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18 Dec 2023

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CHINA'S ECONOMY IS FORECAST TO SLOW SHARPLY IN 2024, THE WORLD BANK SAYS

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AP PHOTO



Israel pressed ahead with its Gaza offensive yesterday after a series of shootings, including of three hostages who were shirtless and waving a white flag, raised questions about its conduct in a 10-week-old war that has brought unprecedented death and destruction to the coastal enclave. Gaza remained under a communications blackout for a fourth straight day, which aid groups say complicate rescue efforts after bombings and make it even more difficult to monitor the war's toll on civilians.

AP PHOTO



US A warship shot down 14 suspected attack drones over the Red Sea on Saturday, and a Royal Navy destroyer downed another drone that was targeting commercial ships, the British and American militaries said. Houthi rebels in Yemen have launched a series of attacks on vessels in the Red Sea, one of the world's busiest shipping routes, and have launched drones and missiles targeting Israel, as the Israel-Hamas war threatens to spread.

AP PHOTO

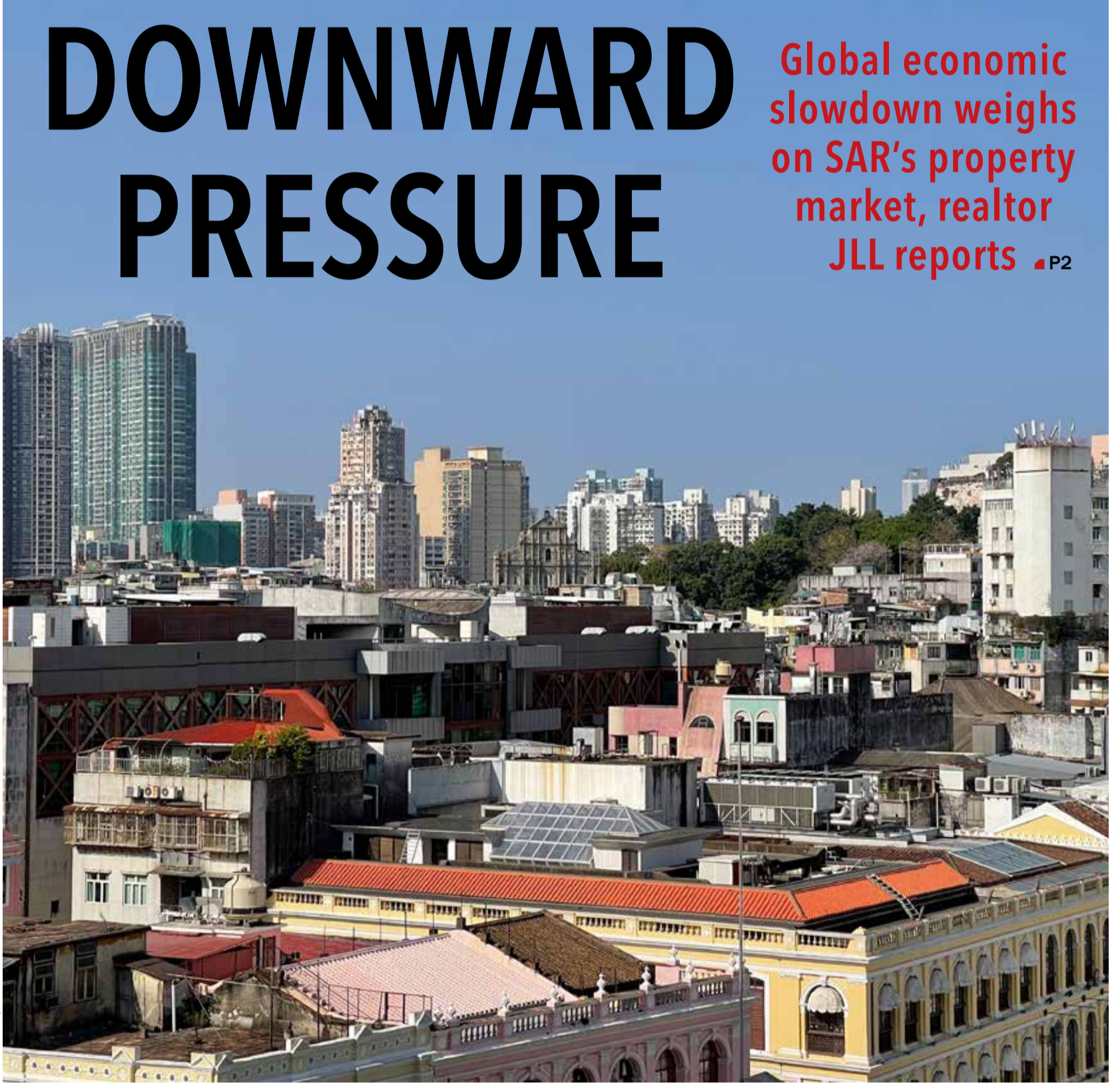


Russia, Ukraine launched over a dozen drones at each other's territory for a second straight day yesterday, one of which apparently targeted a Russian military airport while a Ukrainian civilian was killed after drone debris slammed into his house near the Black Sea. At least 35 Ukrainian drones were shot down overnight over three regions in southwestern Russia, the Russian Defense Ministry said in a post on the messaging app Telegram.

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DOWNWARD PRESSURE

Global economic slowdown weighs on SAR's property market, realtor JLL reports P2



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PROPERTY

JLL: GLOBAL ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN WEIGHS ON SAR'S PROPERTY MARKET

LYNZY VALLES

MACAU'S property market is being affected by interest rate hikes, global economic slowdown and mainland China's slowing economic recovery.

In its 2023 GBA Residential Market Update, realtor JLL said investors continue to adopt a wait-and-see attitude toward the real estate market.

Residential market transaction volumes climbed 10.1% y-o-y to 2,383 as of September, according to data from the Financial Services Bureau (DSF).

Only 50 pre-sale transactions were recorded in the first three quarters due to the absence of major residential projects, and the transaction value of pre-sale projects accounted for only 2.1% of the overall residential transaction volume.

In its update, JLL recalled the government had increased the rates of land premiums in May, which sharply reduced developers' profits, and would consequently affect the land market.

In August, the government also launched two development sites in Taipa central district for auction, but only one site received a



RENATO MARQUES

tender.

Meanwhile, the realtor said 11 Greater Bay Area (GBA) cities had witnessed uneven recovery in the housing market after the relaxation of cooling measures earlier

this year.

According to JLL's 2023 Greater Bay Area Residential Guide, the GBA mainland cities had seen a mild and uneven recovery in housing markets, while Hong Kong's

residential market remains subdued.

Home sales in Macau rebounded, but prices continue to fall.

According to the realtor, the falling prices show that the hou-

sing market recovery remained slow and GBA housing prices are expected to remain under downward pressure in 2024.

Oliver Tong, general manager of JLL Macau, indicated that "Macau implemented adjustments to the property market in November, including stamp duty exemptions and relaxed mortgage loan-to-value ratios for luxury homes, which will help improve the sentiment in the luxury property market."

The local government has already announced it will remove 5% stamp duty on residents' purchase of a second home.

However, home buyers will face lower mortgage loan offerings.

"Starting next year, buyers purchasing residential properties below MOP8 million will need to undergo the loan affordability stress test set by the Monetary Authority of Macao, with borrowers able to obtain a mortgage loan that covers up to 70% of the property value, which is lower than the existing 90% or 80% mortgage loan options," he added, as cited in the report.

Previously, the realty agency had called on the government to drop some of the existing market-cooling measures to help with economic revival.

The call was based on the assumption that in the second half of this year, real property prices in Macau would see an average drop of 5% from the level that is already 10% short of the historical high.

ANTHONY LAM

ECONOMY

THE uneven recovery of the city's economy remains a problem, the Macau Economic Association (MEA) has noted.

The group said that although tourism districts, hotels and resorts saw an influx of customers resulting in packed shops and restaurants after travel resumed earlier this year, more traditional residential areas are not benefitting to the same extent.

The group said community businesses are facing challenges because locals are shopping across the border and tourists are not visiting these districts.

Moreover, tourists' consumption habits have changed. They are now seeking better products or services rather than merely looking

at price tags.

The group has suggested local businesses acknowledge a shift in the market, and make appropriate changes to survive.

As the publisher of the monthly Prosperity Index, the group has forecast the Index will be stable for the next three months. With the October and November indices confirmed at 6.3 and 6.0, the group expects indices to range from 6.2 to 6.3 over the next three months.

The group's forecast for next year's economy is "cold outside, warm inside," meaning global prospects will still be unstable with political, economic and armed

wars continuing.

It cited expectations by international organizations that economic recovery is forecast to slow. High interest rates are another obstacle to full recovery, the group added.

Nonetheless, it added, the "double celebrations" – China's 75th Anniversary and Macau SAR's 25th Anniversary – as well as 2024 being the first year of the government's directive on economic diversification, will prompt the government to invest more in energizing the economy. As such, it believes that the city's economy in 2024 will be even better than this year.

Uneven recovery still problematic in Macau: MEA



ANTHONY LAM

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Times

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

Macau and China win at first Asia & GBA Racing Festival

RENATO MARQUES

LOCAL and mainland Chinese racers won several racing categories over the weekend at the first Asia & Greater Bay Area (GBA) Racing Festival at the Macau International Karting Circuit in Coloane.

The final day of the three-day racing event yesterday saw Macau racers securing victories in two of the four racing categories (KZ and Rok GP Junior), while mainland racers won in the X30 Senior 125 Class (Karts) and the GBA Motorcycle Cup 150cc.

In Sunday's first race, the KZ karting category, the final win went to Macau's Cheong Man Hei after fierce competition with local racer Gonçalo Ferreira.

Ferreira started in pole position and dominated most of the race except for some brief moments when Cheong took the lead.

But in the last lap, Cheong made a decisive move on turn 2 and overtook Ferreira, who could not strike back due to neck pain.

Hong Kong's Anson Liu came third in the final race.

Among the youngest racers in the Rok GP Junior category, Cheong Wai Cheng won, followed by Chen Cheok Lam and Chan Seong Lai.

This was their first real race after obtaining karting racing licenses. The race followed training at the Coloane Circuit Karting Academy with two local racers, João Carlos Afonso and Cheong Chi On, among others.

Mainland racers dominated the only motorcycle race reserved for Sunday. Other motorcycle categories took place on Saturday.

RENATO MARQUES



Chan Yu Tsai



Cheong Man Hei



The GBA Motorcycle Cup 150cc, which runs as a single-make category using CFMOTO NK150 motorcycles, was probably the least interesting race from the program.

Still, the category's winner was unclear until the very last lap when Liang Yuhua in the moto number 10 overtook Gao Ziang (moto number 3) to see the checkered flag.

The duo made the race an almost one-on-one duel, with the racers following then running with comfortable gaps between one another and keeping their positions until the end without

any major challenge.

Another mainland racer, Chen Zekai, finished third in this race.

The first non-mainland racer, Macau's Álvaro Mourato, finished fifth.

Mourato is a former racer who accepted the Automobile General Association Macao-China's invitation to don his leathers and helmet and relive golden times.

In the last race of the day, which had the most international participants, China's Chan Yu Tsai won with a comfortable lead in the X30 Senior 125 Class. Starting at the front of the pack, Chan never relinquished his position.

Finishing second was Singapore's Luke Armstrong who, after several poor laps, struggled to recover time lost to Chan, having made the best lap of the race in the process.

Hong Kong's Liao Yan Yik finished third, while the Philippines' Danzel Waytan came fourth. As with the motorcycles, the best local racer was João Carlos Afonso in fifth place.

The event was sponsored by Galaxy Entertainment Group. It included three other racing events (all on motorcycles) held Saturday and closed the local motorsports season.

TOXIC GAS KILLS FEMALE WORKER

A 26-year-old non-resident worker has died after inhaling toxic hydrogen sulfide gas in the restroom of a restaurant where she worked, authorities announced over the weekend. Last Monday, the employee's co-worker found her passed out in the restroom after 15 minutes. The public hospital attributed the cause of death to hydrogen sulfide poisoning.

TOP COURT OVERRULES CIVIL SERVANT DISMISSAL

Macau's top court has upheld a middle court judgment overruling a government decision to dismiss a civil servant who viewed and/or printed property registrations 44 times, causing MOP330 in losses to the Legal Affairs Bureau (DSAJ). The civil servant had also allowed the owner of a realty agency to skip queues. The top court said the government had failed to prove the civil servant had benefitted from these actions or had otherwise damaged the government's image. The court asked whether the damage was so significant that civil servants' individual interests and rights could be sacrificed in the public interest.

MACAU FLU RATE STILL LOW, GOV'T DOCTOR SAYS

Public health doctor and division head at the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Leong Iek Hou, has disclosed that amid a slight increase in the numbers of patients with fever or respiratory symptoms, the local flu infection rate has gradually fallen to 8%. Meanwhile, the infection rate for Covid-19 has also dropped to nearly 0%. She said it is unclear when this flu season will arrive because of the change in immune habits after three years of Covid-19. She suggested people receive flu shots before travelling.

MACAU PASS SERVICES TO EXPAND TO OVERSEAS E-WALLETS

Macau Pass S.A has announced its expansion of services to Alipay+ partner e-wallets. The e-wallets include Tinaba (Italy), OCBC and Changi Pay (Singapore), MyPB by Public Bank (Malaysia), Toss Pay and NAVER Pay (South Korea) and Hipay (Mongolia). "This collaboration with seven overseas e-wallets through Alipay+ will accelerate the digital transformation of local businesses in Macau through innovative one-stop payment solutions, to create an interconnected international digital payment ecosystem for the Macau market," said Sun Ho, Chairman and CEO of the local transport and payment group.

MUST confers honorary degree on Japanese writer Haruki Murakami in Tokyo

A Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) delegation, led by Chancellor Dr Liu Chak Wan, has visited Tokyo to confer an honorary degree on influential Japanese writer Haruki Murakami.

The author of *Hear the Wind Sing*, *Norwegian Wood*, *Kafka on the Shore* and *1Q84*, Murakami has received the naming rights to a library at Waseda University in the Ja-

panese capital, which is his alma mater.

Murakami expressed gratitude for the MUST honor.

He writes stories he hopes will bring fantasy, inspiration and creativity to the world of science and technology, even where they may not have a direct connection to technology.

Watanabe Yoshihiro, executive vice president of Waseda University,

said he hoped to take this as an opportunity to promote exchange and cooperation between the two universities.

At the ceremony, Liu also presented commemorative gifts to Murakami and Yoshihiro.

MUST president Joseph Hun-wei Lee thanked President Aiji Tanaka of Waseda University for the meticulous arrangements made for this visit. **AL**



CRIME

MOTHER AND SON ARRESTED FOR SMUGGLING NARCOTICS BY SWALLOWING

ANTHONY LAM

THE Judiciary Police (PJ) has arrested two people, a mother and son, caught smuggling drugs into Macau after swallowing them at home.

The mother is surnamed Apontecornejo, 53, and a self-reported businesswoman. Her son, Floresaponte, 22, is a self-reported motorcycle repairer. Both are Peruvian.

Police arrested them after their arrival at the Macau International Airport. The police also believed Macau was not the ultimate destination for the narcotics.

The police identified the two Peruvians during earlier investigations and were aware they would fly to Macau from Manila on Dec. 11.

The pair were intercepted upon arrival, and x-rays revealed the presence of foreign objects in their bodies.

The two were taken to the government hospital, where they were medically checked and excreted 54 condoms containing narcotics and an oval-shaped container holding more narcotics.



Subsequent inspections confirmed these to be 1,945.85 grams of cocaine, valued at approximately MOP5.38 million.

Further investigation revealed that on Dec. 8, the mother swallowed the oval-shaped container and three condoms and the son swallowed the rest. They headed to Spain the next

day, before continuing to Hong Kong, Manila and Macau.

The two had no information about their next instructions.

The mother testified she had taken the assignment to repay her 20,000 Peruvian Sol's worth of debt. Her son admitted to helping his mother with the debt repay-

ment. They said they were given USD1,500 for the trip.

Earlier this month and late last month, the police intercepted several smuggling activities where drugs were camouflaged in various products, including bottled wines. The PJ also intercepted a case in collaboration with the Hong Kong Police Force.



WEATHER

CITY LOGS LOWEST TEMPERATURE THIS WINTER

STAFF REPORTER

THE weather station in Taipa Grande has logged the lowest temperature since the beginning of winter this year, recording 9.1 degrees Celsius.

The city has felt the cold weather since Saturday, after weeks of warm, sunny days.

The Meteorological and Geophysics Bureau (SMG) has forecast slightly higher temperatures today and tomorrow, up to 19 degrees tomorrow. However, temperatures are expected to drop Wednesday with a forecast temperature of about 10 degrees between the handover day and the winter solstice.

The SMG did not rule out a further drop in

temperature.

The SMG has predicted cold and dry mornings and evenings for the next few days, with a large temperature differential between day and night.

The bureau issued the yellow cold weather alert Saturday.

Yesterday afternoon, the Taipa Grande observation station recorded the lowest temperature at 10.5 degrees, followed by the station at Fortaleza do Monte at 10.9 degrees.

The average at all 10 stations was 11.4 C degrees.

"It is expected to be cold in Macau on Dec. 18 (today). The public is advised to wear more clothes to keep warm," the SMG noted.

Caritas: City facing demand for inclusive childcare services

STAFF REPORTER

THERE is a significant demand for inclusive childcare services, according to Caritas secretary-general Paul Pun.

According to Pun, two Caritas nurseries can provide inclusive childcare services for infants and young children with mild special needs, as cited in a TDM report.

Among them, the Creche-Vamos has 10 children partaking in its inclusive childcare services.

However, the number of infants and you-



ng children in need is almost at capacity. Creche Caritas has already admitted three

infants and young children with special needs, said Pun.

He hopes that as

Caritas' nurseries fully launch inclusive childcare services, children with special

needs can receive childcare services with other children of the same age and grow up happily, and other nurseries will also be encouraged to launch services.

Asked about caregivers' workloads, Pun said caregivers reported that the introduction of inclusive childcare services has strengthened the caretaking skills and sense of meaning of caring for children with disabilities.

Before the pandemic, a Times report had noted that parents of children with special needs – particularly English-speaking children – have few options when their children do not meet the acceptance criteria of the inclusive education system.

AFC CUP

CPK WINS 4-1 AT HOME

LOCAL football club MUST Chao Pak Kei (MUST CPK) bid farewell to the 2023 Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Cup campaign, defeating Taiwan's Tainan City FC 4-1 at home on Thursday evening.

Despite five losses in five games, the local team had an amazing Matchday 6 at Taipa's Olympic Stadium, defeating the Taiwanese side thanks to four goals from Nicholas Torrao at minutes 39, 62, 76, and 78.

Tainan City managed a single goal courtesy of Chen Wei-jen at the 82nd minute, bringing

the final score to 4-1.

This win added an unexpected twist to Group I's conclusion.

Before the match, it appeared Tainan City FC would defeat MUST CPK and advance to the next stage, as Mongolia's FC Ulaanbaatar had won 2-1 over Taichung Futuro FC.

However, Taichung Futuro FC defeated FC Ulaanbaatar, although both finished with 12 points.

The two will progress to the knockout stage, with the draw held at the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on Dec. 28. **RM**

SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL SPORTING EVENTS

Melco promotes the unique charm of Macau through "tourism + sports"

MELCO Resorts & Entertainment continues to actively support the SAR government's calls for Macau's economic diversification, dynamically promoting the coordinated development of "tourism + sports" to contribute to the city's enhanced status as a world tourism and leisure center.

By hosting large-scale international sporting events, Melco highlights its commitment to providing Macau citizens and tourists with vibrant tourism and entertainment experiences to promote the effect of cross-border integration, allowing tourists to immerse themselves in Macau's rich and diverse culture, while developing the city into Asia's premier leisure and entertainment destination.

On December 13, Melco teamed up with the East Asian Super League (EASL) to present one of Asia's top sporting events to locals and tourists alike at the Studio City Event Center (SCEC). Supported by the Sports Bureau of the Macao SAR Government, "Melco Style Presents: Clash of the Champions" featured an intense battle between two of Asia's biggest pro basketball teams: **Meralco Bolts from the Philippines Basketball Association (PBA)** and **Ryukyu Golden Kings from Japan's B.League**. The event aims to promote the diversified development of the tourism industry and further extend non-gaming entertainment options for tou-



rists visiting Macau. Guests were invited to enjoy the game as the centerpiece of an exciting evening at the Studio City, where world-class dining and entertainment options were also available.

"EASL is excited to be working with Melco Resorts & Entertainment to bring elite East Asian basketball back to the vibrant city of Macau," said EASL CEO Mr. Matt Beyer.

"Melco is committed to delivering diversified world-class entertainment options to our guests," said Mr. Kevin Benning, Senior Vice President and Property General Manager of Studio City. "We are thrilled to be working with EASL to entertain sports fans with premier Asian basketball at Studio City as we strive to help enhance the competitiveness of Macau's tourism

industry through 'tourism + sports' integration."

Additionally, "Melco Style Presents: 2023 Macau Masters Snooker Tournament", organized by Victoria Snooker Academy UK and fully supported by the Sports Bureau of Macao SAR Government to develop the local sports industry and establish an international sporting image for Macau, will be hosted at Melco's SCEC from December 22-24. The project aims to elevate the level of snooker events in Macau through the tournament, to develop the sports industry and promote the integrated development of "tourism + sports" in Macau to contribute to the government's goal of achieving economic diversification. It aims to develop the city as an international platform for exchange while reinforcing the

region's influence globally in the sporting world.

The highly anticipated event has attracted the participation of outstanding players from around the world, including **Luca Brecel**, winner of 2023 World Snooker Championship, ranked second in the world; **Mark Selby**, currently ranked fifth in the world and highly popular among fans; **John Higgins**, ranked ninth and known for his numerous century breaks; **Allister Carter**, the champion of the 2023 Snooker German Masters and making his first appearance in Macau; **Barry Hawkins**, the champion of the 2023 European Masters; and **Thepchaiya Un-Nooh**, the runner-up of the 2023 Six-Red World Championship and a popular Asian player.

The six popular snooker mas-

ters will compete for championship in group format at the globally anticipated event, providing an intense and exciting performance for the live audience under SCEC's electrifying atmosphere.

Last month, Melco was also one of the major sponsors of the **Macau Grand Prix** this year, fully supporting this historical, locally branded annual international sporting event. Mr. Clarence Chung, Board Director of Melco Resorts & Entertainment, said, "We are thankful to the SAR government and all contributing organizations for their efforts in once again bringing this series of exciting world-class events to racing fans around the world. Now in its 70th year, the Macau Grand Prix reaches a new milestone, further enhancing the city's status in the international sporting arena. Melco will continue to proactively work with the SAR government to attract tourists from home and abroad by showcasing Macau's unique charm through "tourism + sports", promoting economic diversification and development through increased tourism spending."

To further enable tourists and residents to experience the excitement of the Macau Grand Prix, Melco presented the **Mount Fortress at High-Speed** event at the city's renowned UNESCO World Heritage Site for two weeks between November 10 to 23 to promote Macau's vibrancy and image as a tourism-friendly city. The event offered two racing-themed photo areas for visitors to take photos with model racing cars and experience the speed and passion of motorsports. A decorative camping and resting area, together with food stalls offering racing-themed light bites were also available, while Grupo de Danças e Cantares de Macau performed Portuguese folk dances.



Economy is forecast to slow sharply in 2024, the World Bank says, calling recovery 'fragile'

ZEN SOO & ELAINE
KURTENBACH, HONG KONG

CHINA'S economy grew at a 5.2% pace in the first three quarters of the year and showed signs of improvement in November, with factory output and retail sales rising, the government said Friday.

But investments in property sank 9.4%, the National Bureau of Statistics said, indicating the real estate sector has yet to recover from a crisis that has led dozens of developers to default on hundreds of billions of dollars in debts.

The world's second-largest economy is still contending from the setbacks of the COVID-19 pandemic, among other shocks, dogged by weakness in the property sector and in global demand for China's exports, high debt levels and wavering consumer confidence.

The 10.1% jump in retail sales in November from a year earlier, up from a 7.6% jump in October, showed a glimmer of hope given that sluggish consumer spending has been a key factor hindering a stronger recovery.

But it's unclear if it will be sustained. A survey of factory purchasing managers, called the pur-



Workers sweep snow into a manhole near a decoration setup ahead of the Christmas festival at a mall in Beijing

chasing manager index, or PMI, showed a slightly bigger contraction in factory activity compared with October, a fact that statistics bureau spokesperson Liu Aihua said was partly due to the fact that

some industries were entering their usual off season after holiday production rushes.

But Liu added that "at the same time there is insufficient market demand." Liu told repor-

ters in Beijing.

"Looking to the future, the internal and external environment facing our country's development is still complex and severe," Liu said. "To further promote economic recovery, we need to overcome some difficulties and challenges."

China's economy has the advantages of a vast market of 1.4 billion people and an advanced industrial base, he said.

Friday's report followed an update Thursday from the World Bank that forecast that 5.2% annual growth this year will slow to 4.5% next year and to 4.3% in 2025.

China's economy has yoayed in the past few years, with growth ranging from 2.2% in 2020 to 8.4% in 2021 and 3% last year. Stringent limits on travel and other activities during the pandemic hit manufacturing and transport. Job losses due to those disruptions and to a crackdown on the technology sector, combined with a downturn in the property industry, have led many Chinese to tighten their purse strings.

Pockets of strength have kept the economy growing at a pace matching the government's target

for about 5% growth this year, helped by robust exports of industrial machinery, mobile phones and vehicles.

Factory output rose 6.6% in November compared with a year earlier, the statistics bureau reported. That was the strongest growth since September 2022.

Most of the jobs created during China's recovery have been low-skilled work in service industries with low pay, it noted. Chinese also are cautious given the threadbare nature of social safety nets and the fact that the population is rapidly aging, putting a heavier burden for supporting elders on younger generations.

"The outlook is subject to considerable downside risks," the report said, adding that a prolonged downturn in the real estate sector would have wider ramifications and would further squeeze already strained local government finances, as meanwhile softer global demand is a risk for manufacturers.

China's leaders addressed such issues in their annual Central Economic Work Conference earlier this week, which set priorities for the coming year, but state media reports on the gathering did not provide specifics of policies.

Real estate investment has fallen by 18% in the past two years, the World Bank report said. It said the value of new property sales fell 5% in January-October from a year earlier while new property starts dropped more than 25%. The slowdown was worst in smaller cities that account for about 80% of the market in the country of 1.4 billion people. **MDT/AP**

Beijing defends bounties offered for Hong Kong dissidents abroad

CHINA on Friday defended controversial bounties offered for the capture of Hong Kong dissidents who have fled abroad that have been criticized by foreign governments and human rights groups.

Rewards of 1 million Hong Kong dollars (\$128,000) have been offered for information leading to the capture of 13 opposition figures accused of violating the semi-autonomous Chinese city's National Security Law.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said China rejected the outside criticism, saying the arrest orders were "necessary and justified and ... in line with international law and practice."

Without directly mentioning the bounties, Mao said other countries also have extraterritorial aspects to their laws on national security, adding that foreign governments' support for those on the list was merely cover for their aim of destabilizing Hong Kong.

"We strongly oppose and deplore the individual countries slandering Hong Kong's national security law and interfering in the judicial system," Mao told reporters at a daily briefing.

A day earlier, Hong Kong police accused another five overseas-based activists of violating the National Security Law imposed by Beijing, and offered rewards for their arrests.

Mao said the five "endangered national security by destabilizing Hong Kong under the guise of democracy and human rights."

One of the five, Joey Siu, is a United States citizen who was born in North Carolina and moved to Hong Kong as a child.

"This morning I, a U.S. citizen, woke up to the news that an arrest warrant & a HKD \$1 million bounty have been placed on my head by the Hong Kong govt. for exercising my freedoms in my own country," Siu posted on the social media site X, formerly known as Twitter.

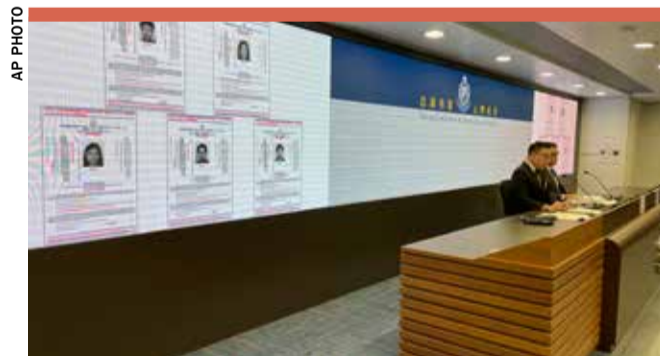
"More to say later but for now: I will never be silenced, I will never back down," Siu wrote. The poli-

ce notice listed her alleged crimes as "colluding with a foreign nation or overseas forces to endanger national security."

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement dated Friday that Hong Kong authorities displayed their "disregard for international norms and human rights in Hong Kong."

"We strongly oppose any efforts to intimidate and silence individuals who choose to make the United States their home and will not waver in standing up for those who are targeted simply for exercising their human rights," he said.

The Hong Kong government in response said that the measures taken were



Hong Kong police announce a new list of five Hongkongers that they want to arrest for alleged national security crimes, at a press conference in Hong Kong, Friday

"in line with the international practice," and said no country should "harbour criminals nor exonerate these people with different excuses."

The latest arrest warrants were issued for Johnny Fok and Tony Choi, who host a YouTube channel focusing on current affairs, and pro-democracy activists Simon Cheng, Hui Wing-ting and Joey Siu. Those on the wanted list are believed to be living in self-exile mainly in Britain,

the U.S. and Australia.

In July, Hong Kong warned eight other activists who now live abroad that they would be pursued for life with bounties put on them. It was the first such use of bounties under the security law, and the authorities' announcement drew criticism from Western governments.

Police have arrested people on suspicion of providing funds for some of those who have fled abroad. **MDT/AP**

DIPLOMACY

Japan and ASEAN bolster ties at summit focused on security

MARI YAMAGUCHI,
TOKYO

LEADERS from Japan and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, at a special summit yesterday marking their 50th anniversary of friendship, adopted a joint vision that emphasizes security and economic cooperation while respecting the rule of law amid growing tensions with China in regional seas.

Ties between Japan and ASEAN used to be largely based on Japanese assistance to the developing economies, in part due to lingering bitterness over Japan's wartime actions. But in recent years the ties have focused more on security amid China's growing assertiveness in the South China Sea, while Japan's postwar pacifist stance and trust-building efforts have fostered friendlier relations.

The leaders, in a joint statement, called for strengthening their "mutually beneficial" partnership and working together for peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific. They also called to pursue greater prosperity for the region and to promote people exchanges among the younger generations, Kishida told a joint news conference with Indonesian President Joko Widodo, this year's ASEAN chair.

"We affirm the shared view to promote a rules-based Indo-Pacific region that is free and open (and) embraces key principles such as ASEAN's unity and centrality, inclusiveness (and) transparency," according to the joint statement.

The leaders stressed "respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful means and renunciation of the threat or use of force," but without identifying China.

The leaders adopted an implementation plan for 130 projects. Japan



Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, left, greets Indonesia's President Joko Widodo upon arrival for the opening session of ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit Meeting at the Hotel Okura Tokyo in Tokyo, yesterday

called to step up cooperation in security and defense, while reinforcing support for efforts in climate change and investment, including in the region's automotive industry, he said.

"As divisions and confrontations deepen and the world faces compounded crises, Japan will tackle the issues together with ASEAN, which is the linchpin of a 'free and open Indo-Pacific,'" Kishida said. "Based on our mutual trust, we will tackle new issues, and contribute to peace and prosperity of the region in order to create a world where people can benefit while their dignity is respected."

Japan adopted a new security strategy last year and has been rapidly building up its military and expanding its military partnerships to better counter China's growing assertiveness in the region.

On Saturday, on the sidelines of the Dec. 16-18 summit, Kishida held a series of bilateral talks as Japan seeks to step up bilateral security ties with ASEAN countries.

Kishida and his Malaysian counterpart, Anwar Ibrahim, signed a 400 million yen (\$2.8 million) deal to bolster Malaysia's maritime security capability. It is a new Japanese official security assistance program specifically for militaries of friendly nations to help strengthen their law enforcement and security capabilities.

The assistance includes provisions of rescue boats and other equipment to help improve the military capability of Malaysia, which sits at a crucial location on sea lanes connecting the Indian Ocean and East Asia and serves a vital role in warning and surveillance operations for the entire region.

Separately on Saturday, Kishida signed a deal with Widodo, offering a grant of up to 9.05 billion yen (\$63.7 million) to fund Indonesia's maritime security capability advancement plan and includes a Japanese-built large-scale maritime patrol boat.

In November, Japan announced a provision of coastal surveillance

radars to the Philippine navy, and the two sides also agreed to start talks for a key defense pact called the Reciprocal Access Agreement designed to smooth their troops' entry into each other's territory for joint military exercises.

Later that month, Japan and Vietnam agreed to elevate the status of their relationship to a top-level comprehensive strategic partnership, under which they will discuss details of a possible deal to broaden their defense cooperation.

But ASEAN countries are not in lockstep in their stance toward China, with which many have strong ties and are reluctant to choose sides. Japanese officials say they are mindful of the situation and not trying to get them to choose sides.

Japan also hopes to push forward energy cooperation with ASEAN leaders at a summit for the Asian Zero Emission Community initiative planned for today, when Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese is expected to join online. MDT/AP

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UN peacekeeping chief welcomes strong support for its far-flung operations despite 'headwinds'

EDITH M. LEDERER,
UNITED NATIONS

THE United Nations peacekeeping chief says he was very satisfied with the strong support of many countries for its far-flung operations at a recent ministerial meeting, despite "headwinds and challenges and problems."

Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the undersecretary-general for peace operations, said in an interview with The Associated Press that the biannual ministerial meeting in Ghana's capital, Accra, earlier this month was attended by nearly 100 countries.

He said that 33 countries made pledges of 117 military and police units for the U.N.'s peacekeeping operations — and 45 countries made more than 100 pledges related to training peacekeepers and partnerships.

"We had really a strong level of support towards peacekeeping, which is great ... and the pledges were very good," Lacroix said.

The number of U.N. peacekeepers and staff has fallen from more than 100,000 worldwide to 70,000 as missions have ended, some more successfully than others.

There are now 12 peacekeeping operations in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East and that number will drop again following demands by the leaders of Mali and Congo for U.N. troops to leave, complaining that the peacekeepers failed in their primary mandate to protect civilians from armed groups.

There had been concern about continuing support for U.N. peacekeeping with the unprecedented six-month withdrawal of nearly 13,000 peacekeepers from Mali ending this month, and a recent agreement on the phased withdrawal of the more than 14,000-strong force in Congo.

But Lacroix said that there was a strong recommitment to U.N. peacekeeping.

During the Accra meeting, he said that ministers also discussed U.N. efforts



Jean-Pierre Lacroix, UN Under-Secretary General, Peace operations

to address other challenges, including increasing the number of female peacekeepers, safety and security for troops, misinformation and disinformation affecting peacekeeping operations and discipline, which includes ongoing instances of sexual exploitation and sexual violence by peacekeepers.

Paradoxically, he said, U.N. peacekeeping remains one of the most supported U.N. operations, but individually, peacekeeping missions face problems because of divisions among the 193 member nations -- especially among the 15 members of the U.N. Security Council who must approve and extend the mandates for peacekeeping missions.

In the list of pledges, Lacroix said, "we probably have more than what we need."

But it's just the beginning of a process, he stressed, because the peacekeeping department he heads must now work with countries to turn the pledges into military and police units that can be deployed, and to start training missions.

Looking ahead, Lacroix said that member states and host countries have the final say on authorizing new peacekeeping operations and

extending existing missions.

In the vast majority of cases, Lacroix said that he believes peacekeeping operations provide "added value ... even if all peacekeeping operations are facing a much more difficult environment political and security-wise — all of them, not only in Africa."

As for protecting civilians which the leaders of Mali and Congo strongly criticized, Lacroix said that hundreds of thousands of civilians are protected every day by U.N. peacekeepers. And he asked what would happen if peacekeepers were removed from Cyprus or the Golan Heights, which Israel captured from Syria in the 1967 war — "and you could say the same thing about many areas in Africa" and elsewhere.

Usually, Lacroix said, the U.N. can manage difficulties, including a degraded level of security for peacekeeping missions, host governments not being fully cooperative, and fake news about peacekeepers.

But he said that missions become exceedingly difficult to sustain or even untenable when on top of that there is extremism as in Mali, which

U.N. peacekeepers aren't mandated to fight, or regional conflicts like in the Great Lakes region of Africa where its mandate only covered Congo.

As for the future of peacekeeping, Lacroix said, "First of all, we're as strong as the unity and commitment of our member states is towards opting for multilateral solutions."

In Mali, where peacekeepers were ordered out, and in Sudan, where the U.N. political mission was expelled, he said, "I think it reflects a world where basically, there is less appetite to sort of go along with the multilateral option."

The ministerial meeting and Lacroix's interview on Monday took place as two major wars raged, in Ukraine following Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, and the Israel-Hamas war, which began on Oct. 7.

When there is a cessation of hostilities in both wars, Lacroix said, under one of many scenarios, there may be a need for a third-party observation mission, and he said that the U.N. has a good network of people in many countries with those capabilities. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1997 DAWN OF SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT



A bill giving Scotland its own parliament for the first time in three centuries has been unveiled in Glasgow today.

Scottish Secretary Donald Dewar revealed his blueprint for the future of Scottish politics and called on the House of Lords not to delay or disrupt its passage into law.

"In well under 300 days we have set in train the biggest change in 300 years of Scottish history," he said.

The bill outlines the parliament described in the white paper, Scotland's Parliament, published in July.

It outlines a 129-member Scots parliament to be set up by the year 2000 with powers to legislate on all mainstream issues of national importance, including health and education.

Following elections in 1999 the majority party will form an Executive to act as government of the country.

The parliament, to be based in Edinburgh, will have the power to vary income tax by 3p in the pound.

Mr Dewar added: "This bill will give Scotland the power to boost its self-confidence, economically, culturally and political."

He said the Bill had clear backing from Scots, who overwhelmingly voted in favour of devolution in a referendum in September.

The Conservative party, which campaigned for a "no" vote at the referendum, now accepts a majority of Scots want devolution.

But Tory constitutional affairs spokesman, Michael Ancram, said: "That does not mean that we have to accept the Bill as it stands."

"There are areas of major concern such as the effect on the constitution of the UK as a whole."

Inter-party talks are already under way on how the bill will be handled.

All UK citizens aged 20 or over will be eligible to stand for election to the Scottish Parliament but only those living in Scotland, or with a main residence in the country, can vote at the 1999 election.

The bill will get its second reading during the first two days of Parliament's return in the New Year.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The Scotland Act 1998 was introduced in 1997 and elections to the Scottish Assemblies were held in May 1999.

Donald Dewar became Scotland's First Minister and later the same month the Scottish parliament met for the first time.

Devolution Day on 1 July 1999 saw the Scottish parliament assume its full powers in the presence of the Queen - to cheers and applause.

But the parliament was plunged into mourning when Mr Dewar, a much loved politician described as the "father of the Scottish nation", died in October 2000 aged 63.

He had suffered bleeding on the brain following a fall. His death was marked by warm tributes from around the world and Scotland.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 New interests are preoccupying your time. If you can include them in your plans, do so. Take on positions that offer on the job training or pay for courses related to the business.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 You will need to spend extra time sorting through your work. You should get into some of those creative hobbies that you always said you wanted to do.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 Your partner will be emotionally unable to cope. Concentrate on spending quality time with children. You may be experiencing emotional turmoil in regard to your mate.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Good day for romance. Talk to superiors about problems that you feel are getting out of hand. Be cautious handling tools, machinery, or dangerous objects.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Consider the source before you believe what you hear. Don't ignore any emotional issues that could be causing problems. Loans will be attainable and legal matters easily taken care of.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Someone may be trying to damage your reputation. Jealousy may be a contributing factor to your emotional ups and downs. Listen to the advice given by those with experience.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 You need a day to rest and relax with the ones you love. You can receive recognition for the work you've done. You may need the space, but you need the extra cash more.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Don't let your mate bully you into thinking that you owe them your time and your life. You may be able to impart knowledge that's innovative to those searching for a new angle.

SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Partnerships could be tense. Don't push your luck. Communication will be the source of your knowledge and you must be sure to spend time with those who have more experience.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 Expect your workload to be heavy. You can enjoy doing things that include children. Try to keep ahead of the game. Knowledge can be acquired if you listen.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 You have more than enough on your plate already. Secret intrigues could get you into trouble. Your ideas can be put into action.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Be prepared to take advantage of your good fortune. Put your energy into home renovations. You may find that your emotional partner will not be too eager to accommodate you.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-14	-4	fine
Changchun	-22	-15	fine
Chengdu	3	10	cloudy
Chongqing	5	8	overcast
Fuzhou	7	16	overcast
Guangzhou	7	14	overcast
Guiyang	-1	2	overcast
Haikou	16	25	rain
Hangzhou	-1	3	rain
Harbin	-27	-19	fine
Hefei	-3	0	snow
Nanjing	-2	1	snow
Shanghai	0	6	rain
Taipei	14	21	cloudy
Wuhan	0	2	snow
Hong Kong	19	22	windy
WORLD			
Moscow	1	2	cloudy
Frankfurt	1	6	overcast
Paris	4	6	cloudy
London	12	12	cloudy
New York	4	15	thunderstorm

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Miners' sch.; 5- Small canyon; 10- Clenched hand; 14- In the neighborhood; 15- Bay window; 16- Director Preminger; 17- Lucie's father; 18- Emblem; 19- Simon...; 20- Person-to-person; 22- Politico Kefauver; 23- City in Western Nevada; 24- ___ but known...; 26- Flight segment; 29- Criminal underworld; 33- Sister of Thalia; 34- Specialty; 35- Bring civil action against; 36- Alter; 37- Give the slip; 38- ___ never work!; 39- Friendly introduction?; 40- Guarded; 41- Journalist ___ Rogers St. Johns; 42- Portrayed; 44- Equine; 45- Grandson of Adam; 46- Catchall abbr.; 48- Accord maker; 51- Insolate; 55- Biblical birthright seller; 56- Africa's most populous city; 58- Lacking slack; 59- Novelist Waugh; 60- Wine grape; 61- Formerly, formerly; 62- Prepare to be shot; 63- " ___ by any other name..."; 64- Architect Mies van der ___;

DOWN 1- Bring to ruin; 2- High schooler; 3- Facilitate; 4- Precedence; 5- Boarded; 6- Home of the Black Bears; 7- Ceremony; 8- Golly!; 9- Freddie Krueger roamed ___ Street in the movies; 10- Remains of any organism preserved in rock; 11- Let's just leave ___ that; 12- Eye sore; 13- Throw; 21- Emperor of Rome 54-68; 22- Advantage; 24- Firm; 25- Initial stake in a hand of poker; 26- Cleave; 27- Vestige; 28- Biblical brother; 29- Melon, e.g.; 30- Fall bloomer; 31- Negates; 32- Postpone; 34- Skeddaddles; 37- Architect Saarinen; 38- Worshiper of Baal, Hathor, or Jupiter; 40- Actress Olin; 41- Gregory Peck role of 1956; 43- Infer; 46- Continental cash; 47- Govt. security; 48- Jalopy; 49- Kon-Tiki Museum site; 50- Scottish refusals; 51- ___-Japanese War; 52- Edible corm; 53- Quiet; 54- Novel ending; 56- Tax pro; 57- Televiser;

Friday's solution

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

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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
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UFC 296

Leon Edwards retains welterweight belt with unanimous decision over Colby Covington

W.G. RAMIREZ, LAS VEGAS

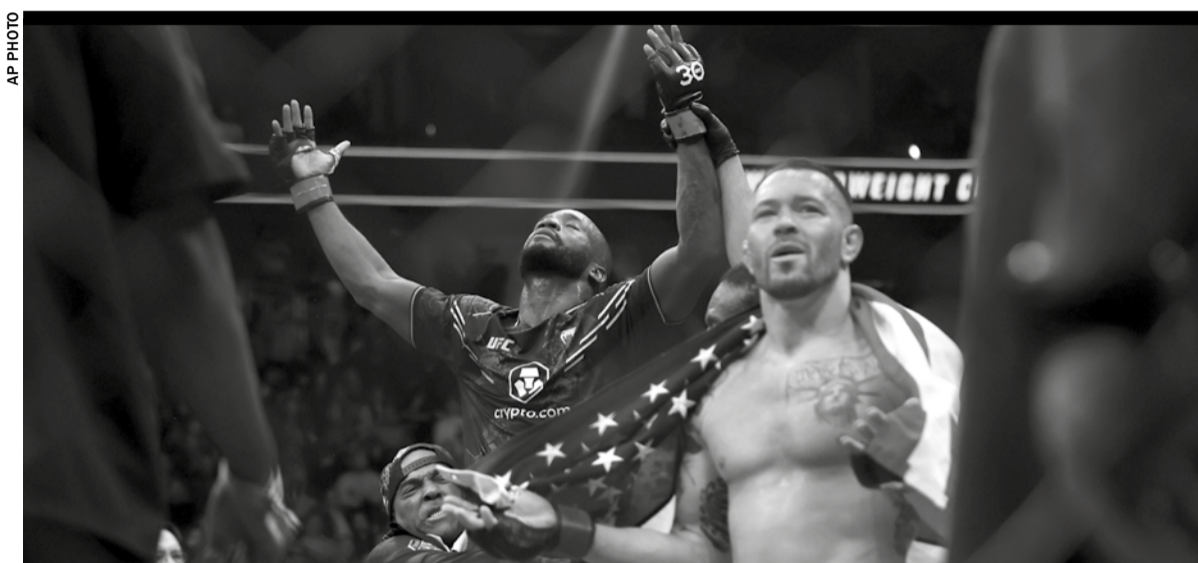
L EON Edwards successfully defended his welterweight belt Saturday night, unanimously outpointing Colby Covington at UFC 296.

In a bout that hardly lived up to its billing, Edwards (22-3) showed poise and patience as he picked his spots to outclass Covington (17-4), beating the former interim champion at his own game.

Rather than using his strengths on his feet as a striker, Edwards chose to grapple and counter whenever Covington took shots for a takedown.

"It was way easier than expected," Edwards said in the postfight interview. "I'm a mixed martial artist. I know everyone sees me as a striker, so it's good to go out there and show different parts of my game."

It was an emotionally charged bout after Covington mentioned Edwards' deceased father at the final pre-fight press conference.



UFC welterweight champion Leon Edwards, left, celebrates after being declared the winner by unanimous decision over Colby Covington, right, during the UFC 296 mixed martial arts event, Saturday

Edwards lost his father when he was a teenager, as he's previously explained his dad was shot and killed in a London nightclub during a skirmish over money.

Edwards had to be restrained after Covington's remarks, but he got revenge Saturday night.

"It was very difficult," Edwards

also said. "Last night I spoke to my mum and she said, 'Understand what he said was hurtful but you need to remember where you came from.'"

After entering the arena draped in an American flag, Covington made a pit stop to share a quick word with former President Do-

nald Trump before stepping into the octagon.

Trump sat ringside, with UFC CEO Dana White, musician Kid Rock and UFC chief business officer Hunter Campbell.

White shot down the rumor that Trump would have put the belt on Covington had he won.

"You guys think Secret Service would've let Trump get into the octagon?" White asked.

In the co-main event, Alexandre Pantoja (27-5) successfully defended his flyweight belt in his first title defense, winning a unanimous decision over Brandon Royval (15-7).

Pantoja used a methodical approach by dominating with his agility and grappling ability to wear down Royval, the second-ranked flyweight in the world.

"I didn't expect a war like that," Pantoja said. "That's the flyweight division ... all good fighters. I'm very happy to represent this division."

It was the second time Pantoja beat Royval, the first coming by way of a second-round submission with a rear naked choke during a UFC Fight Night event on Feb. 6, 2021.

"He evolved so much and he learned (since) his last fight with me," Pantoja said. "He's gone to another level. He deserves all my respect." MDT/AP

AD

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貳獎1名：MOP 8,000.00獎金及紀念品各一份。
參獎1名：MOP 6,000.00獎金及紀念品各一份。
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OPINION

China Daily
 Editorial, China Daily

**'EXCLUSION LAW' AS
 PREJUDICED AS ITS
 PREDECESSOR**

A state law in Florida came into effect in July, which among other things prohibits the state's public universities from offering anyone living in one of six countries a contract to do research. One of the countries is China.

If one of the 12 public colleges and universities covered by the law want to hire Chinese graduate students or postdoctoral students to work in their labs, they must get a waiver from the state's top higher education body. But how that process works has not been made clear.

Had Florida Republican Governor Ron De Santis or any of the lawmakers in the state any sense of responsibility regarding Florida's future, they would carefully read the letter of more than 280 University of Florida faculty members, who "urgently request a timely decision that allows us to recruit top international graduate students with an assistantship, irrespective of their nationality".

At their summit on the sidelines of the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in San Francisco in November, the Chinese and US leaders agreed that the two sides should treat each other with respect, maintain open lines of communication and cooperate in areas of shared interest. What the Florida governor and lawmakers are doing is the opposite, namely disrespectfully closing lines of communication and refusing to cooperate in areas of shared interest.

Florida's law is a sad indictment of the mentality of US politicians such as DeSantis who hold administrative power and can pass legislation that nakedly discriminates against students from China and other countries that they harbor ideological prejudice toward.

The law recalls the Chinese Exclusion Act 1882, which was the first in US history to place broad restrictions on immigration. As was the case then, racism and domestic factors trumped concerns about how the move would damage relations with China.

The Florida ban was inspired by presidential proclamation 10043 issued by then president Donald Trump, which denies a visa to someone who studied at a particular university whether or not any negative information exists about the individual. The policy was introduced despite the US government already having a long-standing program to vet potential students based on concerns over the transfer of sensitive technologies. The Joe Biden administration continues to enforce the proclamation.

Those critical of such moves say that the US will lose out on a valuable talent pool and the financial and scientific contributions these students would make to the US.

But it seems that the damage such actions can do to the US' talent inflow and the country's research are of no concern to US lawmakers such as DeSantis.

These politicians parade such demonstrations of xenophobic chauvinism as though they are a badge of honor.

**CANADIAN YOUTH FACING TERRORISM CHARGES
 FOR ALLEGED PLOT AGAINST JEWISH PEOPLE**

**THE
 BUZZ**

Canada's national police force said Saturday that a youth was arrested and charged with terrorism-related offenses that allegedly targeted Jewish people.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police said the young person arrested Friday was charged with facilitating terrorist activity by communicating instructional material related to an explosive substance.

The youth is further charged with knowingly instructing a person to carry out terrorist activity against "Jewish persons."

Police did not release further details about the alleged offenses.

Officials also said no further information about the youth could be released due to the suspect's age.

In a news release, the national police force said it is seeing a concerning trend of violent extremism and terrorist use of the internet, including among young people.

The RCMP urged adults in authority positions to watch for early warning signs of radicalization. Those include dehumanization of others, extreme anti-government attitudes and clear statements of intention to carry out violent acts.

AP PHOTO



Russian American writer Masha Gessen

LITERATURE

**AUTHOR RECEIVES
 GERMAN PRIZE IN
 SCALED-DOWN FORMAT
 AFTER COMPARING GAZA
 TO NAZI-ERA GHETTOS**

The Russian-American writer Masha Gessen received a German literary prize Saturday in a ceremony that was delayed and scaled down in reaction to an article comparing Gaza to Nazi German ghettos.

The comparison in a recent New Yorker article was viewed as controversial in Germany, where government authorities strongly support Israel as a form of remorse and responsibility after Adolf Hitler's Germany murdered up to 6 million Jews in the Holocaust.

Gessen, who was born Jewish in the Soviet Union, is critical of Israel's treatment of Palestinians.

Reaction to the article comes as German society grapples with the fallout from the Israel-Hamas war, with both pro-Palestinian protests and pro-Israel demonstrations taking place in past weeks. German leaders have repeatedly stressed their support for the country's Jews and for Israel as they have denounced antisemitic incidents.

Gessen was originally due to receive the Hannah Arendt Prize for Political

Thought on Friday in the city hall of Bremen, in northwest Germany, but the sponsoring organization, the Heinrich Böll Foundation, and the Senate of the city of Bremen withdrew from the ceremony.

It took place instead in a different location Saturday with about 50 guests crowded into a small event room and with police security, the German news agency dpa reported.

In Gessen's article, titled "In the Shadow of the Holocaust," the author explores German Holocaust memory, arguing that Germany today stifles free and open debate on Israel.

Gessen also is critical of Israel's relationship with Palestinians, writing that Gaza is "like a Jewish ghetto in an Eastern European country occupied by Nazi Germany."

"The ghetto is being liquidated," the article added.

The ghettos in German-occupied countries during World War II were open-air prisons where Jews were killed, starved and died from diseases. Those who didn't

perish there were rounded up and transported to death camps where they were murdered, a process called "liquidation."

The Böll Foundation, affiliated with Germany's Green party, called the comparison "unacceptable." A jury decided in the summer to award Gessen, an outspoken critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin, and the foundation said it wasn't canceling the award itself.

Gessen was not available for comment, a New Yorker spokesperson said, but the writer defended the article in an interview with Politico.

"I think it is possible to be very upset about that comparison," Gessen told Politico. "I also think that in this circumstance, it is morally necessary and politically necessary to make this very, very upsetting comparison."

The award is to honor people who contribute to public political thought in the tradition of Hannah Arendt, the German-born American political theorist who explored totalitarianism. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Serbia's populist President Aleksandar Vucic is looking to further tighten his grip on power in an election yesterday that has been marred by reports of major irregularities during a tense campaign. The main contest in the parliamentary and local elections is expected to be between Vucic's governing right-wing Serbian Progressive Party, or SNS, and a centrist coalition that is trying to undermine the populists who have ruled the troubled Balkan state since 2012.

AP PHOTO



France Notre Dame Cathedral got its rooster back Saturday, in a pivotal moment for the Paris landmark's restoration. The installation by a crane of a new golden rooster, reimagined as a dramatic phoenix with licking, flamed feathers, goes beyond being just a weathervane atop the cathedral spire. It symbolizes resilience amid destruction after the devastating April 2019 fire — as restoration officials also revealed an anti-fire misting system is being kitted out under the cathedral's roof. Chief architect Philippe Villeneuve, who designed this new rooster, stated that the original rooster's survival signified a ray of light in the catastrophe.

AP PHOTO



Vatican A tribunal convicted a cardinal of embezzlement and sentenced him to 5½ years in prison in one of several verdicts handed down in a complicated financial trial that aired the city state's dirty laundry and tested its justice system. Cardinal Angelo Becciu (pictured), the first cardinal ever prosecuted by the Vatican criminal court, was absolved of several other charges and his nine co-defendants received a mixed outcome of some guilty verdicts and many acquittals of the nearly 50 charges brought against them during a 2½ year trial.