

Xi says ready to work with Trump to build solid foundation for bilateral ties

BUSAN – President Xi Jinping said in Busan yesterday that he is ready to continue working with US President Donald Trump to build a solid foundation for bilateral ties, and create a sound atmosphere for the development of both countries.

In a meeting with Trump, Xi said under their joint guidance, China-US relations have remained stable on the whole.

“China and the United States should be partners and friends. That is what history has taught us and what reality needs,” he said.

Given different national conditions, the two sides do not always see eye to eye with each other, and it is normal for the two leading economies of the world to have frictions now and then, Xi added.

“You and I are at the helm of China-US relations,” said Xi. “In the face of winds, waves and challenges, we should stay the right course, navigate through the complex landscape, and ensure the steady sailing forward of the giant ship of China-US relations.”

Xi said that there is a good momentum in China’s economic development, adding that in the first three quarters of this year, China’s economy increased by 5.2 percent, and import and export trade in goods with the rest of the world expanded by 4 percent.

This is not an easy accomplishment given the domestic and external difficulties, Xi noted, adding that the Chinese economy is like a vast ocean, big, resilient and promising.

“We have the confidence and capability to navigate all kinds of



President Xi Jinping shakes hands with US President Donald Trump in Busan, South Korea, yesterday. – Xinhua

risks and challenges,” Xi added.

At its fourth plenary session, the 20th CPC Central Committee deliberated over and adopted the recommendations for the economic and social development plan over the next five years, Xi said.

“Over the past seven decades and more, we have been working from generation to generation on the same blueprint to make it a reality. We have no intention to

challenge or supplant anyone. Our focus has always been on managing China’s own affairs well, improving ourselves, and sharing development opportunities with all countries across the world,” he added.

Describing that as an important secret to China’s success, Xi said China will further deepen reform across the board, expand opening up, and promote higher-quality economic growth while achieving

an appropriate increase in economic output, and advance well-rounded human development and common prosperity for all, adding that this will also expand the space for cooperation between China and the United States.

Xi noted that the two countries’ economic and trade teams had an in-depth exchange of views on important economic and trade issues, and reached consensus on solving various issues.



He called on the two teams to work out and finalize the follow-up steps as soon as possible, and ensure that the common understandings are effectively upheld and implemented, to inject confidence into the two countries as well as the global economy through solid deliverables.

China-US economic and trade relations have experienced ups and downs recently, and this has also given the two sides some insights, Xi noted.

The business relationship, Xi said, should continue to serve as the anchor and driving force for China-US relations, not a stumbling block or a point of friction.

The two sides should think big and recognize the long-term benefit of cooperation, and must not fall into a vicious cycle of mutual retaliation, he added, calling on the two teams to continue their talks in the spirit of equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit, and continuously shorten the list of problems and lengthen the list of cooperation.

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China urges Paraguayan government to heed call of its people, make right decision: FM spokesperson

BEIJING – China urges the Paraguayan government to heed the call of its people, embark on the right course as early as possible, and make the right decision to recognize the one-China principle and sever so-called “diplomatic ties” with the Taiwan authorities, foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said yesterday.

Guo’s remarks were made in response to the latest poll conducted in Paraguay this

month, which showed nearly 90 percent of Paraguayan people recognize the importance of establishing diplomatic relations with China.

“In recent years, we have heard time and again the strong call of people from various sectors in Paraguay to develop relations with China,” Guo told a daily news briefing.

He noted that the poll once again demonstrates the keen desire of the Paraguayan

people for the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Paraguay.

“We would like to stress again that China’s reunification is unstoppable,” said Guo.

Guo said that maintaining so-called “diplomatic relations” with the Taiwan authorities does not serve the fundamental and long-term interests of Paraguay and its people, and also goes against the prevailing

consensus of the international community on upholding the one-China principle.

“We urge the Paraguayan government to heed the call of its people, embark on the right course as early as possible, come to the right side of history, and make the right decision to recognize the one-China principle and sever so-called ‘diplomatic ties’ with the Taiwan authorities,” the spokesperson said. – Xinhua

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Police nab HK-Macau quartet for cheating 2 casinos out of HK\$19 million

Macau’s Judiciary Police (PJ) have arrested four suspects for fraud, money laundering and document forgery in two casinos, PJ spokesman Cheong Un Hong said during a special press conference yesterday.

– Story on p. 3

France arrests 5 new suspects over Louvre heist: prosecutor

French police have arrested five more people, including a prime suspect, over this month’s daring Louvre museum robbery, the Paris prosecutor said yesterday.

– Story on p. 11

Brazil targets gang money in São Paulo after deadly Rio raid

Brazilian authorities yesterday launched an operation in São Paulo state against money laundering by one of the country’s largest organised crime groups, the First Capital Command (PCC), which also operates internationally.

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Party reaffirms key commitment to putting people first



Much to my delight, the key commitments to putting people first, promoting common prosperity, and safeguarding people's well-being were reaffirmed in the Communist Party of China's communiqué from the recent 4th Plenary Session of its 20th Central Committee. The session, headed by General Secretary Xi Jinping, was held in Beijing from October 20 to 23.

Due to its significance, our newspaper released the full text (4,024 words) of the English-language version of the communiqué on its website on October 24.*

Foreign Affairs Ministry Commissioner Liu Xianfa hosted a presentation consisting of 46 Power-Point slides about the achievements of the 4th Plenary Session on Wednesday at the Commission in Zape, which coincided with the Double Ninth Festival. Newly arrived Deputy Commissioner Cheng Lei was also in attendance, along with diplomats, journalists, and academics. This public holiday in Macau is traditionally considered an auspicious date, as it is a combination of "double yang" numbers.

As an aside, in Chinese philosophy, odd numbers are associated with yang (masculine, positive energy), and the number nine is considered the highest yang number. The repetition of this auspicious number is seen as a day of peak yang energy, traditionally celebrated with customs like honouring the elderly – a praiseworthy custom indeed, considering my age.

Be that as it may, I have attended several presentations by Commissioner Liu in the past few years, all of which have been intellectually rewarding due to their wealth of information and, last but not least, their interesting explanations. Liu's one-hour presentation in English focused on the 4th Plenary Session's commitment to ensuring significant progress in achieving Chinese modernisation.

Liu stated that the most important outcome of the session was the review and adoption of the recommendations of the CPC Central Committee for formulating the new 15th Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development. He underlined that these recommendations, based

on an in-depth analysis of both the domestic and global landscapes, will play a pivotal role in the next five years of Chinese modernisation. Consequently, "the session will not only impact China but will also carry global significance," Liu said.

Undoubtedly, China has global significance – it covers nearly 2 percent of our planet's landmass, about 17.5 percent of its population, and around 19 percent of the world's GDP at Purchasing Power Parity, apart from being the world's second-largest economy (after the US and before Germany). China matters a lot globally in socio-economic, scientific, technological, and cultural aspects.

Liu stressed that it is important for China to seize the window of opportunity to "secure decisive progress toward basically achieving Chinese modernisation." He described the drafting process of the recommendations as a "vivid example of intra-party democracy and whole-process people's democracy in action," pointing out that Xi headed the drafting group, which, after soliciting opinions online, received more than three million comments.

According to Liu, the Communist Party of China's (CPC) Political Bureau and its Standing Committee reviewed and revised draft versions of the document five times and made 218 revisions, covering 452 opinions and suggestions. Liu mentioned that he was one of those who submitted suggestions in the run-up to this month's session.

Regarding the country's 15 Five-Year Plans so far, Liu pointed out that Chairman Mao Zedong urged the whole Party back in 1944 to develop industry and called upon Party members to learn technologies and knowledge for China's industrialisation. Liu helped me remember a gap in my historical knowledge. Mao was certainly right when, as Liu stressed, industrialisation is essential to securing China's national independence. I am convinced that a country must be economically strong to be able to be truly independent.

On the historical front, Liu noted that China's first Five-Year Plan was launched by the Party in 1953 (the year I was born) when Mao proposed the Four Modernisations, i.e., the development of modernised industry, modernised agriculture, modernised transportation, and modernised national defence.



Foreign Affairs Ministry Commissioner Liu Xianfa speaks during Wednesday's power-point presentation at the Commission in Zape on Wednesday.
– Photo: Staff Reporter

In the 1980s, Liu recalled, Deng Xiaoping launched the Party's Three-Step Strategy for the nation's modernisation process: with 1980 as the base point, China's GDP would be doubled and people's food and clothing problems solved by 1990; China's GDP would be quadrupled and reach a moderately prosperous level by the end of the 20th century; and after another 50 years, or in the middle of the 21st century, per capita national income would reach the level of moderately developed countries, thus basically realising modernisation.

I expect the third step to be achieved well before the mid-21st century.

In 1997, Liu pointed out, the Two Centenary Goals were first proposed by the Party: by 2021, to celebrate the CPC's centenary, the goal was to "build a moderately prosperous society in all respects." The first goal has been roundly achieved. By 2049, the centenary of the People's Republic of China (and the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Macau Special Administrative Region), the goal is to "build a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, and harmonious." I believe that the second goal is set to be achieved even earlier.

In 2012, Liu noted, the Party, under Xi's leadership, launched the New Era concept, which has attained a more profound comprehension of the essence and nature of Chinese modernisation, such as by stressing the importance of "distinctive Chinese characteristics" in the nation's ongoing modernisation drive, for which "a preliminary theoretical framework has been designed."

Then in 2020, Xi proposed a two-step strategic plan to build China into a great modern socialist country: basically realise socialist modernisation from 2020 through 2035 and build China into a great modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious, and beautiful from 2035 through the middle of this century. Anyone who has visited the Chinese mainland over the past five years can see that the two-step strategy's

implementation is in full swing—possibly even ahead of schedule.

Liu's presentation also detailed the significant achievements of the outgoing 14th Five-Year Plan, such as an average annual growth rate of 5.5 percent between 2020 and last year, significantly higher than the global average of 3.9 percent over the same period. Besides, China contributed approximately 30 percent annually to global economic growth, becoming the main source of global economic growth and an important engine.

When I first visited China in 1980, NO ONE would have thought that China would be able to achieve this economic miracle within less than half a century. Of course, it's not really a miracle – it's progress created by hard work, determination, and, saving a key point for last, Chinese wisdom.

Nowadays, Liu underlined, China boasts over 500,000 high-tech industrial enterprises, figures among the Top Ten of the Global Innovation Index for the first time, has 26 of the world's top 100 science and technology innovation clusters, ranking first globally in proportion, and holds 60 percent of global AI patents.

For me, all this proves that China's politico-economic development drive is a model for the whole world—both the Global South AND the Global North. All this, of course, has included the world's most successful poverty alleviation drive of scale in history—800 million Chinese in a matter of decades.

Liu also highlighted that China now has the world's largest education, medical care, and social security systems, which are continuously being consolidated.

Moreover, Liu showed in his presentation – 46 power points in all – that China now has the world's largest carbon emission trading market and clean power supply system.

I was positively stunned to hear that China's forest coverage has increased to over 25 percent, contributing a quarter of the world's new green area. Even on the environmental protection and climate change response front, I have no doubt that China is now one of the world's "green champions."

Liu stressed that Xi's leadership ensured the successful implementation of the 14th Five-Year Plan, which ends this year, by "uniting the entire Party and the Chinese people of all ethnic groups, and leading them in meeting difficulties head-on and forging ahead with determination."

The Commissioner also singled out Xi's New Development Philosophy, pointing out that, in 2015, Xi put forward this new development philosophy, featuring innovative, coordinated, green, open, and shared development, according to which "innovation is the primary engine of development, and coordination is not only a means but also a goal of development." I find the latter concept particularly interesting.

Moreover, Liu said that, in 2020, Xi put forward the Party's New Development Paradigm, consisting of domestic circulation as the mainstay and domestic and international circulations reinforcing each other, aiming to fully unlock China's market potential and create greater demand; to open up wider to the outside world and share more opportunities for common development; and to deepen international cooperation for shared benefits.

In 2023, Liu noted, Xi proposed the concept of new quality productive forces, in alignment with the New Development Philosophy, featuring high technology, high efficiency, and high quality; innovation taking the lead; and advanced productivity freed from traditional economic growth models.

Liu also gave a detailed introduction to the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030): "Chinese modernisation can only be realised through a historical process of gradual and ongoing development, requiring the unremitting hard work of one generation after another; the 15th Five-Year Plan period will be critical in this process, as we work to reinforce the foundations and push ahead on all fronts toward basically achieving Chinese modernisation by 2035; it will serve as a key link between the past and the future; in this period, China's development environment will face profound and intricate changes."

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MACAU POST

Macau Weather

CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY PERIODS.

FORCE 3 TO 4 NORTH TO NORTHEASTERLY WINDS. RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 55% AND 90%.



22°C~29°C

Source: SMG

Party reaffirms key commitment to putting people first

Continued from p.2

I fear that the next quinquennium will be particularly challenging, not just for China but for the rest of the world, due to a range of negatives such as anti-globalism, proxy and civil wars, and winology (an emerging theory which posits that the West, steeped in supremacist thinking, finds it difficult to accept China's success because it challenges the Western-dominated world order).

I hope that Beijing and Washington – the world's paramount bilateral relationship – will be able to establish constructive ties based on pragmatism, realism, and mutual benefit that would benefit the international community as a whole. As the European Union, unfortunately, lacks strategic

autonomy, it only plays second fiddle on the world stage. As an EU citizen, I hope that the 27-member bloc will eventually get its act together and play a role commensurate with its status as one of the world's top economies.

Liu also presented the seven major objectives of the upcoming Five-Year Plan, such as significant advancements in high-quality development, further improvements in quality of life, and further advances in strengthening the national security shield. I agree that without national security, national development would be jeopardised. That's true for any political system.

Liu also stated that China remains committed to advancing open innovation and

fostering mutually beneficial international cooperation, providing new opportunities and certainties for global growth.

At the end of his presentation, which was captivating all the way through, Liu also mentioned the role of Hong Kong and Macau within the ambit of the 15th Five-Year Plan, such as leveraging the unique advantages and vital roles of Hong Kong and Macau in serving as bridges between the mainland and the world, and supporting both special administrative regions (SARs) in building themselves into international hubs for high-calibre talent.

The Commissioner noted that since 2011, i.e., the 12th Five-Year Plan, Hong Kong and Macau-related work has been incorporated

as one chapter in the Five-Year Plans. He also stressed the need for Macau to continue working on the appropriate diversification of its economy.

That, I am sure, will continue to be a work in progress for some time to come – including the Macau-Hengqin integration process.

Most importantly, obviously, will be for the local government to remain committed to Xi's advice of always putting people first, promoting common prosperity, and safeguarding people's well-being.

– Harald Brining

<https://www.macaupostdaily.com/news/list?search=communiqué>

Police nab HK-Macau quartet for cheating 2 casinos out of HK\$19 million

Armindo Neves

The Judiciary Police (PJ) have arrested four suspects for fraud, money laundering and document forgery in two casinos, PJ spokesman Cheong Un Hong said during a special press conference yesterday.

The quartet were arrested in the casinos in Cotai on Monday.

Cheong identified the four suspects as three Hongkongers and one local resident; the trio from Hong Kong are aged between 63 and 67, surnamed Lee, Wong and Or who told the police that they are businesspeople. The local resident is a 36-year-old male surnamed Wong, who told the police that he's a driver.

According to Vong Chi Hou, head of the Judiciary Police's gaming-related Crimes Division, they received a report on Monday from a gaming concessionaire that Lee had fraudulently obtained credit facilities.

Vong said that on October 15 Lee submitted a forged electronic bank statement from a Hong Kong bank to a gaming concessionaire, falsely claiming a bank account balance of HK\$48 million. Lee successfully deceived the gaming operator into approving a HK\$10 million gambling credit, Vong said.

According to Vong, subsequently, on October 18, 23 and 27, Lee, along with Wong and Or, obtained

non-negotiable gaming chips – also known as “mud chips” or “lai ma” in Cantonese – in several batches. After gambling for a period, they removed the chips from the casino premises, Vong said.

On Monday evening, Vong said, when the company discovered his activities and demanded the return of the chips, Lee was only able to repay HK\$1,585,000. The remaining HK\$8,415,000 could not be accounted for, after which the company reported the case to the Judiciary Police, Vong said.

According to Vong, a follow-up investigation revealed that since early October, the gang had attempted to obtain loans from multiple gaming concessionaires. Apart from the gaming operator that had filed the report, they successfully defrauded another gaming operator of HK\$9,000,000 in credit, while two other operators did not approve their applications, Vong said.

On Monday evening, Vong said, PJ officers arrested the gang of four at a casino in Cotai and seized HK\$300,000 from Wong. The four suspects told the police that the fraudulently obtained non-negotiable gaming chips had been taken away by other accomplices who were still at large during the press conference yesterday afternoon.

The quartet were transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) yesterday facing charges of fraud, money laundering and document forgery. ■



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort the four hooded casino fraud suspects to a PJ van outside the PJ headquarters in Zape yesterday. – Photo: Armindo Neves

Aviation regulator enforces no-fly zone during National Games torch relay

Khalel Vallo

The Civil Aviation Authority of Macau (AACM) announced in a statement yesterday that unmanned aircraft activities will be prohibited over the Macau peninsula on Sunday to ensure safety during the 15th National Games torch relay.

According to Article 66 of the Air Navigation Regulation of Macau, and approved by Executive Order No. 43/2021, the no-fly zone will be in effect from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Sunday, the statement said, adding that violators face fines ranging from 2,000 to 20,000 patacas.

The no-fly notice was published in the Official Gazette (BO) yesterday. ■



This image provided by the Civil Aviation Authority of Macau (AACM) yesterday shows the regulator's logo announcing its no-fly order for drones.

Police nab local resident, domestic helper for theft

Armindo Neves

The Judiciary Police (PJ) arrested a local resident for theft on Tuesday, PJ spokesman Cheong Un Hong said during a special press conference yesterday.

Cheong identified the suspect as a 72-year-old male surnamed Wong, who told the police that he's jobless.

According to Cheong, the Judiciary Police received a report from the owner and an employee of a repair shop in the peninsula's northern district.

Cheong said that when the two victims opened their shop on the morning of Tuesday, they discovered that the shutter had been deliberately damaged with tools, resulting in a rectangular hole being cut out. The safe inside the shop had also been broken into, and all the cash inside – totalling 60,730 patacas – had vanished, Cheong said.

According to Cheong, an investigation revealed that at around 3 a.m. on October 28, Wong, used a hand-held circular saw to cut a hole in the shop's security shutter, crawled through the opening to enter the premises and commit the crime. He left via the same route about an hour later. After stealing the cash, Wong immediately went to a casino and gambled away all the stolen money, Cheong said.

On Tuesday afternoon, PJ officers nabbed Wong at the Barrier Gate, seized the tool and clothing used for the crime from his residence.

Wong has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing a charge of theft.

Police arrest Myanmar domestic helper for theft

Meanwhile, the Judiciary Police (PJ) arrested a Myanmar domestic helper for theft on Tuesday, PJ spokesman Cheong Un Hong said during a regular press conference yesterday.

Cheong identified the suspect as a 20-year-old female surnamed Mal.

According to Cheong, on Tuesday night, the Judiciary Police received a report from a local female that she suspected her domestic helper of stealing multiple gold items from the flat by exploiting her job, with eight gold items worth a total of 126,000 patacas disappearing.

Cheong said that the victim had for



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort the hooded repairshop theft suspect to a PJ van outside the PJ headquarters in Zape yesterday. – Photo: Armindo Neves

many years kept several gold items in a safe in her bedroom in Patane, with the safe key kept in a bag nearby. The victim had hired the woman as a live-in domestic helper in September 2023, Cheong said.

Last Saturday, according to Cheong, the victim discovered that eight gold items had vanished from the safe. Under questioning by the victim, Mal admitted to stealing three of the gold items worth 37,000 patacas and returned them to the victim. However, the victim confirmed that there were five more gold items worth 89,000 patacas that remained missing, and subsequently reported the matter to the police, Cheong said.

Cheong said that the investigation revealed that on a certain day in September, the domestic helper took advantage of her position to enter her employer's bedroom and discovered the key to the safe and opened it. To avoid detection, she stole only some of the gold items and concealed the stolen goods in a drawer in another room of the flat, Cheong said.

According to Cheong, Mal refused to disclose the whereabouts of the remaining five gold items during the investigation. The Judiciary Police would continue to pursue the whereabouts of the missing gold items, Cheong said.

Mal has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing a theft charge. ■

‘Genetic Duration’ at Macau’s Tak Sang Pawnshop presents works of 9 artists

Rui Pastorin

Casa de Penhores Tak Sang (德生大按) is the site of an Art Macao exhibition entitled “Genetic Duration”, with nine artists transforming the spaces within the erstwhile pawnshop through paintings, photos, videos, sculptures, among a variety of artworks.

“Casa de Penhores” is Portuguese for pawnshop.

Curated by veteran artist Guilherme Ung Vai Meng, who is also one of the artists showcasing their works at the exhibition, the atmospheric event allows members of the public to walk around the former pawnshop’s first and ground floors and explore what it once was in addition to admiring the various artworks, which are displayed across thirteen sections.

The other eight artists showcasing their works are Konstantin Bessmertny, Chan Hin Io, Chao Chi Chun, Guan Hao Wen, Ung Cheng Nam, Ung Cheng Tong, Wu Deng Yang and Xu Jian Chun. Each have “chosen cultural genes-endowed with resilient vitality – as their central theme, embarking on an artistic experiment that transcends dimensions”, Ung said in the curator’s statement.

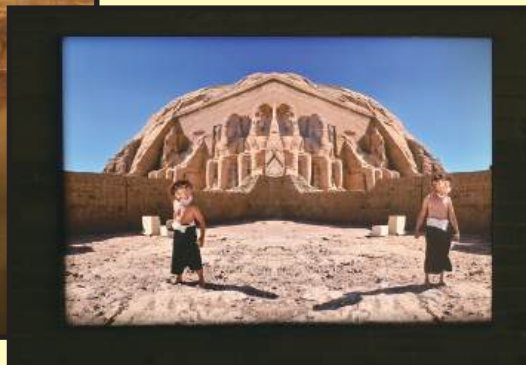
“Genes are the invisible blueprints at the core of life, encoding both destiny and the survival strategies accumulated through human adaptation and evolution”, Ung noted in the statement, adding that the exhibition features the collective themes of “Genes”, “The Sea Rises No Waves”, and “The Four Longshen (Guardian Dragons of Land)” along with the individual display spaces for each artist, according to the statement.

The Cultural Affairs Bureau’s (IC) Macau cultural heritage website notes that the Tak Sang Pawnshop was constructed during the 19th century and is in the category of buildings of architectural interest.

Ung highlighted the significance of the pawnshop and its history, noting that it is a “precious crystallisation of Macau’s cultural genes” and that hosting the exhibition there carries “profound significance” as “the diverse experiments of contemporary art engage in a dialogue across time and space with the wisdom and craftsmanship of traditional artisans”.

Closed on Mondays, “Genetic Duration” is in its final 9-day run, ending on November 9. One can visit during the period from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. The venue is located at 62A-64 Rua de Cinco de Outubro (十月初五街62號A至64號).

Photos taken yesterday by Rui Pastorin



All Souls' Day Public Holiday Notice

Macau marks All Souls' Day as a public holiday on Sunday, November 2. Monday is a holiday for public servants only. Therefore, government offices will be closed on Monday. The *Post*'s editorial team will take a break on Sunday, while it will be a day off for our

office staff on Monday. The next print issue will be published on Tuesday.

However, as usual, our website <https://www.macaupostdaily.com/> will be updated 24/7.

We wish all our readers, advertisers and distributors a pleasant holiday.

Jiangxi, a province of 'coexisting motion and stillness'

Commentary by Armindo Neves

A few days ago, members of the *Post* completed a six-day visit to the southeastern province of Jiangxi as part of a local Portuguese and English language media delegation organised by the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macau Special Administrative Region.

The itinerary spanned Jingdezhen City, Mount Lu, Xiushui County, and the provincial capital Nanchang, exploring the profound historical culture while uncovering its modern face of "coexisting motion and stillness".

The first stop of the itinerary was Jingdezhen, where we visited the Ancient Kiln Folk Customs Museum, Sanbao International Ceramic Valley, the Jingdezhen China Ceramics Museum, and the china studio of Wan Yuting, an intangible cultural heritage inheritor of Jingdezhen's ancient coloured porcelain.

Jingdezhen has a history of over 1,700 years in porcelain production, and its porcelain gained fame along the Maritime Silk Road, reaching Western countries, making porcelain synonymous with China.

In addition to being the capital of porcelain, Jingdezhen is also known as a revolutionary city. During the revolutionary period, Jingdezhen provided funding, materials and activity areas for the Communist Party of China (CPC) multiple times, adding a strong "red undertone" to its blue-and-white porcelain.

However, Jingdezhen is still the city with the lowest gross domestic product (GDP) in Jiangxi. According to data from the statistical bureau of Jiangxi, Jingdezhen's GDP in the first half of this year was 61.267 billion yuan, a difference of 6.06 times compared to Nanchang, which ranked first with a GDP of 371.262 billion yuan.

Yet, to the *Post* team, Jingdezhen appeared to be a particularly vibrant place. With its millennia of cultural heritage, Jingdezhen has attracted many young people to work and live there. In Jingdezhen's Taovichuan Creativity Square, there is a cultural and creative market.

This market has transformed the old ceramic factory district into a comprehensive area that integrates art, culture, and commerce. Within the area, hundreds of young ceramists and stall owners showcase their captivating works, allowing visitors to become one of their first customers on their journey of becoming porcelain masters.

Jingdezhen also has a centre dedicated to training, promoting, and supporting "Jingpiao"* individuals in establishing pottery studios. According to their statistics, over 60,000 people moved from other cities to Jingdezhen between 2013 and 2023, bringing a "revolutionary" new vitality to the city's ongoing development and cultural heritage.

After completing our visit to Jingdezhen, the delegation visited Lushan ("Mount Lu") in Jiujiang City, where, apart from climbing the 1,474-metre-high mountain, we also visited the Lushan Anti-Japanese War Museum and the Lushan Museum.

While walking along the path at Mount Lushan, the *Post* team found it difficult to see the entirety of Lushan's appearance, which reminded them of a poem by Song Dynasty writer Su Shi: "Why can't I tell the true shape of Lushan? Because I myself am in the mountain."



This means that being in the mountain prevents one from seeing its true form.

The unique foggy climate of Lushan often conceals its shapes in mist, and passers-by frequently struggle to see the road ahead due to the thick fog. The town of Guling in the mountains is often referred to as the "mountain city in the clouds" due to its peculiar weather.

Lushan is also a significant site for both the Kuomintang (KMT) and the CPC during the nation's war against Japanese imperialism. Coinciding with the 80th Anniversary of the Victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War, Lushan not only carries the elegance of ancient scholars but has also witnessed the bravery of the Chinese people in the face of adversity. Historical records indicate that around 35 million Chinese soldiers and civilians were killed in the Second Chinese-Japanese War, which began on September 18, 1931, and ended with a China victory on September 2, 1945.

After completing our visit to Lushan, the delegation proceeded to Xiushui County in Jiujiang City, where we visited the Macao Aid Memorial Hall, Xiushui County Aoyuan Middle School, an organic green vegetable base in Heshizhen, the Xiushui County Aole Kindergarten, and the Xiushui County Ninghong Innovative Industry Park project.

To support the nation's rural vitalisation strategy, the Macau government, along with several local businesses, signed a raft of cooperation plans with Xiushui County in 2023 and 2024, covering various fields such as industrial development, education and healthcare, cultural tourism, commercial cooperation, and agriculture; the total funding exceeded 50 million yuan.

To commemorate Macau's assistance to Xiushui County and showcase the cooperation results, the lasting friendship between Macau and Xiushui, and the achievements in rural revitalisation, the Macau government, in collaboration with the Liaison Office in Macau, established the Macau-Aided

Memorial Hall in Ningzhou Ancient City of Xiushui County.

In addition to displaying the cooperation results between Macau and Xiushui County, the hall features a Portuguese-style restaurant and a "cha chaan teng (Hong Kong and Macau-style café), enabling both locals and tourists to understand the deep friendship between Macau and Xiushui while experiencing Macau's culinary culture, thereby strengthening their interest in visiting Macau.

After concluding the visit to Xiushui County, the delegation arrived in Nanchang, where they visited Tengwang Pavilion, Wanshou Palace, the Nanchang Planning Exhibition Centre and the Nanchang Han Dynasty Haihun Marquis National Archaeological Site Park.

Nanchang, as the capital of Jiangxi Province, holds the top GDP in the province, not only due to its status as the provincial capital but also because of its unique natural scenery, historical culture, and industrial development, which are indispensable parts of its identity.

Nanchang boasts Tengwang Pavilion, one of the three great towers in Jiangnan alongside Yellow Crane Tower and Yueyang Tower. It also includes the National Archaeological Site Park, a national key cultural relic protection unit and archaeological site park.

These two sites, representing the nation's profound cultural history, not only attract tourists to Nanchang but also require talented

individuals for the excavation and protection of cultural relics. Through various factors such as science and archaeology, Nanchang, with its deep cultural heritage and ongoing industrial development, ranks first in Jiangxi Province's GDP.

At the end of the visit, the delegation leader-cum director of *Hoje Macau*, Carlos Morais José summarised the trip. He said that the rich historical and cultural heritage of China, from Jingdezhen's ceramic history and modern development, Lushan's poetry and Taoist sacred sites, to the diverse aspects of Xiushui and Nanchang, helped the delegation members gain a deep understanding of the connections between Chinese history and culture, and the rest of the world.

He noted that China effectively uses new technologies to pass on culture and inspire resonance, suggesting that Macau could borrow this model to combine technology with museum construction, building cultural bridges and promoting an educational and enjoyable tourism experience. ■

*"Jingpiao" refers to artists and young entrepreneurs who are drawn by Jingdezhen's millennia-old ceramic culture and industrial ecosystem, and who come from all over the nation and even from abroad to live and work in Jingdezhen, engaging in ceramic-related creation, study, entrepreneurship, and daily life. Directly translated, "Jingpiao" means "drifters [living and working] in Jingdezhen". – DeepSeek



Photos taken in Jiangxi by the *Post*'s Armindo Neves and Maria Cheang Ut Meng during their visit to the southeastern province between October 23 and 28.



UM students join Confucius Memorial Ceremony at Hunan University

Khalel Vallo

The University of Macau (UM) announced in a Tuesday statement that students and faculty from the public university's Cheng Yu Tung College (CYTC) attended the Confucius Memorial Ceremony at Hunan University (HNU) last month to commemorate the 2,576th anniversary of the philosopher's birth, as part of a cultural exchange trip aimed at deepening their understanding of traditional Chinese culture.

HNU is a national public university located in Changsha, capital of Hunan Province.

The opening ceremony of the exchange programme was held at

Yuelu Academy, where Gong Yingxue, associate master of CYTC, and Xiao Yongming, dean of Yuelu Academy, delivered speeches that recognised the significance of the exchange programme, the statement said.

According to the statement, during the visit, CYTC members took part in the traditional Confucius memorial ritual alongside students and faculty from HNU.

Beyond the ceremony, participants visited several historic and cultural sites in Hunan, the statement said, adding that at the former site of Shiwu College, they were taught about the patriotic aspirations of late Qing Dynasty intellectuals, while at the First

Normal School of Hunan, they were told about Mao Zedong's early academic life.

The group also visited the Orange Isle scenic area and attended a lecture by Li Yixuan, assistant professor at HNU, on the history of Yuelu Mountain during the Six Dynasties period.

The exchange programme aimed to strengthen ties between the two universities and foster mutual appreciation of Chinese heritage, the statement said, adding that Yuelu Academy is expected to send its students to visit CYTC in Macau in August next year, with the goal to continue the spirit of academic and cultural exchange. ■



This undated handout photo provided by the University of Macau (UM) on Tuesday shows students from the public university's Cheng Yu Tung College (CYTC) attending the Confucius Memorial Ceremony at Hunan University (HNU) in Changsha, capital of Hunan Province.

21st IEEM Intellectual Property Seminar to take place next week

Rui Pastorin

The Institute of European Studies of Macau (IEEM) will host the "21st IEEM Intellectual Property Seminar" at Artyzen Grand Lapa Macau on Tuesday.

The English-language event is a programme in the institute's annual Intellectual Property Law events, held in conjunction with the University of Maastricht, and will tackle Intellectual Property and the Circular Economy*.

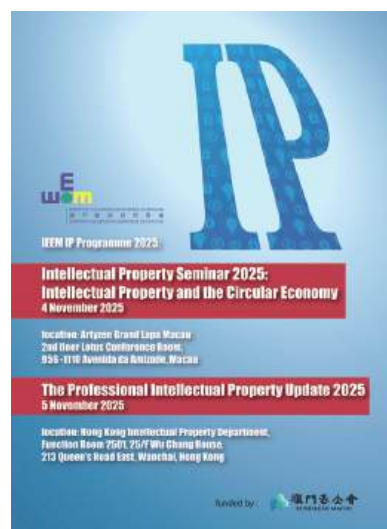
According to a recent IEEM statement, the seminar will invite scholars from the Chinese mainland, Macau and Hong Kong, as well as Australia, Germany, the Netherlands and South Korea. It will address the "potential clashes between the RRR (repair, reuse and recycle) economic model and intellectual property rights, while a circular economy with the declared goal of RRR of goods serves as one of the sustainable economic models of consumption goods".

The following day, the statement said that the Professional IP Update session will be held in conjunction with the Hong Kong Intellectual Property Department on its premises in Wanchai.

"The Annual Hong Kong IP Update is meant to offer an overview over the latest IP developments in Asia and Europe", the statement said, adding that all speakers in the IEEM IP Seminar will attend this session.

One can find more information by visiting <http://ieem.org.mo/index.php/ipls/> ■

**A circular economy is an economic system aimed at minimising waste and making the most of resources. Instead of the traditional "take, make, dispose" model, where products are used and then thrown away, a circular economy focuses on "Reuse", "Repair" and "Recycle", with the goal being to keep resources in use for as long as possible to*



This poster downloaded from the Institute of European Studies of Macau (IEEM) website last night promotes the upcoming 21st IEEM Intellectual Property Seminar.

reduce waste and environmental impact, promoting sustainability. – Source: Poe

DSAL launches vocational training platform on One Account

Ida Cheong

The Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) announced in a statement yesterday that its trial version of the "Integrated Vocational Training Platform" on the "Macao One Account" platform has been launched, in order to align with the local government's "1+4" strategy for appropriate economic diversification, and to further enhance citizens' vocational skills and employment competitiveness.

According to the statement, residents can use the online platform to enrol in vocational training courses provided by three training institutions, namely the Labour Affairs Bureau, the Macau Productivity and Technology Transfer Centre (CPTTM), and the Macao University of Tourism (UTM), which annually account for approximately 60 percent of the total training courses in Macau, covering multiple key sectors. The platform also includes a feedback section to improve functions.

Meanwhile, the platform features a personal "Skills Passport" function, the statement said, adding that certificates and skill qualifications obtained from the three institutions will be automatically and systematically compiled on the platform, achieving digital unified management of personal training records, which provide a clear personal skills profile for employment, career transitions, promotions, or further education.

Moreover, residents can complete enquiries and enrolment for various vocational training and certification courses in a one-stop service on the platform. Users can first select their preferred industry; the platform will then filter relevant training courses, allowing citizens to accurately select and enrol in their target courses, the statement said.

The statement noted that the platform digitally integrates local



This undated poster provided by the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) yesterday shows the enrolment process of the trial version of the "Integrated Vocational Training Platform".

vocational training resources, aiming to address issues such as fragmented training resources, scattered information, and inconvenient management of personal training records. Through three key measures – centralising training resources, digitalising skills management, and precision employment guidance, the platform further enhances the overall effectiveness of vocational training in Macau and provides greater convenience for residents participating in training, the statement said.

The Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) will continue to communicate and collaborate with various public and private training institutions, actively inviting and assisting relevant institutions to join the platform, according to the statement.

For more information about the platform, please visit (https://www.dsalm.gov.mo/zh-tw/standard/fm_plan9.html), or call 8291 4888 during office hours. ■

Brazilian singer Vanessa da Mata to perform with Macao Chinese Orchestra



This poster recently provided by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) promotes the "Vanessa da Mata Concert with the Macao Chinese Orchestra" event set to be held on November 15 at the Macao Cultural Centre's (CCM) Grand Auditorium.

Kristina Vallesteros

Brazilian singer Vanessa da Mata is set to perform a concert with the Macao Chinese Orchestra next month, according to a statement from the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) earlier this week.

The performance is scheduled for November 15 at the Macao Cultural Centre's (CCM) Grand Auditorium and is part of the seventh "Encounter in Macao – Arts and Cultural Festival between China and the Portuguese-speaking Countries".

According to the statement, Vanessa da Mata is known for works that merge styles including Brazilian pop music, R&B*, samba, and reggae. Her song "Boa Sorte/ Good Luck" was highlighted in the statement as being an international hit. The concert will blend her South American style with the orchestra's Chinese instrumentation.

The Macao Chinese Orchestra will

be led by its music director and principal conductor Zhang Lie. The statement said that the vocalist's songs have been specially rearranged for Chinese musical instruments for the event.

Tickets for the upcoming performance are priced at 400 patacas, 300 patacas, and 200 patacas. A 50 percent discount is available for holders of a Macau ID card and other specified concession cards, the statement said. Further promotional discounts are also in place, the statement added.

The festival is organised by the bureau with support from several other government entities and local organisations. ■

**R&B, which stands for Rhythm & Blues, is a genre of popular music that combines elements of jazz, gospel, and blues. At its core, it is soulful, vocal-driven music that emphasises melody, emotion, and, as the name implies, strong rhythmic grooves. – DeepSeek*

Xi says ready to work with Trump to build solid foundation for bilateral ties

Continued from p.1

Xi says dialogue better than confrontation

Dialogue is better than confrontation, Xi said, adding that China and the United States should maintain communication through various channels and at various levels to enhance mutual understanding.

There is good potential for the two countries to work together on combating illegal immigration and telecom fraud, anti-money laundering, artificial intelligence, and responding to infectious diseases, he added.

The competent departments should strengthen dialogue and exchanges and carry out mutually beneficial cooperation, Xi said, adding that the two countries should also engage in positive interactions on regional and international platforms.

"The world today is confronted with many tough problems. China and the United States can jointly shoulder our responsibility as major countries, and work together to accomplish more great and concrete things for the good of our two countries and the whole world," he added.

China will host APEC 2026, and the United States the G20 summit next year, Xi noted.

The two sides can support each other in making both summits productive to promote world economic growth and improve global economic governance, he added.

Trump says Xi 'a well-respected great leader'

Noting that it was a great honor to meet with Xi, Trump said China is a great country and President Xi is a well-respected great leader, with

whom he has been good friends for many years and has always got along well.

The United States and China have always had a fantastic relationship, and it will be even better, said Trump, voicing his hope for an even better future for both China and the United States.

China is the biggest partner of the United States, and with joint efforts, the two countries can get many great things done for the world and have many years of success, said Trump.

China will host the 2026 APEC

Economic Leaders' Meeting, while the United States will host the G20 Summit next year, said Trump, wishing both sides every success in these important events.

The two presidents have agreed to enhance cooperation in economic, trade, energy and other fields and to encourage more people-to-people exchanges.

They have also agreed to maintain interactions on a regular basis. Trump looked forward to visiting China early next year, and invited President Xi to visit the United States.

— Xinhua

Tap Siac Craft Market to hold creative workshops next month



This undated handout photo recently provided by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) shows participants in a previous Tap Siac Craft Market workshop.

Kristina Vallesteros

The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) will host 63 creative handicraft workshops as part of the upcoming Tap Siac Craft Market, according to a recent statement.

Tap Siac is the bureau's alternative spelling of Tap Seac.

The market will be held in Praça do Tap Seac from November 20 to 23 and 27 to 30. The statement said the workshops will include ceramics, glass, miniature-making and leatherwork. Thirteen of the sessions are earmarked for families.

Members of the public can register for the workshops online via the 'Activity Applications' section of the Macao One Account

website. The statement noted that the registration period is until 5 p.m. on Wednesday, November 5. Each workshop costs 50 patacas, with individuals limited to a maximum of two different workshops.

Successful applicants will be chosen by lucky draw and notified by SMS on November 7, the statement said. Selected applicants must pay the fee within a specified period. The statement added that latecomers to the workshops risk losing their place to applicants on a waiting list, with no refund provided.

Further details and the full workshop schedule are available on the Tap Siac Craft Market website <https://www.craftmarket.gov.mo/>. ■

AMCM cuts base rate to 4.25 pct

Tony Wong

The Macau Monetary Authority (AMCM) said in a statement yesterday that it has revised its base rate downwards by 25 basis points, i.e., 0.25 percentage points, to 4.25 percent.

The revision took effect yesterday.

The statement pointed out that "under the linked exchange rate system, Macau's base rate is set at par with Hong Kong's base rate, which is either 50 basis points above the lower end of the target range for the US Fed funds rate or

the average of the five-day moving averages of the overnight and one-month Hong Kong interbank offered rates, whichever is the higher".

Also yesterday, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) cut its base rate to 4.25 percent, hours after a rate cut of the same magnitude by the US Federal Reserve.

Macau's pataca is indirectly linked to the US dollar as it is directly pegged to the Hong Kong dollar which, in turn, is directly linked to the greenback. ■

Macau airport's upstream cargo terminal in Hengqin gets off ground, operation slated for 2027

Tony Wong

Construction of Macau International Airport's upstream cargo terminal in Hengqin has fully commenced, after the project's groundbreaking ceremony was held earlier this week, with the new facility scheduled to come into operation in the first half of 2027.

Local airport operator CAM, Macau International Airport Company Limited, first announced basic details of the project late last year. Various kinds of preparatory work were underway on the site earlier this year, before a groundbreaking ceremony was held on Tuesday formally marking the full commencement of the project.

The future upstream cargo terminal in Hengqin, officially known as Macau International Airport Hengqin Upstream Cargo Terminal, aims to lower logistics costs for goods exported by businesses in nearby Guangdong cities, including cross-border e-commerce goods, via the Macau airport.

Further details of the project were presented by CAM during the groundbreaking ceremony.

The 106-square-kilometre Hengqin island in Zhuhai City is officially known as Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin.

The upstream cargo terminal will be built on a 66,700-square-metre plot of land at the west end of Hengqin island. The complex, with a gross construction area of 97,600 square metres, will comprise



This artist's rendition downloaded from the website of COSCO SHIPPING Logistics & Supply Chain Management yesterday shows the future Macau International Airport Hengqin Upstream Cargo Terminal.

a logistics warehouse, a multi-purpose office building, and other auxiliary facilities.

An upstream cargo terminal refers to a facility that handles the initial stages of cargo movement, typically associated with the transportation and storage of goods before they are shipped to downstream locations.

The upstream cargo terminal project is developed by a joint venture company, Guangdong Hengqin Macau International Airport Logistics Company Limited, the establishment of which was jointly invested by CAM and COSCO SHIPPING Logistics & Supply Chain Management Company Limited, a subsidiary of the state-owned China COSCO Shipping Corporation Limited.

According to the presentation during the ceremony, the future upstream cargo terminal is expected

to be able to handle 300,000 tonnes of cargo annually.

The project is scheduled to be completed at the end of next year, after which the facility could come into operation in the first half of 2027.

The groundbreaking ceremony was attended by dignitaries such as Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai, Central People's Government Liaison Office in the MSAR Director Zheng Xincong, Foreign Ministry Commissioner in the MSAR Liu Xianfa, Macau Secretary for Economy and Finance Anton Tai Kin Ip, Macau Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raymond Tam Vai Man, Ma Iao Hang, the chairman of CAM's board of directors, and China COSCO Shipping Corporation Limited President Zhu Bixin. ■



Dignitaries symbolically break ground on the upstream cargo terminal project in Hengqin on Tuesday.

— Photo: COSCO

Xi, Trump meet in Busan to steady ties, shore up global confidence

Analysis

BUSAN, South Korea – Under the global gaze and before flashing cameras, President Xi Jinping and his US counterpart, Donald Trump, shook hands in Busan yesterday for a highly anticipated meeting, the first since Trump was sworn in as US president again earlier this year.

Later, as their 100-minute meeting drew to an end in South Korea's second-largest city, Xi and Trump walked side by side toward the venue's exit. They clasped hands in farewell.

The two presidents met amid mounting global economic challenges and protectionist trends. Many global observers viewed this high-stakes meeting as a crucial opportunity to steady what many describe as the world's most important bilateral relationship and reinvigorate confidence in the global economy.

CHARTING COURSE FOR TIES

Since Trump took office in January, the two heads of state have maintained close communication through telephone calls and letters. As noted by Xi during the meeting, under their joint guidance, China-US relations have remained stable on the whole.

In the face of winds, waves and challenges, Xi said, the two leaders should stay the right course, navigate through the complex landscape, and ensure the steady sailing forward of the giant ship of China-US relations.

Trump conveyed this spirit of collaboration, stating that US-China relations have traditionally been strong and will continue to improve, expressing hope for a brighter shared future.

It was not the first time that Xi used the metaphor of recalibrating the direction of "the giant ship of China-US relations" to highlight the core task facing current bilateral relations.

In a phone conversation with Trump in June after a China-US high-level meeting on economic and trade

affairs in Geneva, which set in motion a series of subsequent bilateral economic and trade talks, Xi stressed that it was "particularly important" for the two leaders to steer clear of various disturbances and disruptions.

The two sides need to make good use of the economic and trade consultation mechanism already in place, and seek win-win results in the spirit of equality and respect for each other's concerns, Xi said then.

China-US interactions should embody the characteristics of a new era, said Gu Qingyang, associate professor at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore, noting that the so-called "Thucydides Trap," which refers to confrontation between an established power and a rising one, is not inevitable as many believe.

"We do not wish to see China and the United States divided, decoupled, or in confrontation, as that would be detrimental to both. The two nations are already leading global countries, and each is too strong to ignore the other," said Gu.

In the run-up to the Busan meeting, the two countries' economic and trade teams held a new round of consultations in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, reaching a basic consensus on addressing respective major concerns, which provided the necessary conditions for the meeting yesterday.

Xi yesterday urged the two sides to work out and finalize the follow-up steps as soon as possible, and ensure that the common understandings are effectively upheld and implemented, to inject confidence into the two countries as well as the global economy through solid deliverables.

The two teams can continue their talks in the spirit of equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit, and continuously shorten the list of problems and lengthen the list of cooperation, Xi said.

In a written statement to Xinhua, Maya Majueran, founding director of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)



President Xi Jinping (left, center) meets with US President Donald Trump in Busan, South Korea, yesterday. – Xinhua

Sri Lanka, said that the meeting sent a signal of reassurance that the world's two largest economies seek to manage their relationship responsibly rather than drift toward confrontation.

For Tom Watkins, a former advisor to the Michigan-China Innovation Center, "mutual respect" is the key to future US-China relations.

"Each side needs to understand a miscalculation will have devastating consequences," said Watkins, adding that despite the ups and downs in bilateral ties in the past decades, "the two sides have sensibly navigated forward."

"All major global issues intersect at the corner of Beijing and Washington. And how our leaders resolve those issues will shape the future of the world," said Watkins.

BROADER IMPACT ON ASIA-PACIFIC AND BEYOND

The world is grappling with mounting uncertainties and rising protectionist tendencies, and the Asia-Pacific is no exception. Trade barriers are stacking up, geopolitical rivalries are deepening, and the multilateral trading system is under increasing strain. Against this backdrop, Xi's call for dialogue over confrontation resonated far beyond the meeting room in Busan.

Noting that China-US economic and trade relations have experienced ups and downs recently, Xi said that the business relationship should continue to serve as the anchor and driving force for China-US relations, not a stumbling block or a point of friction. The two sides should think big and recognize the long-term benefit of cooperation, and must not fall into a vicious cycle of mutual retaliation, Xi said.

The Ministry of Commerce yesterday unveiled the outcomes achieved by Chinese and US delegations during their recent economic and trade talks in Kuala Lumpur.

The US side will cancel the 10-percent so-called "fentanyl tariffs" and suspend, for an additional year, the 24-percent reciprocal tariffs levied on Chinese goods, including goods from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the Macao Special Administrative Region, a spokesperson of the ministry said, adding that in turn, China will make corresponding adjustments to its countermeasures and continue certain tariff exclusion measures.

The United States will suspend for one year the implementation of a new rule announced on September 29 that expands its "entity-list" export restrictions to any entity that is at least 50 percent owned by one

or more entities on the list. China will suspend the implementation of relevant export control measures announced on October 9 for one year and will study and refine specific plans, the spokesperson said.

Other outcomes included Washington agreeing to suspend for one year the measures under its Section 301 investigation targeting China's maritime, logistics and shipbuilding industries, with Beijing setting to correspondingly suspend its countermeasures once the US suspension takes effect.

Experts across the Asia-Pacific region view this cooperative vision as both timely and necessary.

From Beijing's perspective, the path forward is not one of inevitable competition but of necessary coordination, said Majueran, adding that the Chinese leadership frequently emphasizes a "win-win" model of cooperation, an approach that rejects zero-sum thinking in favor of shared progress.

The Xi-Trump meeting offers an opportunity to de-escalate tensions between the two major countries and a return to dialogue to resolve outstanding issues, said Eng Kok Thay, secretary of state of Cambodia's Council of Ministers.

During the meeting yesterday, Xi noted that the world today is confronted with many tough problems, saying that China and the United States can jointly shoulder their responsibility as major countries, and work together to accomplish more great and concrete things for the good of the two countries and the whole world.

"The trajectory of China-US relations will largely define the strategic and economic environment of the Asia-Pacific and beyond," said Eng Kok Thay.

Cooperation ensures trade stability, technology exchange and security, outcomes that benefit not only the region but the entire world, he added. – Xinhua

US should work with China to ensure steady progress in bilateral ties

Commentary

BEIJING – President Xi Jinping's meeting with US President Donald Trump yesterday in Busan, South Korea, offers a vital opportunity for both countries to strengthen their relationship.

In a world full of uncertainties, the consensus reached between the two leaders provides a clear path forward for stabilizing China-US ties and promoting global stability. This highlights the important role the head-of-state diplomacy plays in guiding China-US relations.

As noted by Xi during the meeting, in the face of winds, waves and challenges, the two leaders should stay the right course, navigate through the complex landscape, and ensure the steady sailing forward of the giant ship of China-US relations.

Since the beginning of this year, the two leaders have spoken on the phone three times, exchanged several letters and stayed in close contact. Under their joint guidance,

China-US relations have remained stable on the whole.

This fully demonstrates that for the two giant vessels of China and the United States to move forward together, without veering off course or losing speed, it is essential to unwaveringly adhere to the strategic leadership of the two heads of state and fully implement their important consensus.

China-US relations influence the direction of the world. A sound, stable and sustainable bilateral relationship not only aligns with the long-term interests of both countries but also reflects the aspirations of the global community.

As noted by Xi, there is good potential for the two countries to work together on combating illegal immigration and telecom fraud, anti-money laundering, artificial intelligence, and responding to infectious diseases. During the meeting, the two presidents agreed to enhance cooperation in

economic, trade, energy and other fields, and to encourage more people-to-people exchanges.

This once again demonstrates that China and the United States gain from cooperation and lose from confrontation. The two countries share extensive common interests and vast areas for cooperation. They can be partners and friends, achieve mutual success, prosper together, benefit their own people and contribute to the world.

As two major countries with different national conditions, it is normal for the two leading economies of the world to have frictions now and then. The key is to respect each other's core interests and major concerns, and to find appropriate ways to resolve issues.

China-US economic and trade relations have experienced ups and downs recently, which have not only caused losses to both countries but also cast a shadow over the global economy. To allow

the economic and trade relations to continue to serve as the anchor and driving force for China-US relations, not a stumbling block or a point of friction, the two sides should think big and recognize the long-term benefit of cooperation, and must not fall into a vicious cycle of mutual retaliation.

As urged by Xi, the two teams can continue their talks in the spirit of equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit, and continuously shorten the list of problems and lengthen the list of cooperation.

During the meeting, Xi also elaborated on the important secret to China's success. "Over the past seven decades and more, we have been working from generation to generation on the same blueprint to make it a reality. We have no intention to challenge or supplant anyone. Our focus has always been on managing China's own affairs well, improving ourselves and sharing development opportunities

with all countries across the world," he said.

These remarks, open and confident, sent a clear message to the United States and the world about China's firm commitment to peaceful development and win-win cooperation.

In a world marked by complex challenges, the international community looks to China and the United States to play a leading role. There are numerous global issues that both nations can address together, working in the interest of both countries and the world. To realize this vision, both sides must move forward with mutual effort and understanding.

Looking ahead, China and the United States should strengthen engagement, avoid misperceptions, manage differences, and expand cooperation, ensuring the implementation of the leaders' consensus for a stable, healthy and sustainable bilateral relationship. – Xinhua

Bali trial begins for 3 accused of Australian's murder

DENPASAR – The trial of three Australians accused of plotting the murder of a compatriot at a villa on the Indonesian resort island of Bali began yesterday, with all facing the death penalty.

Prosecutors read out charges of premeditated murder for Darcy Jenson, 37, Paea-I-Middlemore Tupou, 37, and Coskun Mevlut, 23, over the shooting of 32-year-old Australian national Zivan Radmanovic in June.

He was killed when two people burst into his villa in the tourist hub of Badung and at least one opened fire.

Jenson was arrested at the airport in the Indonesian capital Jakarta on suspicion of trying to leave the country, while the other two were returned from abroad.

Jenson is accused of supplying equipment and organising the attack at the villa while the other two suspects are accused of being the gunmen, according to media reports.

The three suspects are also accused of involvement in the shooting of a second man at the villa, 34-year-old Sanar Ghanim, who was seriously wounded.

“Since there is no objection from the defendants on the indictment, we will continue with evidence and witnesses,” the presiding judge Wayan Suarta told the court.

Radmanovic's wife, Jazmyn Gourdeas, attended the trial in Bali's provincial capital Denpasar.

“She wants to make sure her husband gets the justice that he needs... that's why she decided to come today,” her lawyer Sary Latief told reporters.

When asked what punishment Gourdeas would like to see handed to the suspects, her lawyer said: “The death sentence. She would like to see the maximum penalty.”

The trial will continue on November 3.

Gun crime on the island of Bali and wider Indonesia is rare, and the archipelago nation has strict laws for illegal gun possession. – AFP

India to fly home 500 from Thailand after scam hub raid: Thai PM

BANGKOK – India was to repatriate 500 of its citizens from Thailand after a crackdown on a Myanmar scam hub led to workers fleeing over the border, the Thai prime minister said Wednesday.

Sprawling compounds where internet tricksters target people with romance and business cons have thrived along Myanmar's loosely governed border during its civil war, sparked by a 2021 coup.

Since last week one of the most notorious hubs – KK Park – has been roiled by apparent raids, with hundreds fleeing over the frontier river to the Thai town of Mae Sot.

The upheaval followed an AFP investigation which this month revealed rapid construction at border scam centres, despite a much-publicised crackdown in February.

More than 1,500 people from 28 countries had crossed into Thailand between the start of the crackdown on KK Park and Tuesday evening, according to the administration of the border province of Tak.

“Nearly 500 Indians are at Mae

Sot,” Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul told reporters. “The Indian government will send a plane to take them back directly.”

Many people staffing the fraud factories say they were trafficked into the hubs, although analysts say workers also go willingly to secure attractive salary offers.

Anutin did not say whether the Indian nationals were being treated as criminals or victims, and the Indian embassy did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Experts say Myanmar's military has long turned a blind eye to scam centres which profit its militia allies who are crucial collaborators in their fight against rebels.

But the junta has also faced pressure to shut down scam operations from its military backer China, irked at its citizens both participating in and being targeted by the scams.

The February crackdown saw around 7,000 workers repatriated and Thailand enforce a cross-border internet blockade in a bid to throttle off the fraud factories. – AFP

Impoverished Filipinos forge a life among the tombstones



This photo taken on October 21 shows resident Priscilla Buan cleaning around the tombs inside her makeshift house at Manila North Cemetery in Manila.

– AFP

Pam Castro

MANILA – In teeming Manila, where poverty runs deep and millions lack adequate shelter, some of the living have found refuge among the dead.

Laileah Cuetara's shanty sits atop a pair of raised tombs inside the Philippine capital's Manila North Cemetery, a sprawling 54-hectare public graveyard that is home to about 6,000 informal settlers and at least a million deceased Filipinos.

The tiny wood structure where she lives with her partner and two children is filled from wall to wall with a foam mattress, shelves, a television and picture frames. In the doorway, a statue of an angel stands on an infant's crypt that doubles as a table.

The 36-year-old makes around 3,000 pesos (US\$51) a month selling sweets, drinks and biscuits to cemetery visitors.

Over All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day, when millions of Filipinos visit the graves of departed loved ones, she and her partner receive up to 1,700 pesos for each of the 30 tombs they clean and tend to throughout the year.

But the money they earn is far too little to move, she said ahead of the November 1-2 holidays.

“With the high prices of basic goods nowadays, it's very difficult to improve our living conditions,” said Cuetara, who moved into the cemetery in 2008 after a family conflict forced her from her home in the Manila suburbs.

A former Filipino congressman this year estimated three million

people lacked adequate housing in Metro Manila, while a 2023 United Nations report predicted as many as 22 million across the archipelago nation could face that predicament by 2040.

Dreaming of a house

For 51-year-old Priscilla Buan, who was born inside the graveyard and has raised her children among the tombs, nothing is more terrifying than the demolition orders that follow occasional complaints from visitors.

“Whenever we hear about demolition orders, we remove our belongings... We hide (the appliances) in a different mausoleum so they won't be seen,” the third-generation dweller told AFP, saying demolitions happen at least once a year.

Buan and her family of four sleep atop two crypts in a mausoleum. The remaining area has been repurposed into a living room complete with a sofa, cabinet and appliances. She sells snacks and small goods from the tomb's grilled window.

“Even if I wanted to, we don't have money to buy a house,” Buan said.

But there has been a “concerning” increase in the number of cemetery dwellers, said Vicente Eliver of the Kapatiran-Kaunlaran Foundation, which has been providing livelihood and educational programmes to the graveyard residents since 2010.

Only the grave caretakers and their families once lived there, Eliver told AFP.

“But their children got married, had kids and grandkids who also decided to live inside the cemetery,” he said.

Most of those living inside the cemetery say they have permission to occupy mausoleums or build shanties on top of graves in exchange for keeping them clean.

They tap into existing power lines for electricity and pay 3 pesos per gallon of water from nearby wells.

But the cemetery director, Daniel Tan, told AFP the informal arrangement was not meant to be a long-term one.

“This is a cemetery, it's for the dead and not for the living, so people are really not allowed to live here,” he said.

“We allow (the caretakers) because of the mausoleums that they have to maintain. We just regulate them,” said Tan, adding the city was attempting to find permanent homes elsewhere but offering no specifics.

Cuetara, who showed AFP a permission letter from the owner of the tomb where she resides, said living inside the cemetery was no one's first choice.

Her 11-year-old son has faced bullying at school over the family's address, while her six-year-old daughter is forever drawing houses that adorn the inside of their makeshift dwelling.

“I also want to live outside (the cemetery) ... who doesn't?” Cuetara said.

“All of us here dream of having a house outside, but... it's hard, very hard.” – AFP

Myanmar arrests 3 artists for ‘disrupting election’

YANGON – Myanmar authorities announced yesterday the arrest of three artists for undermining the upcoming junta-organised election, wielding new speech laws that rights monitors say oppress dissent.

Myanmar's military snatched power in a 2021 coup sparking a civil war, but is trumpeting elections scheduled to start in December as an opportunity for reconciliation.

Rebel groups have pledged to

block the polls from their enclaves and numerous rights monitors have said voting cannot be free and fair under restrictions imposed in junta-controlled territory.

Three artists were arrested at their homes on Monday under legislation introduced this year punishing speech deemed damaging to the election with up to a decade in prison, state media said.

The Global New Light of Myanmar said the men – a director, an actor

and a comedian – were detained “for making false and misleading criticism on social media” of other artists who produced a pro-election film.

The movie, aired on repeat on state TV, contains scenes with a village doctor urging opposition fighters to lay down their weapons and endorse the election – due to start in phases on December 28.

The newspaper said the three arrested men “failed to contribute their artistic expertise towards the

success of the upcoming election”.

“Instead, they criticised and attacked other artists who were cooperating in the process,” it added.

Legislation introduced in July forbids “any speech, organising, inciting, protesting or distributing leaflets in order to destroy a part of the electoral process”.

Individuals convicted face between three and seven years behind bars, while offences committed by groups can result in sentences of

between five and 10 years.

“The military junta has weaponised restrictive laws to crack down on dissent and curtail fundamental freedoms,” said a report last month by the Asian Network for Free Elections.

Analysts have described the elections as a fig leaf designed to conceal continuing military rule, while deposed democratic figurehead Aung San Suu Kyi remains jailed and her party has been dissolved. – AFP

Record Vietnam floods kill 10, turn streets into canals

Nhac Nguyen

HOI AN – Major flooding that killed 10 people in central Vietnam this week also turned streets in Hoi An into canals yesterday after a major river reached a 60-year high, authorities said.

Heavy rain has pummelled Vietnam's coastal provinces, home to Hoi An's ancient town that is a UNESCO world heritage site, since the weekend, with a record of up to 1.7 metres falling over 24 hours.

People steered wooden boats and waded through waist-deep water down Hoi An's flooded streets yesterday, with the ground floors of houses and shops submerged, an AFP journalist said.

Resident Tran Thi Ky said her family had tried to raise their furniture off the ground using bricks over the past few days.

"Finally, we gave up," the 57-year-old told AFP.

Kysaid the family's refrigerator, kitchenware and wooden furniture on the ground floor were almost completely underwater.

"I have never experienced this

in my whole life living here," she said from the balcony of her two-storey house.

At least 10 people have been killed this week and eight others are missing, the environment ministry said.

More than 128,000 houses in five central provinces have been inundated, with water three metres deep in some areas.

'Alarming' flooding

Several kilometres of roads have been damaged or blocked by flooding and landslides, with more than 5,000 hectares of crops destroyed and over 16,000 cattle dead, the environment ministry said.

State media reported that a section of a mountain pass linking Danang and Quang Ngai provinces was reopened after it was blocked by a landslide on Sunday.

Rescuers using drones delivered water and instant noodles to around 50 people in dozens of trucks who had been isolated on the roadway with no food and water, the report said.

Flood levels at a measuring

station on the Thu Bon river, which flows through Danang and empties into the sea at Hoi An, "surpassed the historic level in 1964 by four centimetres, reaching 5.62 metres" late on Wednesday, the national weather bureau said.

"Normally the flooding lasts only three days and then we can start cleaning up," said Danang resident Le Thi Thi, 58.

"I don't think I ever experienced this prolonged and terribly high flooding," she told AFP.

Forecasters said water levels had started to slowly recede in Danang and Hue city but would remain at "alarming" levels yesterday.

Scientists say human-driven climate change is making extreme weather events such as storms and floods more deadly and destructive.

Natural disasters, mostly storms, floods and landslides, left 187 people dead or missing in Vietnam in the first nine months of this year.

Total economic losses were estimated at more than US\$610 million, according to government figures. (Photo on page 16) – AFP

Japan's new PM in first talks with S Korean president

GYEONGJU – South Korean President Lee Jae Myung and Japan's new Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi both stressed yesterday the importance of "forward-looking ties" as they held their first official talks.

Relations have long suffered over issues related to Japan's brutal 1910-45 occupation of the Korean peninsula and there have been concerns that ties could worsen under Takaichi.

"In today's rapidly changing international and trade environment, Korea and Japan – as neighbouring countries with so many commonalities – must strengthen forward-looking cooperation more than ever before," Lee told Takaichi at the meeting.

The Japanese leader, meanwhile, said there were "certain issues we disagree on precisely because we're neighbours".

"We agreed that we should exercise our leadership to take care of them, and develop our relationships in a future-orientated, stable manner," said Takaichi, who took office last week.

The meeting took place at an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Gyeongju, South Korea, that was also attended by Chinese leader Xi Jinping and, until yesterday, US President Donald Trump.

War criminals

Before being elected Takaichi, an acolyte of late ex-premier Shinzo Abe – whose relations with Seoul were terrible – regularly visited the Yasukuni shrine.

The site honours Japanese killed in combat, including convicted war criminals, and has long dogged

Tokyo's relations with both Seoul and Beijing.

Takaichi, 64, has appeared to have toned down her nationalist image, staying away from a recent festival at Yasukuni and sending an offering instead.

After being elected, she said that she wanted to stabilise ties and likes "Korean seaweed, uses Korean cosmetics and watches Korean dramas."

South Korea's former conservative president Yoon Suk Yeol sought to improve relations with Japan.

Lee, who takes a relatively more dovish approach than Yoon towards North Korea, has said South Korea and Japan are like "neighbours sharing a front yard".

"Caught between the US and China, Japan and South Korea have little choice but to cooperate, and both leaders are well aware of that," Lee Jae-mook, political science professor at the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, told AFP.

"The concern, however, is that when their approval ratings fall, leaders in both countries tend to use Seoul-Tokyo relations for domestic political gain – through right-wing gestures like visits to the Yasukuni shrine, for instance," he said.

Political commentator Park Sang-byung said Lee "cannot, and will not, side with Japan the way Yoon Suk Yeol did".

"The best-case scenario is that things don't deteriorate – that Takaichi doesn't fully embrace the far-right, Abe-style approach, or blindly take Washington's side in every trilateral issue despite the existing US-Japan-South Korea cooperation," he said. – AFP



Students chant slogans as they protest to demand accountability and trial against Bangladesh's ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, near Dhaka University in the capital on August 12, 2024. Bangladesh's fugitive ex-leader Sheikh Hasina warned on Wednesday that holding elections without her party – the first since her overthrow – was "sowing the seeds" of further division in her country. Toppled in August 2024 by a student-led uprising that ended her 15-year autocratic rule, Hasina fled by helicopter as crowds stormed her palace. The 78-year-old former prime minister has been in hiding ever since, hosted by old ally India. – AFP

Pakistani security source says Afghanistan talks 'likely' to resume

ISLAMABAD – Pakistan and Afghanistan will likely hold another round of peace talks in Istanbul, a Pakistani security source told AFP yesterday, after Islamabad's announcement that previous negotiations had failed.

The talks come in the wake of the deadliest clashes between the South Asian neighbours since the Taliban returned to power in 2021.

More than 70 people were killed and hundreds wounded in violence that erupted after explosions in Kabul on October 9, which the Taliban authorities blamed on Pakistan.

The two sides had held days of talks in Istanbul, until Islamabad said Wednesday that the negotiations had collapsed.

"On the request of the Afghan Taliban regime, another round of talks between Pakistan and Kabul is likely to take place in Istanbul," said the source, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to discuss the subject publicly.

Pakistan state broadcaster PTV

said Islamabad agreed to resume the talks at the request of the hosts.

Afghan state-run broadcaster RTA also reported yesterday that the "stalled negotiations... are set to resume in Istanbul under the mediation of Turkey and Qatar".

RTA laid the blame for the talks' collapse on "unreasonable demands of the Pakistani side".

Afghan officials have not commented publicly about the state of the negotiations.

'Tired'

Relations between the one-time allies, who share a 2,600-kilometre frontier, have deteriorated in recent years.

Islamabad accuses Kabul of harbouring militant groups that stage cross-border attacks, particularly the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which it says uses Afghan territory as a base.

The Taliban government has consistently denied the allegations.

"Any terrorist attack or any suicide bombing inside Pakistan shall give you the bitter taste of

such misadventures," Pakistani Defence Minister Khawaja Asif warned this week.

A ceasefire remains in place, but the border between the two countries has been closed for more than two weeks, biting into the earnings of conflict-weary traders.

In Kandahar on the Afghan side, Nazir Ahmed, a cloth trader, told AFP both countries "will bear losses".

"Our nation is tired and their nation is also tired," the 35-year-old said Wednesday.

Abdul Jabbar, a vehicle spare parts trader in the Pakistani border town of Chaman, said "trade suffers greatly".

"Both countries face losses – both are Islamic nations," he told AFP.

The violence killed at least 50 Afghan civilians and wounded 447 others in one week, the United Nations mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) told AFP on Monday.

Pakistan's military said on October 12 that 23 personnel had been killed and 29 wounded, without detailing civilian casualties. – AFP

Nepal's PM holds first talks since protests with parties and 'Gen Z'

KATHMANDU – Nepal's interim leader has held the first talks between political parties and youth representatives since last month's deadly anti-corruption protests that toppled the previous government, officials said yesterday.

"We have succeeded in creating an environment of cooperation and trust by ending the state of lack of dialogue," Prime Minister Sushila Karki, the former chief justice appointed as interim leader, said in a statement on social media.

The unrest on September 8-9 was triggered by a brief ban on social media, although it was fuelled by long-standing frustration over economic hardship and corruption.

At least 73 people were killed during the two days of unrest, which left parliament, courts and government buildings in flames.

Karki, 73, who will lead the Himalayan nation until elections, held a four-hour meeting with youth representatives on Wednesday, according to her media coordinator Ram Rawal.

The challenges ahead to ensure the March 2026 elections pass off smoothly are huge – including deep public distrust in Nepal's established parties.

The meeting, headed by Karki, was attended by all major political parties and several "Gen Z" representatives, Rawal said.

Also included were representatives of the party of ousted former prime minister KP Sharma Oli, the Communist Party of Nepal – Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML).

"After the protest, there was a trust gap between them," Rawal told AFP. "This meeting has helped create an environment of trust for the upcoming elections."

Karki said in a post on X that "the new generation, political parties and the government all have the same goal – to hold fair, secure and timely elections".

She has pledged to restore order and address calls for clean governance in the country of 30 million.

Minister for Communication Jagadish Kharel told reporters after the meeting that it was "important and fruitful".

The unrest in September hit Nepal's already fragile economy. The World Bank estimates a "staggering" 82 percent of the workforce is in informal employment, while GDP per capita stood at just US\$1,447 in 2024. – AFP

'Better to go to prison': Israeli ultra-Orthodox rally against army service

Michael Blum and Luana Sarmini-Buonaccorsi

JERUSALEM – Tens of thousands of ultra-Orthodox Jewish men rallied in Jerusalem yesterday to protest against military conscription for their community, an issue that has caused a major strain in Israel's right-wing ruling coalition.

The vast crowd were demonstrating to demand a law guaranteeing their right to avoid Israel's mandatory military service – long promised by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Crowds of men set fire to pieces of tarpaulin as hundreds of police officers cordoned off several roads across the city, AFP correspondents reported.

Demonstrators packed onto the tops of buildings, petrol stations, bridges and balconies above a sea of fellow protesters, some of whom held signs declaring: "Better to go to prison than to the army."

A helicopter flew overhead as people gathered to take part in collective prayers.

Abraham, 27, who studies in a Jerusalem religious seminary known as a yeshiva and declined to give his full name, said the goal was to preserve a lifestyle lived according to the Torah, the Jewish holy text.

"We don't go to the army not because we are selfish, but because we try to preserve ourselves, what

the Torah tells us and the rabbis tell us," he told AFP.

"There were hostages, and we mourned their deaths, we prayed for them three times a day, and for the soldiers," he said, referring to the captives abducted during Hamas's October 2023 attack on Israel, which triggered the war in Gaza.

"We love everyone, secular people, soldiers.... We don't hate anyone. We came to unify the ultra-Orthodox community, that only wants to honour God."

Israeli police said one man fell from a height during yesterday's rally and was subsequently pronounced dead by medical personnel.

Crackdown

The mass demonstration follows a recent crackdown on ultra-Orthodox draft dodgers, with thousands of call-up notices ignored in recent months and several deserters imprisoned.

Under a ruling established at the time of Israel's creation in 1948, when the ultra-Orthodox were a very small community, men who devote themselves full-time to the study of sacred Jewish texts are given a de facto pass from army service.

This exemption has come under mounting pressure since the start of the war in Gaza, as the military struggles to fill its ranks.

Whether the exemption should



An ultra-Orthodox Jewish man prays during a protest against conscription into Israel's military in Jerusalem yesterday.

– AFP

be scrapped has been a long-running point of contention in Israeli society, with Netanyahu pledging that his government would pass a law enshrining the waiver.

But he has so far failed to deliver.

Responding to the call of two ultra-Orthodox parties – one of which forms a key part of the ruling coalition – men travelled from all over Israel to join yesterday's rally.

Police announced the mobilisation of 2,000 officers in Jerusalem.

Knesset member and key opposition figure Avigdor Liberman denounced the rally.

"The draft evasion protest is a disgrace to the country's leadership and a spit in the face of our heroic soldiers!" he wrote on X.

In June 2024, the Supreme Court ruled that the state must draft ultra-Orthodox men, declaring their exemption had expired.

A parliamentary committee is now discussing a bill expected to end the exemptions and encourage young ultra-Orthodox men who are not studying full-time to enlist.

Vital support for coalition

The issue has placed Netanyahu's coalition – one of the most right-wing in the country's

history – under severe strain.

In July, ministers from the ultra-Orthodox Shas party resigned from the cabinet over the issue, though the party has not formally left the coalition.

The other ultra-Orthodox party, United Torah Judaism, has already quit both the government and the coalition.

The Sephardic Shas, which holds 11 seats in the 120-member Knesset, has warned that unless military service exemptions are anchored in law, it will withdraw its support – a move that could topple Netanyahu's fragile coalition, now down to 60 seats.

Some ultra-Orthodox rabbis fear that conscription will make young people less religious, but others accept that those who do not study holy texts full-time can enlist.

Ultra-Orthodox Jews make up 14 percent of Israel's Jewish population, or about 1.3 million people, and roughly 66,000 men of military age currently benefit from the exemption.

According to an army report presented to parliament in September, there has been a sharp increase in the number of ultra-Orthodox Jews enlisting despite opposition from their leaders, but the numbers still remain low, at a few hundred over the past two years.

– AFP

France arrests 5 new suspects over Louvre heist: prosecutor

PARIS – French police have arrested five more people, including a prime suspect, over this month's daring Louvre museum robbery, the Paris prosecutor said yesterday.

Dozens of detectives have been hunting for four thieves who used a truck with a moving lift and cutting gear to break into a first-floor gallery at the museum on October 19, fleeing with jewellery worth an estimated US\$102 million.

The latest arrests come after two suspects were charged on Wednesday with theft and criminal conspiracy. They are suspected of being the two who broke into the gallery while two accomplices waited outside.

Paris prosecutor Laure Beccau said the five suspects detained on Wednesday included a main suspect whose DNA linked him to the brazen seven-minute heist, though none of the loot had been found.

"We had him in our sights," she said.

"As for the other individuals who are in police custody, they are people who may be able to provide us with information about the course of events." She said it was "too early" to give additional details about the suspects.

The five detentions took place in and around Paris, particularly in Seine-Saint-Denis, a region just outside the French capital.



French police officers stand next to a furniture elevator used by thieves to enter the Louvre Museum, on Quai François Mitterrand, in Paris on October 19, 2025. Police have arrested five new people, including a main suspect, over this month's daring jewellery theft from the Louvre museum, the Paris prosecutor said yesterday.

– AFP

Two suspects detained on Saturday were charged on Wednesday with theft and criminal conspiracy after they "partially admitted to the charges", according to prosecutors.

They were placed in pre-trial detention.

One is a 34-year-old Algerian living in France, who was identified

by DNA traces found on one of the scooters used to flee the heist.

The second suspect is a 39-year-old unlicensed taxi driver from the Paris suburb of Aubervilliers.

Both were known to the police for having committed thefts.

The first was arrested as he was about to board a plane for Algeria at Paris Charles de Gaulle airport.

The second was apprehended shortly after near his home, and "there is no evidence to suggest that he was planning to go abroad", the prosecutor said.

Wider-scale operation?

Last week, Beccau told media that detectives were investigating "150 DNA samples, fingerprints

and other traces".

She said public and private security cameras had allowed detectives to track the thieves – some of whom wore balaclavas and high-visibility vests during the heist carried out in broad daylight – in Paris and surrounding districts.

Beccau on Wednesday said while investigators were certain of the involvement of four perpetrators, they had not ruled out the possibility of a wider-scale operation "involving a backer or individuals who may have been intended recipients".

But she said nothing pointed to "any complicity within the museum".

The thieves dropped a diamond- and emerald-studded crown that once belonged to Empress Eugenie, the wife of Napoléon III, as they escaped.

The museum's director has said it was crushed while it was extracted from the display case, but could probably be restored.

The burglars, however, made off with eight other items of jewellery.

Among them are an emerald- and diamond necklace that Napoléon I gave his wife, Empress Marie-Louise, and a diadem that once belonged to the Empress Eugenie, which is dotted with nearly 2,000 diamonds.

– AFP

Brazil targets gang money in São Paulo after deadly Rio raid

BRASÍLIA – Brazilian authorities yesterday launched an operation in São Paulo state against money laundering by one of the country's largest organised crime groups, the First Capital Command (PCC), which also operates internationally.

The operation comes two days after Rio de Janeiro police carried out their deadliest-ever raid against another major criminal faction, Comando Vermelho, or the Red Command, which left 121 dead.

The two criminal groups control cocaine trafficking in Brazil, with a reach spreading across Latin America and, in the case of the PCC, to Europe.

Yesterday, officers were deployed to Campinas, southeast of the city of São Paulo, to execute nine arrest warrants and eleven search warrants, targeting “businessmen, influencers, and drug traffickers,” the prosecutor's office said in a statement.

Authorities also confiscated real estate and froze bank accounts.

The goal of the operation is to combat money laundering by suspects who used schemes such as mixing funds from drug trafficking with legitimate business activities, the statement explained.

Local media reported the operation had

resulted in four arrests and the death of one suspect. Authorities have not confirmed the details.

In August, police carried out a much larger operation that broke up a PCC money-laundering scheme in the fuel business.

Authorities said huge amounts of money were being laundered through gas stations and then moved into digital banks and payment apps known as fintechs.

President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva yesterday signed a law to strengthen the fight against organised crime, including harsher penalties for individuals linked to the gangs.

“We cannot accept that organised crime continues to destroy families, oppress residents, and spread drugs and violence throughout the cities,” Lula posted on Wednesday on X.

“We need coordinated work that strikes at the backbone of drug trafficking without putting innocent police officers, children, and families at risk.”

He gave the previous operation against the PCC as an example of one that had targeted its financial sector without any deaths.

The PCC is suspected of having laundered nearly US\$10 billion between 2020 and 2024 through the fuel production chain. – AFP

Portugal, Spain agree Lisbon-Madrid high-speed train line

LISBON – The Portuguese and Spanish governments have agreed to open the first direct Lisbon-Madrid train line with a high-speed service to start by 2034, officials said yesterday.

The rail link would be ready by 2030 and would start with a five-hour service, according to Portugal's infrastructure ministry.

The travel time would be cut to three hours when the high-speed trains are put into service four years later.

There are currently no train services between the Spanish and Portuguese capitals, though there are about 40 flights each day taking about one hour to cover the 600 kilometers.

The accord for the line was made by the two governments with the European Commission.

“This project is more than just a railway connection – it represents a step towards the future of sustainable mobility and European cohesion,” said Portugal's Infrastructure Minister Miguel Pinto Luz.

The two countries have also agreed to finish a study by 2027 on whether to bring their rail gauge in line with the European standard of 143.5 centimetres. Most track in the Iberian peninsula has a gauge of 166.8 cm.

If a change is agreed, a “coordinated” plan would be proposed by the governments, said an infrastructure ministry statement. – AFP



University students protest in front of the Portuguese parliament in Lisbon on Tuesday against an increase in tuition fees. – AFP

‘They slit my son’s throat’ says mother of teen killed in Rio police raid



Residents carry a dead body on São Lucas Square of the Vila Cruzeiro favela (shantytown) at the Penha complex in Rio de Janeiro on Wednesday, in the aftermath of Operação Contenção (“Operation Containment”). Residents of the slum lined up more than 50 bodies at the square on Wednesday, a day after the bloodiest police operation in the city's history, according to local media reports. – AFP

RIO DE JANEIRO – The head, its hair dyed red, was severed from the body and found in dense vegetation near a Rio favela, some 24 hours after Brazil's deadliest-ever police operation.

It belonged to 19-year-old Iago Ravel. His mother has no doubt her son was executed by Brazil's security forces.

“They slit my son's throat, cut his neck, and hung the head from a tree like a trophy,” Raquel Tomás told AFP through grief and anger.

“They executed my son without giving him a chance to defend himself. He was murdered,” she said, her voice shaking.

At least 119 people – 115 alleged gang members and four police officers – were killed on Tuesday in the largest police operation Rio de Janeiro has seen in its recent troubled past.

Some officials put the toll as high as 132 and many relatives are still looking for loved ones.

Police say the raids involving 2,500 security personnel targeted the Comando Vermelho – the Red Command – Rio's main criminal group and a significant player in South America's cocaine trade.

Rightwing Rio Governor Cláudio Castro insisted those killed were criminals and that minimal mistakes were made during the operation.

Iago Ravel's family is not buying it.

His 34-year-old mother spent the night searching hospitals and police stations for her son.

She finally found her son's remains among a pile of bodies lined up in a square in the Penha favela complex.

An AFP journalist saw the decapitated body.

“He was only 19, a boy from a good family,” Tomás said as she waited outside a morgue to formally identify her son's remains.

“Our greatest sadness, our greatest outrage, is the way they killed him,” said Ravel's aunt, Dayane Tomás, 36.

‘It was a massacre’

Ravel's father, Alex Rosado da Costa, accused the Special Police Operations

Battalion, known locally as BOPE, of executing his son.

BOPE is notorious for its skull and dagger insignia and past abuses, for which several of its officers have been tried and convicted.

“They tore off his head. From what I've been told, there are no bullet wounds on the body,” he said.

Ravel's mother described the last 24 hours as pure “terror.”

“They murdered him,” she said. “It wasn't just my son, it was a massacre.”

“Everyone deserves a second chance. During an operation, police should do their job, arrest suspects, but not execute them,” Tomas added.

Outside the morgue, Ana Beatriz Adorno, 24, was still searching for her 29-year-old husband.

“We don't know where he is. We have no body, no information, nothing,” she told AFP.

Two other women were also looking for their husbands.

‘Narcoterrorists’

The bloody clashes began early on Tuesday in Rio's Penha and Alemão neighbourhoods.

Under the codename “Operation Containment” thousands of heavily armed police deployed reportedly with the aim of executing some 100 judicial warrants.

They quickly faced hostilities with suspected gang members deploying bomb-laden drones and building barricades.

The operation was unusually brutal, even by Rio's standards, and the gunfire intense.

Journalists on the ground had to take cover repeatedly, an AFP photographer recalled.

Later, 26 or 27 detainees, shirtless and barefoot, lined up on the ground with heads bowed.

Governor Castro, a close ally of far-right ex-president Jair Bolsonaro, called the raid against “narcoterrorists” a success.

UN human rights officials said they were “horrified” and demanded a swift investigation. – AFP

Football shorts

Marseille midfielder Nadir stable after on-pitch collapse

LIGUE 1 MARSEILLE – Marseille midfielder Bilal Nadir is in good health but undergoing a “full medical check-up” after collapsing off the ball during the team’s Ligue 1 draw with Angers, his club yesterday.

The 21-year-old went down when seemingly on his own, with the ball not in play, in the 86th minute at the Stade Velodrome on Wednesday, just 10 minutes after coming on as a substitute.

He was surrounded by concerned players from both teams before being stretchered off.

“The player did not lose consciousness at the time of the incident,” Marseille said in a statement.

“Upon being attended to by the club’s medical staff and the emergency services at the scene, all of his vital signs were found to be normal.

“As a precaution, Bilal Nadir was transferred to hospital for a full medical evaluation. His condition is good and he remains under observation.”

Marseille conceded a late equaliser to Angers to miss the chance to usurp Paris Saint-Germain at the top of the Ligue 1 table. –AFP

PSG’s injured Doue to miss Bayern match, out for several weeks

LIGUE 1 PARIS – Paris Saint-Germain’s star young forward Desire Doue is “unavailable for a few weeks” following an injury in a Ligue 1 game, the club announced yesterday.

Doue will miss the European champions’ home fixture with Bayern Munich next Tuesday in the Champions League, while Tottenham visit Parc des Princes on November 26.

In Ligue 1, PSG face Nice tomorrow, followed by Lyon the following weekend.

“A new update will be provided after the international break” in November, the club added.

Doue, 20, was stretchered off on the hour mark in Wednesday’s 1-1 draw at Lorient, suffering from “a muscular lesion in the right thigh”.

This latest setback for one of the capital side’s standout players came just after Doue’s return from a six-week lay-off due to a right calf injury picked up on France duty.

He returned in fine form, bagging a first-half brace in the 7-2 Champions League demolition of Bayer Leverkusen last week.

–AFP

Paunovic replaces Stojkovic as Serbia coach

BELGRADE – Serbia yesterday appointed former Real Oviedo boss Veljko Paunovic as their new national team coach, following the resignation of Dragan Stojkovic earlier this month.

Paunovic, who led Serbia’s youth team to the Under-20 World Cup title in 2015, will be tasked with turning around the senior side’s 2026 World Cup qualifying campaign.

“His priority was neither the contract nor the financial terms, but to make himself immediately available and take over the team at such an important moment,” Serbian football federation general secretary Branko Radujko said.

Serbia are third in Group K, one point behind second-placed Albania in the race for a play-off place.

They face already-qualified England at Wembley on November 13 and host Latvia three days later in their final two qualifiers for next year’s World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

“The result of these two matches will in no way affect Paunovic’s future status,” Radujko added.

Stojkovic resigned on October 12 after Serbia lost 1-0 to Albania at home.

“This defeat should not have happened, and I accept responsibility,” Stojkovic said after the match.

They bounced back in their next game with a 3-1 win at Andorra under interim boss Zoran Mirkovic.

Paunovic, whose former clubs include Guadalajara, Tigres, Reading and Chicago Fire, was sacked by Oviedo earlier this month with the club 17th in the La Liga table.

Serbia have qualified for three of four World Cups as an independent nation, but have never got past the group phase. –AFP

Man Utd must ignore outside noise to go in ‘right direction’, says Wilcox



MANCHESTER – Manchester United are heading in the “right direction”, according to sporting director Jason Wilcox as the Red Devils look to maintain an upturn in fortunes under Ruben Amorim.

For the first time in the Portuguese’s year-long reign, United have won three consecutive Premier League games to surge up to sixth in the table.

Wilcox’s appointment last year was one of a number of changes brought about by British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe acquiring a minority stake in the English giants.

United finished 15th in the Premier League during Ratcliffe’s first full season in charge of football operations and missed out completely on European football for only the second time in 30 years.

However, Wilcox sees positive progress, even if there will be more “bumps in the road” in the club’s quest to get back competing to win the Premier League and Champions League.

“We are going in the right direction,” Wilcox said in an interview with the club’s in-house media.

“We have a clear plan. I am sure

there are going to be bumps in the road, but we have just got to make sure we stay calm irrespective of the noise outside.”

After two seasons without Champions League football, a top-four finish to return to Europe’s elite competition is imperative both for United’s prestige and to comply with financial sustainability regulations.

Ratcliffe has been criticised for making swingeing cuts, including two rounds of redundancies, to balance the club’s books.

But United still splashed out £200 million (US\$264 million) on a new forward line of Bryan Mbeumo, Matheus Cunha and Benjamin Sesko in the transfer market.

That investment is beginning to bear fruit as Cunha netted his first goal in Saturday’s 4-2 win over Brighton, while Mbeumo has struck three times in the last two games.

“For us to get in the top four and consistently challenge for Champions League places, win Champions Leagues, win Premier Leagues, we have got to invest in the squad,” added Wilcox.

“We have got to buy the right players. The right players who

are talented but also who can deal with the pressure, who can take the squad forward.

“It is not always about just signing elite talent, they have got to have the right character and be somebody who can bring something different to the team.”

Mbeumo’s fine form does cause one concern for Amorim as he is likely to miss a large chunk of United’s busy festive period due to his participation with Cameroon at the Africa Cup of Nations.

Ivory Coast’s Amad Diallo could also miss up to six Premier League games, including a derby against Manchester City, during the tournament which runs from December 21 to January 18.

“We are going to struggle a little bit, but we already knew that,” said Amorim.

“Other players are going to have the opportunity to help us, they are understanding the way we want to play.

“The change of characteristics are not going to change the idea or the momentum of the team, but let’s use Amad and Bryan in these games and then we will see in January.” –AFP



South Sudan and Uganda blind football teams pose with the referees before a match at Hamz Stadium Nakivubo War Memorial Grounds in Kampala, Uganda on Monday. South Sudan’s national blind football team, the Bright Stars, is making its international debut in a mini-tournament in Kampala, featuring teams from Uganda and Zimbabwe. The tournament offers the team greater visibility and a chance to compete for a spot at the 2028 Paralympics in California. South Sudan’s team began humbly five years ago with just two players under the guidance of sighted head coach Simon Madol Akol, which has since grown the team to 40 members.

–AFP

Real Madrid, Super League seek over US\$4 billion in damages from UEFA: source

Football

MADRID – Real Madrid and Super League promoters are seeking more than US\$4 billion in damages from UEFA, which they accuse of unfairly torpedoing the breakaway competition, a source told AFP yesterday.

A Spanish court Wednesday dismissed an appeal from UEFA relating to the league.

Proposed in 2021 by 12 elite European clubs, including Real Madrid and Barcelona, the Super League project quickly collapsed due to fierce opposition from English clubs’ fans and threats from UEFA and FIFA.

The European Court of Justice ruled in December 2023 that the ban on the Super League was contrary to European law.

Last year, a Spanish judge said FIFA and UEFA had “prevented free competition” by opposing the Super League, ruling they were practising anti-competitive behaviour and

abusing their dominant position.

The court in Madrid on Wednesday also rejected appeals filed by La Liga and the Spanish football federation.

The project’s promoter A22 Sports Management said it regretted that UEFA has “refused any path of compromise” and “reforms” despite several months of discussions, and claimed to have “no other choice” but “to initiate proceedings to obtain compensation for the damages suffered”.

“After years of legal proceedings, UEFA can no longer ignore binding court decisions,” A22 CEO Bernd Reichart said.

“By abusing their monopoly and preventing new initiatives they have caused substantial damages to numerous clubs, players and other stakeholders across Europe.”

The scope of the court’s decision is uncertain, however, as it tackles regulations that have been completely rewritten.

“This ruling does not validate the abandoned ‘super league’ project announced in 2021, nor does it undermine UEFA’s current authorisation rules, adopted in 2022 and updated in 2024, which remain fully in force,” European football’s governing body said in a statement sent to AFP on Wednesday.

“These rules ensure that any cross-border competitions are assessed on objective, transparent, non-discriminatory and proportionate criteria.”

Real Madrid said they were “delighted” by the ruling, “confirming that UEFA, in the matter of the Super League, seriously infringed the European Union’s free competition rules... by abusing its dominant position”.

“The club announces that it will continue to work for the good of global football and fans, while claiming substantial damages from UEFA,” Real Madrid said in a statement.

–AFP



President of Real Madrid Florentino Perez gives a thumbs-up to the fans ahead of the FIFA Club World Cup 2025 round of 16 against Italy’s Juventus at the Hard Rock Stadium in Miami on July 1.

–AFP

Litchfield ton guides Australia to 338 in World Cup semis



MUMBAI – Opener Phoebe Litchfield hit a sparkling century to steer Australia to a mammoth total of 338 against India in the second semi-final of the Women's World Cup yesterday.

After Australia elected to bat in overcast conditions, Litchfield smashed 119 off 93 balls as the seven-time champions racked up the runs at the DY Patil Stadium.

Hosts India struck regular blows after a second-wicket partnership of 155 between Litchfield and Ellyse Perry, who made 77 after overturning an early lbw decision.

But Ashleigh Gardner ensured that Australia's good start did not go to waste as she contributed a brisk 63 before the last three wickets fell in the final over.

Spinners Shree Charani and Deepti Sharma took two wickets each.

Australia's Alyssa Healy returned as captain after she missed the team's last two league matches, but she scored just five before being bowled by Kranti Gaud.

Healy's wicket followed a brief rain interruption but Litchfield stood firm and took the attack to the opposition with some delightful hitting that included 17 fours and three sixes from the left-hander.

The 22-year-old Litchfield hit

a four off Charani to reach her first World Cup century and third in ODI cricket. She launched two sixes off Deepti before Amanjot Kaur bowled her while attempting a lap sweep.

Perry and Beth Mooney, who made 24, attempted to rebuild but Charani hit back with two quick wickets to raise India's hopes of a turnaround in the innings.

A nearly packed house at the 45,000-capacity stadium erupted when left-arm spinner Radha Yadav bowled Perry, but Gardner had other ideas.

Gardner tore into the attack in the final few overs as she hit four fours and four sixes.

Both teams wore black armbands in support of promising 17-year-old Australian cricketer Ben Austin, who died yesterday after being struck with a ball while training in Melbourne.

India have twice been runners-up, in 2005 and 2017 - when they beat Australia in the semi-finals before losing to England.

Since that semi-final defeat Australia have recorded 15 ODI World Cup wins in a row.

The winners will face South Africa, who beat England in the first knockout tie, in the final at the same venue on Sunday. – AFP



Australia's Phoebe Litchfield plays a shot during the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025 one-day international (ODI) semi-final against India at the DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai, India yesterday. – AFP

Sport in brief

Moto3 rider Dettwiler 'no longer critical' after crash: family

MotoGP

KUALA LUMPUR – Swiss Moto3 rider Noah Dettwiler, who suffered a serious crash at the Malaysian MotoGP over the weekend, is no longer in a critical condition, his family has announced.

"According to the doctors, Noah's condition is now stable and no longer critical," said a statement on X.

"He will continue to be monitored closely in the intensive care unit."

The Moto3 race at Sepang on Sunday was delayed and shortened after the collision involving newly crowned world champion Jose Antonio Rueda and 20-year-old Dettwiler during the sighting lap.

Both riders, who were conscious following the incident, were airlifted to hospital.

Rueda, a 19-year-old Spaniard, suffered a suspected hand fracture and other injuries.

His condition "continues to improve", his Red Bull KTM Ajo team said on X.

Doctors said Rueda would likely return to Spain yesterday "to undergo surgery on his right hand in Barcelona in the coming days".

Moto3 is the "lightweight" or entry class in the world championship, behind Moto2 and MotoGP, which is regarded as the pinnacle of the sport.

In 2011 at Sepang Italian rider Marco Simoncelli died after his bike veered across the track during the second lap of the MotoGP race.

Simoncelli lost his helmet in a collision with Colin Edwards and Valentino Rossi and suffered critical injuries to his head, neck and chest. – AFP

All Blacks make 3 changes for Ireland Test in Chicago

Rugby

CHICAGO – New Zealand coach Scott Robertson yesterday made three changes to his starting line-up for tomorrow's Autumn Nations Series clash with Ireland in Chicago.

Baudeen Barrett, who missed the All Blacks' 28-14 Rugby Championship victory over Australia in Perth earlier this month, returns at fly-half in place of Damian McKenzie.

Caleb Clarke comes in on the left wing in favour of Leicester Fainga'anuku while loosehead prop Ethan de Groot returns in the front

row with Tamaiti Williams dropping to the bench.

Tomorrow's clash at Soldier Field comes almost nine years to the day after Ireland scored their first ever victory over New Zealand at the same venue in 2016.

Robertson, whose team will also play Scotland, England and Wales on their Northern Hemisphere tour, said his team has prepared well since arriving in Chicago.

"This is an awesome match to kick off our Northern Tour with," Robertson said.

"Ireland are a strong side and will have a loud contingent of supporters here in Chicago, so we are prepared for a passionate clash.

"We have had a great week together leading up to the Test and now we are looking forward to the contest on Saturday afternoon." – AFP

India's Iyer says 'getting better by the day' after lacerated spleen

Cricket

SYDNEY – India batsman Shreyas Iyer said yesterday he was "getting better every passing day" after lacerating his spleen when falling heavily in a one-day clash against Australia.

The 30-year-old vice-captain doubled over in pain after pulling off a sensational catch to remove Alex Carey in the third ODI in Sydney on Saturday.

He was rushed to hospital with the Board of Control for Cricket in India revealing he suffered internal bleeding.

"I'm currently in recovery process and getting better every passing day," Iyer said on social media in his first comments since the incident.

"I'm deeply grateful to see all the kind wishes and support I've received - it truly means a lot to me.

"Thank you for keeping me in your thoughts," he added.

India's Twenty20 captain Suryakumar Yadav on Tuesday said doctors and physiotherapists described the injury as "rare".

"But rare things happen to rare talent. God is with him and he will recover soon and we will take him along with us," he said.

Iyer is not part of India's T20 squad, which will play the second of five matches against Australia at a sold-out Melbourne Cricket Ground today.

The opening game in Canberra was washed out. – AFP



Ramel Macado Jr. (left) of the Philippines competes against Albert Francisco of the Philippines during the flyweight match at the Thrilla in Manila 50th Anniversary in Quezon City, the Philippines on Wednesday. The fight ended in a draw. – Xinhua

Bublik downs 4th seed Fritz to reach Paris Masters quarters

Tennis

PARIS – Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan downed US fourth seed Taylor Fritz 7-6 (7/5), 6-2 yesterday to book his spot in the quarter-finals of the Paris Masters.

Lying in wait for the 13th seed in the next round will be sixth seed Alex de Minaur of Australia who beat Russian 10th seed Karen Khachanov 6-2, 6-2.

The maverick Bublik has been in fine form in Paris this week and

came from behind in the first-set tie-break to seal the opener against the world number four Fritz.

Bublik broke the American to move 4-2 ahead in the second set, before again pouncing on Fritz's serve and sealing victory with a winning return.

Defeat for Fritz came a day after he secured his place at the ATP Finals following world number eight Lorenzo Musetti's second-round exit in the French capital.

Earlier, American fifth seed

Ben Shelton beat Russia's Andrey Rublev 7-6 (8/6), 6-3 in the third round and will next face either Argentina's Francisco Cerundolo or former world number one Jannik Sinner in the last eight.

The 23-year-old edged a tight opening set against 12th seed Rublev after nearly an hour on court.

The big-serving Toronto Masters champion then secured the first break of the match in the seventh game of the second set to close in on victory.

Shelton engineered several

match points in Rublev's next service game, before eventually converting at the third time of asking.

Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime booked his place in the quarter-finals as he came from behind for the third time in as many matches in Paris to beat German Daniel Altmaier 3-6, 6-3, 6-2.

The ninth seed is currently one spot outside the last ATP Finals berth, which is occupied by Musetti, who lost Wednesday to fellow Italian Lorenzo Sonego.

That result coupled with an Auger-

Aliassime run to the title-decider in Paris would send the 25-year-old above Musetti in the race to the eight-man season-ending showpiece in Turin.

However, before he can think too much about that, Auger-Aliassime must stop the in-form Valentin Vacherot of Monaco.

The Shanghai Masters champion continued his sensational run of form by ousting Carlos Alcaraz's British vanquisher Cameron Norrie in straight sets in the opening match on centre court. – AFP

Universal says struck first licensing deal for AI music

PARIS – A deal struck between Universal Music Group and AI music creation startup Udio marks a new chapter for a recording industry buffeted by the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI).

“The new platform, which will be launched in 2026, will be powered by new cutting-edge generative AI technology that will be trained on authorised and licensed music,” the two companies said in a statement yesterday.

As yet unnamed, the project will be a “new subscription service” that will allow users to “customise, stream and share music responsibly, on the Udio platform,” they added.

The statement did not go into detail about how the new platform will function.

But obvious questions the partners must resolve include whether artists will have to opt in to their music being licensed, how creators will be compensated or how music generated on the platform will be distributed.

Yesterday’s deal is the first of its kind in the music industry, with heavyweight UMG – the industry leader with a roster of beloved stars like Taylor Swift, The Weeknd or Lady Gaga – granting valuable legal access to its catalogue.

UMG chief Lucian Grainge said the tie-up showed the way towards “a healthy commercial AI ecosystem in which artists, songwriters, music companies and technology companies can all flourish.”

“Together, we’re building the technological and business landscape that will fundamentally expand what’s possible in music creation and engagement,” Udio chief Andrew Sanchez said.

The two companies added that they had settled an outstanding copyright infringement case, without specifying the financial terms.

Infringement allegations

The agreement for legal licensing comes as artists, from

authors to musicians and video game developers, fear being replaced altogether by AI models trained on decades of human-produced creative output.

Already, music streaming platforms report a rising flood of computer-generated songs.

AI firms from industry leader OpenAI to music specialists like Udio and competitor Suno have previously been accused by major record companies of using their songs to “train” artificial intelligence models which can produce music that apes human artists.

Rightsholders have demanded stricter limits on the AI developers’ activities, including transparency on what source material they have used and guarantees for their revenue.

“The world’s largest tech companies as well as AI-specific companies, such as OpenAI, Suno, and Udio, Mistral, etc. are engaged in the largest copyright infringement exercise that has been seen,” John Phelan, director general of the International Confederation of Music Publishers (ICMP), told AFP last month.

And the Recording Industry Association of America, a US trade group, filed a lawsuit in June 2024 against both Udio and Suno.

For their part, AI firms often argue their work is covered by the American copyright loophole of “fair use”, which does not require rightsholders’ consent.

Broader talks between music companies and tech firms on how to license works for AI remain under way.

UMG said yesterday that it was also partnering with London-based startup Stability AI to develop new music creation tools.

And independent publisher Kobalt, licensing firm Merlin and AI company Eleven Music struck a deal of their own in August.

– AFP

‘Dangerous Liaisons’ gets McToo twist in prequel ‘The Seduction’

Romain Fongsegrives

LOS ANGELES – HBO Max’s new French-language series “The Seduction” is an 18th-century McToo prequel to “Dangerous Liaisons” with a feminist twist, its director Jessica Palud told AFP.

The infamous tale of two ex-lovers who seduce and corrupt fellow aristocrats for their own debauched amusement, first penned in Pierre Choderlos de Laclos’s 1782 novel, has been adapted several times previously.

Particularly notable examples have included Stephen Frears’s 1988 film version of the same name, starring Glenn Close and John Malkovich, and the 1999 “Cruel Intentions,” which transplanted the plot to preppy modern-day New York.

But the new small-screen version, in preview at The American French Film Festival (TAFFF) in Los Angeles this week, before streaming on HBO Max from November 14, takes a unique approach.

Across six episodes, it explores the early years of the Marquise de Merteuil, imagining the misadventures that led her to become the fear-somely manipulative, free-spirited and promiscuous widow of her later years.

The show chronicles the emancipation of “a humiliated young woman, who won’t let herself be pushed around, won’t tolerate this indignity, these attacks, this incredibly masculine world, and will want to break all the rules,” explained Palud.

Franco-Romanian actress Anamaria Vartolomei (“Mickey 17”) plays the heroine, whom we first meet as a pious commoner called Isabelle Dassonville, while Vincent Lacoste plays the menacing Viscount de Valmont.

The viscount stages a fake marriage to steal Dassonville’s virginity, before vanishing.

She educates herself and marries a powerful nobleman in order to wage a vengeful war against men



Poster for “The Seduction” – Image courtesy of IMDb

– but further ordeals at the hands of the patriarchy await, including an attempted sexual assault, and a concealed abortion.

“Ultimately, little has changed for women” since that time, Vartolomei told AFP.

“If it is a timeless story, that’s because it is still relevant, unfortunately,” she said.

Diane Kruger (“Inglourious Basterds”) plays Valmont’s aunt – a minor character from the novel, expanded here into a Machiavellian mentor, who guides our heroine through an aristocratic and libertine apprenticeship.

“Stop smiling so stupidly – only whores let themselves be looked at like that,” she tells her protégée in the first episode.

“Seduction is nothing. You must learn to control men.”

‘Modernity’

Palud said the complex relationship between these two women brings a “modernity” to the classic story.

“It’s a bit like the 18th-century McToo,” she said.

The series examines sex as a locus of power.

It charts how the Marquise de Merteuil makes and breaks reputations at the king’s court.

“What ‘Dangerous Liaisons’ really is, is a schoolyard,” Palud said, noting parallels with the sometimes brutal interactions of teenagers on social media today.

“Online, we can damage people extremely quickly today, and I tried to incorporate things like that into the series,” she said.

The series’s plot eventually converges with the original novel, without reproducing it exactly.

Attracted to each other but too enamoured of freedom to renounce their schemes, the marquise and viscount make a dangerous gamble.

“We view them a bit as heroes because they appear brave and powerful,” said Vartolomei.

“But deep down they’re failures, because they deny themselves so many things. They’re so afraid to discover their inner souls, it’s almost absurd.”

She added: “Maybe it’s that absurdity that still resonates today.”

– AFP

Court rules against K-pop group NewJeans in label dispute

SEOUL – A South Korean court ruled yesterday against popular K-pop group NewJeans, whose members had sought to cut contractual ties with their label ADOR over what they called “mistreatment” by the agency.

The five-member girl group made headlines in November by announcing the decision to leave ADOR, whose parent company HYBE is also behind K-pop sensation BTS.

The label then filed for an injunction, requesting the court to prohibit the group’s members from engaging in independent commercial activities and allowing it to remain NewJeans’ managing agency.

The Seoul Central District Court in Thursday’s decision, its second in favour of ADOR, rejected NewJeans’ claims that

mistreatment had led to the “irreparable breakdown of trust”.

“The court accepted all positions of the agency, keeping its contract with the group valid,” a court representative told AFP.

The court had already accepted ADOR’s initial injunction request in March to prohibit the group from seeking outside opportunities without the label’s consents while legal proceedings took place.

“The level of trust between ADOR and NewJeans cannot be considered so damaged as to justify terminating the exclusive contract,” the court said in Thursday’s verdict, according to Yonhap news agency.

NewJeans is among HYBE’s most successful acts since the band made its debut in 2022.

The heated contractual dispute

flared up last year after allegations that HYBE forced out the band’s star producer, Min Hee-jin, from her role as CEO of ADOR.

NewJeans’ members then issued an ultimatum demanding Min’s reinstatement, which HYBE declined.

In response, the members took their grievances public, accusing the label of intentionally sabotaging their careers.

Band member Hanni alleged last year that the group experienced workplace harassment, such as “deliberate miscommunications and manipulation” while working with ADOR.

The court said yesterday, according to South Korea’s newswire Yonhap, that there was “no provision in the contract requiring Min, the former CEO, to necessarily head ADOR”. – AFP

World Weather			
CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 4°C~16°C	Manila 23°C~32°C	New York 7°C~13°C	Lisbon 18°C~21°C
Shanghai 13°C~22°C	Bangkok 23°C~30°C	London 13°C~16°C	Rio de Janeiro 19°C~21°C
Hong Kong 21°C~29°C	Tokyo 15°C~20°C	Frankfurt 8°C~13°C	Luanda 23°C~28°C
Taipei 19°C~26°C	Singapore 25°C~34°C	Vancouver 9°C~10°C	Maputo 19°C~27°C
Guangzhou 19°C~29°C	Kuala Lumpur 24°C~36°C	Paris 11°C~16°C	Dili 22°C~33°C
Nanjing 11°C~20°C	Jakarta 23°C~31°C	Moscow 5°C~6°C	São Tomé 25°C~30°C
Guilin 16°C~24°C	Seoul 9°C~20°C	Las Vegas 14°C~27°C	Praia 21°C~31°C
Xi'an 6°C~20°C	Sydney 17°C~23°C	Monte Carlo 15°C~20°C	Bissau 23°C~33°C



1 Great defender

Ayanda Mabhena, an anti-poaching ranger holds a firearm while guarding a sleeping rhino at a conservancy on the South boundary of Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe on October 8. The Community Rhino Conservation Initiative has reintroduced rhinos to southern Hwange, not behind fences but in partnership with villages once seen as threats to wildlife over the years. — AFP

2 Wet lanterns

People navigate a flooded street on boats during heavy rains in Hoi An, Vietnam yesterday. — AFP



3 Surveying his realm

A baboon looks out atop an anthill in the Mbiza Plains in Hwange National Park, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe on October 7. Palm trees grace the landscape across Africa, thriving in environments as diverse as deserts and rainforests forming part of the global family of 2,600 palm species. Palm trees dying in Hwange National Park is primarily due to the high population of elephants, who damage the trees, and climate change, which causes drought and exacerbates the problem. The elephants' feeding habits prevent the palms from reaching maturity and reproducing, and drought stress makes them more vulnerable. — AFP



4 Swallowed by a clown!

A woman enters a milk bar decorated for Halloween celebrations in Warsaw, Poland, on Wednesday. — AFP

5 Steady hand

A Kashmiri artisan paints a papier-mâché vase during the Jammu and Kashmir handicrafts exhibition in Srinagar, India yesterday. — AFP



6 Big bang!

This picture taken on Wednesday shows participants preparing for the release of a hot-air balloon loaded with fireworks on the opening day of the week-long Tazaungdaing Lighting Festival in Taunggyi, Myanmar's northeastern Shan State. — AFP

