conservative Party to form a government, as is tradition.

Sunak clinched the leadership position Monday, seen by his party as a safe pair of hands it hopes will stabilize an economy sliding toward recession, and stem its own plunging popularity, after the brief, disastrous term of Liz Truss.

Her package of unfunded tax cuts spooked financial markets with the prospect of ballooning debt, drove the pound to record lows and forced the Bank of England to intervene — weakening Britain's fragile economy and obliterating her authority within her party.

Sunak — at 42 the youngest British leader in more than 200 years — acknowledged the scale of his challenge as well as the skepticism of a British public alarmed at the state of the economy and weary of a Conservative Party soap opera that has chewed through two prime ministers in as many months.

"I fully appreciate how hard things are," Sunak said outside the prime minister's 10 Downing Street residence. "And I understand, too, that I have work to do to restore trust after all that has happened. All I can say is that I am not daunted."

When he was Treasury chief, Sunak became popular with the public by handing out billions in support to shuttered businesses and laid-off workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

But now he will have to oversee tax hikes and public spending cuts as he tries to bring inflation and government debt under control.

Acknowledging "difficult decisions to come," Sunak tried to draw a line under the chaos that engulfed Truss and



British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak waves from the steps of 10 Downing Street in London, yesterday

her predecessor, Boris Johnson. He said his government "will have integrity, professionalism and accountability at every level."

Opponents already depict Sunak as out of touch with the concerns of ordinary people because of his privileged private school background, previous career as a hedge fund manager and vast wealth.

Sunak "comes into office as not a particularly popular prime minister, but with a reputation for some semblance of economic competence," said Alan Wager, research associate at the think tank U.K. in a Changing Europe. "The problem will be he is seen as someone that's not broadly on the side of people. He's seen as someone that's broadly out of touch."

Much of Sunak's fortune comes through his wife Akshata Murty, whose father is the billionaire founder of Indian IT firm Infosys. The couple is worth 730 million pounds (\$826 million), according to the Sunday Times Rich List.

In April 2022, it emerged that Murty did not pay U.K. tax on her overseas income. The practice was legal — and Murty soon agreed to relinquish it — but it looked bad at a time when millions of Bri-

tons were struggling to make ends meet.

Sunak's top priorities will be appointing Cabinet ministers, and preparing for a budget statement that will set out how the government plans to come up with billions of pounds (dollars) to fill a fiscal hole created by soaring inflation and a sluggish economy — and exacerbated by Truss' destabilizing time in office.

That statement, set to feature tax increases and spending cuts, is currently due to be made in Parliament on Monday by Treasury chief Jeremy Hunt — if Sunak keeps him in the job.

Truss departed after making a defiant public statement outside 10 Downing Street, seven weeks to the day after she was appointed prime minister. She announced her resignation on Thursday, acknowledging she could not deliver on her economic plans.

In her departing words Truss offered a defense of her low-tax vision and her brief term in office — despite the market mayhem triggered by her Sept. 23 budget package.

"I am more convinced than ever that we need to be bold and confront the problems we face," she said, before wishing Sunak success as "our country

continues to battle through a storm."

Sunak's victory is a remarkable reversal of fortune just weeks after he lost to Truss in a Conservative election to replace Johnson. Party members chose her tax-cutting boosterism over his warnings that inflation must be tamed.

Sunak was chosen as Conservative leader after becoming the only candidate to clear the hurdle of 100 nominations from fellow lawmakers to run in the party election. Sunak defeated rival Penny Mordaunt, who may get a job in his government, and the ousted Johnson, who dashed back from a Caribbean vacation to rally support for a comeback bid but failed to get enough backing to run.

As well as stabilizing the U.K. economy, Sunak must try to unite a governing party that has descended into acrimony as its poll ratings have plunged.

Conservative lawmaker Victoria Atkins, a Sunak ally, said the party would "settle down" under Sunak.

"We all understand that we've now really got to get behind Rishi — and, in fairness, that's exactly what the party has done," she told radio station LBC. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1979 SOUTH KOREAN PRESIDENT KILLED



The President of South Korea, Park Chung Hee, has been "accidentally" shot dead by the chief of his intelligence service, Kim Jae Kyu.

Five other people, including the president's bodyguard, were also killed.

The incident took place at the Korean Central Intelligence Agency's headquarters during a dinner being held by Kim in honour of the president.

A government statement revealed that an argument broke out between Kim Jae Kyu and Park's chief bodyguard, Cha Chi Chul, during which a shot was fired by Kim which hit the president as he tried to intervene.

The President was taken from the scene to a nearby army hospital where he later died.

There had been a long-standing dispute between the president and Kim Jae Kyu over whether to adopt a tough or moderate policy towards political opponents.

An emergency meeting of the Cabinet has named Prime Minister Choi Kyu-Hua as acting president. Martial law has also been proclaimed throughout the country.

General Chung, the army chief of staff, has been appointed commander of martial law. His first act was to order a nightly curfew and to ban all demonstrations throughout the country.

The US Government reacted immediately saying that it would deal strongly with any attempt by North Korea to exploit the situation.

The US Defense Department ordered American troops based in South Korea to be on "alert status" as a warning.

Park Chung Hee became President in 1961. He was known for his firm rule which he said was justified by the constant threat of invasion from North Korea.

He had already survived one assassination attempt. In August 1974 a series of shots were fired at him as he gave a speech. All shots missed him but one killed his wife.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

When the president's body was moved from Government House to the national cemetery more than two million Koreans lined the streets.

In a re-enactment of the incident, required by Korean law, Kim Jae Kyu showed how he first shot the president's bodyguard and then the president himself whom he shot twice.

The incident was seen as an attempted coup with intelligence agents admitting to shooting four of the president's other body guards after being told of the plan by Kim Jae Kyu. Kim Jae Kyu and four KCIA agents were tried and sentenced to death for the murder of President Park Chung Hee and his bodyguards.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
Avoid any petty ego confrontations; they could lead to estrangement if you aren't careful. You may have a problem with coworkers if you try to tell them what to do.

**TAURUS**  
Apr. 20-May. 20  
Be fair, not colorful. You may want to take a look at courses offered at a local institute. You have to believe in yourself and your talents. You must look into your options.

**GEMINI**  
May. 21-Jun. 21  
Exercise your talents and present your ideas to groups you think you can contribute to. Uncertainty regarding your direction is likely. Your boss may be pushy.

**CANCER**  
Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
Self-deception regarding your own worth may lead you down the wrong path. You will not be pleased with family members who try to put demands on you when you just don't have the time.

**LEO**  
Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
Your boss may be pushy. Take your time; do not make any decisions in haste. You may find yourself in an emotional fix if you interfere in other people's problems.

**VIRGO**  
Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
Your ability to stand out in a crowd will bring you the recognition you desire. You can make a difference if you're willing to stand up and be counted.

**LIBRA**  
Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
Do what you can but don't jeopardize your health trying to please everyone. Reevaluate your position and make decisions about your future goals. Be an observer before getting involved.

**SCORPIO**  
Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
You should consider submitting some of your written work for publication. Opportunities for travel must be carefully considered. You could do extremely well in competitive sports events.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
You can make major accomplishments while on short trips. Travel will turn out to be far more exciting than you imagined. Don't blow situations out of proportion.

**CAPRICORN**  
Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
You may have difficulties at an emotional level with mates. Your high energy must be directed into productive goals, or frustrations will occur. Don't be too quick to blame others for your bad mood.

**AQUARIUS**  
Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
You will find that unfinished projects at home will be most satisfying. You can expect to face opposition on the home front.

**PISCES**  
Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
Make sure that new mates live up to your high standards. Avoid overloading your plate. Partnerships may be plentiful.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

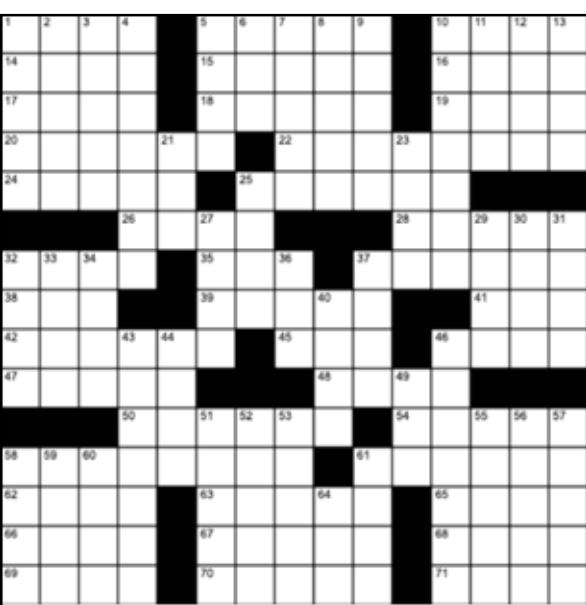
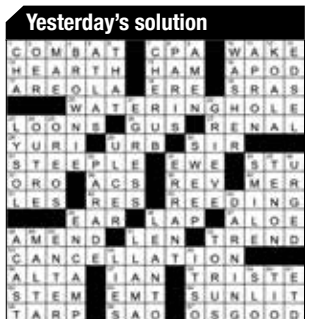
**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	6	20	cloudy
Changchun	0	15	fine
Chengdu	15	18	rain
Chongqing	19	22	overcast
Fuzhou	18	24	overcast
Guangzhou	18	29	fine
Guiyang	14	24	cloudy
Haikou	23	27	rain
Hangzhou	13	21	cloudy
Harbin	-3	13	fine
Hefei	11	22	cloudy
Nanjing	12	21	cloudy
Shanghai	14	19	cloudy
Taipei	19	21	overcast
Wuhan	16	21	cloudy
Hong Kong	24	26	overcast
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	2	6	cloudy
Frankfurt	9	19	rain
Paris	15	22	overcast
London	14	19	rain
New York	13	20	rain

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Highland hats; 5- Toothbrush brand; 10- Hibernia; 14- Encourage in wrongdoing; 15- Monetary unit of India; 16- Foul mood; 17- Laugh loudly; 18- Gillette razors; 19- Quote; 20- Aural; 22- Performs surgery; 24- Paces; 25- Foot part; 26- Cornerstone abbr.; 28- Judges; 32- Feathered creature; 35- Stir-fry pan; 37- Handy; 38- Brian of Roxy Music; 39- City on the Allegheny; 41- General on Chinese menus; 42- Bars legally; 45- Kernel; 46- Ferrara family; 47- Peter of Herman's Hermits; 48- Middy; 50- Evoke; 54- Analyze; 58- Grated Italian cheese; 61- She's a Dahl; 62- Ersatz butter; 63- One in prison for good; 65- Citrus quenchers; 66- Celestial body; 67- Stadium used for sports or musical events; 68- Turbine blade; 69- Household; 70- Virtuous; 71- Tolkien tree creatures;

DOWN 1- Gogol's "\_\_\_ Bulba"; 2- Circa; 3- Gettysburg general; 4- Zebra-like; 5- Like some history; 6- Furrow; 7- Cookwear; 8- Springs; 9- Attack on all sides; 10- One on the run; 11- Monogram ltr; 12- Ceremonial act; 13- French summers; 21- Pompous fool; 23- Cincinnati club; 25- Billy \_\_\_ had a hit song with "White Wedding"; 27- Terrible time?; 29- News; 30- New wine; 31- Blackthorn fruit; 32- "It's \_\_\_ real"; 33- Not \_\_\_ many words; 34- \_\_\_-Rooter; 36- Boy toy; 37- A law \_\_\_ itself; 40- Polly, to Tom Sawyer; 43- Another; 44- Brazilian soccer star; 46- Shackle; 49- Thole insert; 51- Religion of the Muslims; 52- Africa's most populous city; 53- Deduce; 55- Family car; 56- Concerning; 57- Go-aheads; 58- Luxurious; 59- Violist's clef; 60- Quantity of paper; 61- Asian sea; 64- Bambi's aunt;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

**USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

- Emergency calls 999
- Fire department 28 572 222
- PJ (Open line) 993
- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
- Customs 28 559 944
- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IAM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
- Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
- Telephone - Report 1000
- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



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AD



MARKETS

# FUTURES HEAD LOWER DESPITE STRONG SHOWING FROM US COMPANIES

**W**ALL Street declined before the opening bell despite strong earnings from some major U.S. corporations yesterday.

Futures for the Dow Jones industrials fell 0.4% and futures for the S&P 500 slipped 0.3%.

General Motors jumped 4.4% after the automaker reported third-quarter net profit rose 36.7% as vehicle sales rebound from global parts supply chain troubles. Vehicle sales in the U.S. jumped 24%.

Coca-Cola shares climbed nearly 3% after the beverage giant booked stronger-than-expected sales in the third quarter as it hiked prices. It also raised its revenue expectations for the year.

Google's parent company, along with Facebook's parent, Amazon and Apple are all reporting their latest financial results this week. They are among the priciest stocks in the benchmark S&P 500 and their earnings this week could mean big moves, up or down, for the broader market.

Investors are looking for indications of inflation's impact

AP PHOTO



on various industries. Prices on everything from clothing to food remain at their highest levels in four decades, putting pressure on companies to raise prices and cut costs, while squeezing consumers.

The Federal Reserve and central banks around the world

have been raising interest rates to tame inflation and those increases have been weighing on pricier stocks, like technology companies, by making less-risky bonds seem more attractive in a volatile stock market.

The Fed is expected to raise interest rates another three-

quarters of a percentage point at its upcoming meeting in November.

Economists and investors worry central banks could go too far in slowing economic activity, triggering a recession. They're looking for any sign they might ease up on rate increases. The U.S. economy has already slowed, contracting during the first half of the year.

A report on U.S. consumer confidence is due today [Macau time]. The U.S. government will release its third-quarter gross domestic product report later this week.

In Asia, Hong Kong's benchmark edged 0.1% lower, to 15,165.59, failing to hold onto early gains after a 6.4% selloff the day before. The Shanghai Composite index fell less than 0.1%, to 2,976.28.

Iris Pang of ING said "most, if not all, existing [China's] policy decisions has been agreed with Xi. This applies to potential changes in the central bank governor, banking regulator and economic adviser."

The Chinese yuan slid to a 15-year low of 7.3089 to the U.S. dollar after China's central bank appeared to ease off trying to counter market forces that were pushing the tightly controlled currency lower. The yuan has declined as U.S. interest rate hikes encouraged banks and other traders to convert money to dollars in search of higher returns.

In September, Chinese commercial banks were instructed by the People's Bank of China to keep the exchange rate stable and not to bet on the yuan weakening. But after the ruling party's congress ended over the weekend, the central bank set the yuan's starting price for trading yesterday unusually low.

Elsewhere in Asia, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index rose 1% to 27,250.28, while the Kospi in Seoul lost 0.1%, to 2,235.07. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 gained 0.3% to 6,798.60. India's Sensex slipped 0.5%, while Taiwan's benchmark lost 1.5%.

In other trading, the dollar fell to 148.91 Japanese yen from 148.94 yen. The euro fell to 98.64 cents from 98.75 cents.

Benchmark U.S. crude oil fell \$1.25 to \$83.33 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Brent crude, the international pricing standard, shed \$1.19 to \$90.02 per barrel. **MDT/AP**

AD

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AP PHOTO



Coach Luiz Felipe Scolari of Athletico Paranaense watches Copa Libertadores' semifinal against Palmeiras in Curitiba, Brazil, last August

FOOTBALL

# Scolari faces his last Copa Libertadores final

MAURICIO SAVARESE,  
SAO PAULO

**L**UIZ Felipe Scolari likely faces the last final of his 40-year coaching career on Saturday when he leads Athletico against Flamengo in the Copa Libertadores decider.

It's the third straight all-Brazilian final in South America's most prestigious club competition.

The match at Guayaquil, Ecuador, looks like being a landmark for the 73-year-old Scolari, affectionately known as "Big Phil."

"This career is coming to an end indeed," Scolari told The Associated Press in Sao Paulo earlier this month. "If we win the Copa Libertadores, it will be the pinnacle of a career for which I worked a lot. I never expected this much, winning all that I have won."

Scolari's career has seen the highest of highs — he led Brazil to its last World Cup title in 2002 — and the lowest of lows when Germany humiliated tournament host Brazil 7-1 in the semifinals of the 2014 edition.

Scolari also took Portugal to the final of

the European Championship in 2004, when it lost to Greece.

He has won two Copa Libertadores titles as a coach. This will be his fourth final. His team from the city of Curitiba is chasing its first title in the competition in its second final. Flamengo, the 1981 and 2019 champion, lost last year to Palmeiras.

After Brazil's World Cup humiliation in Belo Horizonte, Scolari — whose career included a turbulent spell at Premier League team Chelsea — returned to his boyhood club Gremio and won several titles in China with Guangzhou Evergrande.

Now without his famous mustache, Scolari became Athletico's technical director on May 4. But five days later, with the team struggling in different tournaments, he became head coach for the rest of the season.

"I still think as a coach, not as a technical director. But I think I will end this year here and help appoint someone to take over next year," Scolari said. Since taking charge, Athletico has knocked two giants out of the Copa Liberta-

dores — Argentina's Estudiantes de la Plata and defending champion Palmeiras of Brazil.

"The power that Flamengo, Palmeiras have is much bigger than ours. Our payroll is smaller than about 12 clubs in Brazilian soccer," Scolari said. Athletico has a promising 17-year old striker Vitor Roque, with Uruguayan midfielder David Terans its best player.

Scolari is also looking ahead to the World Cup starting Nov. 20 in Qatar. He believes Brazil's current generation of players is so good that it could dominate the tournament for the next three editions.

"(Brazil's players) have this World Cup, probably 2026 too and many of them will be around in 2030," Scolari said when asked about strikers Vinicius Jr, Raphinha and Antony, who have brought new energy to the Selecao playing alongside Neymar and other veterans in European clubs.

"These kids starting now might give us the result we want. But we can't put too much pressure. In the next four years they will probably be even better," Scolari said.

He's also hoping for a good performance from Cristiano Ronaldo's Por-

tugal, which Scolari calls "my second nation now."

Asked about the best and worst moments of his overall career, Scolari said he couldn't pick.

"The happiest, not the best, was at the start. I did not have this dream of going so far and I won the Rio Grande do Sul state championship with Gremio," Scolari said. "There was not a

worst moment. There's stages that don't work, like 2014, and you have to work to pick yourself up. I left here, went to China and in 11 tournaments we played we won seven. Believe me, there's no special defeat."

Scolari says he wants to continue working at Athletico as a technical director but is ready to fully retire if he doesn't fit and go back to Porto Alegre to become a full-time Gremio fan.

Whatever happens, life is good right now for the veteran coach.

"I am in good health, I have three grandchildren in Portugal, a new granddaughter coming up in Brazil, I have friends all over the world. I never thought this was possible," a tearful Scolari said. "My son just bought a seat at Gremio's stadium, behind the dugout. Today I can't go there, but maybe within a year I will be able to."

Scolari remains in love with football of course.

"Soccer still moves me," Scolari said. "But I will live it less intensively." MDT/AP



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**OPINION**

**Multipolar World**

Jorge Costa Oliveira



**NORD STREAM SABOTAGE AND THE DIVIDE IN THE WEST**

On 26 and 27 September, four explosions in Danish and Swedish waters destroyed parts of the Nord Stream gas pipelines. According to Der Spiegel, neither the German government, the EU or NATO have any doubt these explosions were the result of sabotage and not of technical failure.

The Nord Stream pipelines are in ocean depths ranging from 80 to 110 meters, and experts consulted by Asia Times believe remotely operated underwater vehicles (ROUV or ROV) may have been used to place explosives in the pipelines, and it cannot be ruled out expert divers were involved. This attempt on critical underwater infrastructure is a very serious irresponsibility and a dangerous precedent.

Who is behind this sabotage? No one has claimed responsibility, and even after the inquiries by Nord Stream AG - the owner of the pipelines in question - it will not be possible to be certain. It is not credible that any European country would risk such acts of sabotage against the two pipelines. Moreover, such a move could be considered an act of war by Russia.

For months there have been rumors that Ukraine might carry out attacks on Nord Stream 2; but they have no ROUV to do so, nor is it credible that they would do so when Germany is supporting Ukraine in the war. Since Russia had already shut off the gas in Nord Stream, and could always repeat this action in the future, there is no motivation for destroying vital infrastructure that allows it to rake in significant revenue and leeway for blackmailing the leading European power.

Biden's ill-fated statements last February about how he would not allow Nord Stream 2 to work are now called into question. However, it is inconceivable the US government has in any way acquiesced to this sabotage.

Without Nord Stream and other pipelines from Russia - which are still intact - the European, especially German, dependence on American LNG is huge and will continue to increase (about 40% in 2030). Given that the cost of that LNG is already more than three times the price of gas in the US domestic market, it is undermining the competitiveness of European companies.

The historical backdrop for these acts of sabotage also includes ongoing negotiations regarding long-term contracts for the supply of LNG between German companies and foreign, mainly US suppliers. The German government has been complaining about the "astronomical prices" demanded by the suppliers for the LNG, claiming a lack of solidarity from the US.

Regardless of what the [lengthy] investigations will uncover (probably nothing conclusive), if German public opinion believes American interests are behind this sabotage and have somehow contributed to a brutal hike in the cost of energy in Germany, we will have what Putin's war of aggression on Ukraine failed to achieve - a rift in the relationship of trust between the US and Germany.

[linkedin.com/in/jorgecostaoliveira](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jorgecostaoliveira)

**RONALDO RETURNS TO TRAINING WITH UNITED SQUAD AFTER OMISSION**

Cristiano Ronaldo returned to first-team training with Manchester United yesterday after being omitted from the squad ahead of the team's Premier League match at Chelsea at the weekend.

Ronaldo was disciplined for refusing to come on as a substitute in United's 2-0 win over Tottenham in the league last week. He then headed to the locker room before the final whistle of the game at Old Trafford in a show of dissent.

United manager Erik ten Hag said afterward that the Portugal striker "remains an important part of the squad" but had to be sanctioned for the sake of the culture within the team.

Ahead of Saturday's game at Chelsea, which United drew 1-1, Ronaldo did individual training with fitness coaches at the club's training ground.

Now he is back in practice with the squad ahead of the home game against Sheriff Tiraspol in the Europa League on Thursday.

**THE BUZZ**

**TWO IMAGES OF BRITAIN, TAKEN SEVEN WEEKS APART, THAT SPEAK VOLUMES**

AP PHOTO



**TAMER FAKAHANY, LONDON**

**T**hey are two photos taken exactly seven weeks apart, capturing the traditional and ceremonial rites of the monarch meeting the British prime minister-in-waiting to ask them to form a new government.

They are also bookends. Between the taking of the first and of the second, much elapsed, throwing a nation into mourning and then into an acute, turbulent economic crisis - tectonic shifts, one after the other, that many in the country had never experienced.

Queen Elizabeth II met incoming prime minister Liz Truss on Sept. 6. It was the last time the monarch was seen in an image by the public after her 70 years on the throne. Her reign had straddled two centuries, a World War, post-colonialism, Brexit and a pandemic.

For Truss, it was new start, capping weeks of bruising battle for the Conservative party leadership with Rishi Sunak (more on p8) and handing her the keys to 10 Downing Street. Her predecessor, Boris Johnson, had been forced to resign amid a haze of ethics scandals.

The queen, using a walking cane after prolonged mobility issues, is seen smiling, Truss, too, from the side angle can be seen smiling as they shake hands. The queen died two days later.

For many, the meeting was probably the high point of Truss' premiership. After that, it sped downhill, crashed and burned in 45 days. Her libertarian economic policies caused convulsions in the markets and saw the pound crater to its lowest ebb against the dollar in nearly 40 years.

And now, this week, another photo: former Treasury chief Sunak, now prime minister, pictured yesterday shaking hands with King Charles III. The same Sunak who said Truss' economic plan was a "fairy tale." He may have gotten the last word with his predecessor, but he

has huge obstacles ahead - one of Britain's most severe economic crises in modern history.

Britain is on its third leader this year, and the two most recent ones took the post without a direct mandate from the British people - they were elected leader of the Conservative Party and became prime minister automatically. There is a clamor among the opposition and beyond for a general election. By law, that doesn't have to be until 2024, and Sunak has said he won't call one - after the recent turmoil, the Tories face possible obliteration at the polls as it stands now.

Charles III is secure in his position and almost certain to outlast the government. His mother met 15 prime ministers in her 70 years on the throne; Charles is on his second after less than two months. But he is nevertheless the oldest person ever to ascend to the British throne.

In the middle of such chaos, who knows what the next photograph might show? **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



**Ukraine** The Kremlin has insisted that its warning of a purported Ukrainian plan to use a "dirty bomb" radioactive device should be taken seriously, and criticized the West for shrugging it off. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the Western dismissal of the Russian warning is "unacceptable in view of the seriousness of the danger that we have talked about."

**USA** A retired Foreign Service officer has pleaded guilty to having sex with one minor and exchanging explicit images with another while he was stationed in the Philippines. Dean Cheves, 63, pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court in Alexandria to two counts of engaging in illicit sexual conduct in a foreign place in 2020 and 2021. Cheves admitted having sex with a 16-year-old girl twice in the Philippines after meeting her online. In chats he said he needed to be "extra careful" about the relationship because "(t)his kind of thing causes international incidents."

AP PHOTO



**Uganda** A fire at a boarding school for blind students killed 11 children in a rural community just outside Uganda's capital, Kampala. "One of our dormitories caught fire and burnt at around midnight. The matron made an alarm," Francis Kinubi, the school's founder, said. "This was one of the dormitories for the young girls and it caught and burned down and, very unfortunately, 11 girls, small girls, perished." Police said in a statement that six other people were hospitalized in critical condition.

COURTESY BBC



**UK** The partial solar eclipse began at 10:08 BST yesterday in London, with the maximum eclipse at 10:59. It could be seen across the UK until about midday, BBC reported. Solar eclipses occur when the Moon passes between the Sun and the Earth, casting a shadow. One of the best views was in Lerwick in the Shetland Isles, with 28% of the Sun obscured at mid-eclipse.