

Li Qiang reaffirms commitment to opening up at import expo



Premier Li Qiang delivers a keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the eighth China International Import Expo (CIIE) and the Hongqiao International Economic Forum in Shanghai yesterday. – Xinhua

SHANGHAI – Premier Li Qiang yesterday reaffirmed that the country will continue to seek high-quality growth and unswervingly promote high-standard opening up, making new contributions to the world economy.

Li made the remarks during his keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the eighth China International Import Expo (CIIE) and the Hongqiao International Economic Forum in Shanghai.

China will steadily expand institutional opening up, and advance comprehensive pilot programs to accelerate the services industry's opening up, Li said, adding that a more modernized China will surely bring more stability and positive energy to the world.

This year's CIIE saw a record high number of participating enterprises, fully demonstrating the vitality of China's super-large market, Li said.

Noting that some unilateral and protectionist acts have severely impacted the international economic and trade order, and disrupted the world economy, Li called for upholding equality and mutual benefit, consolidating the foundation of legitimate common interests and safeguarding international fairness and justice.

Li also called for advancing international governance reform and optimizing the international economic and trade rules.

China is willing to work with all parties to promote the implementation of the Global Governance Initiative in the field of global economy and trade, and improve the multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organization at its core, Li said.

The document of recommendations for formulating the 15th Five-Year Plan, adopted at the recent fourth plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee, has injected greater certainty into China's economic and social development for the period ahead, Li said.

The opening ceremony was attended by about 1,500 participants, including representatives from governments, the business community, and academic circles from 155 countries and regions, and international organizations.

In their speeches at the ceremony, foreign leaders and heads of international organizations hailed the important role of the CIIE in promoting opening up and cooperation, and boosting global economic growth.

They voiced their willingness to deepen cooperation with China in trade, connectivity, innovation, green development and other fields, in a bid to safeguard free and fair trade, and jointly promote development and prosperity.

– Xinhua

Sam briefs Premier Li about Macau exhibition at 8th CIIE



Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai (left) and Secretary for Economy and Finance Anton Tai Kin Ip pose for photos at the China Pavilion's Macau exhibition area in the 8th China International Import Expo (CIIE) in Shanghai yesterday. – Photo: GCS

Tony Wong

After attending the opening ceremony of the 8th China International Import Expo (CIIE) and the Hongqiao International Economic Forum in Shanghai yesterday morning, Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai briefed Premier Li Qiang about the Macau exhibition area at the expo's China Pavilion, according to a statement by the Macau Government Information Bureau (GCS).

Since its inception in 2018, the expo has been held every year between November 5 and 10 at the National Exhibition and Convention Centre in Shanghai.

Yesterday's GCS statement noted that Li delivered a keynote speech during yesterday's opening ceremony of the six-day expo.

The statement said that after the opening ceremony, Sam, members of his delegation and other guests accompanied Li on a tour of the expo's China Pavilion, where Sam briefed Li about the China Pavilion's Macau exhibition area as well as Macau's

latest overall development.

Sam travelled to Shanghai on Tuesday afternoon to attend yesterday morning's opening ceremony and the expo's other related activities, including the expo's welcome dinner on Tuesday night. He returned to Macau yesterday afternoon.

According to the statement, the Macau section of this year's CIIE is themed "Diversified Development with Openness and Inclusiveness", covering four main sub-themes: "Continuous Enhancement of Governance Efficiency", "Steady Advancement of Economic Diversification", "Platform for Higher-level Opening Up", and "Maintenance of Social Harmony and Stability".

In addition to the Macau exhibition area at the China Pavilion, the statement said, the Macau government has also set up pavilions at two other exhibition areas in this year's CIIE, namely the "Pavilion of Food and Beverage from Macao and Portuguese-speaking

Countries" at the Agricultural Food Products exhibition area, and the "Macao and Portuguese-speaking Countries' Professional Service Pavilion" at the Trade in Services exhibition area.

According to the statement, the two pavilions showcase "Made in Macau" items, Macau-branded products, and food and beverage products from Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs), as well as professional services including consultation on Macau's legal and taxation matters.

Members of Sam's delegation attending yesterday's opening ceremony included Secretary for Economy and Finance Anton Tai Kin Ip and Sam's chief-of-cabinet Chan Kak. In addition, the statement said, Sam's delegation was also joined by two special guests, namely Central People's Government Liaison Office in the MSAR Deputy Director Lyu Yuyin, and Liu Decheng, director of the Economic Affairs Department of the Liaison Office. ■

(More on pages 5 & 7)

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The Macau Post Daily

China releases latest World Openness Index, highlighting role of emerging forces

The World Openness Index, gauging the openness levels of 129 economies from 1990 to 2024, was released yesterday at the eighth Hongqiao International Economic Forum in Shanghai.

– Story on p. 7

NY elects leftist mayor on big election night for Democrats

New Yorkers elected leftist Zohran Mamdani as their next mayor, while Democrats won two key state governor races sending an early warning signal to Republican President Donald Trump ahead of the 2026 midterms.

– Story on p. 11

Spain's exiled king recounts history, scandals in wistful memoir

Mixing historic anecdotes and regret over his own scandals, Spain's exiled king Juan Carlos I seeks to reconcile himself with his family and nation in newly-published memoirs that offer dramatic reminiscences from one of the last surviving players of 20th-century history.

– Story on p. 12

FDCT, CAS co-host course for local sci-tech professionals in Hefei

Khalel Vallo

The Science and Technology Development Fund (FDCT) and the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) jointly held the “Training Course for Science and Technology Professionals of Macau” in Hefei, capital of Anhui Province, between October 27 and November 2, according to a statement released by the fund yesterday.

The statement said that the initiative aims to strengthen the training and exchange of scientific and technological talent and deepen Macau’s integration into national innovation development.

The opening ceremony took place on October 28, attended by FDCT President Vincent U U Sang, CAS Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan Affairs Office Director Li Fangfang, and Hefei Institutes of Physical Science Director Liu Jianguo, the statement noted.

Li said in the statement that

CAS attaches great importance to scientific and technological cooperation with Macau and has so far established six joint laboratories with local higher education institutions. Li also said that since 2016, CAS and FDCT have co-organised eight training courses in Beijing, the Greater Bay Area (GBA), and Hefei.

She added that the “International Academic Youth Fair” held in Macau in August aimed to expand exchange platforms between researchers from Macau and the Chinese mainland, the statement said.

Meanwhile, Liu noted in the statement that Hefei’s development is driven by scientific and technological innovation, pointing out that the course was carefully designed for Macau participants through thematic lectures and field visits.

Moreover, the statement said, U introduced the local government’s latest science and

technology initiatives, encouraging participants to make use of the learning opportunity to enhance collaboration and promote research transformation.

Seventeen representatives from Macau’s higher education institutions, hospitals, and technology enterprises took part in the programme, the statement noted, adding that the participants said the course deepened their understanding of national innovation strategies and provided valuable experience for advancing Macau’s economic development. ■



This handout photo provided by the Science and Technology Development Fund (FDCT) yesterday shows FDCT President Vincent U U Sang addressing the “Training Course for Science and Technology Professionals of Macau” on October 28’s opening ceremony in Hefei, the capital city of Anhui Province.

Police rule out arson in last week’s motorcycle fire

Ada Lei

The Judiciary Police (PJ) have ruled out arson as the cause of a recent fire near a building in Beco da Ostra (蠔里) on October 28, confirming that the blaze was actually caused by a malfunction in the electronic control unit (ECU) of one of the burnt motorcycles, PJ spokesman Lei Chi Hou said during a regular press conference yesterday.

According to Lei, the fire broke out in a motorcycle parking area next to a residential building

in Beco da Ostra, damaging six motorcycles and the exterior of a nearby renovation company.

Using CCTV footage from the scene, the police found no evidence of suspicious individuals entering or leaving the area before or after the fire, effectively ruling out intentional arson. Additionally, there was rainfall between 3 a.m. and 4 a.m. prior to the incident so that environmental humidity and residual rainwater likely diminished the risk of ignition from a cigarette end, Lei said.

Lei noted that one of the severely burnt motorcycles had its ECU circuit board replaced between October 26 and 27. The owner did not fully turn off the ignition after parking on the evening of October 27, resulting in the continuous power supply to the ECU.

An on-site examination revealed that the ECU board showed signs of “whitening,” indicative of severe burning and marking it as the primary ignition point. The ECU may have spontaneously ignited due to electrical overload while remaining under continuous power, Lei said.

Lei concluded that evidence points to a mechanical fault as the cause of the fire, with no criminal elements involved. ■



This undated handout photo provided by the Judiciary Police (PJ) shows the severely burnt motorbike with its ignition turned on.

New exhibition to celebrate Macau sports achievements

Kristina Vallesteros

An exhibition showcasing the sporting history of Macau and the contributions of the Macanese community will open next Tuesday at the Rui Cunha Foundation (FRC), according to a statement from the Macanese Youth Association (AJM) yesterday.

Customarily, the term “Macanese” denotes Macau’s community of mixed Portuguese and Asian extraction and its diaspora.

The exhibition, titled “Honor and Distinction - Memories of Macau Sports and Macanese Glory”, is organised by the association and sponsored by the public Macao Foundation (FM). A statement from the organisers said it will feature memorabilia from various sports, including field hockey, the Macau Grand Prix (MGP), karate, and badminton.

The exhibition will display items such as helmets, hockey sticks, medals, and trophies on loan from athletes including Paula Carion, Rodolfo Ávila, and João Ramos. It is also set to feature historical photographs from several prominent local sporting families and figures, according to the statement.

The statement noted that the event aims to highlight the legacy of the Macanese community in local sport development. This coincides with Macau and Hong Kong co-hosting the 15th National Games and marks the 20th anniversary of the 4th East Asian Games, which Macau hosted in 2005.

The exhibition will be open to the public at the Rui Cunha Foundation at 749 Avenida da Praia Grande, Luen Pong Building until 22 November. ■



This poster provided by the Macanese Youth Association (AJM) yesterday promotes the “Honor and Distinction - Memories of Macau Sports and Macanese Glory” exhibition slated to open on November 11 at the Rui Cunha Foundation (FRC) on Avenida da Praia Grande.

Police nab Filipina maid for stealing from 2 employers

Ada Lei

The Judiciary Police (PJ) arrested a live-in domestic helper from the Philippines last Thursday for stealing gold jewellery and cash worth over 260,000 patacas from two employers, PJ spokesman Lei Chi Hou said during a regular press conference yesterday.

Lei identified the suspect as a 42-year-old female surnamed Castro.

According to Lei, the Judiciary Police (PJ) received a referral last Thursday from the Public Security Police (PSP) about a theft at a flat in the Lam Mau Tong (林茂塘) area.

Lei noted that an elderly local man reported to the police that he had kept multiple items of gold jewellery and a number of banknotes in several locked drawers in his flat. Since February, he had employed Castro as a live-in domestic helper. Last Thursday, he discovered that both the cash and jewellery had vanished, after which he reported a total loss of 120,100 patacas, including 14 items of jewellery valued at 100,000 patacas, along with various currencies, including Hong Kong dollars, yuan, patacas,



This undated handout photo provided by the Judiciary Police (PJ) shows the stolen items seized from Castro and retrieved from local pawn shops.

and euros, worth 20,100 patacas in total, to the police.

The police arrested Castro at her employer’s flat and recovered some of the stolen items and cash from her room, including two items of jewellery, banknotes in various currencies, and multiple pawn tickets.

The police discovered that some of the pawned items did not belong to the victim. They later confirmed that these items were the property of a middle-aged local woman who had employed Castro from 2021 until January 2025. The police informed her last Friday, and after a

thorough check of her belongings, she realised that several items were indeed missing. She reported the loss of several gold coins valued at 115,000 patacas and two diamond jewellery items valued at 28,000 patacas.

Lei said that Castro had pawned the stolen items at various hock shops and spent all the money on daily expenses. Lei added that the police have retrieved 12 items of jewellery from four different pawn shops.

Castro has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing charges of theft and fraud. ■

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Macau Weather

SLIGHT FLOODING WILL OCCUR IN INNER HARBOUR AREA FROM 8 PM ~ 0 AM DUE TO ASTRONOMICAL TIDE. CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY INTERVALS. LIGHT RAIN LATER. RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 60% AND 95%.



21°C~27°C

Source: SMG

Central district councillors discuss e-governance progress



Central District Community Service Consultative Council Deputy Convenor Pui Seng In (left) and fellow councillor Leong Chon pose during yesterday's press briefing after the government-appointed council's closed-door meeting at the Patane Activity Centre on Avenida de Demétrio Cinatti.

— Photo: Armindo Neves

Armindo Neves

The government-appointed Central District Community Service Consultative Council held its regular monthly meeting yesterday, where various concerns about e-governance were raised.

The first part of the meeting was open to the media, during which committee members raised various issues in their speeches. The meeting then proceeded behind closed doors. It included Legal Affairs Bureau (DSAJ) Deputy Director Lou Soi Cheong and Civil Registry and Commercial and Movable Property Registry officials who were introducing the government's measure to strengthen its e-governance.

The one hour-and-45 minute meeting was held at the Patane Activity Centre on Avenida de Demétrio Cinatti (爹美刁施拿地大馬路).

In the first part of the meeting, councillor Mok Chio Kuan pointed out that the development of e-governance faces profound challenges in integrating information systems across various public entities.

Mok said that the various government entities' data barriers are difficult to break down, leading to ineffective resource sharing, which made the core functions to still rely on in-person handling, Mok said.

Mok suggested the government integrate the systems of different entities such as the Identification Services Bureau (DSI) and the Notary Office, establishing data sharing and coordination mechanisms to enhance administrative efficiency and improve public service convenience.

The council's deputy convenor Wu Hang San pointed out that the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) launched a mobile app for vendors in late September, and over 98 percent of vendors have now signed up. She suggested enhancing the app's user-friendliness to better protect the vendors' rights, especially for the elderly and those with mobility issues.

She proposed improvements such as a same-day leave request service, in which vendors would be able to request leave online in case of emergencies, as well as allowing elderly vendors to link a helper's account to their own for assistance, and adding severe weather alerts.

In the post-meeting press briefing, the council's deputy convenor Pui Seng In cited a DSAJ statement released to the councillors during meeting, according to which the bureau is actively advancing the digitalisation of registration and notarial services, covering six major areas including vehicle, civil, commercial, and property registration. The utilisation rate for many of these services exceeds 90 percent, he said. The digitalisation of vehicle registration has progressed significantly, according to Pui, who said that the app for changing vehicle owner addresses has achieved a 97 percent usage rate.

Fellow councillor Leong Chon added that the Civil Registry has introduced a string of integrated services such as its integrated marriage registration, with a usage rate of nearly 90 percent. Commercial and property registration services are also continuously expanding their online offerings, Leong said. ■

Sam to deliver 2026 Policy Address on Nov 18

Armindo Neves

The Government Information Bureau (GCS) announced in a statement yesterday that Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai will deliver his 2026 Policy Address on Tuesday, November 18.

The statement said that Sam will attend a plenary meeting of the Legislative Assembly (AL) starting at 3 p.m. on that day to explain the government's policy programme for next year. Afterwards, he will give a press conference beginning at 5:30 p.m.

On November 19, Sam will attend a Q&A session in the legislature's hemicycle to respond to lawmakers' questions.

According to the statement, members of the public can watch the proceedings online via the local government portal; the website of the Chief Executive Office (GCE); the legislature's website; the official GCS website; and the Policy Address webpage.

The statement said members of the public can also view proceedings via the official GCE and GCS mobile phone apps; the official GCE and GCS channels on YouTube; and via GCS's Facebook Chinese-language news page (www.facebook.com/macagcs).

The statement also said that members of the public also can browse the 2026 Policy Address via the GCS Facebook page for



This undated handout photo shows the main entrance to the Macau Legislative Assembly (AL) in Nam Van.

— Photo: GCS

Portuguese-language news — www.facebook.com/macagcspt — and its Facebook page for English-language news — www.facebook.com/macagcsen.

Members of the public can also attend the policy address and Q&A session in person in the hemicycle's public gallery.

The statement noted the schedule for the AL meetings to debate the five policy secretaries' portfolio guidelines is as follows: the Administration and Justice portfolio on November 21; the Economy and Finance portfolio on November 24; the Security portfolio on November 26; the Social Affairs and Culture portfolio on November 28; and the Transport and Public Works portfolio on December 1. ■

Manutenção e inspecção bem feitas garantem o funcionamento seguro do equipamento

SAFE

A DSSCU alerta

O responsável pelos ascensores (empresa de administração do condomínio, assembleia de condóminos ou todos os proprietários) deve contratar uma entidade de manutenção e celebrar um contrato para a manutenção regular e reparação necessária. Além disso, deve também contratar uma entidade inspetora para a inspecção periódica, garantindo a conformidade legal e a operação segura dos equipamentos.

Após a celebração, prorrogação ou cessação do contrato de manutenção entre a entidade de manutenção e o responsável, a mesma deve notificar o facto à DSSCU no prazo de 30 dias.

Atenção ao prazo de validade da declaração de aprovação de inspecção: a renovação pode ser solicitada até 60 dias antes do termo da validade, sendo renovada por igual período.

O responsável deve contratar a entidade inspetora atempadamente, de modo a organizar a inspecção e permitir que a entidade de manutenção efectue eventuais reparações antes da renovação. Após a aprovação da inspecção, a "declaração de aprovação de inspecção" pode ser renovada.



Scan o código e veja o vídeo

Para mais informações sobre a manutenção e inspecção de ascensores, queira consultar a "Rede de Informações sobre os Ascensores"

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► Brazilian singer Jandira Silva (right) poses with local conductor Ng Sa after performing *The Girl from Ipanema* on Sunday evening at the Amphitheatre of the Taipa Houses. – Photo: David Hartung



Ng Sa conducts at Lusofonia on Sunday.

Macau college bands celebrate Lusofonia with vibrant performances

Review by William Chan

The two-weekend “2025 GEG Lusofonia Festival” at Taipa Houses concluded on Sunday, once again celebrating the culture of Portuguese-speaking communities in Macau through a vibrant programme of activities, cultural booths, gastronomy, dance, and music performances.

Over the six-day event, spanning two weekends, both local artistes and performers from Portuguese-speaking countries showcased their talents at the Amphitheatre of the Taipa Houses and Largo do Carmo. Performances included music and dance, while stalls at the Taipa Houses complex offered displays of arts and crafts, traditional attire, literature, and culinary delights from various regions.

Macau Anglican College’s Big Mac Band and the University of Macau Symphony Orchestra (UMSO), both of which I participated in this year, were among the featured local music groups in the 28th edition of the festival.* Led by conductor Ng Sa, both music groups made their second appearance at Lusofonia.

Big Mac Band

The Big Mac Band performed on the evening of October 26, delivering four big band classics with over 20 musicians. Their set included *Fly Me to the Moon*, *‘S Wonderful*, and Rocky’s iconic theme tune *Gonna Fly Now*. The performance concluded with Joe Henderson’s renowned tune *Recorda Me*, which translates to “Remember Me” in Portuguese. Despite its brief 30-minute duration, the energetic and captivating performance earned enthusiastic applause from a diverse audience.

Post-performance, Ng Sa remarked, “Macau Anglican College provides exceptional music education, seamlessly integrated into the regular curriculum rather than confined to extracurricular activities. Since reviving the big band programme just two years ago, we have already witnessed remarkable progress from these young and gifted musicians. Last year, we performed on the side stage near the Taipa Houses, and this year, we’ve proudly made it to the Lusofonia main stage at the Amphitheatre. This achievement is a true testament to the dedication and talent of our students.”

UMSO

Last year, the University of Macau Symphonic Band, composed mainly of wind and percussion players, participated in the festival. This year, however, the University of Macau Symphony Orchestra (UMSO), featuring a complete string section, took the stage on Sunday with over 60 students performing a total of five pieces.

UMSO’s repertoire included orchestrated classics *Cinema Paradiso* and *Pure Imagination*, symphonic version of the Brazilian choro song *Tico-Tico no Fubá*, composed in 1917 by Zequinha de Abreu, as well as *The Girl from Ipanema*, sung by Brazilian vocalist Jandira Silva. The performance concluded with an encore of Taiwanese singer Jay Chou’s “Blue and White Porcelain”.

Post-performance, Ng Sa expressed, “With the addition of the string section this year, we are honoured to present orchestral music to the local community. It is important to note that none of our student players are music majors, as the University of Macau does not have a music faculty. However, our goal has always been to perform diversely at a professional level, and the enthusiastic response from the audience shows that we’ve achieved just that.”

The Portuguese term “Lusofonia” denotes the Portuguese-speaking world. When Portugal was still a province of the Roman Empire, it was known as Lusitania.

*<https://macaupostdaily.com/news/23089>
<https://macaupostdaily.com/news/23160>



University of Macau Symphony Orchestra (UMSO) receives applause from the audience at Lusofonia on Sunday evening. – Photos provided by UMSO



The Big Mac Band performs at Lusofonia on the evening of October 26. – Photos provided by Big Mac Band



GEG concludes series of eco & health initiatives

Kristina Vallesteros

Integrated resort operator Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) has concluded a five-month series of activities promoting environmental and workplace health themes, according to a statement from the company yesterday.

The “Towards Dual Carbon – Building a Healthy Enterprise” 2025 Series, which began in June, was launched with support from the government’s Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPB) and Health Bureau (SSM). The statement said that the initiative aimed to deepen awareness of green and healthy concepts among its team members and the community.

The series recently culminated in a “finale theme day” at the Galaxy International Convention Centre (GICC) in Cotai. The event featured the award ceremony for the “Eat Green, Eat Healthy Creative Recipes Challenge”, an internal competition that received nearly 60



This undated handout photo provided by Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) yesterday shows the “finale theme day” of the “Towards Dual Carbon - Building a Healthy Enterprise” 2025 Series of activities and “Eat Green, Eat Healthy Creative Recipes Challenge” award ceremony at Galaxy International Conference Centre (GICC) in Cotai.

submissions from team members. According to the statement, five winning recipes will be featured on staff canteen menus.

The statement noted that other activities in the series included

a “Health Club” touring event offering health screenings in staff areas, an energy conservation promotion booth run with the Macau Electricity Company, and “Green Tours” for around 280 local

students to visit GEG hotels that have received the “Macao Green Hotel Award.”

The theme day was supported and attended by a number of guests including the Health Bureau’s

Head of the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control Leong Iek Hou, and the Environmental Protection Bureau’s Acting Chief of its Environmental Publicity and Education Division Cha Chi Kin, as well as representatives from the resort operator.

GEG stated it remains committed to promoting sustainable development. The statement noted that the company was the first integrated resort in Macau to receive a commendation at the Hong Kong ESG Reporting Awards* (HERA) and that it holds Oxfam’s “Eat Fair Corporate” Certificate. ■

* ESG stands for Environmental, Social, and Governance. It’s a framework used to evaluate a company or investment on how it manages risks and opportunities related to those three central areas. It’s often described as a way to measure a company’s sustainability and ethical impact. – DeepSeek

IPIM takes 43 firms to exhibit at 8th CIIE in Shanghai



This poster provided by Macau’s Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) yesterday promotes local firms taking part in the “8th China International Import Expo” (CIIE), being held in Shanghai through next Monday.

Khalel Vallo

The Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) announced in a statement yesterday that it has organised 43 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from Macau to take part in the 8th China International Import Expo (CIIE), which opened in Shanghai yesterday and is on until Monday.

This year sees a notable rise in the number of Macau’s health product-related exhibitors, with six enterprises participating, the statement noted.

According to IPIM, 11 companies are taking part in the expo for the first time, accounting for about one quarter of Macau’s total exhibitors. The statement pointed out that it is committed to making use of this national-level exhibition to promote Macau’s “1+4” strategy, striving to strengthen connections between Macau’s key sectors and international markets.

IPIM has set up two themed pavilions at this year’s event, the statement noted. Meanwhile, the statement underlined that the “Macao and Portuguese-speaking Countries (PSCs) Food and Beverage Pavilion,” covering

600 square metres in the Food & Agricultural Products area, features Made-in-Macau products, Macau brands, and food and beverages from the PSCs.

Moreover, in the Trade in Services area, a 60-square-metre “Macao and Portuguese-speaking Countries Professional Services Pavilion” offers legal and tax consultations for Macau, as well as professional services for processing products from PSCs, the statement said, adding that it is also promoting the “Scheme for Supporting the Development of Macao First-Store Economy” at expo for the first time, with the goal of providing consultation services and promotional materials to attract foreign brands to open their first shop in Macau.

In addition, a delegation of 35 businesspeople has joined the event to explore cooperation opportunities, the statement noted.

The 8th CIIE, hosted by the Ministry of Commerce (MOC) and the People’s Government of Shanghai Municipality, covers more than 430,000 square metres and includes 155 participating countries, regions, and organisations, according to the statement. ■

Sands China donates 300,000 patacas to Caritas for charity bazaar, run

Rui Pastorin

Integrated resort operator Sands China supported Caritas Macau’s 56th Charity Bazaar and the 2025 Charity Run, donating a total of 300,000 patacas and marking 22 consecutive years of donations to support the Catholic charity’s operations, according to a statement earlier this week by Sands China.

The charity run took place on September 28 at the University of Macau (UM). Sands China donated 100,000 patacas during the cheque presentation ceremony, with Sands China’s Director of Community Affairs Annie Lam presenting a ceremonial cheque to Caritas Macau Secretary-General Paul Pun Chi Meng, the statement said.

The statement added that Sands Cares Ambassadors also joined the 5K Healthy Run.

The 56th Charity Bazaar, meanwhile, was held over the weekend at the Nam Van Lake Nautical Centre. Sands China Executive Vice President of Operations Sean McCreery presented a 200,000 pataca ceremonial cheque accepted by Pun at the bazaar’s opening ceremony on Saturday.

Moreover, 100 Sands Cares Ambassadors and family members ran a game booth themed “Care and Cherish Each Other. Bring Happiness to All.”, the statement said, with all booth proceeds donated to Caritas Macau, without deducting costs, the statement said. Sands China was the first integrated resort operator to take part in the bazaar in 2011, marking the 15th consecutive year of setting up game booths.

Sands China also bought products from the Fuhong Society of Macau and Noah Family

Mutual Aid Association to support the carnival and participating enterprises.

Sands China Executive Vice Chairman Wilfred Wong Ying-wai was quoted by the statement as saying: “This is our 22nd year of donating to support Caritas Macau’s community service work, continuing our long-term commitment to giving back to the local community. It is likewise a pleasure for Sands China to participate in Caritas Macau’s Charity Run and Charity Bazaar each year, promoting community inclusion through concrete action”, giving thanks to both Caritas Macau for its services to the Macau community and to Sands Cares Ambassadors for their event support.

Pun said in the statement that Sands China’s “long-standing engagement with the community, along with their passion and dedication to social welfare, have been a vital force in ensuring the smooth running of the event. All proceeds raised from this year’s Charity Bazaar will be fully allocated to launching and enhancing our non-subsidised social services, with the aim of providing more appropriate support to vulnerable groups, the elderly, and families in need. We firmly believe that with the joint efforts of Sands China and all sectors of society, we can more effectively spread the spirit of care and mutual support, and together build a warmer, more inclusive community in Macau.” ■



Crowds gather in front of the Sands China booth during Caritas Macau’s 56th Charity Bazaar at Nam Van Lake Nautical Centre last weekend. – Photo: Sands China

Lawmakers pass outline of bill streamlining IAM

Tony Wong

The Legislative Assembly (AL) yesterday unanimously passed the outline of a government-initiated bill that proposes to transfer some of the Municipal Affairs Bureau's (IAM) existing statutory functions and duties to the respective public entities under the government's Transport and Public Works portfolio.

Secretary for Administration and Justice Wong Sio Chak introduced the outline of the bill during a plenary session of the legislature's hemicycle yesterday.

Wong took office as the government's secretary for Administration and Justice on October 16, succeeding André Cheong Weng Chon who became the Legislative Assembly's president on that day. Yesterday's plenary session of the legislature was the first one that Wong addressed in his capacity as the government's secretary for Administration and Justice.

After yesterday's passage of its outline, the bill will be passed to one of the legislature's standing committees for an article-by-article review, after which it will be resubmitted to another plenary session for its second and final debate and article-by-article vote.

Unlike other public entities in general, each of which is set up by an administrative regulation, the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM), as a public entity, is a non-political municipal organisation established in compliance with Section 5 of Chapter 4 of the Macau Basic Law which calls for the establishment of "municipal organisations which are not organs of political power".

IAM was set up by a law that came into force in January 2019, replacing the Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau (IACM) which was set up in January 2002.

Government-drafted administrative regulations, aka by-laws, do not require the legislature's approval.

The bill, the outline of which was passed yesterday, proposes amendments to the current law establishing



Secretary for Administration and Justice Wong Sio Chak addresses yesterday's plenary session in the Legislative Assembly's (AL) hemicycle. — Photo: GCS

and regulating IAM, which took effect on January 1, 2019.

The government proposes that the amendment bill will take effect on June 1 next year.

According to Wong, the bill proposes to transfer several current functions and duties of the bureau to the respective public entities under the Transport and Public Works portfolio, namely naming newly-built streets, roads and other public spaces, assigning and allocating address numbers, and carrying out the maintenance and repair of road and drainage network.

Wong acknowledged that some of the current IAM functions and duties overlap with those of some public entities under the transport and public works portfolio.

Wong said that the number of IAM departments will be reduced from 12 to eight, while the number of divisions will be lowered from 36 to 19.

According to Macau's public administration structure, bureaus consist of departments, while departments consist of divisions. ■

The Macallan unveils new visual identity for Double Cask, Sherry Oak

Rui Pastorin

The new visual identity for The Macallan's Double Cask and Sherry Oak in its Timeless Collection was showcased during a cocktail event at MGM MACAU on Tuesday night.

The new visual identity was created by contemporary graphic designer and longstanding collaborator David Carson, according to a statement yesterday by The Macallan.

Among Carson's sources of inspiration are how sherry wine and oak intersect to influence The Macallan's taste. Moreover, the new bottle design was influenced by the shape of The Macallan Distillery and its "sweeping green roof", while the triangular shoulder label connects the new collections with the old and represents Spain's Sherry Triangle, the statement said.

The statement added that the rear label designs incorporate a new cask type symbol to "highlight the contribution of flavour and aroma imbued from American and European oak casks", while there is also

enhanced consumer engagement.

The statement added that the new designs "offer a refreshed, modern perspective and vision for the future that celebrates the brand's peerless craftsmanship and creative mastery".

The Macallan Creative Director Jaume Ferras was quoted by the statement as saying: "This distinctive new identity offers a multitude of visual cues to tell our story, from the sherry seasoning to the American and European oak casks which contribute to the complex taste and flavour profiles in every bottle of The Macallan."

Carson said in the statement: "Like whisky, design is all about balance – with The Macallan, I wanted to create a visual identity that respects its rich history and encapsulates its forward-thinking spirit. Each detail, from the rear label designs to the bottle's form, is a tribute to the mastery behind every dram."

More information can be found on www.themacallan.com/en. ■



This photo shows the Macallan Timeless Collections' Sherry Oak, which was showcased with the Double Cask during a cocktail event at MGM MACAU in Nape on Tuesday night. — Photo: Rui Pastorin

Gongbei Customs seizes 6 bottles of Maotai

Armindo Neves

Zhuhai's Gongbei Customs announced in a statement yesterday that its officers seized six bottles of Maotai from a mainlander at Gongbei Port (checkpoint) last Wednesday.

According to the statement, on that evening, customs officers at the Zhuhai Gongbei border checkpoint noticed a female mainlander surnamed Yu carrying two unusually heavy shopping bags, so they decided to intercept her for inspection.

The inspection revealed six

bottles of Maotai concealed in six beverage boxes.

The statement underlined that smuggling includes the concealing, disguising, misreporting, or otherwise evading of customs inspection when transporting, carrying, or mailing dutiable goods entering or leaving the mainland, and that serious cases that constitute an offence will be subject to criminal liability in accordance with the law.

Customs seizes tablets, racquets, cameras and lens

Meanwhile, Zhuhai's Gongbei Customs announced in a statement on Tuesday that its officers seized 40 Ipads, 123 racquets, 11 cameras and seven lenses from a local

driver on Sunday at Gongbei Port.

According to the statement, customs officers seized 40 "APPLE" Ipads, 84 "WILSON" branded racquets, 39 "YONEX" branded racquets, 11 cameras and seven lenses from a dual-plate vehicle during an inspection of the car at the Gongbei Port inbound cargo inspection lane.

The statement underlined that smuggling includes concealing, disguising, misreporting, or otherwise evading customs inspection when transporting, carrying, or mailing dutiable goods entering or leaving the mainland, and that serious cases that constitute a crime will be subject to criminal liability in accordance with the law. ■



This undated handout photo provided by Zhuhai's Gongbei Customs yesterday shows six bottles of Moutai concealed in six beverage boxes.



This undated handout photo provided by Zhuhai Gongbei Customs on Tuesday shows contraband seized by its officers at Gongbei Port on Sunday.

Western narrative of China's 'overcapacity' politically motivated: Cambridge economist

Interview

LONDON – Western claims of "overcapacity" against China are politically motivated and fail to acknowledge how the country's rapid technological advancement and strong performance in global manufacturing are the results of decades of strategic development, said a political economist at the University of Cambridge.

In an interview with Xinhua, Dr Jostein Hauge, a political economist and assistant professor in development studies at the University of Cambridge, rejected Western accusations that China is "flooding" markets with cheap products or that it is suffering from "overcapacity," calling them "misleading."

Countries buy Chinese products, he explained, because they are "high-quality goods at a relatively good price," which benefits both consumers and businesses globally.

Hauge noted that China has consistently demonstrated a clear vision to upgrade its industries.

He added that China is expected to continue expanding its leading role in global manufacturing, citing projections from the United Nations Industrial Development Organization that the country's share could reach around 45 percent by 2030.

"There is reason to believe that China's share will continue to grow for a few years," said Hauge. "In clean energy manufacturing, such as solar, wind power, and lithium-ion batteries, does it make sense to talk about overproduction when we're in a climate emergency? I don't think so."

According to the economist, Western criticism is primarily driven by competitiveness concerns, such as the future of Europe's auto industry, and by a long-standing assumption that "Western hegemony is the natural state of the world."

By reducing its own emissions and exporting clean technologies, China has enabled other developing countries to enjoy greater "ecological policy space," Hauge said. — Xinhua

China demonstrates firm commitment to global cooperation at import expo

SHANGHAI – The 8th China International Import Expo (CIIE), the world's first national-level exposition dedicated to imports, opened in Shanghai yesterday, showcasing China's firm commitment to global cooperation, which injects much-needed certainty and stability into the global economy.

When delivering a keynote speech at the opening ceremony, Premier Li Qiang pledged that the country will unswervingly promote high-standard opening up, steadily expand institutional opening up, and advance comprehensive pilot programs to accelerate the service industry's opening up.

The six-day event has set a new record in scale. It boasts participation from 155 countries, regions and international organizations, with 4,108 overseas exhibitors and a total exhibition area of over 430,000 square meters, according to the Ministry of Commerce (MOC).

"This is a clear vote of confidence in the Chinese economy and a show of strong support for the CIIE from all parties involved," said Wu Zhengping, deputy director-general of the CIIE Bureau.

According to Vice Commerce Minister Sheng Qiuping, China has been the world's second-largest import market for 16 consecutive years, with its goods and service imports set to top US\$15 trillion during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-2025).

China's ruling party concluded a pivotal meeting last month, approving recommendations for the country's 15th Five-Year Plan, a roadmap that will steer national development through 2030. The document reaffirms China's commitment to promoting high-standard opening up and creating new horizons for mutually beneficial cooperation.

NEW PRODUCTS

Beyond the record-breaking exhibition scale and participant numbers, the event has attracted 290 Fortune 500 and leading industry players. Notably, American companies maintained the largest exhibition area for the seventh consecutive year.

The Volkswagen Group has chosen to once again hold its global board meeting in Shanghai during the CIIE, while Alfa Laval, a Fortune Global 500 company from Sweden, has also scheduled its meeting at the expo venue. Furthermore, the first-time in-person attendance of senior executives from numerous multinational corporations signals a strong determination to deepen roots in the Chinese market.

"Previously, I only experienced the charm of the CIIE virtually. This time, it is my first visit to the CIIE from France," L'Oréal Group CEO Nicolas Hieronimus said. "The CIIE offers us valuable certainty and demonstrates China's firm commitment to high-level opening-up and high-quality development."

The 8th CIIE is displaying 461 new products, technologies and services. Over the past seven years, a series of global and regional debuts at the expo have turned it into a grand stage for showcasing cutting-edge ideas.



A robot writes the character "fu" ("good luck") at the China Pavilion during the 8th China International Import Expo (CIIE) in Shanghai yesterday. The expo opened in Shanghai yesterday. The highlights of the China Pavilion include the latest achievements of China in comprehensively deepening reform and high-level opening-up during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-2025). – Xinhua

Apart from a dedicated focus on future industries like the low-altitude economy and humanoid robotics, the spotlight at this year's CIIE is also on the latest achievements from the world's premier companies in fields such as new-generation IT, AI, and green, low-carbon development.

On the opening day of the CIIE, Tesla's Cybercab made its Asia-Pacific debut in the Automobile and Smart Mobility area. The sleek golden model, with its sci-fi aesthetic, has no steering wheel or pedals and is built for full self-driving. Tesla revealed that the mass production of Cybercab is scheduled to start in the second quarter of next year.

American firm Johnson Controls, participating in the CIIE for the eighth time, launched at the expo a new-generation YORK CYK high-temperature centrifugal heat pump, a product developed by its team in China. The product helps enterprises reduce fossil fuel consumption and carbon emissions while promoting the efficient use of green electricity.

"China is not only a key market and manufacturing base, but also a globally significant source of green innovation and sustainable development. I'm with full confidence in China's economy," said Anu Rathnide, Johnson Controls Asia Pacific president, adding that the company currently has four manufacturing bases, two R&D centers, and over 40 branches in China.

BEYOND EXHIBITION

Today, the CIIE has evolved from a platform for showcasing results into a magnet for global resources and a hub for building substantial partnerships.

Data shows that over the past seven years, the event has featured approximately 3,000 new products, technologies and services, while also facilitating over 1,100 foreign-funded enterprises and investment promotion

agencies in conducting targeted matchmaking activities across China. It has so far generated over US\$500 billion in intended transactions.

Through years of participation in the CIIE, the German pharmaceutical company Boehringer Ingelheim has not only witnessed its exhibits graduate to marketable products at "China speed," but also evolved from an exhibitor into an investor in China, driven by the country's favorable business environment.

"We truly appreciate the continuous improvement in China's business environment as well as the impressive progress in the healthcare reform," said Mohammed Tawil, president and CEO of Boehringer Ingelheim Greater China. "These developments have created a more open, fair and predictable environment for multinational companies like us."

Boehringer Ingelheim plans to invest more than 5 billion yuan in R&D in China over the next five years, according to Tawil.

Anna An, president of Henkel Greater China, noted her admiration for the professionalism of buyers at the expo, who often come with clear cooperation intentions and specific procurement goals. She added that Henkel has steadily increased its innovation investment in China, recently opening a 500-million-yuan adhesive technologies experience center in Shanghai.

China saw the registration of 48,921 new foreign-invested firms in the first three quarters of 2025, marking a year-on-year increase of 16.2 percent, according to the Ministry of Commerce. From 2021 to 2025, the world's second-largest economy attracted over US\$700 billion in cumulative utilized foreign investment, with 25,000 more new foreign-funded enterprises than in the previous five-year period.

SHARED PROSPERITY

Despite mounting global uncertainties, the

CIIE continues to serve as a bridge, enabling all to access development opportunities.

Since its inception, the event has consistently provided various preferential treatments and conveniences for the least developed countries (LDCs). For the first time, the 8th CIIE established a dedicated exhibition area for products from the LDCs with diplomatic ties with China, aiming to help their enterprises fully leverage zero-tariff policies and tap into the vast Chinese market. The number of exhibitors from the LDCs has seen a year-on-year increase of 23.5 percent.

Meanwhile, the current session hosted its first-ever Global South sub-forum, focusing on enhancing the economic resilience of the Global South and promoting sustainable agricultural development in these regions.

The CIIE also provides small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) worldwide with an opportunity to shine on the big stage. More than 80 business associations from over 50 countries and regions bring over 1,500 SMEs to this year's expo.

To help overseas SMEs access the Chinese market more efficiently, it launched a cross-border e-commerce platform, integrating the entire process from product display and transactions to logistics and delivery.

China has become the primary trade partner for more than 150 countries and regions. From 2021 to 2025, its imports of goods and services are projected to exceed US\$15 trillion, while its accumulated outbound investment has generated over US\$300 billion in tax revenue for host countries, creating substantial employment and advancing their industrialization and modernization.

The story of Peruvian artisan Oswaldo Mamani, shared at a United Nations event in June, offers a vivid snapshot of this broader picture. Through the CIIE, his handmade alpaca plush toys, Warmaca, found their way into the Chinese market, improving not only his own life but also lifting over 200 local families out of poverty.

"The Chinese market has potential, strong consumer power, and rapid demand growth," Mamani said. "We have to deliver goods five times a year, with each batch ranging from 2,500 to 3,000 items." Now, Warmaca's booth at the CIIE has expanded from its initial nine square meters to 54 square meters.

Aqeel Chaudhry, a jewelry businessman from Pakistan, has also personally benefited from China's opening up over the years. At the previous CIIE, a pendant from his company, modeled after the expo venue's distinctive four-leaf clover layout, was an instant hit.

"In my eyes, the four-leaf clover represents not only the grand platform of the CIIE but also the deep connection global businesses seek with China," Chaudhry said. In addition to establishing stores in Shanghai and the northern Chinese city of Dalian, Chaudhry has also expanded his brand's presence through partnerships in eastern provinces such as Zhejiang and Jiangsu. – Xinhua

China releases latest World Openness Index, highlighting role of emerging forces

SHANGHAI – The World Openness Index, gauging the openness levels of 129 economies from 1990 to 2024, was released yesterday at the eighth Hongqiao International Economic Forum in Shanghai.

In 2024, the World Openness Index was at 0.7545, down 0.05 percent from 2023, according to the index for last year.

The 2024 index was included in the

World Openness Report 2025. First released in 2021, the index is compiled by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' (CASS) Institute of World Economics and Politics and the Research Center for the Hongqiao International Economic Forum.

The report, "Seeking New Consensus on Openness amid the Balance of Cooperation and Security," notes that openness and

cooperation are the inevitable path for world peace and development.

Emerging markets and developing economies have become important powers in maintaining the world's openness, said Liao Fan, director of the CASS Institute of World Economics and Politics.

"The world's openness will rely more on emerging forces in the future," he said.

Between 1990 and 2024, China's openness index advanced from 0.5891 to 0.7634.

"China's opening-up practices and measures have become a certainty in the world's opening-up process, and constantly provide new growth drivers for economic globalization," said Wang Xuekun, director of the Research Center for the Hongqiao International Economic Forum. – Xinhua

Death toll tops 100 as Philippines digs out after typhoon

Faith Brown with Cecil Morella in Manila

CEBU – The death toll from Typhoon Kalmaegi in the central Philippines climbed past 100 yesterday as the devastating impact on Cebu province became clearer after the worst flooding in recent memory.

Floodwaters described as unprecedented had rushed through the province's towns and cities a day earlier, sweeping away cars, riverside shanties and even massive shipping containers.

Cebu spokesman Rhon Ramos told AFP that 35 bodies had been recovered from flooded areas of Liloan, a town that is part of provincial capital Cebu City's metro area. The grim news brought the toll for Cebu to 76.

On neighbouring Negros Island, at least 12 people were dead and 12 more were missing after Kalmaegi's driving rain loosened volcanic mudflow which then buried homes in Canlaon City, police Lieutenant Stephen Polinar said.

"Eruptions of Kanlaon volcano since last year deposited volcanic material on its upper sections. When the rain fell, those deposits rumbled down onto the villages," he told AFP.

Only one Negros death had been included in an earlier government tally of 17 deaths outside Cebu.

That figure included six crewmembers of a military helicopter that crashed while on a typhoon relief mission.

'The water was raging'

AFP reporters spoke with residents of Cebu's most-affected areas yesterday as they cleaned up streets that had been rivers a day before.

"Around four or five in the morning, the water was so strong that you couldn't even step outside," said Reynaldo Vergara, 53, adding that everything in his small shop in Mandanaue had been lost when a nearby river overflowed.

"Nothing like this has ever happened. The water was raging."

In nearby Talisay, where an informal settlement along a riverbank was washed away, AFP found 26-year-old Regie Mallorca



Residents pick up debris from their damaged houses in the aftermath of Typhoon Kalmaegi in Talisay, Cebu province yesterday.

– AFP

already at work rebuilding his home.

"This will take time because I don't have the money yet. It will take months," he said as he mixed cement and sand atop the rubble.

The area around Cebu City was deluged with 183 millimetres of rain in the 24 hours before Kalmaegi's landfall, well over its 131-millimetre monthly average, weather specialist Charmagne Varilla told AFP.

On Tuesday, provincial governor Pamela Baricuatro called the situation "unprecedented" and "devastating".

Scientists warn that storms are becoming more powerful due to human-driven climate change. Warmer oceans allow typhoons to strengthen rapidly, and a warmer atmosphere holds more moisture, meaning heavier rainfall.

In total, nearly 800,000 people were moved from the typhoon's path.

Seeing ghosts

The catastrophic loss of life in Cebu comes as the public seethes over a scandal involving so-called ghost flood-control projects believed to have cost taxpayers billions of dollars.

Yesterday, governor Baricuatro suggested a connection between the corruption scandal and what her spokesman later called "unusual" flooding in a cluster of subdivisions.

"You begin to ask the question why we're having terrible flash floods here when you have Ph26.6 billion (US\$452 million) for flood

control projects (in the national budget)," she said in an interview with local outlet ABS-CBN.

"Definitely we have seen projects here... that I would say are ghost projects," she said, adding her inspection team had not seen a single structure built to government standards.

A spokesperson at the Department of Public Works and Highways, the government entity at the centre of the scandal, told AFP that department head Vince Dizon was already in Cebu to inspect typhoon damage.

"After his inspection there, maybe he will comment," they said.

More storms coming

The Philippines is hit by an average of 20 storms and typhoons each year, routinely striking disaster-prone areas where millions live in poverty.

The archipelagic country has already reached that average with Kalmaegi, weather specialist Varilla said, adding at least "three to five more" storms could be expected by December's end.

The Philippines was hit by two major storms in September, including Super Typhoon Ragasa, which tore the roofs off buildings on its way to killing 14 people in nearby Taiwan.

By 5 p.m. [local time] yesterday, Kalmaegi was moving westwards over the South China Sea and towards Vietnam, where authorities have warned it could compound the damage of a week of flooding that has already killed dozens of people.

– AFP

Study finds protein's potential impact on athletic performance, muscle loss via testosterone

MELBOURNE – Lacking a common protein may affect how muscles respond to testosterone, potentially affecting athletic performance and age-related muscle loss, according to a new study led by an Australian research institute.

The research has uncovered a surprising link between ACTN3, the gene for speed, and the body's response to testosterone, the hormone that helps maintain muscle mass, according to a statement released yesterday by Australia's Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI).

The α -actinin-3 protein is found in muscles important for explosive activities. About one in five people lack this protein due to a variation in the ACTN3 gene, said the study published in *Science Advances*.

The research showed this genetic variation reduced levels of the androgen receptor in muscle tissue in both men and women, impacting how muscles grow or shrink in response to testosterone, said MCRI Senior Research Officer Jane Seto.

"This gene has long been associated with elite sprinting

ability, but we're now seeing it plays a much broader role in muscle biology. It's not just about speed but about how your muscles respond to testosterone," Seto said.

The study, using both mouse models and human samples, found that missing the α -actinin-3 protein worsened muscle loss in male mice when testosterone was blocked, and blunted muscle growth in female mice treated with supplementary testosterone during puberty.

Researchers identified seven key genes that appear to drive this effect, as they are sensitive to testosterone and depend on the α -actinin-3 protein for proper expression. These genes influence important cell processes such as breaking down amino acids, cleaning out damaged cells and regenerating newer, healthier ones and producing energy in mitochondria, the study said.

Seto said the findings could explain why some people lose muscle more rapidly with age or illness, or respond to testosterone-based therapies differently, and suggest this protein as a potential target for treatments preserving muscle mass.

– Xinhua

Troubled NZ wildlife park to euthanise 7 lions

WELLINGTON – A New Zealand wildlife park says it will be forced to euthanise seven elderly lions after running into financial difficulties.

The Kamo Wildlife Sanctuary in the northern city of Whangarei said it was closing down and had no choice but to euthanise the big cats.

"There were no real options left. The staff and I are devastated," sanctuary operator Janette Vallance said in a statement on Tuesday.

The lions were aged between 18-21 years old, which is longer than they would typically live in the wild.

There were no realistic options for re-homing them at other New Zealand zoos.

"The memories and legacy of these incredible animals will live on in the hearts of many," the park said.

The sanctuary drew minor fame in the early 2000s when it featured on a television show about celebrity big cat handler Craig "the Lion Man" Busch.

Busch was later accused of a string of animal rights abuses, such as keeping animals in sub-standard cages.

A handler was mauled to death by a white tiger inside the park in 2009.

– AFP

Japan deploys troops after wave of deadly bear attacks

TOKYO - Japan began deploying soldiers yesterday to a northern region hit by a spate of deadly bear attacks, which have risen to record levels this year.

New Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's government is scrambling to draft a special policy package to deal with the crisis, which has resulted in 12 deaths and more than 100 injuries since April.

Japan has strict gun laws and the troops will not carry firearms or hunt the animals.

They will instead arm themselves with bear sprays, sticks, shields, goggles, bullet-proof jackets and net launchers, the defence ministry said, as they attempt to restore a sense of safety in panicked communities.

A poor acorn harvest this year

has triggered Japan's growing bear population to come into towns to seek food, particularly in northern regions such as Akita and Iwate, experts have said.

Rural depopulation has also blurred traditional boundaries between towns and bear habitats, encouraging bears to expand their habitats towards residential areas, according to researchers.

Japan's Self-Defence Forces agreed to offer logistical assistance to rural areas, including transporting bear traps, hunters and bears that have been caught.

A team of 15 soldiers was deployed yesterday to help move a trap in Kazuno city in the hard-hit Akita region.

Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Kei Saito said the military's focus

was national defence, but they could help when possible.

Takaichi's cabinet held a special meeting on the crisis last week and said she would offer a policy package by mid-November.

That is likely to include increasing the number of hunters who can respond to the most urgent situations, such as bear sightings in residential areas.

Akita governor Kenta Suzuki, who has repeatedly warned that his region does not have the capacity to fight the animals, thanked the troops for their help.

"By coordinating efforts with local municipalities, I hope to assist the activities of the Self-Defence Force troops," Suzuki said at a signing ceremony in Akita with the military to mark the start of the programme.

– AFP



People take selfies with a kratong, or floating basket, along the Chao Phraya River in front of Wat Arun Buddhist temple during the Loy Krathong festival in Bangkok yesterday.

– AFP

Reeling from earthquakes, Afghans fear coming winter

KHULM – Survivors of a powerful earthquake that turned homes in Afghanistan into rubble are now wondering where they can find shelter from pouring rain and the coming winter cold.

Others who made it through an even deadlier quake two months ago share their anxiety.

This week's 6.3-magnitude tremor that rattled the northern provinces of Samangan and Balkh killed at least 27 people, the Taliban authorities say.

The epicentre was located in Samangan's Kholm district, where a man named Gulabuddin is mourning his daughter-in-law.

When disaster hit overnight Sunday into Monday, she did not manage to reach the ground level of the family home in time.

Gulabuddin himself was hit in the head by a falling brick.

"We lost all of our belongings," he told AFP.

"Winter is coming. We have children aged four and five. Where can we go? For two nights now we've been staying with relatives."

Rain has turned a dirt path in

his village into a muddy puddle, surrounded by cracked and collapsed walls and roofs that caved in.

Similar scenes emerged in areas of eastern Afghanistan that were struck by a shallow 6.0-magnitude earthquake in late August.

That one killed more than 2,200 people, making it the deadliest in Afghanistan's recent history.

In the farming village of Mazar Dara, in the mountains of Kunar province, Bazarga Safay saw children swept away as this earlier quake hit.

Two months later, she said she feared others would die of cold.

'Survive the cold'

Safay, a 50-year-old farmer, lost two relatives in that earlier earthquake, and now shares a tent with 15 people, 12 of them children.

"We were given a tent, but it's not suitable for winter," she said.

Most residents prefer sleeping outside, in gardens or on terraces, fearful of spending the night in what remains of the village's houses as aftershocks are a frequent occurrence.

People will have to endure



Lorries drive along a highway past a mountain range, in the aftermath of an earthquake at Tang-e Tashkurgan in Khulm district, Samangan province, Afghanistan on Tuesday. – AFP

temperatures that will soon drop as low as -20C without warm blankets or proper winter clothes.

"The earthquake happened in summer, and the organisations provided aid based on the needs at the time," said Najibullah Hanafi, a Taliban information official in Kunar.

"Now that winter is coming, they need clothes and things that

can help them survive the cold."

Despite these dire conditions, international aid organisations have repeatedly warned that their work will be limited because major donors led by the US government have pulled funding.

Concrete solution?

At the foot of the mountain

Mazar Dara sits on, camps have been set up.

But the International Organisation for Migration says a survey among survivors showed that 77 percent of respondents indicated they planned to stay put even in winter – either because they cannot afford to move or because they do not know where to go.

The only solution for many of them is to rebuild their homes but make them better, even at the cost of replacing the traditional stone houses.

Hanafi, the information officer, said the Taliban authorities were building dozens of new houses in Mazar Dara.

Correspondents there, however, saw only one bulldozer clearing debris.

"We need to rebuild right way, with concrete and bricks," said farmer Sayid Wali Safay, 27.

Another resident, Awal Jan, said: "We want to rebuild our house in the same place, but not in the same way. If we don't want our house to collapse again, only concrete will work." – AFP



Devotees hold oil lamps as they celebrate the Hindu festival of 'Dev Deepawali' at the Banganga water tank in Mumbai, India yesterday. – AFP

Bangladesh offers reward for stolen guns before polls

DHAKA – Bangladesh announced yesterday cash rewards to surrender machine guns, rifles and pistols looted during an uprising last year, hoping to collect hundreds of weapons ahead of key elections.

An estimated 6,000 firearms were stolen from police armouries during the deadly August 2024 unrest that toppled the hardline rule of then-prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

More than 1,300 are still reported as missing, police spokesman AHM Shahadat Hossaine told AFP.

Police issued a list of rewards for their return, ranging from just over US\$4,000 for a light machine gun to US\$800 for an assault rifle, and US\$400 for a shotgun or pistol. Cash would also be paid for ammunition.

"Bangladesh Police guarantee full confidentiality", Hossaine said, urging people to hand them in.

Bangladesh has been in political turmoil since Hasina fled into exile last year, and political parties are jostling for power ahead of polls slated for February 2026.

Dhaka-based rights group Odhikar says political violence since the uprising has killed nearly 300 people.

More than 150 others have been killed in mob violence, according to Odhikar.

Investigators meanwhile continue to probe a devastating fire that tore through the cargo complex of the country's main international airport on October 18.

Bushra Islam, a senior official at Biman Bangladesh Airlines, told AFP that a team had found the smashed lock of a vault which had survived the fire - a strongroom used to store arms, as well as valuable items such as gold and diamonds.

Islam said it was not clear "how many arms have gone missing, if any".

A senior police officer, speaking on condition of anonymity, said a team had inspected the vault after the fire.

"Days later, the vault was found open," he said.

The government said it had requested foreign experts to help examine the cause of the blaze. – AFP

Sri Lanka targets big fish in anti-corruption push

Amal Jayasinghe

COLOMBO – When Sri Lanka's economy collapsed in 2022, politicians and officials were accused of brazenly stealing the island's assets.

Three years later, the tide appears to be turning against the once-untouchable elite, with several members of the former ruling Rajapaksa family and other powerful figures jailed or appearing in court.

The government is pursuing some of the country's most powerful individuals – with a former president, several ex-ministers and the heads of the police, prisons and immigration all appearing in court.

Ranga Dissanayake, director-general of the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption (CIABOC), was granted sweeping powers in May to recover stolen assets – even without criminal convictions.

There is no official data of state corruption losses, but activists estimate it to be billions of dollars over several decades. Sri Lanka's GDP per capita income stood at US\$4,515 in 2024.

"Corruption is the main reason for this economic crisis," Dissanayake, who took up the post in January, told AFP.

The International Monetary Fund calls for the "prioritising" of anti-graft measures, and says recruitment to CIABOC "should be accelerated".

'Crossing the Rubicon'

Tackling entrenched corruption was a key pledge of leftist President Anura Kumara Disanayake, who is not related to the CIABOC chief.

"How can a file in the Criminal Investigation Department move

up and down, or remain stuck for seven or eight years in a cupboard?" he asked during a speech marking anti-corruption day.

CIABOC faces a backlog of tens of thousands of cases.

"Power is meant to uphold justice," the president added. "But instead, it is often used for injustice, personal gain and the accumulation of wealth."

Public anger over crippling shortages of food, fuel, and medicine sparked months of protests in 2022, toppling then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

Gotabaya denies corruption allegations, but the Supreme Court in 2023 said he and his politician brothers "demonstrably contributed to the economic crisis", and "violated the public trust reposed in them".

Gotabaya was replaced by Ranil Wickremesinghe, who secured a US\$2.9 billion IMF bailout to steady the economy.

But Wickremesinghe was arrested in August on charges of using state funds for personal travel.

"There are certain moments in politics or governance which are the moments of 'crossing the Rubicon' – that point of no return," Saliya Pieris, former head of the Bar Association, wrote on Facebook.

Sri Lanka ranked 121 out of 180 countries in Transparency International's 2024 Global Corruption Index - a stark reminder of the scale of the problem.

"The politicians robbed the country," said businessman Tissa Gamini, 68, adding there had been some change but not enough.

"Ministers, members of parliament, they're all the same – and government servants too."

Ishani Menaka, 37, said she

struggled to feed and educate their five children during the crisis, while her husband quit the state railways after 20 years, and left for Romania, joining an exodus of Sri Lankans.

"We could not manage," Menaka said. "So he gave up his job and went abroad."

'Economy collapsed'

Sri Lanka's police chief, accused of running a criminal network, was arrested and sacked earlier this year, while the prison commissioner was jailed for releasing convicts in exchange for cash.

The immigration controller was sentenced to two years for contempt of court, and faces trial for an alleged multimillion-dollar visa fraud.

The Rajapaksa clan is under pressure too.

Former ministers Mahindananda Aluthgamage and Nalin Fernando received 20- and 25-year prison sentences respectively for misusing government funds to support ex-president Mahinda Rajapaksa's failed election bid.

In August, Mahinda's nephew Shashindra Rajapaksa was arrested for fraudulently claiming riot damage compensation.

Money laundering investigations have also been revived against Mahinda's sons, lawmaker Namal and ex-navy officer Yoshitha – who claims he was given a bag of gems by an aunt. Both deny wrongdoing.

Television executive Weerasinghe Jayasundara, 57, recalled how "lives went back a few years" in 2022, when inflation hit nearly 70 percent.

"We're unable to get anything done - there was no transport, gas prices went up sharply, the economy collapsed," Jayasundara said. "The main cause is corruption." – AFP

France moves to suspend Shein website as first store opens in Paris

Susannah Walden and Anna Smolchenko

PARIS – Shein opened its first physical store worldwide in Paris under the eye of riot police, as the French government said it was suspending the Asian e-commerce giant's online platform following outrage over its sale of childlike sex dolls.

Hundreds of shoppers streamed into Shein's permanent physical store on the sixth floor of the BHV department store, a landmark that has stood across from Paris City Hall since 1856.

Police patrolled the street and put up barriers, keeping nearby protesters from approaching the waiting shoppers.

Soon after the launch of the shop, the French government said it was suspending the Shein digital platform until the company complied with French legislation.

Despite an uproar in the couture capital over the Asian brand's fast fashion business model and its environmental impact, the first shoppers queued for hours outside the luxury department store.

Some of the crowd – ranging from older couples to mothers with young kids and trendy 20-somethings – said they arrived out of curiosity, while others pointed to the brand's affordability.

"Times have changed, generations have changed," Mohamed Joullanar, a 30-year-old who already buys from Shein online, told AFP.

"I'd never thought of going to BHV before," the Moroccan master's degree student told AFP. "I always heard it was expensive, luxury products. But now, thanks to Shein, I'm here."

Hammani Souhaila bought a 16.49-euro (US\$18.93) T-shirt for her 17-year-old daughter at the store but expressed regret that the Shein items sold at BHV were "more expensive than online".

'Crimes against children'

Nearby children's rights activists staged a protest.

"We protect Shein and the culture of crimes against children while survivors of childhood sexual violence with their signs are pushed aside,"



An employee celebrates during the opening day of Asian e-commerce giant Shein's first physical store at the Bazar de l'Hôtel de Ville (BHV) department store in Paris yesterday. – AFP

protester Caroline Di Ruzza from Mouvement Enfants, an association for the protection of children, told AFP.

Leftist political groups gave speeches and distributed flyers, including one denouncing "suspected forced labour" and "pollution", and urging passers-by to sign a petition against Shein's presence in the Paris store.

Shein, which was founded in China in 2012 but is now based in Singapore, has faced criticism over working conditions at its factories and the environmental impact of its ultra-fast fashion business model, among other concerns.

Its arrival in France has been opposed by politicians, trade unions and top fashion brands.

Just days before the planned opening, a new controversy erupted over the sale of childlike sex dolls on Shein's platform.

The discovery triggered a new political outcry and the opening of a judicial investigation against Shein, and also rival online retailers AliExpress, Temu and Wish, over the sale of the sex dolls.

But the queues still formed despite the uproar. "The dolls didn't stop me from coming," said Fatima Mriouch, a 48-year-old education worker.

Yesterday, the French government said it was moving to suspend the Shein website in France "for the time necessary for the platform to demonstrate to the public authorities that all of its content is

finally in compliance with our laws".

The retailer said it wanted dialogue with the French authorities, and separately said it was suspending products from third-party sellers in France.

Man arrested over childlike doll

In a new development, prosecutors said a man was arrested in southern France after ordering a childlike sex doll from China.

The parcel did not come from Shein, prosecutor Jean-Luc Blachon told AFP.

The man, who was taken into custody, had previously been convicted of sexual assault and "admitted to having ordered the doll for sexual purposes", prosecutors said.

Shein has already pledged to "fully cooperate" with French authorities over the probe into the retailer, and announced it was imposing a ban on all sex dolls.

Frédéric Merlin, the 34-year-old director of the SGM company that operates BHV, has said he considered pulling the plug on the partnership with Shein but later changed his mind.

Merlin, who expressed hope that Shein will help increase footfall at the department store, made an appearance at the entrance shortly before the official opening.

Shein is also scheduled to open five shops in other French cities, including Dijon, Grenoble and Reims. – AFP

UK police hunt for man wrongly freed from jail

LONDON – British police said yesterday they had launched a manhunt for a prisoner mistakenly released from jail, angering parliamentarians at the latest mix-up committed by the UK's beleaguered prison system.

London's Metropolitan Police said in a statement it was looking for a 24-year-old Algerian man after he was released in error a week ago.

"Officers are carrying out urgent enquiries in an effort to locate him and return him to custody," a spokesperson said.

Justice minister David Lammy said he was "appalled" by the mistake.

"My officials have been working through the night to take him back to prison," he said in a statement.

The Met spokesperson said the force was informed on Tuesday that the man had been mistakenly let out of Wandsworth prison in southwest London on Wednesday, October 29.

The error deals further embarrassment to Prime Minister Keir Starmer's struggling centre-left Labour government, which polls show is deeply unpopular with the British public.

Just last month, Hadush Kebatu, an Ethiopian asylum seeker convicted of sexually assaulting a teenage girl and a woman, was

mistakenly released from prison before being recaptured following a 48-hour manhunt.

The UK government then forcibly deported Kebatu, giving him £500 (US\$661) to leave the country, and launched an independent investigation into his accidental release.

Figures showed 262 people were mistakenly freed from prison between March 2024 and March 2025, up from 115 in the 21 months previously.

Kebatu's arrest earlier this year in Epping, northeast of London, triggered weeks of demonstrations targeting hotels where asylum seekers were believed to be housed.

AFP understands that the Algerian man released last Wednesday is not an asylum seeker.

Starmer, prime minister since July 2024, is coming under fire on multiple fronts over immigration as the hard-right Reform UK party led by firebrand Nigel Farage surges in popularity.

The premier's official spokesman said the latest accidental release was "utterly unacceptable", but suggested the previous Conservative government was partly to blame for leaving behind a "chaotic" and overcrowded prison system. – AFP

Soros inquiry sparks criticism in Bulgaria

SOFIA – Bulgaria's National Assembly yesterday set up a commission of inquiry into the activities of US billionaire and philanthropist George Soros, his son, and their foundations in the country.

The creation of the commission – "to collect and analyse documents, question Bulgarian services and institutions as well as individuals" – sparked criticism from justice and rights groups.

The investigation came after a suggestion from the party of Delyan Peevski, a former media tycoon targeted by US and British sanctions for alleged corruption.

Lawmakers passed a vote with the help of two ruling coalition parties as well as all pro-Russian or far-right parliamentary groups.

The main party in power, GERB, and the pro-European CC/

BD alliance did not support the motion.

The commission is to establish "the flow of financing and to identify any links with political parties, judges, schools, media, economic circles and public institutions".

Soros's Open Society foundation was established in Sofia in 1990, just after the fall of the communist regime in Bulgaria.

It funds education, judicial reform and anti-discrimination projects.

Soros, 95, has become the target of conservatives. In August, US President Donald Trump called for legal action against Soros, accusing him of having backed violent protests.

For a number of years, Soros has also been seen as the nemesis of the government in his native Hungary. – AFP, MPD

Putin says Russia considers resuming nuclear tests after Trump comments

MOSCOW – Russian President Vladimir Putin said yesterday that Russia would consider resuming nuclear tests if the United States did so, convening a security council meeting after US President Donald Trump's comments on testing.

The statement marks the latest episode of nuclear sabre-rattling between the world's two largest atomic powers, after Putin and Trump failed to find ways to resolve the Ukraine conflict.

Putin ordered Russia's defence and foreign ministries, as well as security services, to "gather information on this topic" and make "proposals on the possible start of preparation works

for nuclear weapons tests".

Russia has not conducted a nuclear test since 1990, the year before the collapse of the USSR.

Trump said on social media last week that he had instructed the Pentagon to "start testing our Nuclear Weapons on an equal basis" with Russia and China. It was unclear whether he was referring to tests involving nuclear warheads or not.

During the security council meeting, Putin was responding to Russian Defence Minister Andrei Belousov, who suggested to "begin immediate preparations" for nuclear testing in the Arctic archipelago Novaya Zemlya.

The Russian leader has

repeatedly said that if Washington carries out a nuclear test Moscow will do the same.

In October, Putin oversaw two tests of nuclear-capable weapons, which excluded atomic warheads.

Trump has been trying to end fighting between Russia and Ukraine since he returned to the White House in January.

Talks have yielded no progress however, and he has shown increasing frustration with Putin, who has rejected multiple calls for a ceasefire.

Aside from North Korea, no country has carried out an atomic weapon test involving a nuclear explosion in the 21st century. – AFP



A boy looks through a hole in a blanket during an exhibition featuring a collection of drawings by children and women reflecting feelings of loss and hope, at a school-turned-shelter for displaced Palestinians at the Al-Rimal neighbourhood of Gaza City yesterday. – AFP

'I can also make it': pride in Uganda over Mamdani NY win

Sophie Neiman

KAMPALA – Some Ugandans were elated yesterday at the news that one of their countrymen, Zohran Mamdani, had been elected mayor of New York, while many drew a complete blank.

Mamdani, 34, a staunch leftist, became the first Muslim mayor of the United State's biggest city after elections on Tuesday.

He was born in Uganda to a family of Indian origin and has lived in the US since he was seven years of age.

There was some excitement at Makerere University in the Ugandan capital Kampala, where Mamdani's father was a senior academic until a few years ago.

"Seeing Zohran up there, I feel like I can also make it," said Anthony Kirabo, 22, a psychology student.

"It makes me feel good and proud of my country because it shows that Uganda can produce some good leaders," he told AFP, adding that he hoped it might encourage more tourists to come to the east African country.

But many had never heard of Mamdani or the fact that a Ugandan had become the youngest mayor of New York in more than a century.

Others hoped Mamdani's victory would provide a lesson for Uganda's own leaders as they head into a potentially fraught

presidential election of their own in January, with 81-year-old Yoweri Museveni seeking a seventh term in power.

Bobi Wine, the 43-year-old running against Museveni in the election, sent "heartfelt congratulations" to Mamdani.

"From Uganda, we celebrate and draw strength from your example as we work to build a country where every citizen can realise their grandest dreams regardless of means and background," Wine wrote on X.

Joseph Sendagire, a 28-year-old procurement officer speaking to AFP in Kampala's city park, said he hoped Uganda would "borrow a leaf" from New York's election.

"Uganda should embrace a culture of free and fair elections, allow candidates to compete for whatever post we want in a fair manner, treat them equally, and then at the end of the day, may the best candidate win," he said.

Other Ugandans welcomed Mamdani's pro-poor policies.

"I think him taxing the rich at the benefit of those that do not have enough is a very good policy," said Owen Mubalya, a 23-year-old law student at Makerere University.

"It's very inspirational having all these people occupying such offices. I really think there is something to learn, and it encourages me to work harder."

– AFP

Man arrested after groping Mexican president

MEXICO CITY – Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum called yesterday for making sexual harassment a criminal offense nationwide after a man groped and tried to kiss her as she walked down the street.

The incident occurred on Tuesday as Sheinbaum walked to an event near the presidential palace, shaking hands and taking pictures with people along the way, videos on social media showed.

The man approached Sheinbaum from behind, put his arm around her shoulder, and with the other hand touched her hip and chest, while attempting to kiss her neck.

A member of the presidential security detail pulled away the man, who appeared to be intoxicated.

Sheinbaum, Mexico's first female president, said yesterday that she decided to file a complaint to police when she realised the man continued to harass other women.

Authorities later reported that the man had been arrested.

"My view is, if I don't file a complaint, what will happen to other Mexican women? If they do this to the president, what will happen to all women in our country?" Sheinbaum said at her morning press conference.

The government will review

whether this behaviour "is a criminal offense in all states, because it should be a criminal offence and we are going to launch a campaign," she added, acknowledging that she suffered similar harassment in her youth.

The 32 federal districts that make up the country each has its own criminal code, and not all of them include criminal penalties for such behaviour.

Despite the incident, Sheinbaum treated the man politely, agreeing to take a picture with him, then patting him on the back.

"This person approached me completely drunk, I don't know if he was on drugs," she said. "It wasn't until I saw the videos that I realised what had really happened."

The complaint against the man was filed with the prosecutor's office in Mexico City, where sexual harassment is punishable by law.

The incident also sparked criticism of the president's security detail and denunciations of so-called macho attitudes that normalise unwelcome intrusions on women's personal space and bodies.

Some 70 percent of Mexican women aged 15 and over experience at least one incident of sexual harassment in their lives, according to data from UN Women.

– AFP

NY elects leftist mayor on big election night for Democrats

Gregory Walton

NEW YORK – New Yorkers elected leftist Zohran Mamdani as their next mayor, while Democrats won two key state governor races sending an early warning signal to Republican President Donald Trump ahead of the 2026 midterms.

The clean sweep among several ballots nationwide on Tuesday has boosted morale among Democrats bruised by Trump's return to the White House and has set alarm bells ringing among Republican circles.

Mamdani, 34, is the city's first Muslim mayor and the youngest to serve in more than a century.

The Democratic socialist's victory came in the face of fierce attacks on his policies and his Muslim heritage from business elites, conservative media commentators and Trump himself.

"If anyone can show a nation betrayed by Donald Trump how to defeat him, it is the city that gave rise to him," Mamdani said in a victory speech to supporters.

"In this moment of political darkness, New York will be the light."

Mamdani's win, as well as the Democratic Party's victories in the governor's races in Virginia and New Jersey, suggest a shift in the political mood across the United States as it looks to next year's midterm elections when control of Congress will be up for grabs.

In another significant win for Democrats, voters in California also approved a proposition to redraw electoral districts in a bid to neutralise gerrymandering efforts ordered by Trump in other states.

Trump refused to take any blame for Tuesday's results and tried to make an eleventh-hour intervention in the race, calling Mamdani a "Jew hater."

In a post on his Truth Social network, he also cited anonymous "pollsters" suggesting the Republican defeats were down to the government shutdown and the fact that his own name wasn't on the ballot.

'Next stop City Hall'

Mamdani, a state lawmaker for New York's Queens borough, appealed to voters by pledging to tackle the soaring cost of living,



New York City mayoral candidate Zohran Mamdani (right) celebrates alongside his wife Rama Duwaji during an election night event at the Brooklyn Paramount Theater in Brooklyn, New York on Tuesday. – AFP

offering free city bus travel, childcare and city-run grocery stores.

He focused on living costs facing ordinary New Yorkers, building support through his informal personal style, social media savvy and a massive canvassing ground game.

"The next and last stop is City Hall," Mamdani said in a video posted to X after his victory was declared.

Mamdani was virtually unknown before his upset victory to secure the Democratic nomination over former governor Andrew Cuomo, who he trounced again on Tuesday.

When the race was called in his favour, excitement was palpable across the city.

It was a "local victory" that offered a means of "resisting and pushing back" against the political establishment in Washington, Ben Parisi, 40, told AFP, adding that the night stood in stark contrast to Republican Trump's victory a year ago.

Republican candidate Curtis Sliwa, founder of the Guardian Angels citizen crime patrol group, came in third after weeks of Cuomo insisting he bow out to increase his chances.

Disappointed and "heartbroken" Cuomo supporters booed as the results rolled in saying Mamdani's victory was "not right."

Many blamed Sliwa for splitting the centre-right vote while others questioned their safety in the city.

"As a Jew in New York, it's terrifying to think that we're going to have a mayor who hates us," Cuomo supporter Elise, 74, said.

Prominent business people including Bill Ackman noisily attacked Mamdani and funnelled cash to his rivals, while conservative media including The New York Post published blanket negative coverage.

Turnout was high in this year's vote with 2.06 million ballots, or 98 percent of votes cast, counted by 12:31 a.m. (local time) yesterday – more than the total number of voters in the 2021 race.

Uphill struggle

Mamdani's improbable rise highlights the Democratic Party's debate over a centrist or a leftist future, with some leading national figures offering only tepid endorsements of Mamdani ahead of voting.

Syracuse University political science professor Grant Reeher said ahead of the result mayor Mamdani would face an uphill battle.

"Everybody's got their knives out, and it's a very difficult city to govern," he told AFP.

In New Jersey, Democratic Party candidate Mikie Sherrill beat out a Trump-backed businessman and in Virginia, Democratic candidate Abigail Spanberger took back the governor's mansion from the Republicans.

Both sides wheeled out big guns, with former president Barack Obama rallying support for Spanberger and Sherrill.

"We've still got plenty of work to do, but the future looks a little bit brighter," Obama said in response to the wins.

– AFP

Israeli minister slams NY mayor elect as ' Hamas supporter'

JERUSALEM – Israel's diaspora minister yesterday slammed New York's leftist mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani as a "Hamas supporter" and called on the city's Jews to move to Israel following his victory.

"The city that once stood as a symbol of global freedom has handed over its keys to a Hamas supporter," right-wing Minister of Diaspora and Combating Antisemitism, Amichai Chikli, wrote on X.

He went on to say that Mamdani's views were "not far from those of the jihadist fanatics who, 25 years ago, murdered three thousand of its own people," referring to the September 11, 2001 attacks by Al-Qaeda on

New York and Washington.

Mamdani, 34, who has pledged to make New York more affordable, will become the city's first Muslim mayor when he takes office in January.

In recent months he has made a point of vocally denouncing antisemitism – as well as the Islamophobia he has suffered.

Mamdani is a long-standing supporter of the Palestinian cause.

His positions on Israel – which he has called an "apartheid regime" while branding the war in Gaza a "genocide" – have drawn the ire of some in the Jewish community.

"New York will never be the same again, especially not for its

Jewish community. The city is walking, eyes open, into the abyss into which London has already plunged," Chikli added on X.

"I invite the Jews of New York to seriously consider making their new home in the Land of Israel."

Mamdani's decisive election victory came in the face of fierce attacks on his policies and Muslim heritage from business elites, conservative media commentators and US President Donald Trump.

Trump made an eleventh-hour intervention in the election race on Tuesday, smearing Mamdani as a "Jew hater" on his social media platform.

– AFP

Spain's exiled king recounts history, scandals in wistful memoir

Esther Sánchez and Toni Cerda

PARIS – Mixing historic anecdotes and regret over his own scandals, Spain's exiled king Juan Carlos I seeks to reconcile himself with his family and nation in newly-published memoirs that offer dramatic reminiscences from one of the last surviving players of 20th-century history.

From holding Franco's hand on the dictator's deathbed to helping defuse a coup, the 87-year-old reviews well-known moments from Spain's history in his 500-page book, published in French yesterday and in Spanish next month.

Seeking to mend relations with his estranged son, Spain's King Felipe VI, Juan Carlos also confronts his individual pain and isolation – from seeing his brother die in a childhood shooting accident to the romantic and financial “mistakes” that drove him back into exile in his eighties.

“There is not one day when I'm not overcome by nostalgia,” he declares from self-imposed exile in Abu Dhabi, in the book, “Reconciliation”, co-written with the French author Laurence Debray.

“It's like I've got Spain under my skin.”

Memories of Franco

Appointed by Franco to succeed him, Juan Carlos was widely credited with helping steer Spain to democracy after the fascist dictator's death in 1975.

He recalls sitting beside Franco – who acted as an almost “paternal” figure towards him – as the ailing dictator lay dying in his hospital bed.

“He took my hand and said, as if it was his last breath: ‘Your highness, I ask you just one thing: keep the country united,’” Juan Carlos recalls.

“So I had a free hand to launch reforms, as long as Spain's unity was not endangered.”

He also recalls putting on his general's jacket to appear on television, ordering rebellious soldiers back to their barracks after they staged a coup in parliament in February 1981.



Spain's former king Juan Carlos I is helped as he arrives at the wedding of Madrid's Mayor José Luis Martínez Almeida (not seen), at the Sagrado Corazón y San Francisco de Borja church in Madrid on April 6, 2024. – AFP

Debray judged Juan Carlos's tale “a unique European life story”.

“He is one of the only surviving [world] leaders from the Second World War” generation, she said.

Despite being seen “as quite a cheerful man” by some, “he is a man who has been very alone – very much torn between his family and Franco since his earliest childhood.”

Scandals

In 2014 Juan Carlos broke his hip on a hunting trip to Botswana with his then-mistress, Corinna Larsen – a visit branded an unforgivable extravagance at the height of Spain's economic crisis.

“I cannot avoid referring to that matter, because it had an unfortunate impact on my reign and my fate,” he writes.

He admits to “bitterly” regretting the affair, which, along with a subsequent lawsuit against him by Larsen, left him a “wounded man”.

Juan Carlos abdicated later in 2014, handing the throne to Felipe.

The elder king also discusses a US\$100-million donation from Saudi Arabia's late King Abdullah – accepting which was a “serious mistake”, he writes.

Months after the payment came to light in 2020, he left Spain for the Emirates so as not to be a distraction for Felipe.

His wife, Queen Sofia, stayed in Spain.

“I bitterly regret that my wife has never travelled here to see me,” he writes. “I suspect that she does not want to annoy her son.”

Childhood tragedy

“Reconciliation” delves into the lonely childhood of the future monarch, who was brought from his family's home in exile to Spain at the age of 10 and taken under Franco's wing.

He recounts his grief at the death of his younger brother Alfonso when the two were “playing” with a pistol as teenagers at their family's home in Portugal in 1956 – a case that has never been fully investigated.

“We had taken out the magazine. We did not realise there was a bullet left in the chamber. A shot fired into the air, the bullet ricocheted and hit my brother right in the face.”

Debray, who moved to Abu Dhabi and spent two years interviewing the king in French to compile the memoir, called it “quite explicit” in its confessions.

“He says publicly that there are things he regrets,” she told AFP.

“It really is History with a capital ‘H’, but described from within, from his personal point of view.”

Now, Juan Carlos writes, he wishes “more than anything to return home to Spain” and mend relations with his son the king.

“I hope to be buried there with honours.” – AFP

Pay to protect: Brazil pitches new forest fund at COP30

Nick Perry

PARIS – Tropical countries from Cameroon to Colombia could earn tens of millions of US dollars a year under a novel approach to protecting the world's rainforests being launched at the COP30 summit in Brazil.

The inauguration of the Tropical Forests Forever Facility (TFFF) is expected today as global leaders meet in the Brazilian Amazon, where this year's UN climate negotiations are being held.

Brazil is courting US\$125 billion from governments and private financiers for a global investment fund that proposes making annual payments to developing countries for every hectare of forest they keep standing.

The scheme has attracted some early interest, but investors have been less forthcoming. Here's what to know about Brazil's centrepiece forest initiative at COP30:

Why is it needed?

Most of the world's primary rainforest lies in poorer tropical countries where there is simply more money to be made cutting down trees than saving them.

Decades of promises by wealthy countries to bankroll the fight against deforestation have not materialised, said João Paulo de Resende, special climate advisor at Brazil's finance ministry.

Despite some improvements at the national level, including in Brazil, deforestation rates remain at record highs globally: the equivalent of 18 football fields of primary forest was lost every minute in 2024.

This is an enormous problem for the planet. Rainforests are rich in biodiversity and help regulate the climate, and destroying them releases vast amounts of stored carbon.

How does the fund work?

Enter the forest fund, which proposes creating a reliable, long-term revenue stream to undercut the economic incentive in tropical countries to chop down trees.

It first needs to find US\$25 billion from “sponsor” governments wanting to burnish their conservation credentials and willing to take the first hit should the fund suffer losses.

By absorbing more risk, Brazil hopes to attract another US\$100 billion from private investors like pension and sovereign funds whose returns would be more protected.

The combined capital is ploughed into emerging markets to generate profits which, after interest repayments to investors, flow to tropical countries with low deforestation rates as confirmed by satellite.

This approach differs from carbon markets or the traditional “grant and aid model”, where donations are given to specific forest conservation projects, said Pakhi Das, who has studied the fund for Plant-for-the-Planet, a non-profit initiative.

“It is profitable for both the tropical forest countries who are receiving these funds... and investors who are going to be paying for conservation,” she said.

Who stands to benefit?

Brazil expects the fund to generate US\$4 billion a year for conservation and, according to its latest concept note, has identified 74 forest-rich nations that could split the spoils.

In reality, far fewer would be eligible, at least initially.

Only countries with a low rate of annual deforestation – below 0.5 percent – would meet the criteria, and that record must be maintained, year after year, to keep receiving payments.

“I think that's quite straightforward... is deforestation being reduced, or not? And if not – no payment anymore,” World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Brazil's executive director, Mauricio Voivodic, told AFP.

It should also motivate others to up their game, experts told AFP. In many cases, the potential payout is double or triple what national governments or outside donors provide for forest conservation.

Brazil, Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), at least theoretically, each stand to earn hundreds of millions of US dollars a year should they stamp out deforestation entirely.

Will it work?

Resende said the fund could still launch without the full US\$25 billion startup capital in hand – a good thing considering that so far Brazil is the only country to have committed any money.

“What we do need to get at COP is like a political message that this is the way forward – let's continue making this happen,” he said.

Some diplomats have expressed concerns over the fund's monitoring methods and scepticism that it will receive the high credit rating needed to attract outside investors, let alone such returns on emerging markets.

Observers said it was a difficult time to be asking governments for large contributions to forest conservation, but stressed that the long-term project could garner support over time.

“If successful, this will be operating forever, protecting forests forever... it's much better to do that than keep waiting for another solution that is perfect. There is no silver bullet,” said Voivodic. – AFP

Pope says US deployment off Venezuela 'increases tension'

ROME – Pope Leo XIV on Tuesday criticised the US military deployment in the Caribbean, without naming US President Donald Trump, saying that “with violence we don't win”.

In response to a question from a journalist as he left his Castel Gandolfo secondary residence, the leader of the world's Catholics said a country had the right to have its military “defend peace”.

“In this case, however, it seems a bit different. It increases tension,” said the 70-year-old pope, speaking of reports of US boats “each time ever closer to the coast of Venezuela”.

“I think that with violence we

don't win. The thing to do is to seek dialogue,” he added.

Trump has launched a major military deployment in the Caribbean in recent weeks, conducting multiple strikes on alleged drug-trafficking vessels, killing dozens.

He has downplayed potential US intervention in Venezuela, where leader Nicolás Maduro – who faces indictment on drug charges in the United States – has accused him of wanting to impose “regime change” in Caracas to seize Venezuelan oil.

The Chicago-born pope was also asked about migrants in detention in his home city – the United States' third-largest – which

has been a key target of Trump's crackdown on immigrants.

“Jesus says very clearly at the end of the world, we're going to be asked, how did you receive the foreigner, did you receive him and welcome him or not,” said the pontiff.

“I think there is a deep reflection that needs to be made in terms of what's happening. Many people who have lived for years and years and years never causing problems have been deeply affected by what's going on right now,” he said.

In September, Leo – a former missionary in Peru – criticised what he called the “inhuman treatment” of immigrants in the US. – AFP



Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (right) and Comoros President Azali Assoumani hold hands during a meeting in Belém, Pará State, northern Brazil, yesterday. Lula da Silva is preparing to host the COP30 UN climate summit slated for November 10-21, in Belém. – AFP



Bayern Munich's German midfielder Aleksandar Pavlovic (right) heads the ball during the UEFA Champions League, league phase match against Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) at the Parc des Princes in Paris, on Tuesday. Bayern won the game 2-1. — AFP

Tough game for Betis in Europa League as Pellegrini prefers not to think about future



MADRID – Betis and Celta Vigo are in Europa League action tonight while Rayo Vallecano aims for another three points in its Conference League campaign.

Betis look for three points in a difficult home game against Olympique Lyon, who reached the semifinals of the competition last season and travel to Seville with three wins in three matches so far in the group stage.

The Spanish side has also been in excellent form in La Liga in recent weeks, with Antony impressing in a 3-0 win at home to Mallorca at the weekend, but have lost first choice goalkeeper Pau Lopez for several weeks with a knee injury.

Speaking to the press yesterday, Betis coach Manuel Pellegrini said Alvaro Valles would play today and confirmed Lopez would be out for “at least a month,” while suggesting he would make changes in his starting 11.

“We always analyse the risks some players might face; there are four or five players we need to manage carefully to determine

what’s best for Betis and for them,” said Pellegrini.

The veteran coach, who is out of contract at the end of the current season, was also asked about the possibility of becoming the Chile national team coach and refused to rule out coaching his homeland.

“We’ll see about the future when the time is right. Nobody knows what might happen or can predict the future. Right now, I’m here at Betis, my contract ends in June, and we’ll see what the future holds for the club and for me,” he said.

Celta Vigo travel to face Dinamo Zagreb with the club’s morale sky-high thanks to consecutive wins in La Liga, while the side coached by Claudio Giraldez is also handily placed in Europa after wins against Nice and PAOK Salonika.

Rayo Vallecano’s match against Lech Poznan is a high-risk game with over 400 police and security guards on duty with around 800 Polish fans expected in the south of Madrid for the match in the compact Vallecas Stadium.

The games will be played at 4 a.m. tomorrow morning Macau time. — Xinhua/MPD



Inter and AC Milan complete purchase of San Siro

MILAN – Inter Milan and AC Milan moved one step closer to a new stadium of their own yesterday after completing the purchase of the iconic San Siro, which is set for demolition.

The two Serie A clubs announced “the signing of the deed of sale with the Municipality of Milan”, little more than a month after city approval for the acquisition of the land on which the stadium sits.

Nicknamed football’s La Scala, San Siro is one of the world’s most recognisable stadiums and the long-time home of Inter and AC Milan, who between them have been crowned European champions 10 times.

Inter and AC Milan obtained approval to purchase the land for 197 million euros (US\$231 million) after over 11 hours of debate and a

knife-edge vote at Milan city hall in the early hours of September 30.

The sale needed to be completed by next Monday, otherwise a public building protection order for the San Siro’s second tier would have come into effect.

Now the two clubs can now push ahead with a project worth around 1.2 billion euros which will radically change an area of just over 28 hectares in a densely-populated neighbourhood on the western outskirts of Milan.

A modern 71,500-capacity arena will be built on land - currently occupied by matchday car parking and a public park - to the immediate west of the current stadium which will continue to be used until the new one is completed.

Once the new ground is constructed, the San Siro will be

almost entirely demolished to make way for new parkland, office space and entertainment facilities with everything to be designed by architectural firms Foster and Partners and MANICA.

The clubs are hoping to have the new stadium ready in time for Euro 2032, which is set to be jointly hosted by Italy and Turkey.

Italy’s football federation needs to communicate to European governing body UEFA its five official picks for stadiums for that tournament by October next year, when it can present new venues or ones which need to be redeveloped as long as works begin by March 2027.

The current San Siro will host the opening ceremony of the upcoming Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics on February 6. — AFP

Football shorts

Atletico’s Le Normand set to miss Spain qualifiers after knee injury



MADRID – Atletico Madrid defender Robin Le Normand has suffered a “high grade” knee injury, the La Liga club yesterday.

The Spanish centre-back went off hurt during his team’s 3-1 Champions League win over Union Saint-Gilloise on Tuesday.

Atletico did not give a timeframe for Le Normand’s expected return, but Spanish media reported he will not be able to feature in upcoming World Cup qualifiers with his national team.

Spain face Georgia on November 15 and Turkey on November 18 as they bid to seal their place at the 2026 World Cup.

“Le Normand has suffered a high-grade injury to the posterior capsule of his left knee,” said Atletico in a statement.

The club confirmed the injury did not affect his meniscus or knee ligaments.

The defender will not be able to face Levante on Saturday in La Liga before the international break.

Le Normand will hope to return by the time Atletico face Inter Milan in the Champions League on November 26, while the Rojiblancos also take on Spanish champions Barcelona in a key La Liga clash on December 2. — AFP

Key PSG trio set for spell on sidelines



PARIS – Paris Saint-Germain are set to be without Ousmane Dembele, Achraf Hakimi and Nuno Mendes for several weeks after the trio sustained injuries in Tuesday’s Champions League loss to Bayern Munich.

Ballon d’Or winner Dembele came off after just 25 minutes before Moroccan star Hakimi had to be helped from the field in tears following a challenge by Luis Diaz that led to a red card for the Bayern Munich forward.

PSG yesterday said Dembele had picked up a calf injury and would require a “few weeks” of treatment. The France international was starting for just the second time since suffering a hamstring injury while playing for his country at the start of September.

Hakimi was diagnosed with a severely sprained left ankle and faces several weeks out, the club said. He could also be in a race against time to be fit for hosts Morocco at the Africa Cup of Nations, which starts on December 21.

Nuno Mendes played the full 90 minutes of the 2-1 loss to Bayern but sprained his left knee and will join Dembele and Hakimi on the sidelines.

Their absences add to a growing injury list at PSG that already included Desire Doue, who was stretchered off with a thigh problem in a Ligue 1 game at Lorient last week. — AFP

Tottenham supporting Udogie after alleged gun threat in London



LONDON – Tottenham say they are supporting 22-year-old Italian international defender Destiny Udogie and his family after he was allegedly threatened with a gun in London.

Police arrested a 31-year-old man in connection with the incident in September. He has been bailed while inquiries continue.

A Tottenham spokesman said on Tuesday: “We have been providing support for Destiny and his family since the incident and will continue to do so.

“Given this is a legal matter, we cannot comment any further.”

Police were called late in the evening on September 6 to reports a man in his 20s had been threatened with a gun in a north London suburb popular with Tottenham and Arsenal players.

A spokesman said: “Officers spoke to the victim and during the course of their investigation it was also reported another man in his 20s had also allegedly been blackmailed and threatened by the same individual.

“No injuries were reported in either incident.

“A 31-year-old man was arrested on Monday, September 8 on suspicion of possession of firearms with intent, blackmail and driving without a licence.”

Udogie started Tottenham’s 4-0 Champions League home win over Copenhagen on Tuesday. — AFP

China taps countryman Shao as men’s national football coach

BEIJING - China named former midfielder Shao Jiayi as the new manager of its men’s national football team yesterday, months after another failed World Cup campaign.

Shao, 45, was selected after considering “the current situation of Chinese men’s football (and) the long-term construction and development of the national team”, the Chinese Football Association (CFA) said in a statement.

The veteran midfielder, who spent nine years in Germany as a player, has been in charge of first-tier Chinese side Qingdao West Coast since last year.

He has also coached China’s U19 and U20 sides and served as assistant manager for the men’s national team.

Shao was capped 41 times for China, according to state media, and played in two group stage games in the country’s only appearance at the World Cup in 2002.

He finished his career in the CSL with Beijing Guoan in 2015.

China sacked previous manager Branko Ivankovic in June after their failed World Cup bid.

They ultimately finished second-to-last in their Asian group, with seven defeats in 10 matches.

The Chinese team is ranked 93rd in the world by FIFA, continuing a downward slide that began several years ago.

The side has long been the target of ridicule by Chinese fans due to their poor results and the multiple corruption scandals plaguing the sport. — AFP



Liverpool's French defender Ibrahima Konate (left) embraces Real Madrid's English defender Trent Alexander-Arnold on the pitch after the UEFA Champions League, league phase football match between Liverpool and Real Madrid at Anfield in Liverpool, north west England on Tuesday. Liverpool won the game 1-0. — AFP

Le Garrec welcomes Dupont help in training for Springboks showdown

Rugby

Illtud Dafydd

PARIS – France scrum-half Nolann Le Garrec said yesterday he was grateful for the presence of injured superstar Antoine Dupont in training before this weekend's game with South Africa.

Dupont is still recovering from a serious knee injury suffered in March but has been present with Les Bleus' squad in the build-up to Saturday's Autumn Nations Series encounter in Paris.

The 28-year-old Olympic champion is set to return to action next month with his club Toulouse, after France play the Springboks, Fiji and Australia.

Le Garrec, 23, is expected to start instead of Dupont at half-back with Maxime Lucu on the bench in a re-run of the 2023 Rugby World Cup quarter-final, won by the Springboks on the way to their fourth title.

"If it's Antoine or even Max Lucu, we discuss a lot off the field in general," Le Garrec told reporters.

"It's always good advice from Antoine and Max.

"With all of their qualities, they help me a lot," he added.

La Rochelle's Le Garrec is set to be joined at half-back by Dupont's club team-mate Romain Ntamack, as they start an international together for the first time.

Brittany-born Le Garrec made his Test debut in 2024, having trained with the squad more than a year earlier alongside the experienced Ntamack.



France's scrum-half Nolann Le Garrec (left) and France's scrum-half Antoine Dupont take part in a training session of the French national rugby team ahead of the Autumn Nations Series International rugby union test match in Marcoussis, south of Paris yesterday. – AFP

"It's great to play alongside Romain," Le Garrec said.

"We have the same vision of the game.

"We try to stay completely in the moment to help the team play as well as possible," he added.

'Traumatic'

Dupont's absence also leaves a gap in the captaincy role, with Racing 92 centre Gael Fickou in line to skipper the side.

Fickou, 31, will lead the Six Nations champions on his 97th international appearance, as he did during July's tour of New Zealand.

"He has incredible experience," Le Garrec said of his former Racing team-mate.

"He's experienced it all with France, the highs and the lows.

"He's very consistent and stable. "It's great that he gets the chance to captain the team," he added.

The meeting at the Stade de France offers Fabien Galthie's side a chance for revenge for the loss two years ago, which denied them a shot at World Cup glory on home soil.

Le Garrec was not selected for the World Cup, while Ntamack missed the tournament with a knee injury.

"We weren't involved in the quarter-final, but I think it was traumatic for more than the matchday 23," Ntamack told reporters.

"I think since then we've moved on.

"We're focused on this match in 2025 and we hope to start our November campaign well," the 26-year-old added. – AFP

Sport in brief

Pant returns as India name squad for S Africa Tests

Cricket

NEW DELHI – Flamboyant wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant returned to India's squad for the upcoming Test series against South Africa, the cricket board announced yesterday.

Pant missed India's home series against the West Indies last month as he recovered from a foot fracture.

Fast bowler Akash Deep was also recalled, replacing Prasidh Krishna from the team that played against the West Indies.

India are in a period of transition under 26-year-old captain Shubman Gill, following the retirements of stalwarts Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli.

Gill led India to a 2-0 home win over the West Indies and a hard-fought 2-2 draw in their five-Test series in England earlier this year, his first outing as captain.

The two-Test series against South Africa begins November 14 in Kolkata, with the second match to be played in Guwahati - the city's first-ever Test.

India are currently third in the World Test Championship table, with South Africa two spots below in fifth.

The Proteas drew their last Test series 1-1 against Pakistan. – AFP

Venus Williams to return to Auckland Classic at the age of 45

Tennis

WELLINGTON – Seven-time Grand Slam champion Venus Williams will play in January's Auckland Classic at the age of 45, tournament organisers announced yesterday.

Williams has been awarded a wild card for the Australian Open warm-up event from January 5-11 after only returning to the circuit in August at the US Open after a 16-month break.

"She is one of the great players in the modern era and her performances on the court speak for themselves," said tournament director Nicolas Lamperin, who added that she was in "remarkable shape and form".

"Off the court she has made an equally significant contribution to the game and to the development of female players worldwide," he said.

"Venus has had a profound influence on the evolution of women's tennis and has inspired the next generation with her unshakeable passion for the sport."

Williams, who won the Auckland Classic in 2015 when she beat Caroline Wozniacki in the

final, has lifted five Wimbledon singles titles, two US Opens and an Olympic gold, in Sydney in 2000.

Lamperin said it was a "privilege" to have Williams back at the tournament.

"All sports fans should take this opportunity to watch one of the sport's all-time greats in action."

Japan's four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka was also announced as a confirmed entry for the tournament.

The Australian Open begins in Melbourne on January 18. – AFP

2 senior Kenyan sports officials arrested in multi-million corruption scandal

NAIROBI - Two senior Kenyan sports ministry officials were arrested yesterday and are set to face charges of embezzling 3.8 billion shillings (US\$29 million) in public funds through fraudulent schemes.

A senior assistant commissioner and an accountant at the department were arrested, along with three others, during house and office raids by anti-corruption officials, who recovered large sums of cash.

Anti-graft body the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) said the operation was carried out under a court warrant to investigate allegations that the officials unlawfully acquired the money during the 2020-2021 and 2025-2026 financial years.

"The suspects allegedly abused their positions of trust and authority to embezzle public funds through collusion and procurement fraud," the EACC said in a statement.

Officers recovered 3.58 million shillings (about US\$1,025) in cash, along with other evidence, during their searches.

The arrests come a day after the country's sports minister was summoned by parliament over "alleged misappropriation of billions of shillings in stadium projects and sporting events."

The East African country is currently undertaking major stadium construction and renovation ahead of the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations, which it will co-host with Tanzania and Uganda.

Corruption has long plagued Kenyan sports, with a former minister previously charged with embezzling 55 million shillings (some US\$425,000) during the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. – AFP



This handout photograph taken and released by the Indian Press Information Bureau (PIB) yesterday shows India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi (centre) posing with the winners trophy along with the Indian women's cricket team at his residence in New Delhi after India won the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025. India's historic Women's World Cup victory has sparked an excitement which it is hoped will inspire the next generation and draw new fans to the sport. Hosts India defeated South Africa by 52 runs on Sunday, claiming their first-ever Women's World Cup. – AFP

Rybakina stays perfect at WTA Finals with win over alternate Alexandrova

Tennis

RIYADH – Elena Rybakina maintained her undefeated record at the WTA Finals with a 6-4, 6-4 victory over Russian alternate Ekaterina Alexandrova in Riyadh yesterday.

It was a rematch of the Ningbo final from three weeks ago, which saw Rybakina capture her second title of the season.

The Kazakh world number six extended her current winning streak to nine of her last nine matches contested, and will face one of Aryna

Sabalenka, Jessica Pegula or Coco Gauff in tomorrow's semi-finals.

"Ekaterina is always a tough opponent and has a big serve. I'm happy I was able to win in straight sets. Each win gives you confidence and I'm pretty happy that for now my last matches have been great," said Rybakina, who was playing with taping on her shoulder.

Rybakina entered the match with Alexandrova having already secured her place in the semi-finals as the winner of the Serena Williams Group, while Iga Swiatek and

Amanda Anisimova will battle it out for the other ticket to the final four.

Alexandrova was brought in as a replacement for American Madison Keys, who withdrew ahead of the match due to a viral illness.

The Australian Open champion suffered two defeats in round-robin play this week in Riyadh, to Poland's Swiatek and compatriot Anisimova, and had no chance of advancing to the knockout stage.

At the end of her match against Anisimova on Monday, Keys wouldn't shake her opponent's hand,

indicating she was feeling unwell and didn't want to pass on the virus.

"I'm really disappointed to not be feeling my best and ultimately having to withdraw from the tournament. It's a huge accomplishment to make it this far and I'm very proud of myself for doing that and having a great year. I hope to be back next year," said Keys in a statement.

Alexandrova is the second alternate in Riyadh. The first alternate, Mirra Andreeva, who is already competing in the doubles at this year's

WTA Finals, elected not to sign in due to not being fit to play yesterday.

Andreeva has a doubles match today, alongside her partner Diana Shnaider, and might still be called in for duty as an alternate if any of the four singles players is unable to play.

Today will also see the conclusion of the Stefanie Graf Group, with Belarusian top seed Sabalenka taking on Gauff of the USA and America's Pegula scheduled to play Jasmine Paolini, although the Italian has also reported feeling unwell. – AFP

Danish music rights group sues AI music platform Suno

COPENHAGEN—Danish music rights group Koda said on Tuesday that it was suing the American AI music platform Suno, accusing it of training its model for music creation on copyrighted songs.

Koda said Suno had “trained their AI model on Koda’s repertoire while concealing the scope and sources of the training data – failing to disclose what works were used and how”.

The group, which represents around 51,000 composers, authors and publishers, said it had evidence of the use of songs from famous Danish acts like Aqua and MØ among others.

“In all cases, Koda has concrete evidence that the copyright of each work has been infringed,” the group said.

It added that the music produced by Suno could mimic the originals, “putting them in direct competition with the very works exploited.”

“We are excited about what responsible AI can do for music,” Koda’s chief Gorm Arildsen said. “But innovation can’t be built on stolen goods.”

AI firms from industry leader OpenAI to music specialists like Udio and Suno have been accused by major record companies of using their songs

to train artificial intelligence models to produce music.

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

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

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

Negotiations have also been initiated between the three major labels – Universal, Warner and Sony – and AI companies.

Universal and Udio on October 30 announced an agreement to launch a music creation platform in 2026.

Koda said it was also calling for “a clear, industry-wide standard” for demanding consent from creators, transparency and remuneration from tech companies.

According to Koda, at the current pace of AI development it could lead to a “historic” 28 percent revenue loss for the Danish music industry by 2030.

– AFP

US lawsuit claims Spotify allows streaming fraud

LOS ANGELES—A new lawsuit alleges streaming giant Spotify turns a blind eye to vast networks of bots that inflate streaming figures to benefit megastars such as Drake at the expense of lesser-known artists.

The legal action, filed in a US federal court on Sunday, claims the Canadian rapper gets millions of US dollars in revenue from such fake streams, while Spotify garners significant commercial value from appearing to have more users than it really does.

“This mass-scale fraudulent streaming causes massive financial harm to legitimate artists, songwriters, producers and other rightsholders,” says the lawsuit, filed by rapper RBX – Snoop Dogg’s cousin.

Spotify uses a pro-rata model to pay artists from a central pot of income derived from subscriptions and advertising.

Inflated streaming figures for high-profile performers would therefore diminish the proportion of money available for other artists.

“Data analysis shows that billions of fraudulent streams have been generated with respect to songs of ‘the most streamed artist

of all time,’ ...professionally known as Drake,” the suit says.

“But while the streaming fraud with respect to Drake’s songs may be one example, it does not stand alone.”

The class action suit – in which Drake is not named as a defendant and which does not allege any wrongdoing on the part of the “One Dance” hitmaker – is “brought on behalf of Plaintiff and a similarly situated class of music recording artists, song writers, performers, and other music rights holders.”

“Plaintiff gives a voice to more than one hundred thousand rightsholders who, among other things, may be unable or too afraid to challenge Spotify, a powerful force in the music business whose failure to act has caused significant problems and great financial harm.”

Spotify is the only defendant named in the suit, which focuses on the company’s alleged unwillingness to clamp down on fraud.

“To satisfy constant pressure from shareholders to grow the business and increase stock prices, Spotify needs an ever-expanding population of users to engage on its platform,” the suit says.

“The more users [including fake users] Spotify has, the more advertisements it can sell, the more profits the company can report, all of which serves to increase the purported value delivered to shareholders.”

The suspicion of streaming fraud has beset services like Spotify since they displaced downloads as the main way music is consumed.

A company spokesperson told AFP that they were unable to comment on pending litigation, but denied Spotify benefited from such fraud.

“We heavily invest in always-improving, best-in-class systems to combat it and safeguard artist payouts with strong protections like removing fake streams, withholding royalties, and charging penalties,” the spokesperson said.

The lawsuit is not the first legal action on streaming fraud.

Last year Drake accused record label Universal Music of conspiring to inflate streaming figures for a diss track by rival Kendrick Lamar.

That case – part of a high-profile beef between the two men – was dismissed in October. Drake is appealing the decision.

– AFP



US actress Elle Fanning (left) poses upon arrival for the world premiere of 20th Century Studio’s “Predator: Badlands” at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles on Monday. “Predator: Badlands” is a 2025 US science fiction action film directed by Dan Trachtenberg. It is the sixth live-action film, seventh overall film, and ninth installment in the Predator franchise. The film stars Elle Fanning and New Zealand actor Dimitrius Schuster-Koloamatangi.

– AFP

Spotify active users top 700 million

STOCKHOLM – Music streaming giant Spotify said on Tuesday that it had 713 million active users at the end of the third quarter, while paying subscribers rose 12 percent to reach 281 million.

Revenue rose by seven percent to 4.3 billion euros (US\$4.9 billion), beating the company’s guidance of 4.2 billion euros.

The increase was driven by the growth of its paying subscribers and despite a decline in advertising, the Swedish company said.

“The business is healthy,” Spotify’s Founder and CEO Daniel Ek said in a statement.

“It all comes back to user fundamentals and that’s where we are: 700 million users who keep coming back, engagement at all-time highs,” he added.

Operating income rose 28 percent to 582 million euros, while net income more than doubled to 899 million euros.

Spotify also said it was expecting to reach 745 million active users and 289 million

paying subscribers by the end of the year.

In late September, Spotify announced that Ek would be stepping down as CEO on January 1 and would become executive chairman.

Gustav Soderstrom, the company’s chief product and technology officer, and chief business officer Alex Norstrom would take over as co-CEOs.

Ek co-founded Spotify with Martin Lorentzon in 2006.

– AFP

Late queen’s fashion to go on show at Buckingham Palace

LONDON – Buckingham Palace will next year host an unprecedented exhibition highlighting the fashion legacy left by the late queen Elizabeth II during her 70-year reign.

“The wardrobe of her late majesty is a snapshot of a very long life, a life of duty, and in so many ways it’s a time capsule,” said UK designer Erdem Moralioglu.

“It captures a very specific and important moment in history.”

The exhibition “Queen Elizabeth II: Her Life in Style” will display some 200 items of clothing she wore over the course of her 96 years, half of which have never been exhibited before, the Royal Collection said in a statement on Tuesday.

There will also be some sketches, some with annotations by the designers and even the late queen herself.

Moralioglu, along with fashion designers Richard Quinn and Christopher Kane, will contribute pieces to the exhibition which opens at The King’s Gallery, Buckingham Palace, in April.

Elizabeth’s style and her promotion of British culture had “a huge impact on British fashion,” said Quinn.

“The ultimate stamp of approval: she always shone a light on British designers, highlighting the relevance and significance of British fashion across the world.”

Kane added that “her garments tell the story of Britain and its changing identity through fashion”.

Among the items on display will be an apple-green evening gown designed by Norman Hartnell and worn for a state banquet given at the UK embassy in Washington in 1957 for then president Dwight D. Eisenhower.

The queen’s wedding dress and her coronation gown, both also designed by Hartnell will be on view, along with a bridesmaid’s dress she wore in 1934.

There will be practical tailored pieces from the queen’s private wardrobe including riding clothes and distinctive scarves.

































One unusual item is a clear plastic raincoat made by the couturier Hardy Amies in the 1960s, which was “strikingly modern for the era,” the Royal Collection said.

“Queen Elizabeth II’s wardrobe was a masterclass in symbolism, tailoring and British craftsmanship,” said curator Caroline de Guitaut.

Tickets for the exhibition, which will run from April 10 to October 18, 2026, went on sale on Tuesday.

Elizabeth died in September 2022.

– Xinhua

World Weather			
CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
 Beijing 9°C~14°C	 Manila 24°C~32°C	 New York 3°C~11°C	 Lisbon 15°C~19°C
 Shanghai 16°C~23°C	 Bangkok 23°C~32°C	 London 12°C~17°C	 Rio de Janeiro 19°C~23°C
 Hong Kong 22°C~26°C	 Tokyo 9°C~19°C	 Frankfurt 3°C~11°C	 Luanda 23°C~27°C
 Taipei 21°C~28°C	 Singapore 25°C~34°C	 Vancouver 8°C~11°C	 Maputo 19°C~27°C
 Guangzhou 21°C~29°C	 Kuala Lumpur 24°C~35°C	 Paris 9°C~17°C	 Dili 23°C~32°C
 Nanjing 15°C~20°C	 Jakarta 23°C~34°C	 Moscow 7°C~9°C	 São Tomé 25°C~29°C
 Guilin 17°C~25°C	 Seoul 7°C~19°C	 Las Vegas 11°C~25°C	 Praia 22°C~32°C
 Xi'an 10°C~16°C	 Sydney 16°C~23°C	 Monte Carlo 14°C~19°C	 Bissau 23°C~34°C



Fully appreciate autumn

An aerial drone photo taken yesterday shows people visiting a wetland park in Yantai City, Shandong Province.

— Xinhua

Just dropping in for a bite!

Birds perch on a fruiting persimmon tree in a park in Tengzhou City, Shandong Province, on Tuesday.

— Xinhua

Open wide!

A woman poses for photographs in a sculpture of a giant mythical creature at the Tegallalang rice terraces near Ubud in Bali yesterday.

— AFP



No 2 alike

Kashmiri artisans add embroidery to rugs locally known as 'Namda' at a workshop in Srinagar, India yesterday.

— AFP

Holding up the Moon

The supermoon known as the Beaver Moon is seen behind the statue dedicated to "Women Who Fight" at the Glorieta de las Mujeres in Mexico City on Tuesday.

— AFP

Big rain warning...

An airplane flies in the cloudy sky during sunrise in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany, yesterday.

— AFP

