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**Indonesia's** elite counterterrorism police squad arrested at least 59 suspected militants in recent weeks in a nationwide crackdown as the country gears up for elections in 2024, police said yesterday. The arrests were made in eight provinces since Oct. 2, including 27 suspects who were arrested Friday, said Aswin Siregar, the spokesperson of the squad known as Densus 88. Those arrested believed to have links to banned extremist groups who were allegedly plotting to disrupt next year's election, he said.

AP PHOTO



**Japanese** police yesterday surrounded a post office where a man with a gun was holed up, and said the case may be linked to a shooting earlier in the day at a nearby hospital that wounded two people. Hours later, the standoff continued and one post office employee was still believed to be inside the building, a woman who was reportedly taken hostage by the gunman. Japanese media said police were negotiating for her release over the phone. Hundreds of police were mobilized and surrounded the building housing the post office in the city of Warabi, reports said.

AP PHOTO



**Australia** A wildfire is suspected to have killed a man, destroyed more than 50 homes and razed 20,000 hectares of farm and scrubland in eastern Australia, authorities said yesterday. Firefighters have been battling the blaze that has scorched the Queensland state town of Tara for more than a week. No new property losses were reported yesterday as crews sweltered in 37 degrees Celsius weather to reinforce containment lines established on Monday.

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Radio Taxi receives 10,000 orders daily with only 300 vehicles and frequently 'all taxis are busy'... P3

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**AVIATION**  
**COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS SURGE OVER 26,800 IN THIRD QUARTER**

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### OVER 8,700 RESIDENTIAL UNITS UNDERWAY IN Q3

The Land and Urban Construction Bureau has announced that in the third quarter of this year, two private residential projects were issued occupation permits and 54 private residential projects are being built or under building inspection, providing 2,242 units. Another 97 residential projects are in the design stage, providing 6,555 units. During the period, eight hotel projects were under construction and in the design stage, providing 4,445 rooms.

### LARGE-SCALE JOB FAIR NEXT WEEK TO OFFER 2,000 VACANCIES

The Labour Affairs Bureau and the Macau Federation of Trade Unions will hold a large job fair on Nov. 13 and 14 at the Fisherman's Wharf Convention and Exhibition Center, hosting some 50 local companies. In a statement, the bureau said more than 2,000 job vacancies will be provided, with registrations opening today. In addition, the authorities will continue to hold employment matching sessions for people with disabilities on Dec. 5. More than 200 job vacancies will be provided by 23 participating companies.

### WHOLESALE, RETAIL FIRMS RECORD INCREASE IN 2022

The city recorded 15,824 wholesale and retail establishments, market stalls and fixed street stalls operating in 2022, an increase of 935 year-on-year, according to the Statistics and Census Service. The total number of persons engaged rose 2,330 to 65,269. Receipts and expenditure of Wholesale & Retail Trade dropped 6.4% and 3.3% year-on-year to MOP105.01 billion and MOP99.97 billion respectively.

KONG CHI

# LAWYER IN BRIBED PROSECUTOR CASE PLEDGES INDEPENDENCE AT WORK

ANTHONY LAM

**T**HE lawyer-defendant in the bribery case involving a senior prosecutor has said she maintained impartiality at work despite having had a non-lawyer as an investor.

At a recent hearing, first defendant Kong Chi's lawyer questioned fourth defendant Kuan Hoi Lon. She responded that her law firm – founded with the investment of second defendant Choi Sao Ieng as disclosed earlier – had taken a variety of cases, such as criminal, civil, administrative and contract, according to a report by local media All About Macau.

When questioned by Kong's other defense lawyer about her impartiality after being hired by a non-lawyer, Kuan said Choi did not ask for details about the cases she was handling. Nor was she asked by Choi to report progress or details of the cases. However, Choi was asked about the closure dates of cases and legal fees collected.

Kuan said cases referred to the law firm by Choi accounted for about 20% of her total workload, 30% of which were criminal cases.

Kuan also disclosed that during the partnership, Choi banked MOP50,000 to MOP60,000 for the

law firm each month, which was used for salaries and company expenditure. She denied the sum came from illegal activities, and explained that fluctuations existed due to changes in salary or the number of employees.

In an earlier hearing, Choi said the law firm she invested in hired Kuan who received MOP35,000 as her monthly base salary. Participation in cases was to generate a maximum of 20% in commission for Kuan.

Kuan later said the partnership ended for several reasons after three years.

It was also disclosed that Kuan would help collect items or money held in custody as requested by her clients. Noting that others were present when money or other items were transferred, Kuan said all belongings were returned to her clients and that no cash had been passed to Choi.

The court has agreed that the Judiciary Police should verify the signatures on the receipts collected as exhibits because the prosecution doubts their authenticity, but results must be returned to the court within a month.

Furthermore, seven prosecutors have been subpoenaed to testify in court, with five actually appearing. Prosecutor-coordina-

tor Lai U Hou opted for written testimony due to his role in the Prosecutor Committee. Prosecutor-coordinator Tam I Kuan exercised her right to remain silent as she is Kong's legal spouse.

The prosecution showed exhibits that pointed to Kong's informal viewing of case documents handled by other prosecutors.

Prosecutor Wu Hio remembered Kong's assistant had "borrowed" case documents from him without giving reasons or the dates by which the documents would be returned. He accepted the request because Kong, being assistant prosecutor-general, was authorized to see the documents.

When asked about Kong's repeatedly borrowing of the same case documents, Wu said he normally did not interfere after Kong's first borrowing of a document.

He also said the formalities governing the borrowing of case documents were only introduced later. At first, such practices were not required to be logged.

Wu also said he did not think much about a case being archived after Kong's accessing the documents three times, but wondered why Kong needed to take them so often.

Prosecutor Leong Man Ieng

said she did not remember calls between Kong, assistant prosecutor-general Cheng Lap Fok, Prosecutor Lai U Hou and herself before a court hearing connected to this case.

The past hearing involved a common friend of Choi and Kong. The prosecution said that after the calls, Kong – instead of Leong – appeared at the hearing as the prosecution.

Prosecutors Lai and Leong are married.

Leong said she had covered for Cheng during the latter having a leg injury. When questioned by the court about why she remembered covering for Cheng but not the sudden swap of prosecutor for a hearing, she said she thought it was a special arrangement decided at upper levels.

Another testifying prosecutor, Lao Oi Si, said Kong once asked why she was unwilling to give access to a case document, when the former requested it over the phone.

Prosecutor Mui Cheng Fei, testified that Kong had once instructed her to add a charge of computer forgery against a suspect in a POS machine scam. She put scam as the lead charge because she found evidence for computer forgery was not strong enough.

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TAXI SHORTAGE

# Radio Taxi receives 10,000 orders daily with 300 vehicles

STAFF REPORTER

**T**HE number of orders and reservations for on-line taxi hailing have significantly increased with more than 10,000 orders per day.

However, there are only 300 Radio Taxis operating in the city, showing a severe lack of supply given the increasing demand, according to general manager of Macau Radio Taxi Wong Pui Kuan.

Wong said the firm has "encountered many challenges in their six years of operation" and is continuously reviewing and improving its internal management and operational capabilities.

Previously, the taxi operator expressed support for more taxi licenses as demand cannot be met even with all the company's 300 taxis in full operation.

Relying on a fleet of seven-seater vehicles, the company has been popular among family tou-



rists, which account for a majority of visitors to Macau.

In August, the Transport Bureau (DSAT) said there was room for improvement in e-hailing taxi services, as online ride hailing service platforms, such as Didi or Uber, are not legal in Macau.

Amid Macau's taxi shortage saga, Macau's taxi drivers have expressed opposition to any return of ride hailing services to the SAR.

Tony Kuok of the Macau Taxi Driver Mutual Association said that reintroducing ride hailing services would cause unaccepta-

ble market upheaval.

This comes as the city faces a taxi shortage after the reopening of the borders.

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng has previously said the government had checked the law and found no space for such services, "unless a lot of laws are amended."

Last week, the SAR government launched a public tender for ordinary eight-year taxi licenses for 500 new taxis. The tender, slated to end Nov. 23, will allow companies to bid for packs of 10 licenses, with each company allowed to apply for up to 50 taxis.

Further, the Bank of China Macau signed a strategic cooperation agreement with Macau Radio Taxi to upgrade the existing taxi hailing mobile application and will launch "Dialing PLUS" in December, gradually adding functions such as booking ferry tickets, air tickets and hotels.

FINANCE

# Bank license changes possible after updated law

**A** new type of bank license with a restricted scope of business may be issued under the updated laws for the financial system, the Monetary Authority of Macau (AMCM) has announced.

The updated law will be enacted today.

The authority highlighted several aspects in the updated law. Room for newer types of banking licenses exists, the AMCM noted, and a new type of license for banks with a restricted



scope of business will be introduced. Temporary licenses may be issued for financial technology projects to enable flexibility.

The law will also aid improved local supervi-

sion and alignment with international monitoring bodies. The AMCM said regulations for credit institutions will be aligned to international industry standards. Qualifications

and the responsibility of the managerial and supervisory bodies of credit institutions will be upgraded to refine "effective governance," the AMCM added.

Administration will also be "refined" with simplified procedures for bond issuance. As a result of the "refinement," the issuance of bonds will be reviewed. Issuance will then be approved by registration. This adjustment is to cope with bond market developments, the AMCM said.

Penalties for illegal financial activities will also be increased. Those who accept savings and issue repayable sums that break the law will face tougher sentences. Criminal liabilities have also been added where violators are legal entities.

In recent years, the Macau government has been striving to transform Macau into a new financial hub for China. It was said Beijing has shown support through the issuance of national bonds in Macau. **AL**

70TH GP

# 80% OF LAST TWO GRAND PRIX RACE DAYS TICKETS SOLD

ANTHONY LAM

**A**BOUT 80% of the tickets for the last two race days of this year's Macau Grand Prix (GP) have been sold, the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong, has disclosed.

Marking the event's 70th anniversary, this year's Macau GP will be

held on six days over the second and the third weekends in November.

The senior official described ticket sales as satisfactory. She hoped the event will help attract more tourists to Macau.

The Director of the MGTO, Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, said the Macau GP's promotional videos are being

aired on Cathay Pacific flights to persuade Hong Kong-bound passengers to visit Macau as well.

Meanwhile, the event's organization has been going smoothly, Ao Ieong said. Crash barriers are installed, with certain necessary openings and chain-link fencing as exceptions. Flexible openings are

reserved for the swift resumption of road traffic after each race day.

The public parking lot at the Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal has been closed since last weekend. It will reopen on Nov. 24 at 3 p.m. Those who need parking near the ferry terminal should consider the parking lots next to Jai

Alai hotel or behind the Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry's Commissioner's Office.

As at every Macau GP, the ferry terminal parking lot is closed to park race cars.

Road users are also reminded about possible detours or lane closures due to the installation of crash barriers.

## IFTM RISES IN SHANGHAI RANKING IN NEWLY RELEASED REPORT

ShanghaiRanking's Global Ranking of Academic Subjects, the Macao Institute for Tourism Studies (IFTM) ranks 42nd globally in "Hospitality and Tourism Management," rising from last year's ranking in the 51-75 bracket. In addition, IFTM also offers dual master's programs with the University of Surrey from the United Kingdom and the University of Queensland from Australia, which rank second and eighth globally.

## IC CALLS FOR PRODUCTION PARTICIPANTS FOR FILMART 2024

The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) will set up a "Macao Pavilion" at the Hong Kong International Film & TV Market (FILMART) in 2024 to promote the film and TV production industry and attract non-local film and TV projects to film in Macau. The IC is calling for expressions of interest by local film and TV production entities to participate in the FILMART by Nov. 23. The bureau will select a maximum of eight companies. Last year, FILMART gathered more than 7,300 practitioners from 41 countries and regions.

## BLUE-CARD HOLDERS INCREASING

The number of non-resident workers increased by about 18,000 over a period of one year, data from the Labour Affairs Bureau has shown. September figures show there were more than 171,000 blue card holders in the territory, compared to 153,000 in the same month last year. Most come from mainland China (118,694), followed by 7,655 from the Philippines and 2,287 from Vietnam.

## UM AND UNIVERSITY OF COIMBRA COLLABORATE ON NEUROSCIENCE LAB

The University of Macau (UM) will have a joint laboratory in Neuroscience with the University of Coimbra, the vice-rector of the Portuguese higher education institution, João Nuno Calvão da Silva, has told TDM Radio. The University of Coimbra is committed to strengthening cooperation and reciprocity in a historic connection to Macau, according to the report. Earlier this year, UM rector Yonghua Song signed many strategic cooperation agreements with Portuguese universities such as University of Coimbra and University of Porto to strengthen cooperative exchanges in research and education.

STATS

# Q3 COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS SURGE TO OVER 26,800

**A**RRIVING and departing commercial flights totaled 3,437 trips in September, a sharp rise of 337.3% year-on-year, yet slightly lower when compared to August (4,060).

In the first three quarters this year, arriving and departing commercial flights jumped 275.7% year-on-year to 26,863 trips.

The Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has been partnering with airlines to boost tourism arrivals, offering a series of promotions.

Just recently, the bureau announced campaigns with airline companies to promote the Macau Grand Prix, such as screening marketing videos on Cathay Pacific flights.

During summer, the MGTO, together with Air Macau, organized a familiarization trip dedicated to tourism operators from



Tokyo and Osaka to boost arrivals from Japan.

With the lifting of border restrictions at the beginning of 2023, the aviation industry has progressively resumed both arriving and departing international flight services with the MGTO hoping that these promotional

activities will attract more visitors from this traditional source to an expanded portfolio of attractions in Macau.

Meanwhile, cross-border vehicular traffic in September jumped 57.6% year-on-year to 636,553 trips, of which light automobile

trips (595,534) surged by 61.3%.

In the first three quarters of 2023, cross-border vehicular traffic (5,230,437 trips) soared 98.9% year-on-year, while the gross weight of containerized cargo by land (26,818 tonnes) slid by 31%. **LV**

TOURISM

# SEPTEMBER HOTEL OCCUPANCY DROPS

**S**EPTEMBER hotel occupancy was at 78.6%, slightly down compared to the month prior, which was at 88.7%, during summer holidays.

The number of guests of hotel establishments last month leapt 158.2% year-on-year to 1.13 million. Guests from mainland China (813,000), Hong Kong (178,000) and Taiwan (30,000) jumped 144.2%, 917.7% and 873.7% respectively, albeit from a low base.

Local guests (46,000) dropped 41.5%.

Meanwhile, guests' average length of stay was 1.6 nights.

In the first three quarters of 2023, the average occupancy rate of hotel guest rooms rose 43.1 percentage points year-on-year to 80.6%.

A rise is expected in October due to the Golden Week. Government data shows the eight-day National Day Holiday logged nearly a million visitors, mostly from the mainland.

Tourism authorities said the average hotel occupancy rate topped 87.9% during the period.

Further, in September, there were 133,000 visitors arriving on package tours.

In the first three quarters of 2023, visitors arriving on package tours totaled 743,000, and Macau residents purchasing outbound services through travel agencies rocketed 931.7% year-on-year to 291,000. **LV**

AD

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PMI

# Chinese factory activity contracts in October as pandemic recovery falters

ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

**A**N official survey of manufacturers shows China's factory activity contracted in October, suggesting the economy remains on uneven footing.

The purchasing managers' index, or PMI, fell to 49.5 in October on a 100-point scale, down from 50.2 last month, according to the National Bureau of Statistics and the China Federation of Logistics & Purchasing.

A figure below 50 indicates a contraction in manufacturing activity while a number above 50 reflects an expansion. The non-manufacturing PMI for October fell 1.1 percentage points to 50.6, a sign of slowing activity in China's service and construction industries.

Factory output and supplier delivery times improved while measures of new orders, raw materials and employment contracted.

China's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic has faltered after an initial burst of growth earlier in the year faded more quickly than expected.

In recent months, the government has raised spending on build-



ding ports and other infrastructure, cut interest rates and eased curbs on home-buying. But economists say wider reforms are needed to address long-term problems that are stifling growth.

"If reflected in hard activity data, today's PMIs suggest that the momentum of China's economic growth ebbed at the beginning of the fourth quarter," Robert Carnell, regional head of research for ING Economics in Asia Pacific, said in a report.

Carnell said support measures, including increased government

spending, will help offset any tendency for the economy to slow.

"Even so, today's data suggest that although it has weakened, economic growth is still ongoing," he said.

Recent data suggest China will likely to hit its growth target of 5% for the year, he said. The economy expanded at a 4.9% annual pace in the last quarter.

The property sector, once an important pillar of China's economy, has now become a drag on growth as developers struggle with huge debt burdens and slowing sales. **MDT/AP**

ENERGY

# India-led alliance set to fund solar projects in Africa

**A**N alliance of nations that push for more solar power worldwide are set to announce nearly \$35 million for projects such as mini grids and rooftop installations, mainly in Africa, according to the group's director general.

At the sidelines of the group's annual meeting in New Delhi yesterday, Ajay Mathur said the International Solar Alliance expect a \$25 million investment from the Indian government, alongside its own cash injection of \$10 million for smaller solar power infrastructure.

Officials from 116 nations are discussing how to harness solar power to ramp up clean energy use



and reduce reliance on planet-warming fossil fuels at the gathering, which runs until Thursday.

The United States, France, Germany, the United

Kingdom, as well as more than 30 African countries are members of the ISA. China, the market leader in solar energy, is not yet part of the alliance.

India's power minister and ISA president R. K. Singh said that the alliance's funding mechanism, known as the Global Solar Facility, is aiming to raise \$100 million to help deploy solar projects around the world.

Singh said that because of a lack of investment so far, Africa "has not been able to leverage its potential" in terms of solar power.

Singh said the alliance is focused on getting the 733 million people worldwide currently without electricity hooked onto renewables. Then, he said at a press conference, "we are certain investments will start flowing into Africa."

He added that exponentially increasing renewable energy capacity globally will be a key point of discussion at the upcoming United Nations climate conference scheduled to begin in Dubai in a month's time. **MDT/AP**

ADVERTORIAL

# GREAT TIMES

Revitalize Your Skin This Winter with the Award-Winning Spa Treatment

**A**s winter approaches, it's time to pamper and rejuvenate your skin to combat the harsh effects of the season. Look no further than the multiple award-winning TRIA Spa at MGM MACAU and MGM COTAI and its highly acclaimed "Jade and Gold Journey" treatment. Recognized as the "Most Attractive Spa Treatment of the Year" at the SpaChina Awards, the luxurious treatment has been upgraded and re-launched, promises an even more revitalizing experience.



The 90-minute indulgent journey features a hand treatment using 24K gold caviar cream. Its unique formula reduces collagen loss, instantly leaving your hands firm, smooth, and radiant. Coupled with the Jade Retreat, which focuses on relieving stress in the shoulder, neck, and back through a full body massage using warm jade stones, followed by a facial treatment. The comprehensive spa experience improves immune system and blood circulation, and promotes detoxification, resulting in a truly holistic revitalization.



Indulge in a rejuvenating escape while experiencing the ultimate age-defying and detoxifying effects of this remarkable treatment. The "Jade and Gold Journey" is available in November and December only. For enquiries and reservations, please call Tria at MGM MACAU at (853) 8802 3838 or MGM COTAI at (853) 8806 2733 or email triaspa@mgm.mo.



DIPLOMACY

# Singapore defense minister calls on China to take lead in reducing regional tensions

KEN MORITSUGU, BEIJING

SINGAPORE'S defense minister urged China as a dominant power in Asia to take the lead in reducing tensions in the region, warning that a military conflict like the one in Ukraine or the Israel-Hamas war would be devastating for the continent and its future.

Speaking yesterday on the third and final day of an annual defense conference held by China, Ng Eng Hen stressed the importance of military-to-military communication to manage crises, expressing hope that the United States and China would resume the use of their military hotline.

Peace is precarious and never a given anywhere in the world, Ng said. "What has happened in Europe and the Middle East must never occur here. ... We must do all we can to avoid it."

The Xiangshan Forum brought together defense officials from dozens of countries and organizations. China, which recently sacked its defense minister, was represented by Zhang Youxia, vice chairman of the Central Military Commission.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu used the forum to highlight Russia's deepening ties with China as it faces isolation from the West over its invasion of



Singapore's Defense Minister Ng Eng Hen arrives for the 10th Beijing Xiangshan Forum in Beijing, yesterday

Ukraine.

Shoigu was given a military honor guard reception before a meeting with Zhang on Monday. The Russian Tass news agency quoted Zhang as saying that China is ready to respond with Russia to security threats and challenges and "jointly maintain global strategic balance and stability."

Ukraine's defense attaché took issue with the conference giving the floor to Shoigu and the defen-

se minister of pro-Russia Belarus on Monday, followed by an Iranian official who defended Russia's invasion.

"There is only North Korea missing to see the full parade of evil," the attaché, Klymyshyn Petro, said during a question and answer session after a speech by Seyed Yahya Rahim Safavi, a senior adviser to Iran's leader.

Safavi described the invasion as a defensive reaction to U.S.

and EU efforts to expand NATO to the Russian border, and said that Ukraine is paying a high price because the U.S. and NATO don't want to fight with Russia directly.

Ng, noting the territorial disputes in the South China Sea and the nuclear threat from North Korea, said it is vital for defense and military establishments to engage to reduce the risk of miscalculations and mishaps.

He applauded codes that have

been adopted to manage unplanned military encounters at sea and said they should be expanded to include coast guards, which frequently face off in disputed waters.

The Philippines and China exchanged accusations and warnings yesterday after China's navy and air force tracked a Philippine navy ship near Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea.

China froze military exchanges with the U.S. in August 2022, but the two sides appear to be restarting dialogue, including on security ahead of a possible meeting between Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping in November.

The U.S. sent a representative to the Xiangshan forum, Cynthia Carras, the Defense Department's principal director for China, Taiwan and Mongolia.

Ng appealed to China to assure other nations that it is not a threat as it grows more powerful.

"Whether China accepts it or not, wants it or not, it is already seen as a dominant power and must therefore act as a benevolent one," he said.

China has sought to portray itself as a non-threatening global power and different from Western powers — though clearly some of its neighbors and the U.S. view it as a potential threat.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry official, quoting the country's president, told the conference that China would better safeguard world peace through its own development.

"This path is neither the old path of colonization and plunder, nor the crooked path taken by some countries to seek hegemony once they grow strong, but the right course of peaceful development," said Nong Rong, an assistant minister of foreign affairs.

MDT/AP

LI KEQIANG

# Remains of former Chinese premier to be cremated and flags to be lowered



THE remains of former Chinese Premier Li Keqiang are to be cremated tomorrow, with flags around the country to be flown at half-staff to mourn the official who helped guide the world's second-largest economy for a decade.

Li died Friday of a heart attack at 68. Mourners gathered at his childhood home in the city of Hefei in an apparently spontaneous outpouring of grief seen by some as a rebuke of state leader and head of the ruling Communist Party Xi Jinping.

Li was once seen as a potential top leader, but the trai-

ned economist was shunted aside in a leadership shakeup last year and replaced with Xi loyalist Li Qiang. Even before then, Xi had consolidated power and sidelined potential rivals with an anti-corruption campaign and by altering the constitution to allow himself to rule indefinitely.

Xi has also thoroughly reshuffled economic and financial leadership positions and set up an entity called the Central Financial Commission in moves that are seen as shifting power from other regulators such as the China Securities Regulatory Commission.

The death of the English-speaking Li who represented a generation of politicians schooled during a time of greater openness to liberal Western ideas, was seen by many observers to symbolize the shift toward stronger par-

ty controls.

Although he was the Communist Party's second-ranking official, Li received far less attention from state media outlets than Xi. The two men never formed the sort of partnership that characterized the relationship between previous presidents and premiers.

Li was "extolled as an excellent (Communist Party) member, a time-tested and loyal communist soldier and an outstanding proletarian revolutionist, statesman and leader of the Party and the state," the official Xinhua News Agency reported Tuesday. Flags will be lowered at government offices, including in the semi-autonomous cities of Hong Kong and Macau and at Chinese consulates and embassies around the world, Xinhua said. MDT/AP

SOUTH CHINA SEA

# PLA's forces shadow a Philippine navy ship near disputed shoal, sparking new exchange of warnings

JIM GOMEZ, MANILA

A Philippine navy patrol ship was shadowed by Chinese forces near a disputed shoal in the South China Sea, sparking a fresh exchange of accusations and warnings between the Asian neighbors yesterday.

Chinese and Philippine security officials gave conflicting accounts of Monday's encounter near Scarborough Shoal. China has surrounded the shoal with its navy and coast guard ships since a tense standoff with Philippine vessels more than a decade ago.

A rich fishing atoll and a safe mooring area during storms, Scarborough off the northwestern Philippines coast is one of most fiercely contested territories in the South China Sea, where Chinese and Philippine forces have faced off in recent months.

The frequent confrontations, which led to an Oct. 22 collision of Chinese and Philippine vessels near another disputed shoal, have prompted the United States to repeatedly renew a warning that it's obligated to defend the Philippines, its oldest treaty ally in Asia,



AP PHOTO

if Filipino forces, ships or aircraft come under an armed attack in the Pacific, including in the South China Sea.

Chinese air force Col. Tian Junli, a spokesperson for the Southern Theater Command of the People's Liberation Army, said a Philippine warship trespassed into what he said were Chinese waters around Scarborough Shoal on Monday and was "tracked, monitored, warned and restricted" by the Chinese navy and air force for seriously

violating "China's sovereignty and international law."

"We urge the Philippine side to immediately stop its infringement and provocation to avoid further escalation," he said in a statement. "The troops assigned to the PLA Southern Theater Command remain on high alert at all times to resolutely defend China's national sovereignty and security and peace and stability in the South China Sea."

Philippine National Security Ad-

viser Eduardo Año, however, said in Manila that the Philippine navy ship carried out a routine patrol of the waters in the vicinity of Scarborough "without any untoward incident," but added that "Chinese vessels, as usual, conducted shadowing on the movement" of the Philippine navy ship.

Año accused China of hyping up the encounter and "creating unnecessary tensions between our two nations."

"The Armed Forces of the Phi-

lippines and the Philippine coast guard will not be deterred by the aggressive and illegal activities" of China's navy, coast guard and militia forces, he added. "We will protect our territory and sovereign rights at all cost," Año said, citing the orders of Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to Filipino forces.

The territorial disputes in the South China Sea, which also involve Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei, have long been feared as an Asian flashpoint and have become a delicate fault line in the regional rivalry between the U.S. and China.

In Beijing yesterday, Singapore Defense Minister Ng Eng Hen underscored the importance of efforts to prevent conflicts from escalating, including by establishing defense hotlines.

Southeast Asian diplomats expressed concern over recent flare-ups of the disputes in the South China Sea in a new round of talks with their Chinese counterparts in Beijing last week, two regional diplomats told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the issue publicly.

During the talks on a proposed nonaggression pact, the Chinese and Philippine delegations had a "tense exchange" of renewed accusations over recent confrontations, one of the diplomats said.

The proposed pact aims to prevent occasional spats from degenerating into a major armed conflict, but the negotiations have been stymied by differences, including whether the agreement should be legally binding and what areas of the strategic sea passage it should cover. **MDT/AP**

BANGLADESH

# Three die as police clash with opposition supporters seeking prime minister's resignation

POLICE in Bangladesh yesterday clashed with opposition supporters as the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) enforced a three-day transport blockade across the country to demand the resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the transfer of power to a nonpartisan caretaker government to oversee general elections next year.

Hasina ruled out dialogue and warned the opposition of consequences if they continue the blockade.

At least two people died and scores were injured on the blockade's first day. The ruling Awami League party warned that the opposi-



AP PHOTO

Police detain activists of main opposition BNP who were trying to enforce a three-day blockade in Dhaka, yesterday

tion would be confronted if they continue to create what it called anarchy. At least six people including a policeman have died in the political chaos in the South Asian nation since a massive opposition rally on Saturday.

The government has been under pressure for months as the Bangladesh Nationalist Party led by former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has staged anti-government protests. Elections are expected in January, and the political si-

tuation is tense as the Election Commission prepares to announce their schedule.

Yesterday, violence was reported in central district of Kishoreganj, where two people died in clashes with police and ruling party supporters, DBC TV station reported. Other media reported clashes in Narayanganj district outside the capital, Dhaka, where three policemen were stabbed. The United News of Bangladesh agency reported violence including vandalism and arson in Dhaka and other districts.

Dozens of arrests were made on Tuesday, reports said.

On Saturday, Zia's par-

ty held a rally in Dhaka that turned violent. The following day, the opposition party held a daylong general strike across Bangladesh when authorities arrested a key opposition politician who has been leading the movement in the absence of Zia, who is ailing. The party then announced three days of blockade.

The foreign missions of Australia, Canada, Japan, South Korea, Norway, Britain and the United States in Dhaka issued a joint statement on Monday urging all sides to refrain from violence and work together to create conditions for a free, fair, participatory and peaceful election.

Yesterday, hours after U.S. Ambassador Peter Haas met with Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal and said he hoped all sides would engage in dialogue, Hasina ruled out that possibility and described the opposition as "murderers." She was referring to the violence on Saturday when opposition activists allegedly beat a police official to death.

She strongly criticized Zia's party. "We won't just let them off this time. They will not be able to stop the election this way," she said.

The vote will be held on schedule, she added. She has ruled out the possibility of holding it under a caretaker government.

Hasina also criticized global human rights groups for their silence in condemning the recent violence by the opposition.

Politics in Bangladesh has been dominated by two major dynastic parties led by Hasina and Zia. **MDT/AP**



ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

# UN agency in Gaza says urgent cease-fire is a matter of life and death

EDITH M. LEDERER,  
UNITED NATIONS

**T**HE head of the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees told a U.N. emergency meeting yesterday [Macau time] “an immediate humanitarian cease-fire has become a matter of life and death for millions,” accusing Israel of “collective punishment” of Palestinians and the forced displacement of civilians.

Philippe Lazzarini warned that a further breakdown of civil order after the agency's warehouses were broken into by Palestinians searching for food and other aid “will make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the largest U.N. agency in Gaza to continue operating.”

Briefings to the Security Council by Lazzarini, the head of the U.N. children's agency UNICEF and a senior U.N. humanitarian official painted a dire picture of the humanitarian situation in Gaza 23 days after Hamas' surprise Oct. 7 attacks in Israel, and its ongoing retaliatory military action aimed at “obliterating” the militant group, which controls Gaza.

According to the latest figures from Gaza's Ministry of Health, more than 8,300 people have been killed — 66% of them women and children

— and tens of thousands injured, the U.N. humanitarian office said.

UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell that toll includes over 3,400 children killed and more than 6,300 injured. “This means that more than 420 children are being killed or injured in Gaza each day — a number which should shake each of us to our core,” she said.

Lazzarini said: “This surpasses the number of children killed annually across the world's conflict zones since 2019.” And he stressed, “This cannot be ‘collateral damage.’”

Many speakers at the council meeting denounced Hamas' Oct. 7 surprise attacks on Israel that killed over 1,400 people, and urged the release of some 230 hostages taken to Gaza by the militants. But virtually every speaker also stressed that Israel is obligated under international humanitarian law to protect civilians and their essentials for life including hospitals, schools and other infrastructure — and Israel was criticized for cutting off food, water, fuel and medicine to Gaza and cutting communications for several days.

Lazzarini said “the handful of convoys” allowed into Gaza through the Rafah crossing from Egypt in recent days “is nothing compared to the needs of over 2 million people trapped in Gaza.”

“The system in place to allow aid into Gaza is geared to fail,” he said, “unless there is political will to make the flow of supplies meaningful, matching the unprecedented humanitarian needs.”

The commissioner-general of the U.N. agency known as UNRWA said there is no safe place anywhere in Gaza, warning that basic services are crumbling, medicine, food, water and fuel are running out, and the streets “have started overflowing with sewage, which will cause a massive health hazard very soon.”

UNICEF oversees water and sanitation issues for the U.N., and Russell warned that “the lack of clean water and safe sanitation is on the verge of becoming a catastrophe.”

U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield urged the divided Security Council — which has rejected four resolutions that would have responded to the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks and the ongoing war — to come together, saying “the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is growing more dire by the day.”

Stressing that all innocent civilians must be protected, she said the council must call “for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, address the immense humanitarian needs of Palestinian civilians in Gaza, affirm Israel's right to defend itself

from terrorism, and remind all actors that international humanitarian law must be respected.” She reiterated President Joe Biden's calls for humanitarian pauses to get hostages out and allow aid in, and for safe passage for civilians.

“That means Hamas must not use Palestinians as human shields — an act of unthinkable cruelty and a violation of the law of war,” the U.S. ambassador said, “and that means Israel must take all possible precautions to avoid harm to civilians.”

In a sign of increasing U.S. concern at the escalating Palestinian death toll, Thomas-Greenfield told the council Biden reiterated to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday “that while Israel has the right and responsibility to defend its citizens from terrorism, it must do so in a manner consistent with international humanitarian law.”

“The fact that Hamas operates within and under the cover of civilians areas creates an added burden for Israel, but it does not lessen its responsibility to distinguish between terrorists and innocent civilians,” she stressed.

Following the rejection of the four resolutions in the 15-member Security Council — one vetoed by the U.S., one vetoed by Russia and China, and two for failing to get the minimum nine “yes” votes — Arab nations went to the U.N. General Assembly last Friday where there are no vetoes.

The 193-member world body adopted a resolution calling for humanitarian truces leading to a cessation of hostilities by a vote of 120-14 with 45 abstentions. Now, the 10 elected members in the 15-member Security Council are trying again to negotiate a resolution that won't be rejected. While council resolutions are legally binding, assembly resolutions are not though they are an important barometer of world opinion.

Israel's U.N. Ambassador Gilad Erdan was sharply critical of the council's failure to condemn Hamas' attacks and asked members: “Why are the humanitarian needs of Gazans, the sole issue, the sole issue you are focused on?”

Recalling his grandfather who survived Nazi death camps but whose his wife and seven children perished in the Auschwitz gas chamber, Erdan told the council he will wear a yellow star — just as Hitler made his grandfather and other Jews wear during World War II — “until you condemn the atrocities of Hamas and demand the immediate release of our hostages.” **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1966 VIET CONG BOMBS SAIGON



At least eight people have been killed and several wounded after Viet Cong artillery shelled the South Vietnamese capital, Saigon.

Altogether about 30 shells were fired into the city centre.

The first round came as troops and spectators were getting ready to watch a parade to mark National Day, the third anniversary of the overthrow and assassination of former Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem.

There was a lull and then a second round of shells exploded as Prime Minister Nguyen Kao Ky was saluting his troops.

There was chaos as crowds tried to find cover on foot or by motor scooter.

Many found their way blocked by American and South Vietnamese armoured vehicles coming from the opposite direction.

One shell hit the Chapel of Saint Anthony of Padua in the cathedral.

And another exploded just outside the cathedral killing an American officer.

Five other Americans were wounded and at least two Vietnamese killed when a shell hit the crowded central market.

The Viet Cong were firing from bases at the edge of the jungle some three and half miles away from Saigon and amazed military observers with their accuracy.

They also sank an American minesweeper in the Saigon River with a mine later in the day, killing several crew members.

So far US armed helicopters and South Vietnamese ground forces have failed to track down any Viet Cong bases.

Yesterday, former US President General Dwight D Eisenhower called for more troops to be sent to Vietnam to bring about a swift end to the conflict.

He told the US News and World Report that the war had been “going on too long” and said America should be “putting in the kind of military strength we need to win” as soon as possible.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

The Viet Cong was a communist movement dedicated to the union of North and South and had been fighting a guerrilla war against South Vietnam since 1954.

They were reinforced by North Vietnamese troops in 1959 in an effort to overthrow the South Vietnamese Government.

In 1961 the US began sending troops to the region to bring a halt to what it saw as the spread of communism in South-East Asia.

In 1965 the US started air raids on the North. Peace talks in 1969 saw American involvement decrease but war took hold once more in 1970 when the US and South Vietnam invaded Cambodia.

A major communist offensive in 1972, coupled with strong opposition at home to US involvement in the war, led to further peace talks and the Paris Agreement in January, 1973 and the withdrawal of US troops.

Saigon fell to communist forces on 30 April 1975. Some 900,000 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese, 50,000 Americans, and about 400,000 South Vietnamese had died.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

**YOUR STARS**

**ARIES**  
Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
Art investment will pay big dividends in the long term. Concentrate on home improvement. Small details will make a difference. So smile!

**TAURUS**  
Apr. 20-May. 20  
Spend time getting into physical activities with your lover. You won't get the reaction you want from your mate today. Secret enemies will be eager to spread rumors about you.

**GEMINI**  
May. 21-Jun. 21  
You may find it necessary to confront a situation that has gotten out of hand. You have two choices; Get out on your own, or bend to your mate's whims.

**CANCER**  
Jun. 22-Jul. 22  
Unexpected visitors are likely. Be prepared to do your chores early. You will do extremely well if you get involved in competitive activities today.

**LEO**  
Jul. 23-Aug. 22  
You can beautify your surroundings by renovating or redecorating. Partnerships will be successful. Travel could include delays and other minor problems.

**VIRGO**  
Aug. 23-Sep. 22  
You will meet new and exciting people if you attend social activities or sporting events. Travel opportunities should be your first choice.

**LIBRA**  
Sep. 23-Oct. 22  
You can meet someone who will become very dear to you if you get out and socialize. You will be erratic and quite likely to make personal mistakes.

**SCORPIO**  
Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
You may find yourself in an opportune position if you are willing to take a bit of a risk. You may have ignored or neglected your mate lately.

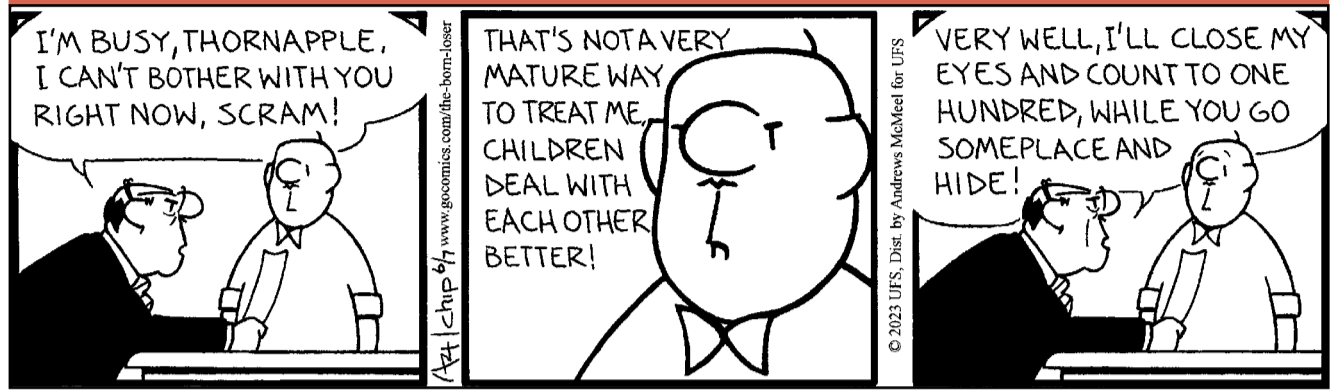
**SAGITTARIUS**  
Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
Try to mix business with pleasure while traveling. Help those incapable of taking care of their personal affairs. You can make money if you pursue your own business.

**CAPRICORN**  
Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
Use discretion, especially if involved with someone from work. You can make major gains if you talk to your boss about your findings.

**AQUARIUS**  
Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
You can make a difference if you take a position of leadership. You may have difficulties at an emotional level with mates. A new relationship can be yours if you get out with friends.

**PISCES**  
Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
This is not the best time to take a risk, to gamble or spend money you really can't afford to part with. Be firm when dealing with matters pertaining to your environment.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

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

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

**WEATHER**

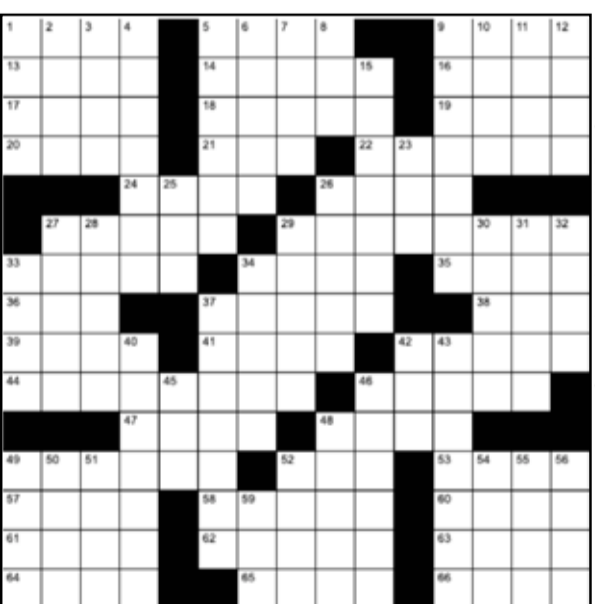
|              | MIN | MAX | CONDITION |
|--------------|-----|-----|-----------|
| <b>CHINA</b> |     |     |           |
| Beijing      | 12  | 23  | fine      |
| Changchun    | -1  | 10  | cloudy    |
| Chengdu      | 15  | 22  | cloudy    |
| Chongqing    | 17  | 24  | cloudy    |
| Fuzhou       | 18  | 26  | overcast  |
| Guangzhou    | 18  | 31  | fine      |
| Guiyang      | 11  | 25  | fine      |
| Haikou       | 24  | 27  | rain      |
| Hangzhou     | 15  | 28  | fine      |
| Harbin       | -1  | 5   | cloudy    |
| Hefei        | 13  | 29  | fine      |
| Nanjing      | 15  | 28  | fine      |
| Shanghai     | 18  | 28  | fine      |
| Taipei       | 21  | 26  | cloudy    |
| Wuhan        | 14  | 28  | fine      |
| Hong Kong    | 22  | 26  | fine      |
| <b>WORLD</b> |     |     |           |
| Moscow       | 8   | 13  | overcast  |
| Frankfurt    | 8   | 16  | cloudy    |
| Paris        | 11  | 14  | rain      |
| London       | 9   | 14  | rain      |
| New York     | 3   | 10  | rain      |

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Do a slow burn; 5- Editor Wintour; 9- What's left; 13- Magma; 14- Falls short; 16- Director Preminger; 17- Take down \_\_\_; 18- Fabric woven from flax yarns; 19- Lament; 20- You've Made \_\_\_ Very Happy; 21- Mined mineral; 22- Congolese river; 24- Final Four org.; 26- Black, in poetry; 27- Apply, as pressure; 29- Long-finned tuna; 33- Strongly fragrant sage; 34- Shelter for honeybees; 35- Israel's Barak; 36- Author Deighton; 37- Trimmed; 38- Rocker's show; 39- Gardner and others; 41- Supermodel Sastre; 42- Dry as \_\_\_; 44- Like a close neighbor; 46- Orchestra section; 47- Wife of a rajah; 48- Director Ephron; 49- System of rule; 52- Short haircut; 53- Baht spender; 57- Take \_\_\_ from me; 58- Muse of love poetry; 60- Time to give up; 61- Let \_\_\_; 62- Bowling alley button; 63- Historical periods; 64- Exploit; 65- Marries; 66- Stiff bristle;

DOWN 1- Close with force; 2- Record; 3- Holiday lead-ins; 4- Cart driver; 5- Financially solvent; 6- Currency unit in Nigeria; 7- Baseball team; 8- Beer; 9- Love affair; 10- School founded by Henry VI; 11- All-male; 12- Author Morrison; 15- Slighted; 23- Fur scarf; 25- Weep; 26- Santa's aides; 27- Parisian pupil; 28- Antianxiety drug; 29- Broadcaster; 30- 1977 George Burns film; 31- Debris; 32- Periphery; 33- Extended family unit; 34- Red River city; 37- Explorer; 40- Like barber poles; 42- \_\_\_Lingus; 43- British rock group; 45- Hoover, for one; 46- Automaton; 48- Eminent; 49- Sudden assault; 50- Novel ending; 51- Deride; 52- Humble; 54- Roll call response; 55- Med school subj.; 56- \_\_\_ boy; 59- Remote button;

**Yesterday's solution**



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

**USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

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

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FOOTBALL

# Messi wins record-extending 8th Ballon d'Or, Bonmati takes women's award

**T**HE list reads 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2015, 2019, 2021, and now 2023.

Lionel Messi won the men's Ballon d'Or for a record-extending eighth time yesterday [Macau time] after fulfilling his life's ambition by leading Argentina to the World Cup title in Qatar last year.

Adding to his silverware the one major trophy that eluded him in his storied career was the decisive factor in an otherwise quite mundane season — for his standards — at Paris Saint-Germain.

The 36-year-old Messi won ahead of Manchester City forward Erling Haaland and his former PSG teammate Kylian Mbappe.

Messi thanked his Argentina coach, teammates and staff for making his victory possible.

"Tonight I'm enjoying myself. It's a pleasure that will never leave me, and I hope to be able to enjoy it for many years to come," Messi said through a translator. "Becoming world champion was the title we were missing. I'd like to thank

AP PHOTO



Messi



Bonmati

everyone who helped make Argentina the world champion team."

Messi also paid tribute to the late Diego Maradona, who also helped Argentina win the World Cup, back in 1986.

"This title and this trophy," Messi said, "I share them with you and all our Argentina comrades."

Aitana Bonmati won the women's

award for guiding Spain to victory at the Women's World Cup in August. She also helped Barcelona win the Women's Champions League and Spanish league.

A year after missing out on the shortlist for the 2022 Ballon d'Or, and despite leaving top-level European soccer behind, Messi has recovered his crown.

He won the sport's biggest individual prize due to his tremendous World Cup. In Qatar, Messi was involved in 10 goals for Argentina, scoring seven and assisting three. He scored twice in the final against France.

His final season with PSG was less shiny. Although PSG won a record-extending 11th French league, it

again exited the Champions League in the round of 16.

Nobody else has won more than five Ballon d'Or. Cristiano Ronaldo has five, and Michel Platini, Johan Cruyff and Marco van Basten each won it three times.

Since moving to Inter Miami in the United States, Messi has already picked up his first silverware there

AD

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**Urology** : Dr. Lo Kwong Yin Richard, Dr. Zhao Yun Qiao

**Paediatric Surgery** : Dr. Yeung Chung Kwong

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**Obstetrics & Gynaecology** : Dr. Fong Kuan Io

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

by inspiring the team to victory in the U.S. Leagues Cup.

Messi's latest win marked the first time a Major League Soccer-based player got such recognition. Messi received the trophy from former Manchester United star David Beckham, who is one of the owners of his new club.

"I'm very happy with the decisions I've made and to be with Miami," Messi said.

He succeeded Karim Benzema.

Mbappe hoped another Frenchman could win the Ballon d'Or after he scored a hat trick in the World Cup final, though France lost in a penalty shootout.

Haaland led City to a treble of trophies last season — Champions League, English Premier League, FA Cup — while scoring 52 goals.

Bonmati had already been awarded UEFA best women's player and the Golden Ball for the top Women's World Cup player. She scored three times and assisted twice at the tournament.

She followed in the footsteps of her teammate Alexia Putellas, who took the past two awards.

Bonmati won ahead of Sam Kerr and Salma Paralluelo.

"We are a country that lives football, intensely," Bonmati said. "We have a unique talent in Spain."

For the first time last year, the trophy awarded by France Football magazine was based on achievements from the past season. It was previous-

sly awarded based on performances through a calendar year. Stanley Matthews won the first Ballon d'Or in 1956.

The women's trophy was created in 2018, and both were canceled in 2020 because of the pandemic.

In other awards, the best under-21 player was Jude Bellingham, while Haaland won the Gerd Müller award for the best striker of the year.

The Lev Yashin award for best goalkeeper went to Emiliano Martinez. In addition to his trophy, the Argentina goalkeeper collected boos and whistles from the audience at the Theatre du Chatelet that included Mbappe and France coach Didier Deschamps.

Martinez was criticized for the excessive tone of his World Cup celebrations. He carried a doll with Mbappe's face on it while standing alongside teammate Messi as Argentina paraded the trophy back home. Martinez, who also made a crude gesture after winning the Golden Glove award for best goalkeeper, was filmed mocking Mbappe in the team dressing room after the game.

The humanitarian prize named after the late Brazil midfielder Socrates went to Vinicius Junior, for his involvement in the foundation he set up for underprivileged children. The Real Madrid player, who has been the target of racist abuse in the Spanish league, pledged to keep up the fight against racism. **MDT/AP**

## FOOTBALL | EPL

# History is against Ten Hag as he tries to turn Man United's season around

**ERIK** ten Hag says Manchester United is on the way up. The Premier League table tells a different story.

It must be tough for the United manager to come up with fresh explanations for his team's ever-worsening form. But after Sunday's 3-0 loss to Manchester City the pressure is mounting on him to provide a solution and turn United's season around.

"It hurts a lot," he said. "Now you have to deal with it. Accept it, how it is, and, in 24 hours, you have to get up and go for the next game."

That next game is against Newcastle in the League Cup on Wednesday. It is a repeat of last season's final, which United won as Ten Hag ended the club's six-year wait for a trophy and delivered silverware in his first year in charge.

Those were happier times for the Dutch coach, who enjoyed an impressive first season, which

also included Champions League qualification and a second final - the FA Cup, which United lost against City.

Now Ten Hag, who was hired after leading Ajax to three Dutch league titles, faces a fight to stop United's campaign from unravelling after a miserable start.

The numbers do not make for good reading.

United has lost five of its 10 league games, which is the most defeats the club has suffered at this stage of a campaign since 1986.

In a season when Ten Hag was supposed to mount a title challenge, his team is already 11 points off the leader, Tottenham, and eight adrift of Champions League qualification.

Erling Haaland's two goals on Sunday, made it 11 in the league for the Norway striker this term, which is the same as the entire United team has managed so far.

Rasmus Hojlund, an \$82 million signing in the offseason, is yet to score in the league after seven games. While United fans jeered as the Dane was substituted against City, those boos were in response to Ten Hag's decision to take him off, rather than any dissatisfaction with the striker.

That is just another problem for the manager, who is having to listen to jeers from his own fans with increasing regularity.

He says he understands their frustration and there is still the sense that he has their backing. But he is the latest manager to struggle under the weight of expectation at a club that has been in decline since Alex Ferguson retired in 2013.

Ten Hag is the fifth permanent appointment since then, following in the footsteps of David Moyes, Louis van Gaal, Jose Mourinho and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer. **MDT/AP**

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**OPINION**

**China Daily**  
 Editorial, China Daily

**FRENCH CONNECTION TO MORE FRUITFUL ENGAGEMENT**

Unlike what its name suggests, the 24th China-France Strategic Dialogue, which just concluded in Beijing, was not about “deliverables” alone but rather about the orientation of bilateral ties. As a significant follow-up to the 12th European Union-China High-level Strategic Dialogue last month, the China-France engagement testifies to a shared interest in sustaining the mutually beneficial aspects of bilateral ties.

The dialogue, featuring Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and the French president’s diplomatic counselor, Emmanuel Bonne, was reportedly “friendly and in-depth”, and the consensus were broad and upbeat.

The verbal consensus they reached are of great importance to both sides in these times of transformative changes. This dialogue and the earlier China-EU dialogue have injected new energy into China-France and China-EU cooperation while providing the anchor for the important relationships to weather the political turbulence sweeping across the world. Amid the strong headwinds of a divided world, a persistent China-France and China-EU bond would be critical to promoting world peace and stability.

China is indeed under daunting pressure as Western economies impose technology blockade and try “de-risking” themselves from China-linked supply chains. Yet in this process, and in their effort to suppress China economically, France and the EU, too, have found their economies more than bruised. And even if the United States, which is seemingly behind all of this, is determined to do or pay whatever it takes for outcompeting China, much of the rest of the world is not ready to suffer collateral damage.

As he did with EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, Wang Yi put considerable emphasis on the French and the EU’s independence in terms of foreign, and economic and trade policies during his discussion with Bonne. Calling China and France “independent major countries”, Wang told Bonne that China regards the EU as an independent and important part of the multipolar world, which echoes French President Emmanuel Macron’s call for Europe’s “strategic autonomy”, and Borrell’s for China to treat the EU as just that.

What should be most consoling to Beijing are Bonne’s words that France has confidence in China’s economy, and has no intention of checking China’s development. Never before had such a statement carried so much weight for Beijing.

In spite of Brussels defining Beijing as a “systemic rival” and calling for corresponding economic “dependencies”, Wang, as he did with Borrell, told Bonne that China and the EU are partners, not rivals, and their common interests far outweigh their differences. At the end of the day, France and the EU need to treat China “in a more pragmatic and rational manner, avoid external interference” in order to achieve mutual benefit.

**THREE ASTRONAUTS RETURN TO EARTH AFTER 6-MONTH STAY ON CHINA’S SPACE STATION**

**THE BUZZ**

Three Chinese astronauts returned to Earth yesterday morning after six months aboard China’s orbiting space station.

Jing Haipeng, Zhu Yangzhu and Gui Haichao emerged in good health from the return capsule near the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center on the edge of the Gobi Desert, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

The station’s new three-person crew arrived to the Tiangong station last week.

The station is essentially complete, so the new crew will conduct medical and scientific experiments and maintain equipment.

China made its first crewed space mission in 2003 and plans

to put astronauts on the moon before 2030. It has brought samples back from the lunar surface and landed a rover on the less explored far side of the moon.

Future plans include sending a new telescope to probe deep into the universe.

China built its own space station after it was excluded from the International Space Station, largely due to U.S. concerns over Chinese military control over the national space program.

Beijing has emerged as the chief rival with the U.S. for reaching new milestones in outer space, with extremely limited cooperation between them in the field, as mandated by U.S. law.

**FORMER BRITISH AGENCY EMPLOYEE GETS LIFE IN PRISON FOR STABBING AN AMERICAN SPY**

**BRIAN MELLEY, LONDON**

A former British cyberspionage employee who had become angry and resentful toward his agency’s work was sentenced yesterday [Macau time] to life in prison for attempted murder in the vicious stabbing of an American intelligence worker assigned to the U.K.

Joshua Bowles, 29, punched the woman and knifed her repeatedly in what was called a “politically motivated” attack as she left a gym March 9 in the western England town of Cheltenham, which is home to the U.K.’s electronic spy agency, Government Communications Headquarters, better known as GCHQ.

“I’ve just tried to kill her,” Bowles said, according to Steve Bunn, who helped stop the attack. “It’s ... good ... I didn’t have a gun, isn’t it? I make a pretty (expletive) terrorist, don’t I?”

Bowles will serve at least 13 years in prison before any chance at early release.

The woman, identified in court only by a code number, 99230, worked for the National Security Agency, which spies on electronic communications for the U.S., and places some of its employees at the Cheltenham facility.

Prosecutor Duncan Penny said the attack was pre-meditated and the woman was targeted solely because of her role with the NSA.

“American intelligence represents the largest contributor within the intelligence community, so (it) made sense as the symbolic target,” Bowles told police after his arrest. “I consider GCHQ just as guilty.”

Justice Bobbie Cheema-Grubb in London’s Cen-



Joshua Bowles (undated handout photo issued by Counter Terrorism Policing South East)

tral Criminal Court called it a “politically motivated attack” driven by “anger and resentment” towards GCHQ and women. The judge said Bowles, a former computer software coding developer, had shown a “deep disaffection with society and a desire to challenge authority.”

Bowles’ internet searches included white supremacy, Unabomber Theodore Kaczynski and attacks on women.

“By the time you launched your attack, your feelings of anger and resentment against GCHQ and women had evolved sufficiently to lead you to mount a lethal assault through which you wanted, however unrealistically, to disrupt the work of the U.K. intelligence community with an important ally, the United States of America, and you hoped to achieve this by killing one of the American citizens you knew was engaged in that work,” Cheema-Grubb said.

After Bunn intervened,

he said Bowles told him he would understand his actions if he knew what was being done at GCHQ and said he was appalled by the work of the NSA.

“He was disgusted by the manner in which they gather information and use things against people,” Bunn said, and said he could no longer “handle the murky waters of ethics and whether they are doing the right thing and the power that the American NSA have and the things they do.”

Defense attorney Tim Forte said Bowles had “profound regret, remorse and shame at what he has done.”

Forte said his client was not a terrorist but was depressed at being rejected by another former American co-worker he liked and trying to hurt GCHQ.

The victim recovered after being hospitalized for cuts to her abdomen, chest and thigh. She said it had a profound effect and “completely changed my life.” **MDT/AP**



**UN** investigators yesterday urged Russia to acknowledge responsibility for a missile strike on a Ukrainian village that killed 59 civilians, conduct a transparent investigation into what happened, provide reparations for victims and hold those responsible to account. The strike on a cafe in the village of Hroza on Oct. 5 was one of the deadliest strikes since the Kremlin’s forces launched a full-scale invasion 20 months ago. Whole families perished while attending a wake for a local soldier who died fighting Russian troops. The blast killed 36 women, 22 men and an 8-year-old boy.



**EU** The commission’s top official yesterday urged Montenegro to push ahead with its European Union integration process after the small NATO member country elected a new government, ending a political stalemate that stalled its EU membership bid. EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen met with top Montenegrin officials just hours after parliament confirmed the new government following a heated session that lasted throughout the night. Parliament approved the new Cabinet with 46 votes in favor and 19 against.



**Czech Republic** Three energy companies including U.S. Westinghouse, France’s EDF and Korea’s KHNP, have submitted their final bids to build the Czech Republic’s newest reactor at the Dukovany nuclear power station as the country strives to become more energy independent and wean itself of fossil fuels. State-controlled power company CEZ said it would assess the bids for the multi-billion-dollar contract before sending its decision to the government for final approval of the winner.