

## France's Théophile Naël wins Macau GP

Rui Pastorin

France's Théophile Naël of KCMG ENYA PINNACLE MOTORSPORT won yesterday's action-packed Macau Grand Prix – FIA FR World Cup of the 72<sup>nd</sup> Macau Grand Prix (MGP).

Finishing in second and third places were Mari Boya from Spain, who is also from KCMG ENYA PINNACLE MOTORSPORT, and Shanghai-born Enzo Deligny of R-ACE GP from France.

Much of the race was a closely fought battle between Boya and the UK's Freddie Slater from SJM Theodore PREMA Racing, who performed well during the qualifying races and started yesterday's final in pole position.

Following a safety car period for a five-car crash during the first lap, Slater regained the lead on lap four. He built a three-second lead before another safety car was deployed on lap nine due to a crash at Lisboa Bend.

During the 11<sup>th</sup> lap, when Boya retook the lead, Slater clipped the barrier after making a mistake, removing him from the race. Boya was then ahead of Deligny and Naël on lap 14. During Boya's attempt to slow Deligny, Naël found an opportunity and went from third to first place.

A final safety car was called due to incidents involving Abu Dhabi's Rashid Al Dhaheri, local racer Charles Leong Hon Chio, and Tokiya Suzuki from Japan, preventing a restart.

During the post-race press conference, Saint-Étienne-born Naël said that it felt "really, really good" to win the race and highlighted the importance of patience. "I know that we are racing in Macau, so anything can happen" until the chequered flag is waved.

Moreover, speaking with reporters after



France's Théophile Naël (No.6) of KCMG ENYA PINNACLE MOTORSPORT fights off teammate Mari Boya (No.7) from Spain for the top spot. – Photos: Rui Pastorin

Naël holds up his MGP and team trophies after winning yesterday's 72<sup>nd</sup> Macau Grand Prix (MGP).

the press conference, Naël said that he felt that it was an overall "really good" weekend for his team. "I'm really happy. It was an up-and-down weekend to be honest", noting that the qualifying race did not go as planned. "We had a bad start on my side, but I think I recovered well today. It was tricky to overtake, the safety car helped a lot, but I

managed to do some really good restarts and to stay close to the car ahead".

Naël also told reporters that the win was unexpected, adding that he had just come to race and finish the season well. He said he had also not driven the car for a year. "For me, it was just a race to feel the car, to stay confident for the next year".

When asked if he would be coming back for next year, Naël said that he did not know yet. "Let's see".

The FIA FR World Cup debuted in Macau last year and was won by New-York born Ugo Ugochukwu, the first US racer to win the Macau Grand Prix since 1981. ■

– Additional reporting by MGPOC

## US hopes to finalise rare earths deal with China this month: Bessent

WASHINGTON – US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said yesterday that Washington hopes to finalise a deal with China for securing supplies of rare earths by the Thanksgiving holiday at the end of November.

Under the tentative deal – reached in late October at a meeting between Presidents Donald Trump and Xi Jinping in South Korea – Beijing agreed to suspend for one year certain export restrictions on critical minerals.

China is hugely dominant in the mining

and processing of rare earths, which are essential for sophisticated electronic components across a range of industries including auto, electronics and defence.

"We haven't even finished the agreement, which we hope to have done by Thanksgiving," which falls on November 27, Bessent said on Fox News's "Sunday Morning Futures" program.

"And I am confident that – post our meeting in Korea between the two leaders, President Trump, President Xi – that China will honour their agreements."

Bessent insisted that under the deal, rare earths "will flow freely as they did before April 4," when Beijing slapped curbs on the sector, requiring export licences for certain products in response to Trump's sweeping tariffs.

Under the deal reached by Trump and Xi, the United States will cut back tariffs on Chinese products, and Beijing will buy at least 12 million tonnes of US soybeans by the end of this year, and 25 million tonnes in 2026.

– AFP, MPD

## China issues alert on overseas study in Japan

BEIJING – The Ministry of Education released an overseas study alert yesterday, urging Chinese students currently in Japan or planning to study there soon to assess risks carefully, take necessary precautions, and plan their studies prudently.

The ministry said that safety risks for Chinese citizens in Japan have risen, citing Japan's recent poor public security, a surge in crimes targeting Chinese citizens, and the overall unfavorable study environment. – (More on p. 7) – Xinhua

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### Takaichi's 'survival-threatening situation' gambit thrusts Japan into perilous waters

A decade ago, the Japanese government of Shinzo Abe rammed through the deeply divisive security legislation permitting limited collective self-defense. – Story on p. 7

### Pope urges leaders not to leave poor behind

Pope Leo XIV decried poverty yesterday, urging world leaders and Catholics to reach out to marginalised people, as the Church celebrated a "Jubilee of the Poor".

– Story on p. 11

### Protest march in Belém marks first big UN climate protest in years

Tens of thousands of people thronged the streets of the Amazonian city hosting COP30 talks on Saturday, dancing to thumping speakers in the first large-scale protest at a UN climate summit in years. – Story on p. 12

## Police nab Indonesian woman for fraud & money laundering

Armindo Neves

The Judiciary Police (PJ) nabbed an Indonesian woman for fraud and money laundering on Thursday, PJ spokesman Cheong Kim Fong said during a special press conference on Saturday.

Cheong identified the suspect as a 40-year-old non-resident worker (NRW) surnamed Marni who told the police that she is a domestic helper.

According to Cheong, last Tuesday, two local residents filed a report with the Judiciary Police that they had received phone calls from fraudsters posing as Taobao customer service representatives.

Cheong said that the fraudsters claimed that the victims' memberships were due to expire and demanded an annual fee payment of 720 yuan.

Under the pretext of assisting them to cancel the subscription via a mobile application, the scammers instructed the two victims to activate the screen-sharing function on their phones and follow their instructions.

The fraudsters, according to Cheong, then claimed that cancelling the plan required an initial transfer, assuring the victims that the funds would be refunded immediately.

This tricked the two individuals into transferring 990,000 patacas and 160,000 patacas, respectively. However,

the fraudsters cut off all contact as soon as the transfers were completed, Cheong said.

During the investigation into the flow of funds, Cheong said that PJ officers discovered that 200,000 patacas of the stolen money had been transferred into the bank account of a local youth.

An investigation revealed that this young individual was actually a victim in a separate fraud case.

According to Cheong, after the young resident had been scammed out of 3.4 million patacas earlier this year, his bank account was taken over and used by the criminal syndicate for laundering money. The Judiciary Police intervened in time, preventing further transfers of the illicit funds, Cheong said.

Another account that received 950,000 patacas was registered in Marni's name, Cheong said, adding that PJ officers arrested Marni and seized her smartphone in the central district. Under questioning, she admitted to having been "asked" by a compatriot to use her personal details to register two phone cards and three bank accounts for criminal use, for which she received 5,000 patacas.

Marni was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) on Saturday, facing charges of fraud and money laundering. ■



The hooded Indonesian money laundering and fraud suspect is escorted by Judiciary Police (PJ) officers to a PJ vehicle outside the PJ headquarters in Zape on Saturday. – Photo: Armindo Neves

## Social worker fatally stabs her female friend over 30 times

Armindo Neves

The Judiciary Police (PJ) arrested a social worker from the Chinese mainland for fatally stabbing her female friend more than 30 times over a relationship issue on Thursday, PJ spokesmen Cheong Kim Fong and Leong Kuok Hei said during a special press conference on Saturday.

Cheong identified the suspect as a 33-year-old woman surnamed Miao who told police that she is a social worker, adding that the victim had worked in the local education sector.

According to Leong, on Thursday afternoon a staff member of a hotel in Cotai responded to a request for help from Miao. The employee found Miao and the female victim lying in a pool of blood in the hotel guestroom. The Fire Services Bureau (CB) arrived at the scene and rushed both women to the hospital, Leong said.

According to Leong, the victim, having sustained multiple stab wounds on the right side on the back of her head, neck and the left side of her chest with over 30 penetrating injuries, was pronounced dead after resuscitation failed. Miao sustained minor cuts to the hands and body. She was discharged from hospital following medical treatment, Leong said. She was picked up for questioning by the police when leaving the hospital.

According to Leong, an investigation revealed that Miao had been friends with the victim since their high school days. Miao, Leong said, carried a 10-centimetre-long knife in her backpack when arriving in Macau from the Chinese mainland on Wednesday afternoon.

After checking into the hotel, according to Leong, Miao went to



Two bloodstained knives seized from the murder scene and a cleaver seized from the suspect's backpack are displayed during a special press conference on Saturday about Thursday's homicide by stabbing of a woman by her female friend in a hotel guestroom in Cotai. – Photo: Armindo Neves

a shopping mall in the peninsula's central district and purchased an additional 16-centimetre-long knife and a 16-centimetre cleaver.

At around 3:30 p.m. on Thursday, the victim arrived at the hotel to meet the suspect, and the two entered the room together. Only 20 minutes later, Miao called the hotel reception for help, Leong said.

According to Leong, PJ officers discovered clear signs of a struggle at the scene, with multiple bloodstains on the floor and walls.

PJ officers seized two bloodstained knives, measuring 10 cm and 16 cm respectively, and found an unused 16-centimetre-long cleaver in the suspect's backpack, Leong said, adding that the three pieces of kitchen cutlery fall under the legal category of prohibited weapons.

According to Leong, based on the evidence collected from the crime scene, investigative findings, and the forensic medical report, the Judiciary Police have determined there is strong evidence indicating that the suspect's premeditated attack was due to relationship issues.

Miao was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) on Saturday, facing charges of aggravated murder and possession of a prohibited weapon.

According to Article 129, the suspect faces a prison term of between 15 and 25 years for aggravated homicide.

Life imprisonment, indefinite detention and capital punishment are illegal in Macau. In exceptional circumstances, the maximum prison term amounts to 30 years. ■

## MGTO urges Macau residents 'to step up vigilance' while in Japan

Tony Wong

The Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) issued a statement on Saturday night reminding Macau residents who are currently in Japan or planning to travel there to step up their vigilance, in the wake of the recent travel alert issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing regarding Chinese citizens travelling to Japan, as the number of attacks against Chinese citizens there has been increasing since the middle of this year.

The statement underlined that MGTO has accordingly updated the information for Japan on the website of its travel alert system while paying close attention to the "relevant situation" in Japan.

The statement reminded Macau residents who plan to travel to or are already in Japan to strengthen their vigilance, pay close attention to their personal safety, and stay abreast of the information announced by Japan's authorities regarding the latest developments there as well as the consular service information

released by the Chinese Embassy and Consulates in Japan.

The statement noted that Macau residents in Japan who need to seek assistance can call MGTO's 24/7 tourism hotline on (853) 2833 3000. The statement advised Macau residents in Japan, in case of emergencies, to promptly contact local police and seek assistance from the Chinese Embassy or Consulates in Japan.

For consular assistance, the statement noted, please contact the Foreign Ministry's Global Consular Protection and Service Emergency Hotline (24 hours): +86-10-12308 or +86-10-65612308.

MGTO's travel alert system has three levels, namely Level 1 indicating that a threat to personal safety has emerged in the respective countries and regions, Level 2 indicating an elevated threat, and level 3 indicating an extreme threat.

Currently, MGTO does not issue a travel alert for Japan, except Fukushima Prefecture, for which the level 1 has been issued.

Fukushima was hit by a nuclear

power plant disaster caused by an earthquake-induced tsunami in March 2011.

### Air Macau offers Japan tickets' refund or changes

Meanwhile, Air Macau announced in a statement yesterday that passengers who have bought air tickets to destinations in Japan with the departure dates between Saturday, November 15 and December 31 this year can have their tickets refunded or apply to change the flight dates. The statement underlined that handling fees will not be charged in both situations.

According to the statement, passengers applying to change their flight dates can only choose the flights up to 30 days before or after their original departure dates.

The measures only cover tickets booked and issued on or before Saturday, November 15, the statement said.

Details in English about the arrangements can be checked on: <https://www.airmacau.com.mo/#/business-common?data=1530&type=1k> ■

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### Macau Weather

CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY PERIODS.  
FORCE 3 TO 4 EAST TO NORTHEASTERLY WINDS, BECOMING FORCE 5 NORTHERLY WINDS WITH GUSTS.  
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 45% AND 90%.



21°C~28°C

Source: SMG

# 72<sup>nd</sup> MGP leaves spectators visibly excited

*Vox pop by Armindo Neves, Khalel Vallo*

The 72<sup>nd</sup> Macau Grand Prix (MGP) concluded its four-day run of “thrilling” races, as one interviewee put it, providing die-hard motor-racing fans and casual spectators alike with excitement through watching events ranging from the inaugural Macau Formula 4 Race - FIA F4 World Cup to the Macau GT Cup - FIA GT World Cup.

Speaking with *Post* reporters yesterday, spectators around the Macau Grand Prix Building said that they enjoyed watching the motorsport event’s final day, with some highlighting their excitement in watching races up close for the first time in their life while being quick to add that they hope to return next year.

Tom, a Japanese spectator attending the Macau Grand Prix for the first time, pointed out his great excitement, acknowledging a particular fondness for the Macau



Crowds of fans wait for the cars to drive past the Reservoir Grand Stand. – Photos: Rui Pastorin



GT Cup and Macau Formula 4 Race. “Having never been to a live race in Japan, I found the Macau Grand Prix even more thrilling”, Tom said.

A spectator, nicknamed “Pao Ge” (“Brother Cannon”), simply enjoyed the atmosphere and the smell of petrol at the venue, highlighting his satisfaction with all the races. He said that although a

multi-car collision occurred during the GT race, he considered the good weather itself a major advantage for the racing event.

Another spectator, surnamed Chan from Macau, said that he found this year’s Macau Grand Prix exciting, with a particular focus on the Macau Guia Race and Macau GT Cup. Chan added an observation, which was that the trend for drivers nowadays seemed to be much younger, though their experience may be comparatively lacking.

Ray, a photography enthusiast, said that he was happy that the good weather this year allowed him to successfully capture the Macau Motorcycle Grand Prix that was cancelled last year due to rain. Though Ray admitted that he’s not a hardcore motorsport fan, he photographed the races purely as a

personal hobby, aiming to document the atmosphere. He modestly added that his work is not yet at a level he considers suitable for the 72<sup>nd</sup> Macau Grand Prix Photography Competition.

Aspectator nicknamed “Ah Ting” said he was particularly interested in the Macau GT Cup as he’s a fan of Swiss driver Edoardo Mortara, aka “Mr. Macau”, though he felt it was a pity that his motor-racing idol couldn’t finish the race this year due to an incident. He was less satisfied with the Macau Roadsport Challenge, pointing out that the race was repeatedly interrupted, making it nearly impossible to complete a full racing lap.

The *Post* also spoke to spectators who have been coming to the Macau Grand Prix for a long time, particularly a young local couple

who said they had been visiting the annual racing event since childhood.

Their first visit took place as schoolchildren. Speaking about yesterday’s experience, they highlighted that it was “much more interactive” than before, noting that nowadays some of the spectators can get far closer to the cars and even chat with drivers and engineers, which was something they said “never happened when we were younger.”

They added that they might be able to return next year if time allows, describing the Grand Prix as a tradition they have kept “every year” and calling this year’s visit a rare chance to experience the event up close in the paddock.

Meanwhile, former United States’ National Basketball Association (NBA) coach Jamal Boykin said he attended the races for the first time simply because he “loves Macau”.

“Any excuse I have to come to Macau, I’ll come, and I’ve never been to the Grand Prix”, Boykin said, adding that he loves cars, whether they’re fast or expensive. “I didn’t expect to be able to get so close to the cars. So, it’s exceeded my expectations already”.

Regarding the event’s energy level yesterday, its last day, he said that it was “high”, adding that he aimed to return next year with his relatives. “They have to experience this. I believe it’s top tier. And we have great weather, and beautiful cars.” ■

## Joshua Buchan becomes 1<sup>st</sup> Australian to win Guia Race



Australia’s Josh Buchan from HMO Customer Racing (Hyundai Elantra N TCR) drives ahead of Lynk & Co Cyan Racing’s (Lynk & Co 03 FL TCR) Ma Qinghua from the Chinese mainland yesterday. – Photos: Rui Pastorin



Buchan is doused with champagne by a team member after receiving his trophy.

*Armindo Neves*

Australia’s Josh Buchan of HMO Customer Racing (Hyundai Elantra N TCR) won yesterday’s legendary Macau Guia Race – Kumho FIA TCR World Tour Event of Macau.

According to a Macau Grand Prix Organising Committee (MGPOC) statement released yesterday afternoon, Buchan became the first Australian to win the race, which was launched back in 1972.

Buchan told the media at a post-race press conference that despite being slightly slower in the first section of the track, he clinched the victory by capitalising on his car’s straight-line speed advantage and determined defensive manoeuvres. Buchan also said that he never yielded, even when faced with the risk of being pushed off the track, while insisting on competing cleanly and with respect for his opponents.

Buchan said he hoped to renew his contract with the Hyundai team, with whom he has collaborated for many years, and to compete in the next Kumho FIA TCR World Tour Event.

Buchan also told reporters on the sidelines of the press conference that the credit for the victory must go to his team, adding that during Thursday’s first practice session, he was intimidated by the extreme difficulty of the Guia Circuit, and only adapted to the pressure during yesterday’s race, ultimately securing victory.

Buchan also praised Macau’s uniquely friendly urban atmosphere and expressed strong willingness to return to what he considers the most challenging and legendary track, hoping to enjoy racing here with a more relaxed mindset in the future.

In the race, China’s Shanghai-born Ma Qinghua initially challenged pole-sitting Buchan, but the latter reclaimed the lead by Mandarin Bend. Uruguayan racer Santiago Urrutia then pressured Buchan until lap seven, when he tapped Buchan’s car. This error dropped Urrutia back, leading to his eventual retirement due to the damage to his car. As Ma continued his pursuit, on the final lap he attempted a pass, but Buchan defended to secure his victory. ■



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## Metal barrier removal schedule for the 72<sup>nd</sup> Macau Grand Prix

Upon conclusion of the 72<sup>nd</sup> Macau Grand Prix, the Macau Grand Prix Organizing Committee would like to thank all Macau citizens for their support and cooperation of the event and inform that the metal barrier removal works have begun immediately upon the conclusion of the event. It is estimated that these works will be concluded on 27<sup>th</sup> November, as per the schedule below:

Date	Time	Location
17 <sup>th</sup> to 20 <sup>th</sup> of November	08:00 to 20:00	(1) Remove all movable gates (2) Remove all barriers on both sides of the movable gates
17 <sup>th</sup> to 22 <sup>nd</sup> of November	08:00 to 20:00	Remove all barriers from Avenida da Amizade to Reservoir Bend
20 <sup>th</sup> to 27 <sup>th</sup> of November	08:00 to 20:00	Remove all barriers from Rua dos Pescadores to Reservoir Bend
22 <sup>nd</sup> to 27 <sup>th</sup> of November	08:00 to 20:00	Remove all barriers at the upper part of the Guia Hill (Estrada de S. Francisco, Estrada dos Parses and Estrada de Cacilhas)



## 72<sup>nd</sup> Macau Grand Prix culminates in thrills and celebrations



## Fuoco wins FIA GT World Cup



Italian racer Antonio Fuoco (No. 50) races ahead of the pack during yesterday's Macau GT Cup – FIA World Cup.

– Photos: Rui Pastorin

### Khalel Vallo

Italian racer Antonio Fuoco (No.50) sealed a commanding win in the FIA GT World Cup yesterday, overcoming pressure in the final laps to claim both his first Macau victory and Ferrari's first-ever triumph at the Guia Circuit on the last day of the 72<sup>nd</sup> Macau Grand Prix (MGP).

Fuoco, driving his Ferrari 296 GT3, led from the start and held off a strong challenge from Swiss-Italian racer Raffaele Marciello in a BMW M4 GT3 (Evo), with German racer Laurin Heinrich finishing third in his Porsche 911 GT3 R (992).

Speaking to the media after his victory, Fuoco said that his poor result in last year's race here had been on his mind throughout the event. "Last year was really tough to accept, but as always we never

give up," he said. However, this time, with the team finding balance early in free practice and securing pole, he credited their consistency. "We have been on point throughout the weekend and I want to thank the guys because they pushed really hard for this race."

Fuoco maintained control from the opening laps through a late safety-car restart, holding off Marciello's BMW, which was, according to him, "faster on the straights". The Ferrari showed strong pace across all sessions, completing what Fuoco described as "a really perfect weekend since the beginning".

Speaking to the *Post*, Fuoco said the final laps were especially demanding. "Macau is always challenging. When you are in front and you have a small gap on the

last two laps, you need to be really focused because it's so easy to make mistakes", he said, adding that he focused "corner by corner" to avoid overthinking the finish.

Moreover, crossing the finish line triggered an emotional release tied to last year's loss. "First thing that comes to my mind is the race of last year... it was a redemption", he said.

"We returned with all the same crew, the same people, and in the end, it worked." Fuoco's win also marked Ferrari's first GT World Cup victory in Macau. When asked about returning next year, he said it was too early to confirm, adding only that "the last two weeks have been amazing" following his WEC (2025 FIA World Endurance Championship) successes and now a Macau triumph. ■

## France's Jules Roussel wins first-ever MGP FIA F4 World Cup race



France's Jules Roussel (centre), Italy's Olivieri Emanuele (left) and Japan's Rintaro Sato pose together during their post-race press conference about the first-ever Formula 4 Race – FIA F4 World Cup at the 72<sup>nd</sup> Macau Grand Prix (MGP) press centre yesterday.

– Photo: Ida Cheong

### Ida Cheong

Nineteen-year-old French driver Jules Roussel won the first-ever Formula 4 Race – FIA F4 World Cup at the 72<sup>nd</sup> Macau Grand Prix (MGP) on the 6.2-km Guia Circuit yesterday, clocking a time of 31:16.409.

Meanwhile, 17-year-old Italian Olivieri Emanuele, the godson of three-time 24 Hours of Le Mans winner Rinaldo Capello, finished in second place with a time of 31:17.667.

Twenty-year-old Japanese driver Rintaro Sato, son of 2001 Macau Grand Prix winner and two-time Indy 500 victor Takuma Sato, had to start from 11<sup>th</sup> position on the grid after a penalty for a procedural infringement cost him third place in the qualification race, ended up coming in third with time of 31:17.847.

Roussel said during yesterday's post-race press conference that winning a race at the Macau Grand Prix had been one of his

dreams, adding that he focused on maintaining his pace throughout the race, and carefully measured the risks when overtaking opponents.

Roussel told reporters after the press conference that he was elated at winning the race, calling it "fantastic". Roussel added that he was tense from start to finish during the whole race, only relaxing after the final corner. While feeling frustrated at times while battling rivals, Roussel said he focused on maintaining his lead after making successful overtakes.

Regarding next year's MGP participation, Roussel said that his participation was uncertain, and he hoped to move up to a higher category but definitively would love to race in Macau again.

Emanuele said in the press conference that his race was about maintaining rhythm, keeping confidence, and defending against

attacks from behind. After the safety car deployment, his focus shifted primarily to defence, he said.

Starting from 11<sup>th</sup> on the grid, Sato acknowledged that it was a tough race, but stressed he managed to overtake in advantageous sections, benefitted from a good start while avoiding incidents, and secured a podium finish. Sato underscored the difficulty of overtaking on the Guia Circuit, especially after the Melco Hairpin Bend, and his strategy was to maintain speed, stick close to the car ahead, wait for the opponents' mistakes, and seek a breakthrough in the advantageous sections.

The 72<sup>nd</sup> Macau Grand Prix hosted the inaugural Formula 4 Race – FIA F4 World Cup. However, the Macau Grand Prix included the "Formula 4 Chinese Championship" from 2020 to 2022, while the "Formula 4 South East Asia Championship" was held here in 2023. ■

## UK's Davey Todd charges to proper Macau Motorcycle GP win



Second-placed Peter Hickman (left) and winner Davey Todd, both from the UK, and third-placed Erno Kostamo (right) of Finland pose in the Media Room of the Macau Grand Prix Complex on Saturday morning.

– Photo: Lesley Wells

### Lesley Wells

After being declared winner in last year's rain-soaked Macau Motorcycle Grand Prix for setting the fastest lap in qualifying before the race was cancelled, the UK's Davey Todd, riding a Zeeco 8TEN Racing BMW, won Saturday's Macau Motorcycle Grand Prix – 57<sup>th</sup> Edition 10.021 seconds ahead of British team mate and co-owner Peter Hickman and 24.706 seconds ahead of Finland's Erno Kostamo, riding another BMW for Racing for Inclusion by RVS, in third.

This year's Motorcycle Grand Prix was also blighted by the weather as Friday's qualifying session was cancelled due to overnight rain leaving the circuit wet, so the qualifying was held at 7 a.m. on Saturday morning, followed by the race at 9:10 a.m.

Pole sitter Todd roared off and led the race from start to finish while Hickman, who had qualified in third, and Kostamo, who qualified in second, initially battled it out for second. Hickman, also astride a BMW, got a fast start and led the Finn at the start but Kostamo reclaimed second place at the Mandarin Bend. The two battled for second place for a few laps until Kostamo made a mistake on Mandarin Bend and dropped to fifth when re-joining the race eventually finishing third.

During the press conference at the Media Centre above the Paddock Todd said, "the race was great. It is a fantastic feeling to win the Macau Grand Prix over race distance, and I was looking forward to a battle with my team mate, [Hickman] but I just got away on the first lap and stayed there. I expected the battle with my teammate as he usually closes the gap".

Todd was also disappointed that he had not broken the circuit's lap record set by Briton Stuart Easton in 2010 of 2.23.616 minutes. Todd's fastest lap was 2. 23.702 minutes. He said, "I was hoping for the lap record, I felt I had a little more push and could definitely do 2.22."

Hickman said, "It's a great end to a difficult year for me, in

the first two laps I was making mistakes and I was a bit scared, but I got my head down and then really enjoyed the race".

Hickman spoke about his 140 mph (225 kmh) crash at the Isle of Man TT races in May, in which he suffered chest, back, shoulder, nerve and facial injuries, "I have got my strength back but not my stamina so I am going to do a lot of work on myself over the winter".

He went on to say, "I am very happy to have a 1-2 for the team. At Lisboa [Bend] I thought he [Todd] was a few seconds ahead but he was a long way up the road".

Kostamo said, "Despite qualifying well, I was very nervous on the opening lap which is why I made a big mistake braking into the Lisboa [Bend] and losing second place. From then on it was all about damage limitation so I am happy with my lap, and very happy to finish in third".

Todd said, "I can't wait to get back out there [on the circuit] and be a few seconds faster. We shall be back next year. Peter [Hickman] is probably looking for redemption so we'll definitely be back next year".

Todd spoke the *Post* after the press conference and said they had been worried about the weather after the cancellation of Friday's qualifying and the fact that Macau had had so many typhoons in the last couple of months but "the weather was perfect today, beautiful sunshine, a great day for racing".

He added, "I am so glad to win today, especially as I technically won last year but to do it so emphatically is brilliant. I could go out there again now and try to break the lap record. I'll be back next year to do that".

Irishman Michael Sweeney who crashed on Dona Maria Bend in Thursday's practice session started the race but pitted after 7 laps. Other non-finishers were the UK's Sam West on lap 3 and compatriot Paul Jordan on lap 6.

The motorcycle manufacturers competing in Saturday's race featured Germany's BMW and Japan's Honda, Suzuki, and Yamaha. ■

# China, PSC film-fest themed 'Transcending Boundaries' starts



This undated handout photo recently provided by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) shows officiating guests and representatives posing during the opening ceremony of the "7th China and the Portuguese-speaking Countries Film Festival" at Galaxy Cinemas in Cotai last Friday.

**Kristina Vallesteros**

The "China and the Portuguese-speaking Countries Film Festival" has opened in Macau, presenting nearly 30 films themed "Transcending Boundaries", according to a Friday statement by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC).

The event is integrated into the 7th "Encounter in Macao - Arts and Cultural Festival between China and the Portuguese-speaking Countries" and will run through December 5. The statement said the festival will also feature outreach activities such as community screenings, post-screening talks and workshops.

The opening ceremony, with the Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) as its partner, was held on Friday at Galaxy Cinemas. It was attended by officials including Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) Director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes and IC Vice President Cheang Kai Meng. The festival kicked off with a screening of the Chinese comedy "Green

Wave", the statement said.

The statement noted that this year's festival is divided into five sections: "The Key East Asian Filmmaker: Zhang Lü", "Cross-cultural, Cross-regional", "Premiere of Chinese and Lusophone Films", "Chinese-Portuguese Short Films" and "Community Screening". The selection aims to showcase cultural landscapes and stories from China, Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs), Japan, and South Korea, according to the statement.

To further explore the theme of transcending boundaries, the statement highlighted several featured works. These include Portuguese director Cláudia Varejão's documentary "Ama-San" about Japanese female divers, and Japanese director Ryo Takeuchi's "The Yangtze River".

The statement also confirmed that several members of film creative teams, including director Zhang Lü and Hong Kong lyricist Siu Hak, are set to interact with audiences.

A post-screening discussion with director António Ferreira and producer Tathiani Sacilotto will follow the closing film "The Scent of Things Remembered".

In a move to integrate arts into the community, the statement announced a free outdoor screening of the Chinese animated film "Deep Sea" on Saturday at the Dr. Carlos d' Assumpção Park in Nape. The event will also feature a body painting activity.

The statement added that various ticket discounts are available. These include a "buy-one-get-one-free" offer for holders of tickets or receipts from other "Encounter in Macao" festival events, and a 20 percent discount for teachers, volunteers associated with the National Games, and Tap Siac Craft Market vendors.

Tickets for the Film Festival are now available at the Cinematheque•Passion and online. The public can visit the festival's official website <https://www.icm.gov.mo/FCP/2025/cn/> for more information. ■

## 2025-2026 seasonal flu jabs free for all locals from today

**Tony Wong**

All local residents can get the government's 2025-2026 seasonal influenza jabs free of charge from today, after they have been available for high-risk individuals free of charge since late September.

The Health Bureau (SSM) announced details of the arrangements for local residents to get their free jabs in a statement on Thursday night.

According to the statement, high-risk individuals can get their free jabs without an appointment, while other local residents in general are required to make a booking.

The high-risk individuals covered by the free influenza jabs, according to the statement, comprise local residents in six special categories and all individuals, including non-local residents, in four special categories.

The high-risk local residents in the six categories comprise those aged between six months and under 18 years; those aged 50 or above; pregnant or lactating women; those suffering from chronic diseases or obese persons, i.e., those with

a body mass index (BMI) of 25 or above; those employed by the city's six gaming operators; and those in urgent need to travel outside Macau, the statement said.

The high-risk individuals, both local and non-local residents, in the four categories comprise students and teaching and other staff of creches, kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary education institutions; service users and staff of residential care homes; all healthcare workers; and other personnel deemed necessary by the Health Bureau to be vaccinated such as those working in public entities.

According to the statement, all high-risk individuals can get their walk-in free jabs at one of the city's public health centres or health stations, or the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre. High-risk individuals who are local residents can also choose to be vaccinated at the public Macao Union Hospital in Cotai, the private Kiang Wu Hospital, the University Hospital run by the private Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) in Taipa, or the clinic run by the

Macau Federation of Trade Unions (commonly known as Gung Luen in Cantonese) near Praça do Tap Siac.

Other local residents in general, according to the statement, can book their free jabs at one of the city's public health centres or health stations, Macao Union Hospital, Kiang Wu Hospital, MUST University Hospital, or the Gung Luen clinic near Praça do Tap Siac.

They can book their jabs through their Macao One Account, the bureau's influenza vaccination appointment website (<https://www.ssm.gov.mo/infrs>), telephone, or by visiting one of the above-mentioned healthcare facilities providing the free influenza jabs, the statement said.

Meanwhile, the statement also said that since the bureau commenced its 2025-2026 seasonal influenza vaccinations for high-risk individuals on September 30, 122,000 people had been inoculated by Wednesday last week, a 14 percent increase from the 107,000 people to receive their 2024-2025 seasonal influenza jabs during the same period of last year. ■

## Shoppers, merchants share views on MGP souvenir trade

**Ida Cheong**

The four-day 72nd Macau Grand Prix (MGP) ended yesterday, with shoppers saying they spent more on buying MGP souvenirs than last year but one merchant complaining about "quieter" sales than in 2024.

Jonas Ieong Chon Long, who came to watch the races for the second time because of his interest in racing and the opportunity to watch international drivers in action, noted that he purchased a model car and collectible trading cards of drivers this year, spending over 1,000 patacas, compared to the 200 patacas he spent on a model car last year. He noted that he spent more this year due to the greater variety of products available.

Lucio Marcelino Chiu, a souvenir buyer, said that that he was a first-time MGP spectator, adding that he decided to come because this year's competition featured F4 races, along with the participation of world champions, and experiencing racing cars speeding past him for the first time was both shocking and thrilling. Chiu said that he bought two model cars this year, spending around 4,000 patacas.

Wong Ngai Meng, Business Development and Marketing Officer of YOKOHAMA, told the *Post* that this year's sales situation

has been quieter compared to last year, with fewer shoppers. For instance, he said, foot traffic was low on Saturday between 2 p.m. and 3 p.m. Wong said that he thought the decline in buyers was influenced by various factors, including event arrangements and a decrease in consumers' purchasing power.

Wong noted that since the MGP organisers only confirmed the souvenir booth locations one week in advance, he suggested that arrangements should be finalised earlier next year, adding that he hoped to secure again a booth near the entrance or exit next year to attract more visitors.

Regarding the issue of speculative reselling of Cinnamoroll\* limited-edition products, Jun Cheung, who was in charge of the Tarmac Works' stall, said that they were unable stop the reselling, pointing out that his company has already implemented a system where order forms are distributed to customers in the queue, allowing them to select products in advance and expedite processing. ■

\*Cinnamoroll is an adorable white puppy character from the Japanese company Sanrio, best known for creating Hello Kitty. His key characteristics are his fluffy white appearance, long ears that allow him to fly, and a tail that curls like a cinnamon roll. — DeepSeek



Jonas Ieong Chon Long, a souvenir buyer, poses with yesterday's MGP souvenir purchase.



Lucio Marcelino Chiu, a MGP souvenir buyer, poses with one of the model cars yesterday.



Shoppers stand in front of a MGP souvenir stall outside the Macau Outer Harbour Ferry Terminal yesterday. — Photos: Ida Cheong

# 2025 MGP spectators up 15 pct from last year: govt

**Tony Wong**

Sports Bureau (ID) Acting President See Lei Si Leng said yesterday evening that this year's Macau Grand Prix (MGP) recorded 116,000 spectators, an increase of 15 percent from the 101,000 spectators recorded in last year's MGP.

Lei noted that the 116,000 spectators were the highest number of the four-day event, apart from the six-day, two-weekend-long 70<sup>th</sup> MGP in 2023, which attracted 145,000 spectators.

Lei briefed reporters yesterday evening about this year's MGP, which ended yesterday afternoon

with the FR race.

Lei, coordinator of the Macau Grand Prix Organising Committee (MGPOC), attributed the increase in the number of spectators to the good weather and the fact that the races this time were held smoothly.

According to MGPOC data, the 116,000 spectators recorded during this year's MGP comprised 15,000, 28,000, 35,000 and 38,000 on the first, second, third and last day.

According to previous official data, the 145,000 spectators recorded during 2023's MGP comprised 46,000 in the first week's two-day

period and 99,000 in the second week's four-day period at that time.

Based on this, the 116,000 spectators recorded during this year's four-day event represented an increase of 17 percent from the 99,000 spectators recorded in the second week's four-day period of 2023's MGP.

Lei also said that this year's MGP, as well as its related events earlier this month, coincided with some competitions of the ongoing Macau segment of the 15<sup>th</sup> National Games, thanks to which, she said, Macau "has been full of a joyful sports atmosphere". She described the overall results of this

year's MGP as "very good".

The 15<sup>th</sup> National Games' ongoing Macau segment, which started on November 6, is being held through Thursday this week.

Lei said that the Formula Regional (FR) race this year, the second time since its inception last year, achieved better results than last year, describing this year's FR races as "safe and splendid".

By default, the winners of the FR races are the winners of the MGP. Previously, the winners of the Formula 3 race were the winners of the MGP. ■



**Sports Bureau (ID) Acting President See Lei Si Leng speaks yesterday evening's wrap-up press briefing at the Macau Grand Prix media centre. – Photo: Tony Wong**

## Takaichi's 'survival-threatening situation' gambit thrusts Japan into perilous waters

TOKYO – A decade ago, the Japanese government of Shinzo Abe rammed through the deeply divisive security legislation permitting limited collective self-defense.

Such move was met with widespread public resistance and criticism for overriding the government's own 1972 constitutional interpretation, which had drawn a clear red line under Article 9 of the country's constitution: Japan could not, under its pacifist Constitution, engage in collective self-defense.

Now, Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, a self-claimed political heir of Abe, attempts to take this already-dangerous reinterpretation and wrench it into even riskier territory for Japan and the region.

During a recent parliamentary hearing, Takaichi cited the so-called "survival-threatening situation" – a trigger designed by the controversial 2015 law – and linked it to the Taiwan question, suggesting Tokyo might treat the Taiwan question as grounds for military involvement under the legislation.

This is not merely reckless rhetoric. It is profoundly destabilizing. By dragging the Taiwan question into Japan's already-contested security framework, Takaichi is deliberately blurring the boundary between defensive policy and outright militaristic adventurism.

It is a reckless gambit that ignores Japan's constitutional limits, disregards public sentiment, and gambles with the security of the entire region.

The logical contortions in Takaichi's remarks are staggering. A so-called "survival-threatening situation" refers to a clear danger situation in which an armed attack on a foreign country with which Japan has close relations threatens Japan's survival. China's Taiwan is plainly not "a country" with close ties to Japan, nor does any conceivable Taiwan contingency amount to a clear threat to the survival of the Japanese state or the basic rights of its citizens.

To shoehorn Taiwan into the category of a "survival-threatening situation" is a deliberate distortion and a calculated political provocation.

As the Chinese side has emphasized, Takaichi's erroneous remarks constituted a gross interference in China's internal affairs, seriously violating the one-China principle, the spirit of the four political documents between China and Japan, and the basic norms of international relations.

Takaichi's outburst also runs counter to the political commitments Japan has repeatedly made, igniting a storm of controversy within the country.

Some voiced concern that by hyping up the notion of "a Taiwan contingency," the prime minister is blatantly provoking China, a move that brings Japan no benefit but considerable strategic risks.

Others noted that even the United States, on which Japan relies heavily for security issues, has been cautious to avoid unnecessary provocations toward China, while Japan is taking up the role of dragging the United States into confrontation. Even certain conservative figures known for their hardline stance on China lament that Takaichi's remarks severely narrow Japan's future policy options.

Takaichi's gambit comes amid an ambitious overhaul of Japan's defense posture.

Just over a month into office, she has floated proposals for dramatic defense expansion, including a substantial military budget hike, full relaxation of arms-export controls, enhanced pre-emptive strike capabilities, and accelerated revision of security documents, with the most controversial being signs of a backtrack on Japan's long-standing "three non-nuclear principles."

Taken together, the moves indicate the government's intention to shift from postwar restraint toward a more assertive, militarized posture. If that is the case, Takaichi has, in effect, ripped away the last vestiges of the veil obscuring the real trajectory of Japan's post-2015 "collective self-defense" framework.

As China has repeatedly stated, any force that dares to obstruct China's reunification is doomed to fail. – Xinhua

## Wang keeps table tennis women's singles title at National Games in Macao

Wang Manyu of Heilongjiang successfully defended her women's singles title at the National Games, defeating Sun Yingsha of Hebei 4-2 in a thrilling final yesterday.

At Galaxy Arena in Cotai, world No. 1 Sun took the lead early, winning the first game 11-7. However, Wang bounced back with resilience, claiming three consecutive games 11-8, 12-10, and 11-4.

In the fifth game, Sun managed to fight off a late surge from Wang, securing a tense 16-14 victory. Despite Sun's strong performance in the sixth game, Wang made a stunning comeback, scoring eight consecutive points to clinch the final game 11-9 and secure the victory.

"We delivered an exciting match. Both of us made some mistakes and have room to learn. I focused on the process rather than the result itself. We inspired each other to reach new heights," 26-year-old Wang said after the final.

Sun, 25, said, "We've met in many tournaments this year, mostly in the finals. She is a respected player with determination and perseverance. We are in a healthy competition environment that pushes us to improve together."

Earlier this year, Sun had edged Wang 4-3 in the World Table Tennis Championships in Doha to retain her

women's singles title. However, Wang had the upper hand in October, defeating Sun 4-2 to claim the 2025 World Table Tennis China Smash women's singles crown.

In the women's singles bronze medal match earlier, Shandong's Chen Meng triumphed over Macao's Zhu Yuling with a scoreline of 11-9, 6-11, 13-11, 12-10, 11-7. (More on pages 14 & 16) – Xinhua, MPD



**Gold medalist Wang Manyu of Heilongjiang poses during the awarding ceremony for the table tennis women's singles at the 15<sup>th</sup> National Games in Macao last night. – Xinhua**

## Japanese PM's remarks on China signal dangerous militarism revival

**Commentary**

BEIJING – Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's extremely erroneous and hostile remarks on China have raised global alarm that she is leading Japan on a course to reviving its notorious militarist past.

Recently, Takaichi said that the Chinese mainland's "use of force on Taiwan" could constitute a "survival-threatening situation" for Japan, implying the possibility of Japan's armed intervention in the Taiwan Strait. So far, she has refused to retract her baneful remarks despite China's solemn representations and strong protests lodged through diplomatic means, as well as criticism from her predecessors and other key Japanese figures.

Takaichi's remarks remind people of Japan's past imperialist aggressions and expose the country's military ambitions. Over its history, Japan has launched aggression against many countries under the pretext of tackling so-called national survival crises, including its invasion of China from 1931 to 1945. Japanese wars of aggression have resulted in survival crises in multiple Asian countries and inflicted untold suffering on

people in the region and beyond.

Takaichi's fallacies regarding China are by no means an isolated incident but part of a broader agenda to accelerate renewed militarism. Behind these fallacies lie the paranoia and arrogance of Japanese right-wing forces seeking to break free from the country's peace constitution and pursue the status of a "military power."

In recent years, Japan has been drastically readjusting its security policy, increasing its defense spending, relaxing its restrictions on arms exports, seeking to develop offensive weapons, and going farther down the wrong path of military buildup.

Before taking office, Takaichi had repeatedly made anti-China statements, denied the Nanjing Massacre that Japanese troops had committed in China during their aggression, hyped up the "China threat" narrative, and made irresponsible remarks on the Taiwan question. She has made multiple visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, which is a spiritual tool and symbol of Japanese militarists responsible for the war of aggression, and honors 14 convicted Class-A war criminals with grave responsibilities for the

war crimes committed during that war of aggression.

This year marks the 80th anniversary of victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War. It is also the 80th anniversary of Taiwan's restoration to China. China has firm determination, national unity, and strong capacity to safeguard its national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Japanese authorities should truly repent the country's past militarist invasions, heed the lessons of history, and adhere to a path of peaceful development, instead of finding incendiary and deceptive excuses for its military buildup.

As ancient wisdom teaches, hubris precedes ruin. Takaichi's recent remarks and actions related to China's Taiwan have gravely impacted China-Japan relations. The Japanese prime minister would do well to withdraw her erroneous statements immediately, and to cease challenging China's red-line core interests and the post-WWII international order. Dangerous political gambles in pursuit of militarism will only cause significant harm to Japan itself. – Xinhua

## Philippine sect draws huge crowd to anti-corruption rally

MANILA – A powerful Philippine religious sect rallied in Manila yesterday calling for accountability over a spiralling flood control scandal involving officials and lawmakers, with police estimating a crowd in the hundreds of thousands.

Scores of construction firm owners, government officials and parliament members – including President Ferdinand Marcos’s congressman cousin – have been accused of pocketing funds for substandard or so-called ghost infrastructure projects.

Yesterday’s rally was called by the Iglesia ni Cristo (INC), a church which has historically been a powerful voting bloc with ties to the Duterte political dynasty.

Wearing T-shirts emblazoned with the slogan “Transparency for a Better Democracy”, INC members flocked to Manila’s Rizal Park to demand “truth and accountability”, said spokesman Edwil Zabala.

He told attendees that “we are not fighting the government. It is not our aim to bring down the government as an institution,” slamming what he said were attempts to portray the rally as an attempt to destabilise the administration.

Zabala cited the need to investigate “emerging evidence” in the multipronged probe.

Last week, a former congressman who fled the country after being



Members of religious group Iglesia ni Cristo attend an anti-corruption protest at a park in Manila yesterday. – AFP

implicated over millions of dollars in missing infrastructure funds, released a video claiming President Marcos himself was involved, something the administration has derided as “wild speculation”.

“What’s saddening about this is our leaders were involved... We want change,” said Rake Tribiana, 32, a real estate broker and INC member at the rally.

“We are here not only because our church calls for this. This is the call of most of the Filipino people.”

AFP could not independently confirm police crowd estimates of up to half a million people.

A concurrent rally led by supporters of the Duterte family and explicitly calling for Marcos’s resignation drew an estimated 2,000 people.

Rage over so-called ghost

infrastructure projects has been mounting in the Southeast Asian country since Marcos put them centre stage in a July state of the nation address that followed weeks of deadly flooding.

Yesterday’s protests come on the heels of two powerful typhoons that left more than 250 people dead, many due to flooding, and just days after Marcos promised arrests in the corruption case before Christmas.

INC, which claims about three million members, helped Marcos and running mate Sara Duterte win the 2022 elections. In 2016, they endorsed Rodrigo Duterte ahead of his win.

In January this year, INC held a huge rally in Manila opposing the mooted impeachment of Vice President Duterte, who has had a spectacular falling out with one-time ally Marcos since their election victory. – AFP

## Philippines, S Korea seal seasonal workers pact

MANILA – The Philippines and South Korea strengthened their partnership through a new joint memorandum for the implementation of South Korea’s seasonal workers program, the Philippine Department of Agriculture (DA) said yesterday.

“The agreement sets a whole-of-government framework that unites national and local efforts in deploying Filipino seasonal workers to South Korea,” the DA said in a press release.

“It guarantees fair labor practices, legal protection, and proper welfare,

while promoting ethical recruitment and agricultural cooperation between both countries,” the DA said.

Under the deal, the DA said it will roll out agricultural training, livelihood programs, and reintegration support for returning workers. – Xinhua

## Woman seriously injured in knife attack in central Tokyo

TOKYO – A woman in her 40s was stabbed by a man in central Tokyo’s busy Akasaka district yesterday and sustained serious injuries, local media reported.

At around 10:25 a.m. local time, police received an emergency call saying that a woman was bleeding after having been stabbed by a man wearing

black headwear on the basement floor of a building in Akasaka, Kyodo News reported, citing police sources.

The woman sustained serious injuries to her abdomen and hand but was conscious when taken to a hospital, the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department said, adding that the suspected attacker fled the scene

with a knife-like weapon.

The victim, thought to be a singer, was believed to have been attacked while she was waiting alone outside a live music club where she was scheduled to perform, the report said.

The police said they were searching for the suspect, adding that the woman did not know him. – Xinhua

## Death toll from Indonesia landslide rises to 11

JAKARTA – A landslide on Indonesia’s Java island has killed at least 11 people, an official said Saturday, updating a previous tally as rescuers scrambled to find 12 others who are still missing.

The landslide, caused by heavy rainfall, hit three villages in Central Java province on Thursday, burying some houses and damaging others.

“As of Saturday afternoon, the number of victims who were found dead is 11, while 12 more are still being searched for,” local search and rescue chief Muhammad Abdullah told AFP.

More than 700 personnel from the search and rescue office, military

and police as well as volunteers were involved in the operation, he said.

A spokesman for the national disaster agency had previously reported that two bodies were found on Thursday. Another was recovered on Friday and eight more on Saturday, according to Abdullah.

The government has deployed excavators and tracking dogs to assist the search, he added.

The national weather service had warned earlier this week of extreme conditions that could cause hydrometeorological disasters, with heavy rainfall expected across several regions on Indonesia in the coming weeks.

According to the Britannica website, hydrometeorology is a branch of meteorology that deals with problems involving the hydrologic cycle, the water budget, and the rainfall statistics of storms.

The annual monsoon season, typically between November and April, often brings landslides, flash floods and water-borne diseases.

Climate change has impacted storm patterns, including the duration and intensity of the season, resulting in heavier rainfall, flash flooding and stronger wind gusts.

Earlier in November, flash floods and landslides in a remote area of Papua killed at least 15 people. – AFP

## Men moving 81 macaques, meth arrested in Thailand

BANGKOK – Thai rangers have arrested two men suspected of being part of an international wildlife smuggling network, the military said Saturday after they were intercepted in a car carrying 81 macaques near the Cambodian border.

Thailand is a major transit hub for wildlife smugglers, who often sell highly-prized endangered creatures on the lucrative black market in China, Taiwan and Southeast Asia.

A patrol stopped the vehicle on Friday afternoon in Aranyaprathet district of Sa Kaeo province, where troops found the monkeys stuffed into a blue net bag.

“At 3:20 p.m., authorities arrested the two suspects and inspected their vehicle,” the 12<sup>th</sup> Ranger Forces Regiment, which is responsible for the area, said in a statement on Facebook.

The soldiers also seized methamphetamine pills and crystal meth, though no quantities were specified.

During questioning, the men admitted they were involved in a cross-border trafficking ring moving macaques from Thailand into Cambodia, the military said in a Facebook post.

Troops were working with police to pursue charges under wildlife-protection and narcotics laws.

Last year Thailand sent almost 1,000 highly endangered lemurs and tortoises back to their home in Madagascar, after both countries’ biggest operation against wildlife trafficking.

In May, Thai police arrested a man suspected of smuggling two baby orangutans into the kingdom.

– AFP



This handout photo taken by the 12<sup>th</sup> Ranger Forces Regiment of the Royal Thai Army on Friday and released on Saturday shows seized macaque monkeys in blue mesh bags after being rescued from a wildlife smuggling operation in Aranyaprathet district in Sa Kaeo province near the Thailand-Cambodia border. – AFP

## Japan PM’s attempts to alter non-nuclear principles to draw backlash: media

TOKYO – Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi was considering reviewing the country’s long-standing Three Non-Nuclear Principles, which is certain to draw backlash, according to Kyodo News.

In updating Japan’s National Security Strategy and two related documents, last revised in 2022, Takaichi was considering revising the third principle, which prohibits nuclear weapons from entering Japan’s territory, Kyodo News reported, citing government sources.

If the principle is changed, it will represent a significant shift in the country’s security policy and is certain to draw domestic and international backlash, the report said.

The Three Non-Nuclear Principles, not possessing, not producing and not allowing introduction of nuclear weapons into Japanese territory, were first declared in the Diet, Japan’s parliament, by then Japanese Prime Minister Eisaku Sato in 1967 and viewed as a national credo.

The national security strategy, one of the three documents approved by the Cabinet in 2022, states, “The basic policy of adhering to the Three

Non-Nuclear Principles will remain unchanged in the future.”

While Takaichi has no intention of revising Japan’s stance on not possessing or producing nuclear weapons, she believes that not permitting the introduction of nuclear arms could hinder port calls by US nuclear-armed vessels, therefore weakening US nuclear deterrence, the report said.

During a recent Lower House Budget Committee hearing, Takaichi avoided stating whether her defense and security policies would adhere to the Three Non-Nuclear Principles that Japanese administrations have followed for decades.

An editorial published in the Japanese newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* pointed out that as a country that suffered atomic bombings, Japan has positioned the Three Non-Nuclear Principles as a national policy, which has long received widespread support from the Japanese people.

Takaichi should understand that the policy of adhering to the Three Non-Nuclear Principles cannot be rashly changed by hasty judgment of the prime minister, the editorial said. – Xinhua

# India and Pakistan blind women show spirit of cricket with handshakes

**Amal Jayasinghe**

KATUNAYAKE – Blind women from India and Pakistan brushed aside political tensions yesterday, shaking hands in neutral Sri Lanka at a cricket tournament for the visually impaired.

At what organisers describe as the world's first blind women's T20 tournament, players from the two South Asian neighbours showed they had sporting vision even if they lacked sight – unlike their regular national teams.

Tensions off and on the field have been high since a deadly military clash between the nuclear-armed neighbours in May.

India's men refused to shake hands with their Pakistani opponents at the Asia Cup in September, since when neither side has shown signs of making up.

That animosity spread to the women's sides who declined any greeting at the recent T20 World Cup and also to yesterday's men's Rising Stars Asia Cup tie in Doha.

India's blind players were expected to mirror the conduct of

their sighted teams when there was no handshake after the toss, but at the end of the match both sides warmly greeted each other.

The two sides, who travelled to the venue together in the same bus, not only shook hands but also exchanged generous compliments.

India won by eight wickets in just 10.2 overs after Pakistan were restricted to 135 for eight in their 20 overs at the Free Trade Zone grounds in Katunayake, 30 kilometres north of Colombo.

Pakistan skipper Nimra Rafique congratulated India on their comprehensive victory, while her Indian counterpart T. C. Deepika said Pakistan had played well.

The teams applauded one another loudly but neither set of players was permitted to talk to the press.

## 'Biggest opportunity'

There were hardly any spectators but the match was shown live on Sri Lanka's national television, Rupavahini. Blind Sri Lankan officials hosting the tournament



Pakistan's captain Nimra Rafique (third right) shakes hands with India's players at the end of the Women's Blind Twenty20 World Cup 2025 match between India and Pakistan at the BOI Cricket Stadium in Katunayake, Sri Lanka yesterday. – AFP

"watched" the match on YouTube by listening to the commentary.

Indian team manager Shika Shetty told AFP before the match that the tournament was opening up opportunities for more women.

"This is the first-ever World Cup for blind women... I think this is one

of the biggest opportunities for our entire visually impaired girls," said Shetty, who is not blind.

"Maybe many girls with disabilities will come out from their villages. Maybe they will come for studies, maybe they will come for the sport. So, it is helpful for other girls too."

Blind cricket relies on a sharp ear, as players must detect a white plastic ball – the size of a tennis ball – filled with ball bearings that rattle as it moves.

Pakistan coach Tahir Mehmood Butt, also speaking before the game, said the launch of women's blind cricket had created new opportunities for young players in Pakistan.

"For the totally blind, if they have good hearing, they can become good cricketers," Tahir told AFP.

Each team must field at least four completely blind players, three who can see up to two metres, and four partially sighted players able to see up to about six metres.

Totally blind batters may have a partially sighted runner. Bowling is underarm, unlike in the traditional game.

Four other nations – Australia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the US – are competing in the tournament which began in India and moved to Sri Lanka for the final stages. The final is scheduled for next Sunday in Colombo. – AFP

## Man dies of H5N1 bird flu in Cambodia

PHNOM PENH – A 22-year-old Cambodian man had died of H5N1 human avian influenza, said a Ministry of Health's statement released yesterday.

"A laboratory result from the National Institute of Public Health showed on November 15, 2025 that the man was positive for H5N1 virus," the statement said.

The ill-fated man lived in Kien Khleang village of Chroy Changvar district in the capital Phnom Penh.

Health authorities are looking into the source of the infection and are examining any suspected cases or people who have been in contact with the victim in order to prevent an outbreak in the community, the statement said.

Tamiflu (oseltamivir), an

antiviral drug to prevent the bird flu from spreading, was also distributed to people who had direct contact with the victim, it added.

H5N1 influenza is a flu that normally spreads between sick poultry, but it can sometimes spread from poultry to humans, and its symptoms include fever, cough, runny nose, and severe respiratory illness.

The Ministry of Health called on people to be extra vigilant and not to eat ill or dead poultry, saying that bird flu still poses a threat to people's health.

So far this year, the Southeast Asian country recorded a total of 17 human cases of H5N1 bird flu, with six deaths, according to the Ministry of Health. – Xinhua

## India says accomplice of Delhi car blast 'suicide bomber' arrested

NEW DELHI – Indian authorities said yesterday that a deadly car blast in New Delhi earlier this week was an attack carried out by a "suicide bomber", announcing the arrest of an accomplice.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA), the country's counter-terrorism law enforcement body, said the alleged attacker and the second suspect were both from Indian-administered Kashmir, where police have carried out sweeping raids in recent days.

Announcing "a breakthrough" in the investigation, the NIA said in a statement it had arrested Amir Rashid Ali, "in whose name the car involved in the attack was registered".

He had "conspired with the alleged suicide bomber, Umar Un Nabi, to unleash the terror attack", it added, without specifying any possible motive.

Nabi, a resident of Kashmir, was an assistant professor in general medicine at a university in the northern state of Haryana, according to the counter-terrorism agency, which said it had seized a vehicle belonging to him.

Ali had come to Delhi to "facilitate the purchase of the car which was eventually used as a vehicle-borne Improvised Explosive Device (IED) to trigger the blast", the NIA said.

The explosion last Monday took place near a busy metro station close to the landmark Red Fort in the capital's Old Delhi quarter, where the prime minister delivers the annual Independence Day address.

A hospital official has said the blast killed 12 people. It was unclear whether the toll included Nabi.

The NIA's statement said the attack "claimed 10 innocent lives and left 32 others injured".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has called the attack a "conspiracy", and his government vowed to bring the "perpetrators, their collaborators and their sponsors" to justice.

It was the most significant security incident since April 22, when 26 mainly Hindu civilians were killed at the tourist site of Pahalgam in Indian-administered Kashmir, triggering clashes with Pakistan.

Kashmir has been divided

between India and Pakistan since their independence from British rule in 1947, and both claim the Himalayan territory in full. Tensions remain high between New Delhi and Islamabad.

On Friday, nine people were killed when confiscated explosives blew up at a police station in Indian-administered Kashmir, in what authorities said was an accident.

Local media reported that a militant organisation had claimed responsibility for it, which police dismissed.

The explosives had been recovered from Haryana state just before the powerful car blast in Delhi, according to the police.

Indian media have widely connected the Delhi blast with a string of arrests just hours prior.

Police said those arrested were linked with Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), a Pakistan-based and Al-Qaeda-linked group, as well as a Kashmiri offshoot linked to it.

The group that claimed the police station blast is considered close to JeM. – AFP



Activists hold placards and candles during a protest in Ahmedabad, India on Saturday, after India's Supreme Court ordered the removal of stray dogs from public places. – AFP

## 9 injured after car crashes through fence during race north of Sydney

SYDNEY – Nine people have been hospitalized after they were injured when a vehicle crashed through a fence during a race event north of Sydney on Saturday night.

Police in the state of New South Wales (NSW) said in a statement that the vehicle was competing in a race when it crashed through a fence and hit a grandstand in the small town of Walcha, 320 km north of

Sydney, at around 6:15 p.m. [local time] on Saturday.

Spectators rendered assistance until ambulance paramedics arrived and transported seven men and two women, all aged between 20 and 75, to a nearby hospital.

Of those nine people, a 54-year-old man was critically injured and three others were seriously injured and were transferred to major

hospitals overnight.

NSW Police said that officers attending the scene were told that the 27-year-old male driver of the vehicle was involved in an on-track collision immediately before crashing through the fence.

Specialist officers from the crash investigation unit were deployed to Walcha to examine the scene.

– Xinhua

# UN peacekeepers say Israeli forces fired on them in southern Lebanon



This photo taken yesterday from Israel shows the border separating northern Israel from southern Lebanon, with the Lebanese village Ain Ebel visible in the background. Israel has recently intensified its strikes on Lebanon, accusing the Iran-backed Hezbollah group of rearming, nearly a year into a ceasefire that brought an end to their most recent war.

— AFP

BEIRUT, Lebanon —The UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon said Israeli soldiers shot at its troops yesterday in the south of the country, while Israel's military said it mistook blue helmets for "suspects" and fired warning shots.

The Israeli military blamed "poor weather conditions" and said it had not deliberately targeted UN troops.

Earlier yesterday, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) said in a statement that Israeli forces "fired on UNIFIL peacekeepers from a Merkava tank from near a position Israel has established in Lebanese territory," adding that heavy machine gun rounds hit about five metres from their personnel.

The force said the peacekeepers were able to "leave safely 30 minutes later" after the tank withdrew inside the Israeli position.

In a statement, the Israeli military said "two suspects were identified" in the El Hamames area of southern Lebanon.

"The troops subsequently fired warning shots, and the suspects distanced themselves. No injuries were reported," it said.

"After a review, it was determined that the suspects were UN soldiers who were conducting a patrol in the area and were classified as suspects due to poor weather conditions.

"No deliberate fire was directed toward UNIFIL soldiers."

UNIFIL has been working with the Lebanese army to consolidate a truce between Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah reached last November.

It said the incident "represents a serious violation of UN Security Council resolution 1701", which ended a 2006 conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, and also formed the basis of last November's truce.

That ceasefire sought to end more than a year of hostilities between the parties, which broke out after the start of the Gaza war.

Under the deal, Israel was to withdraw its forces from south

Lebanon, but it has kept them at five areas it deems strategic.

It has also carried out regular strikes on targets in Lebanon, arguing it is hitting Hezbollah sites and operatives.

The Israeli military said the incident was under examination and was being handled through official military liaison channels.

Yesterday's incident was not the first in which UNIFIL accused Israel of endangering its troops.

"Yet again, we call on the IDF to cease any aggressive behaviour and attacks on or near peacekeepers," the force said.

Lebanon's army, meanwhile, accused Israel of "violating Lebanese sovereignty, causing instability and obstructing the full deployment of the army in the south".

The army is meant to deploy to the area alongside UNIFIL as part of the ceasefire agreement.

It said it was "working, in coordination with friendly countries, to put an end to the continuous violations". — AFP

## Israel says Gazans who landed in S Africa unexpectedly had third-country approval

JERUSALEM—Israeli authorities said on Saturday that 153 Palestinians who turned up unexpectedly in South Africa, triggering questions from its president, had received entry approval from an unnamed third country.

Shimi Zuretz, a spokesman for COGAT, the Israeli body that runs civil affairs in the Palestinian territories, told AFP they had only been allowed to leave Gaza "after COGAT received approval from a third country to receive them".

He did not name the country.

After landing in Johannesburg on Thursday, the Gazans were kept aboard their plane for 12 hours because they did not have departure stamps from Israel in their passports, South African border police said.

The home affairs ministry finally allowed the passengers to disembark when an NGO said it would provide them with accommodation.

The NGO, Gift of the Givers, told South African media it did not know who had chartered the flight or a previous one that brought 176 Gazans on October 28.

An Israeli official who did not wish to be identified told AFP that the organisation which coordinated the transfer had submitted third-country visas to COGAT for all the evacuated residents.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa told journalists on Friday that it seemed "like they were being flushed out".

"These are people from Gaza who somehow mysteriously were put on a plane that passed by Nairobi and came here," he said.

South Africa's home affairs ministry said 130 of the group entered the country, while the remaining 23 took onward flights to other destinations.

Zuretz said COGAT facilitates the departure of Gaza residents through Israel to receiving countries, for patients requiring medical treatment, dual citizens and their family members, "or those possessing visas to third countries".

Israel "bases its decisions solely on requests received from foreign countries", he added, saying the departure of more than 40,000 Gaza residents had been facilitated since the October 7, 2023 attack on Israel, which sparked the retaliatory war in the Gaza Strip.

South Africa, which hosts the largest Jewish community in sub-Saharan Africa, has largely been supportive of the Palestinian cause.

The government filed a case against Israel with the International Court of Justice in 2023, accusing it of genocide in Gaza. — AFP

## Pétain tribute comments raise 'revisionist' storm in France

Jean-Christophe Verhaegen

VERDUN, France — A senior French official said on Saturday legal action would be taken over comments made praising Philippe Pétain, France's wartime head of state convicted of treason after World War II.

The row is the latest controversy over the legacy of Pétain, a World War I hero disgraced for his collaboration with the Nazis.

Xavier Delarue, the government prefect of Meuse department in eastern France, said he would take action over remarks made following a Mass for Pétain organised by an association dedicated to restoring his reputation.

Interior Minister Laurent Nunez and a leading Jewish community group also condemned the comments.

The Association to Defend the Memory of Marshal Pétain (ADMP) organised a Mass Saturday at Saint-Jean-Baptiste church in Verdun, where Pétain won a famous WWI battle in 1916.

Around 20 association members attended. Outside about 100 people, watched by police, gathered to protest the ceremony.

After the Mass ADMP president Jacques Boncompain told journalists that Pétain had been "the first resistant of France".

Boncompain also said Pétain's post-war conviction for treason by a High Court of Justice had not been fair.

Protestors booed one member of the pro-Pétain group as he sang a song in praise of Pétain "Marshal, Here We Are".

The prefect, announcing the legal action, said the comments had been "clearly revisionist".

### 'Deeply hurt'

Nunez, in a post on X, said: "The remarks made today on the sidelines of Mass in 'tribute'

to Philippe Pétain in Verdun go against our collective memory."

The minister condemned any attempt to rehabilitate someone linked to WWII collaboration and oppression.

Yonathan Arfi, president of CRIF, which represents Jewish institutions in France, called the tribute an insult to the memory of 76,000 Jews deported during Pétain's time in power.

"Celebrating a Mass for Pétain is to glorify collaboration and rehabilitate a traitor to the nation," he added.

Revisionism, under French criminal law, is the act of negating or minimising crimes such as genocide, war crimes or crimes against humanity.

Anyone convicted faces up to a year in jail and a fine of up to 45,000 euros (US\$52,000).

The Pétain tribute came soon after France's Armistice Day on November 11, the day WWI ended, when the nation remembers those who fought and died in the conflict.

Verdun's mayor, Samuel Hazard, had tried to ban the pro-Pétain ceremony, but was overruled by a court on Friday.

"I'm deeply hurt, because I think of all the victims of Nazi barbarism and... Marshal Pétain's ideology," he said after Saturday's ceremony.

Pétain's admirers stress the role he played in World War I. He is widely seen as the architect of France's victory over German forces at Verdun, the longest battle of the war.

But he only avoided execution, after being convicted and sentenced to death at the end of WWII for leading France's collaborationist Vichy government, because of his advanced age.

Pétain died in 1951, six years into his life sentence in exile on the Atlantic island of Yeu.

— AFP



President of the ADMP (Association to Defend the Memory of Marshal Pétain) Jacques Boncompain holds a book about Pétain he wrote after a protest in front of the Saint-Jean-Baptiste church which held a Mass "in homage to Marshal Pétain and his soldiers" organised by the association in Verdun, northeastern France, on Friday.

— AFP

## UK govt defends refugee shakeup

Peter Hutchison

LONDON – Britain's interior minister yesterday defended plans to drastically reduce protections for refugees and end automatic benefits for asylum seekers, insisting that irregular migration was "tearing our country apart".

The measures, modelled on Denmark's strict asylum system, aim to stop thousands of migrants from arriving in England from northern France on small boats – crossings that are fuelling support for the anti-immigrant Reform UK party.

But the proposals were criticised as "harsh and unnecessary" by the Refugee Council charity and are likely to be opposed by left-wing lawmakers within Prime Minister Keir Starmer's embattled Labour government.

"I really reject this idea that dealing with this problem is somehow engaging in far-right talking points," Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood told BBC television.

"This is a moral mission for me, because I can see illegal migration is tearing our country apart, it is dividing communities."

Presently, those given refugee status have it for five years, after which they can apply for indefinite leave to remain and eventually citizenship.

But Mahmood's interior ministry, formally known as the Home Office, said it would cut the length of refugee status to 30 months.

That protection will be "regularly reviewed" and refugees will be forced to return to their home countries once they are deemed safe, it added.

The ministry also said that it intended to make those refugees who were granted asylum wait 20 years before applying to be allowed to live in the UK long-term, up from the current five years.

It also announced that it would create "new safe and legal routes for genuine refugees" through "capped work and study routes".

Asylum claims in Britain are at a record high, with some 111,000 applications made in the year to June 2025, according to official figures.

The Home Office called the new proposals, which Mahmood will lay out in parliament today, the "largest overhaul of asylum policy in modern times".

It said the reforms would make it less attractive for irregular migrants to

come to Britain, and make it easier to remove those already in the country.

### Benefits crackdown

A statutory legal duty to provide support to asylum seekers, introduced in a 2005 law, would also be revoked, the Home Office said.

That means housing and weekly financial allowances would no longer be guaranteed for asylum seekers.

It would be "discretionary", meaning the government could deny assistance to any asylum seeker who could work or support themselves but did not, or those who committed crimes.

Starmer, elected in July 2024, is under pressure to stop migrants crossing the Channel in small boats from France, something that also troubled his Conservative predecessors.

More than 39,000 people, many fleeing conflict, have arrived this year following such dangerous journeys – more than for the whole of 2024 but lower than the record set in 2022.

Reform, led by Nigel Farage, has led Labour by double-digit margins in opinion polls for most of this year.

Enver Solomon, chief executive of the Refugee Council, urged the government to rethink its plans, saying they "will not deter" the crossings.

"They should ensure that refugees who work hard and contribute to Britain can build secure, settled lives and give back to their communities," he said.

Labour is taking inspiration from Denmark's coalition government – led by the centre-left Social Democrats – which has implemented some of the strictest migration policies in Europe.

Senior British officials recently visited the Scandinavian country, where successful asylum claims are at a 40-year-low.

Refugees in Denmark are entitled to a one-year renewable residency permit, and are encouraged to return home as soon as authorities deem there is no longer a need for a safe haven.

Family reunions are also subject to strict requirements, including a minimum age for both parents, language tests and guarantees of funds.

Labour's more left-wing lawmakers will probably oppose the plans, fearing that the party is losing voters to progressive alternatives such as the Greens. – AFP

## Pope urges leaders not to leave poor behind

VATICAN CITY – Pope Leo XIV decried poverty yesterday, urging world leaders and Catholics to reach out to marginalised people, as the Church celebrated a "Jubilee of the Poor".

The US pope has made social justice a key theme of his papacy, now in its sixth month since being made head of the world's Catholics in May following the death of Pope Francis.

The Church, Leo said during a Mass at St Peter's Basilica, is "still wounded by old and new forms of poverty", but "hopes to be 'mother of the poor, a place of welcome and justice'".

Yesterday marked a special Jubilee of the Poor, one of many such celebrations during the holy year, which has drawn pilgrims from around the world. It fell on the World Day of the Poor, an annual observance begun by Francis in 2017.

Following Mass, Pope Leo ate lunch inside the Vatican's vast Paul VI Hall with a group of over 1,300 homeless and disadvantaged people, disabled people and refugees, blessing the meal of lasagne and cutlets as other community events to help the poor took place around Rome.



Pope Leo XIV attends a lunch organised on the World Day of the Poor at the Paul VI audience hall at the Vatican yesterday. – AFP

"I urge Heads of State and the leaders of nations to listen to the cry of the poorest," said Leo during his address inside St Peter's.

"There can be no peace without justice, and the poor remind us of this in many ways, through migration as well as through their cries, which are often stifled by the myth of well-being and progress that does not take everyone into account, and indeed forgets many individuals, leaving them to their fate," he said.

Beyond poverty itself, he cited "many moral and spiritual situations of poverty", resulting in loneliness.

He urged believers to "be attentive to others... reaching out to the marginalised and becoming witnesses of God's tenderness."

Following his Angelus prayer to the crowds in St Peter's Square, the pope denounced persecution and attacks against Christians around the world, including Bangladesh, Nigeria, Mozambique and Sudan, and cited fresh violence in the ongoing conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

"I accompany the families in prayer in Kivu, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where in recent days there has been a massacre of civilians, at least 20 victims of a terrorist attack," he added.

On Saturday, officials in the region told AFP that an attack by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) had left at least 18 people dead.

The group, founded by former Ugandan rebels who pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (IS) jihadist group in 2019, attacked a village around 300 kilometres north of Goma overnight on Friday into Saturday. – AFP

## 'Vulgar images' at Tehran design show spark controversy

TEHRAN – Tehran University cut short yesterday its participation in events marking the city's design week after videos of unveiled women attending a show spread online and sparked controversy.

Events under the umbrella of Tehran Design Week will continue into today at other venues, but the university said it was closing its premises to ensure public safety after "a massive influx of visitors".

The programme, which began on Tuesday, has already proved a success, with designers, brands and artists holding public events showcasing trends in 60 venues around the Iranian capital.

But one event at the university,

in which avant garde designs were celebrated with a show that included electronic music and colourful projections attracted unwelcome attention.

After videos of the event went viral online, the local news agency Fars reported that "a piece of music with political connotations" was audible behind "vulgar" images of unveiled women.

The university did not comment on this allegation, but cancelled the remaining events it was due to host in the final days of design week.

Under the rules imposed after the Islamic Revolution of 1979, all women in Iran are required to cover their hair with a veil in public and wear

modest and loose-fitting clothing.

But in major cities, particularly Tehran, many women now openly go out without a veil or wear jeans or even tight or revealing outfits that would have been unimaginable in Iran just a few months ago.

This trend seems to have accelerated since the end of the 12-day war in June against Israel.

The head of the judiciary in Iran, Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei, has ordered a crackdown on these violations, local media reported on Friday.

In recent months, authorities have closed several cafés and restaurants for failing to enforce the mandatory veil or for serving alcohol, which is prohibited in Iran. – AFP

## Thousands demand justice over deadly North Macedonia nightclub fire

SKOPJE, North Macedonia – Thousands of people joined a rally in the North Macedonia capital on Saturday to support the families of 63 people killed in a deadly nightclub fire this year.

The demonstrators, who marched to country's parliament, were led by relatives of the dead who carried a huge banner with pictures of the victims saying "63 shadows will be following you".

Demonstrators chanted "justice for Kocani". Other banners said "the system kills" and "how many children should be lost for you to wake up".

A fire at a hip-hop concert in the eastern town of Kocani on

March 16 triggered a stampede in an overcrowded club that left dozens dead and injured nearly 200 – most aged between 16 and 26.

Relatives of the victims staged their 30<sup>th</sup> "Angels' March" demanding justice. This demonstration was moved to Skopje where more people joined. A trial over the inferno is due to start on Wednesday in the capital.

"The investigation that was conducted was incomplete, with many open questions. We, the families, were left with the suspicion that the truth has been hidden," said Natalija Gjorgjeska, wife of one of the singers who died in the inferno.

Gjorgjeska said the families

demand that lawmakers set up a special inquiry committee into the disaster.

Fireworks used in the performance set off the blaze. But prosecutors said safety regulations had been flouted in the nightclub.

Among 34 persons and 3 companies charged in the looming case is a government minister, two former ministers, the club's owner, building inspectors and three former mayors of Kocani.

They are charged with "provoking serious acts against public safety".

In a separate anti-corruption and organised crime probe, dozens of police officers and officials have also been linked to the blaze. – AFP



A protester holds a banner reading "School bullying kills" during a march to denounce violence against children and teenagers, called by 77 organisations in the run-up to International Children's Rights Day, which is marked annually on November 20, in Paris on Saturday. – AFP

# Protest march in Belém marks first big UN climate protest in years

**Facundo Fernández Barrio and Issam Ahmed**

BELEM, Brazil – Tens of thousands of people thronged the streets of the Amazonian city hosting COP30 talks on Saturday, dancing to thumping speakers in the first large-scale protest at a UN climate summit in years.

As the first week of climate negotiations limped to a close with nations deadlocked, indigenous people and activists sang, chanted and rolled a giant beach ball of Earth through Bélem under a searing sun.

Others held a mock funeral procession for fossil fuels, dressed in black and pretending to be grieving widows as they carried three coffins marked with the words “coal,” “oil” and “gas.”

“We are here to try to apply pressure so that countries fulfill their promises and we don’t accept a regression,” Txai Surui, a prominent 28-year-old indigenous leader, told AFP.

It was the first major protest outside the annual climate talks since COP26 four years ago in Glasgow, as the last three gatherings were held in locations with little tolerance for demonstrations – Egypt, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Azerbaijan.

Called the “Great People’s March” by organisers, the Belém rally came at the halfway point of difficult negotiations and followed two

indigenous-led protests that disrupted proceedings earlier last week.

## Forest ‘massacre’

“Today we are witnessing a massacre as our forest is being destroyed,” Benedito Huni Kuin, a 50-year-old member of the Huni Kuin indigenous group from western Brazil, told AFP.

“We want to make our voices heard from the Amazon and demand results,” he said. “We need more indigenous representatives at COP to defend our rights.”

Tyrone Scott, a 34-year-old Briton from the anti-poverty group War on Want, said it was an “indigenous-led, movement-led, people-powered march.”

“It’s just really exciting and a little bit of a nice antidote to the staleness and sterileness of the inside of the COP,” Scott told AFP.

Their demands include “reparations” for damage caused by corporations and governments, especially to marginalized communities.

A giant Palestinian flag and “free Palestine” banners appeared throughout the crowds.

One protester on stilts dressed as a greedy Uncle Sam denouncing “imperialism,” while other artwork took aim at Donald Trump, the US president who denigrates climate science and champions fossil fuels.



Activists hold a huge banner reading “Our future is not for sale” during the “Great People’s March” on the sidelines of the COP30 UN Climate Change Conference in Belém, Pará State, northern Brazil, on Saturday.

– AFP

“Here we are talking about agroecology, feminism, we are talking about how trade unions are defending the life and better employment,” 33-year-old Giovanni Del Prete told AFP.

“These are the politics that we must move forward to defeat the climate crisis.”

After a 4.5-kilometre march through the city, the demonstration stopped a few blocks from the COP30 venue, where authorities deployed soldiers to protect the site.

Ultimately, the crowd – which organisers put at 50,000 – dispersed peacefully.

On Tuesday, indigenous

protesters forced their way into the Parque da Cidade (“City Park”), the COP30 compound built on the site of a former airport – clashing with security personnel, some of whom sustained minor injuries.

Then on Friday, dozens of indigenous protesters blocked the entrance for roughly two hours to spotlight their struggles in the Amazon, prompting high-level interventions to defuse the situation.

## High stakes

Inside the venue, COP30 president André Corrêa do Lago conceded the first exhaustive week

of negotiations had failed to make a breakthrough and urged diplomats not to run down the clock with time-wasting manoeuvres.

“The stakes are too high for us to allow procedural tactics or stalled discussions to stand in the way of progress,” he said.

He promised to publish a “note” to summarise the positions of parties – a to-do list of sorts for government ministers taking over the negotiations today.

Countries locked horns over trade measures and weak climate targets, while a showdown looms over demands that rich nations triple the finance they provide poorer states to adapt to a warming world.

Countries including Denmark, the UK and Kenya are also rallying support behind Brazil’s proposal to agree a “roadmap” for advancing the phaseout of fossil fuels.

“We’re very much up for supporting them on that roadmap... We would love to see an outcome on that,” said UK climate minister Katie White, adding such a proposal would need the support of “the vast majority of countries”.

Such efforts are fiercely opposed by Saudi Arabia, among other oil-producing nations, and some parties told AFP they strongly doubted the proposal would be approved by consensus at COP30.

– AFP

# Clashes erupt in Mexico City anti-crime protests, injuring 120

MEXICO CITY – More than 100 people were injured and 20 arrested during a massive protest on Saturday in Mexico City against the president’s handling of violent crime, local government officials said.

Thousands marched on the capital’s historic main public square, the Zócalo, in a demonstration fuelled by young Mexicans with ties to a global wave of Generation Z protests as well as supporters of the domestic “Sombrero Movement,” which emerged after the recent assassination of a mayor known for his fight against organised crime.

Participants of all ages took part in the rally in front of the National Palace, where President Claudia Sheinbaum lives and works.

Several protesters, some wearing balaclavas, toppled the metal barriers protecting the palace and threw paving stones at riot police, who responded with tear gas, according to AFP journalists.

“For many hours, this mobilisation proceeded and developed peacefully, until a group of hooded individuals began to commit acts of violence,” Pablo Vázquez, Mexico City’s security chief, told reporters.

Twenty protestors and 100 police were injured, with 40 officers hospitalised for cuts and bruises, he added.

Police arrested 20 people for theft and assault, Vázquez said, and had also launched an investigation into the assault of a journalist from La Jornada newspaper, which alleged police officers were behind the incident.

## Inspired by murdered mayor

Sheinbaum, in power since October 2024, maintained approval ratings above 70 percent in her first year in office but faced growing criticism of her security policies in the wake of several high-profile murders.

“This is one of the most corrupt

governments we’ve ever had,” said Valentina Ramírez, a student interviewed by AFP. “It’s a corrupt narco-government that wants to defend the corrupt and the cartels instead of the people.”

On Saturday, several protesters wore sombreros similar to the style of hat made famous by Carlos Manzo, a mayor in western Michoacan state who was assassinated on November 1. He had been known for his crusade against drug-trafficking gangs in his hometown Uruapan.

The assassinated mayor’s widow, however, distanced her husband’s movement from the demonstration on Saturday.

Bernardo Bravo, a leader of lime producers in the same region, had also been shot dead in late October.

Earlier this week, Sheinbaum questioned the motivations for the demonstration and said at her regular morning news conference that the protest was “inorganic” and “paid for.”

“It is a movement promoted from abroad against the government,” she said.

Demonstrators displayed banners bearing messages such as “We are all Carlos Manzo” alongside the iconic pirate flag from the Japanese manga One Piece, which has become a symbol of youth protest around the world, from Madagascar to the Philippines and Peru.

“You should have protected Carlos Manzo like this!” some protesters shouted at security forces, who responded with fire extinguishers and tear gas.

– AFP

# Huge fire sparked by explosions near Argentine capital ‘contained’

EZEIZA, Argentina – A large blaze ignited by powerful explosions at an industrial park near Argentina’s capital has been contained, local authorities reported on Saturday.

Officials also said that most of the more than 20 people who suffered minor injuries in the incident have been discharged from hospital.

Late Friday (local time), a dense column of black and orange smoke billowed across the sky above the Ezeiza municipality, about 40 kilometres from Buenos Aires and close to the country’s busiest international airport.

The explosions and fire spread panic among locals. The disaster shattered windows in some homes and caused minor damage to other buildings.

The fire has not yet been extinguished but “it is contained, which means it will not spread beyond the limits where it is currently burning,” Fabian García, the Civil Defence director for Buenos Aires province, told local media.

The incident “had violent characteristics, but the situation was never out of control to the point of posing a risk to the population,” García said.

Air quality was being monitored in the affected area. Smoke particles detected were of concern, “but it is not an

extremely dangerous situation,” García added.

Thick columns of black smoke rose hundreds of meters into the night sky, illuminated orange from the massive blaze, as witnessed by AFP reporters near the site.

“The explosions and fire breaking out in the different factories are huge,” Ezeiza mayor Gastón Granados said earlier.

“We are trying to control [the fire] and extinguish it...,” he said on C5N television, adding that the windows of his own nearby house had been shattered and they were evacuating families from the area.

Hospital director Carlos Santoro said his facility had received 22 injured patients.

A patient with a heart attack and a pregnant woman suffering from respiratory issues were among those admitted, he added.

Firefighters were still battling to put out the fire early on Saturday, local media reported.

Several companies manufacturing tires, chemical products and other goods were located in the industrial area.

Local media reported that five different factories were hit by the explosions and blaze, and AFP reporters saw that at least one factory building had been reduced to ashes.

– AFP



Demonstrators attend the “For Peace” march organised by Generation Z against the government of Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico on Saturday.

– AFP

## Spain virtually seal World Cup qualification in Georgia romp



TBILISI – Spain made almost certain of qualification for the 2026 World Cup with a comfortable 4-0 win in Georgia on Saturday.

Luis de la Fuente's side have won all five Group E matches and although not mathematically through to next summer's tournament, their vastly superior goal difference means it is highly unlikely that Turkey will be able to overhaul them.

Spain host Turkey tomorrow in the final group match, with Vincenzo Montella's side three points behind them after beating Bulgaria 2-0.

For Spain not to progress to the World Cup directly from the group, Turkey would have to win by seven goals or more.

La Roja were without star winger Lamine Yamal, as well as other key players in Rodri Hernandez, Dani Carvajal and Nico Williams, but still eased to victory in Tbilisi.

Mikel Oyarzabal opened the scoring from the penalty spot, with Martin Zubimendi and Ferran Torres extending their lead in the first half, before Oyarzabal netted again.

They have all but assured a 13<sup>th</sup> consecutive World Cup berth, scoring 19 goals in the group without conceding any.

"We feel really good after this and we did a really good job as a team," Torres told TVE.

"It's not mathematical yet, we're now heading into last game to qualify ourselves for this World Cup.

"We can never take things for granted but we are confident in ourselves."

### Ruthless performance

De la Fuente told his players that

they were on their way to becoming "legendary" after their Euro 2024 triumph and Spain delivered a ruthless performance to make light work of the hosts.

Giorgi Gocholeishvili handled Torres's effort to give away an early penalty, which Oyarzabal dispatched calmly for his 20<sup>th</sup> Spain goal, and the 100<sup>th</sup> of the De la Fuente era.

Spain dominated the ball and Alex Baena hit the post before Fabian Ruiz slipped in Zubimendi to finish with aplomb for the second after 22 minutes.

Oyarzabal set up Torres to strike from close range for the third as the visitors ran riot.

Liverpool goalkeeper Giorgi Mamardashvili deflected Oyarzabal's shot to safety as Spain nearly grabbed a fourth before the break.

Oyarzabal nodded home his second after 63 minutes from Torres's cross to put further shine on a straightforward victory.

"Whenever I can help in this way I'm happiest," Oyarzabal told TVE.

"We have to seal this qualification in the best way [against Turkey], going out to win."

Pau Cubarsi deflected the ball against his own post late on as Georgia threatened to become the first side to score against Spain in the group but could not find a way through.

"Although we won 4-0, there are things we can do better," Arsenal midfielder Zubimendi told TVE, always seeking to improve.

Defeat means Willy Sagnol's Georgia, who impressed at Euro 2024, can no longer reach the play-offs, dashing their dreams of reaching a World Cup finals for the first time.

– AFP

## Pressure will boost Germany in 'knockout' Slovakia clash, says Nagelsmann



LEIPZIG – Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann said the pressure of today's "knockout" 2026 World Cup qualifier with Slovakia will be the boost his side need after a stuttering campaign.

Germany, level on points with Slovakia but ahead on goal difference, need a win or a draw to top Group A and qualify directly for next year's tournament in North America.

The runners-up in the group must go through an additional playoff round in March.

Victory today in Leipzig would also guarantee Germany become one of the seeded teams in December's World Cup draw in Washington.

Nagelsmann has backed his side to perform with the pressure now mounting.

"You're bound to be a bit nervous in the morning. That's part of it, but also what makes it exciting," Nagelsmann said.

"If we were already through, we'd be totally relaxed. But there's something appealing about the fact we aren't."

The four-time World Cup winners were the clear favourites in the group to qualify directly but fell to a 2-0 loss away to Slovakia

in September, just their third-ever defeat in World Cup qualifying.

Since then, injury-hit Germany have won four from four but have rarely convinced.

"We'd have preferred to win in Slovakia, but we didn't. This is the situation we're in now. We can accept it," Nagelsmann said.

"And that's where the excitement lies in a knockout game like this, especially in the early stages.

"We expect to play a good game tomorrow and to pick up all three points."

For much of the qualifying campaign, Nagelsmann has been without several starters including Kai Havertz, Jamal Musiala, Marc-Andre ter Stegen, Antonio Rudiger, Niclas Fuellkrug and Tim Kleindienst.

However, the Germans look likely to welcome back captain Joshua Kimmich and defender Nico Schlotterbeck from injury, with a decision to be made today.

"We've got a good doctor and some good physios. They're skilled at taping [players] up tightly," Nagelsmann said.

The game will be played at 3:45 a.m. tomorrow morning, Macau time.

– AFP/MPD

## Portugal qualify for 2026 World Cup by thrashing Armenia



PORTO – Portugal crushed Armenia 9-1 despite the absence of suspended talisman Cristiano Ronaldo yesterday to clinch qualification for the 2026 World Cup finals.

Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes and Paris Saint-Germain's Joao Neves both scored a hat-trick as Roberto Martinez's side racked up a huge win in Porto to top Group F.

Renato Veiga got the ball rolling for Portugal, with Goncalo Ramos and Francisco Conceicao also on the scoresheet.

After a draw in Hungary in October and a surprise defeat in Ireland on Thursday, in which Ronaldo was sent off, Portugal wrapped up qualification at the third attempt in their final group match.

They will compete in a seventh consecutive World Cup, a tournament which the Euro 2016 champions are yet to win.

"We always want to win in the same way - to be convincing and control the game. It's not always possible, but today we were effective and achieved a good victory," said Fernandes.

With midfielder Fernandes playing a key role throughout, Portugal made a quick start by scoring in the seventh minute.

Fernandes's vicious inswinging free-kick from just outside the left side of the box was pushed onto the post by goalkeeper Henri Avagyan but Veiga was on hand to head home the rebound.

The visitors shocked the hosts by scoring on their first attack to equalise, with Grant-Leon Ranos crossing for Armenia captain Eduard Spertsyan to strike.



Portugal's midfielder Joao Neves runs with the ball during the 2026 World Cup qualifiers Europe zone group F football match against Armenia, at Dragao stadium in Porto yesterday.

– AFP

However, Portugal quickly stepped up a gear and racked up an unassailable lead. Paris Saint-Germain striker Ramos intercepted a back pass and squeezed home his country's second after rounding Avagyan.

Portugal put together a tidy move for their third, with Neves blasting home from the edge of the box after being teed up by Fernandes.

Neves netted a spectacular second with a free-kick which flew into the top right corner, leaving Avagyan with no chance.

Fernandes netted the fifth in first half stoppage time with a low penalty after Ruben Dias was fouled.

### 'Now we can truly dream'

The Manchester United midfielder continued where he left off after the break, slotting home his second after being fed by Ramos.

Fernandes completed his hat-trick from the penalty spot after debutant substitute Carlos Forbs was felled.

Neves followed suit for Portugal's eighth goal, smashing home after Veiga headed Fernandes's cross into his path.

Juventus forward Conceicao added the ninth in stoppage time to seal one of his country's biggest-ever victories.

"Now we can truly dream about the World Cup, I was very pleased with the players' response [after the Ireland defeat]," said Martinez.

"We're at the World Cup! Let's go, Portugal!" wrote Ronaldo on social media platform X.

The striker could miss the start of the tournament depending on whether FIFA extend his suspension beyond the mandatory one-match ban he served against Armenia.

Ireland stunned Hungary with a late winner to triumph 3-2 in the other Group F match and reach the play-offs, with Troy Parrott following up his midweek brace against Portugal with a hat-trick.

– AFP



Ireland's forward Troy Parrott (left) celebrates his goal during the FIFA World Cup 2026 Group F European qualification match against Hungary at the Puskas Arena in Budapest, Hungary yesterday. Ireland won 3-2.

– AFP

## UEFA hit Marseille with partial stadium closure over fan trouble



PARIS – UEFA have handed Marseille a partial stadium closure punishment over a series of incidents in their 1-0 defeat at home Atalanta in the Champions League, European football's governing body

announced on Saturday.

Home fans at the Stade Velodrome on November 5 had set off flares, thrown projectiles and used lasers.

UEFA fined Marseille 71,000 euros (US\$82,500) and ordered them to close a part of the south

stand for the Champions League match against Newcastle on November 25.

Goalkeeping coach Alexandre Salvat was given a two-match ban for insulting an official during the Atalanta match.

– AFP

# Title defenses and legendary farewells mark golden day at National Games



GUANGZHOU – The 15<sup>th</sup> National Games saw a gold-rich climax yesterday, producing 43 gold medals across various sports where legendary athletes solidified their legacies while rising stars announced their arrival.

In a display of sustained excellence, several defending champions reaffirmed their dominance. Olympic champion Gong Lijiao of Hebei closed her stellar career by winning her fifth consecutive National Games women's shot-put title with a mark of 19.68 meters.

"This gold medal is enough to prove my 25 years of dedication," said an emotional Gong, who dedicated the victory to her late mother.

In men's gymnastics, Liu Yang of Liaoning successfully defended his rings title with a score of 14.940, while in weightlifting, Li Fabin of Fujian retained his men's 61kg crown with a total lift of 306kg.

The table tennis arena witnessed Fan Zhendong of Shanghai securing his sixth career National Games gold, defending his men's singles title with a 4-1 victory over Hainan's Lin Shidong.

"At the beginning, I didn't feel at ease. I continued to elevate my performance and felt delighted to seize the gold," Fan said after his fourth appearance in the singles final at the National Games.

"Each Games tells a new story at different stages of my career. It is always difficult to top the podium at the National Games. What I need to do is to keep improving my skills and mentality. My next goal is to help Shanghai achieve a great result in the team event," Fan said.

Meanwhile, Wang Manyu of Heilongjiang replicated her previous success with a 4-2 victory over Hebei's Sun Yingsha to defend her women's singles crown.

The Games bid farewell to several beloved athletes, including Gong, badminton stars He Bingjiao of Jiangsu and Chen Qingchen of Guangdong.

"My career, from beginning to end, has been perfectly complete without any regrets," said a tearful He after her defeat to longtime teammate Chen Yufei in her fourth National Games appearance. Chen Qingchen echoed the sentiment, calling her final National Games appearance a journey without regrets.

The day also showcased China's next

generation of talent. The archery range witnessed 20-year-old Zong Yu of Hubei emerge as an unexpected champion, defeating national team archers Li Jiaman and Huang Yuwei en route to the women's recurve individual title.

In the ocean waves of Shantou, 16-year-old Olympic surfer Yang Siqi of Sichuan dominated the women's shortboard competition, winning by a massive 5.33-point margin to claim her first National Games title. While in fencing, 15-year-old Zou Tianyi of Jiangsu captured the silver medal in men's foil, only narrowly losing to Fujian's Xu Jie in the final.

The swimming pool saw veteran Zhang Yufei of Jiangsu claim the women's 50m butterfly gold in 25.61 seconds, her second title of the Games, while veteran Xu Jiayu of Zhejiang set a new national record of 24.36 seconds in the men's 50m backstroke semifinal. In a surprising upset, Hong Kong's Ho Ian Yentou edged out top contenders to win the men's 50m freestyle.

On the track, Xi Xiaoheng of Zhejiang delivered a stunning performance in the men's 800m, overtaking favorite Liu Dezhu in the final stretch to claim gold and break the

national record with a time of 1:45.48.

The unusual sight of re-runs occurred in the 4x400m mixed relay, where Anhui and Zhejiang teams were granted a re-race due to a technical fault in the previous day's final. Both teams surpassed the original third-place finisher's time, resulting in three teams sharing the bronze medal.

At the Hong Kong golf course, pressure reached its peak as Zhang Weiwei of Guangdong needed a dramatic birdie on the final hole and three extra holes in a playoff to defeat Tianjin's Yin Ruoning for the women's individual title.

"The National Games happens only once every four years. The pressure is immense," Zhang admitted after her victory.

On the men's side, Kuang Yang of Zhejiang maintained his lead throughout the tournament despite confessing he was "so nervous I almost vomited" on the final morning.

The iron will of athletes was further displayed in Hong Kong's triathlon mixed relay, where Shandong team overcame an early setback, including a bike crash, to overtake Hong Kong in the final leg and secure gold by a mere 11 seconds. – Xinhua

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## Bezzecchi claims Valencia MotoGP victory in season-ender



Aprilia Racing team's Italian MotoGP rider Marco Bezzecchi celebrates winning the MotoGP race of the Valencia Grand Prix at the Ricardo Tormo racetrack in Cheste, Spain yesterday. – AFP

### MotoGP

VALENCIA – Aprilia rider Marco Bezzecchi won the Valencia MotoGP yesterday to bring the season to a close and cap a fine end to his year.

The 27-year-old sealed third place in the championship in the sprint on Saturday and, starting on pole, edged out Raul Fernandez (Trackhouse) to celebrate in style.

Bezzecchi also triumphed last weekend in Portugal as Aprilia sealed back-to-back Grand Prix victories for the first time.

The Italian's third place also gave Aprilia their first top-three championship finish.

Marc Marquez, who did not race yesterday because of injury, clinched his seventh world title with five events to spare in Japan in September, his brother Alex going on to seal second place overall in October.

"I had a lot of fun," said Bezzecchi.

"It was tough but I am very, very

happy for the work the team did. I can't hope for a better way to finish the season and now we have to celebrate for sure."

Last year's race in Valencia was cancelled because of the deadly flooding which hit the region, with fans happy to be able to welcome back the event this season.

Fernandez overtook sprint winner Alex Marquez on the 12<sup>th</sup> lap to move up to second, still more than a second behind Bezzecchi.

On his Ducati, Fabio Di Giannantonio pipped Pedro Acosta (KTM) to third.

"I dedicate this podium to my parents," said Fernandez.

"I'm very grateful to finish the year like this... the bike is doing well and we're getting the full potential out of it."

Francesco Bagnaia, MotoGP champion in 2022 and 2023, finished a bitterly disappointing season early following contact caused by Johann Zarco on the first lap.

The French Honda rider was issued

a long lap penalty as Bagnaia, who finished fifth in the championship, headed back to the pits.

Aprilia's Jorge Martin, competing in his first Grand Prix since a collarbone fracture at the Japanese Grand Prix in September, also left the race early as he had indicated he would on Saturday.

The 2024 champion, having served a double long lap penalty at the start, finished his injury-hit campaign after completing 15 laps, to conserve energy before testing next week.

"Aprilia Racing has decided to withdraw Jorge Martin from the race as a precaution," said his team in a statement.

Before the race began Franco Morbidelli clipped the back of Aleix Espargaro's bike as he headed to his place on the grid.

The Italian started in the pit lane and retired because of an injured hand, suffering a fracture, which will keep him out of testing tomorrow when serious planning for the 2026 pre-season begins. – AFP

## George glad England backed-up haka response with NZ win

### Rugby

LONDON – Jamie George was pleased to have played a part in England's defiant reply to the haka but was even happier to beat New Zealand 33-19 at Twickenham in perhaps the team's best performance under coach Steve Borthwick.

George, himself a former England skipper, persuaded Borthwick and current skipper Maro Itoje it was worth revisiting the response to the haka England employed in a 2019 World Cup semi-final win in Japan.

Back then, England formed up in a 'V'. On Saturday they adopted more of a horseshoe, with a capacity crowd of some 82,00 at Twickenham belting out a chorus of 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot' – England's rugby anthem – for good measure.

As was the case six years ago, the response to the traditional Māori challenge was the prelude to a memorable win – just England's ninth in 47 Tests against the All Blacks spanning 120 years.

"I had an idea and I thought 'why not?' so put it to Maro and Steve and they got on board with it," said George, who was also England's starting hooker in the 2019 World Cup semi-final.

"Maro said 'yes, as long as we don't have to have too many rehearsals!' We spoke through it on Friday night and you'd be amazed at the amount of questions that I had and how hard it was to form the V."

He added: "We wanted to replicate 2019 because we hadn't done it at the Allianz (Twickenham), which is something that I always thought would be pretty cool because we speak a lot about of connection with the fans."

But George said the pre-match theatrics would have counted for little if England, who were 12-0 down early on, had been unable to achieve a victory that gave them a 10<sup>th</sup> in a row against all opponents.

"Doing something like that is great, but then backing up it with a performance is the most important thing – we did that."

England's win over the All Blacks six years ago was followed by the disappointment of a crushing World Cup final loss to South Africa.

The 35-year-old George said while it was important the current England side savoured Saturday's success, they needed to refocus ahead of next weekend's Autumn Nations Series finale against Argentina at Twickenham.

"I learnt from the 2019 World Cup semi-final against New Zealand that wins like this take a huge amount of emotion and emotionally drain you," he said.

"A lot of the guys will wake up exhausted with their phones buzzing and everyone telling us how amazing we are. And that's great – revel in it enjoy it. But keep it in context."

– AFP

## Bad Bunny wins top album prize at Latin Grammys in Vegas

Paula Ramon

LAS VEGAS – Puerto Rican superstar Bad Bunny enjoyed a victory lap on Thursday at the Latin Grammys, the biggest celebration of Spanish and Portuguese-language music.

The reggaeton star won five awards from 12 nominations, including the coveted best album prize – a category in which he is also competing at the 68th Annual Grammy Awards in February.

Bad Bunny also won for Best Urban/Urban Fusion Performance, Best Reggaeton Performance, Best Urban Music Album and Best Urban Song.

The awards triumph for “Debi Tirar Más Fotos” (“I should have taken more photos”) marks another chapter in a year in which the 31-year-old – whose real name is Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio – has swept the entertainment world.

A barnstorming residency in his native Puerto Rico has just ended, with a world tour set to kick off this month in the Dominican Republic.

The reggaeton breakout made headlines when he said the tour would not include any dates on the US mainland because he was concerned his fans might be targeted by US President Donald Trump’s immigration raids.

The one exception to his self-imposed ban will be the Super Bowl halftime show on February 8 in Santa Clara, California.

The performance, which comes midway through the NFL final, is routinely one of the television events of the year, watched by well over 100 million people in the United States alone, with millions more tuning in around the world.

Bad Bunny faced competition from Argentinian duo Ca7riel & Paco Amoroso, who took home five awards of their own.

They are the first nominations for the explosive hip-hop duo, who recently opened several concerts in Latin America for Kendrick Lamar, a strong favourite for the 2026 Grammys.

Edgar Barrera, who as a producer and songwriter has garnered more than 70 nominations at the Latin awards, also competed for Song and Record of the Year for his work with Karol G on “Si antes te hubiera conocido” (“If I Had Met You Before”).

The album’s single “Tropico-queta” also earned the Colombian singer a nomination for Best Tropical Song.

Karol G is set to be one of the headliners at Coachella next year.

Brazil’s Liniker, who in 2022 became the first transgender artist to win a Latin Grammy, received seven nominations for her album “Caju” (“Sweetheart”) including the top three prizes.

Other nominees for the best album award include Alejandro Sanz, Carin León, Gloria Estefan, Joaquina, Rauw Alejandro, Vicente García, and Natalia Lafourcade, who has a total eight nominations.

The Latin Grammys returned to the MGM Grand Garden Arena after editions in Spain and Miami.

The show featured performances from Bad Bunny, Karol G, and Ca7riel & Paco Amoroso, as well as by Alejandro Sanz, Carlos Santana, Rauw Alejandro, Kacey Musgraves, Edgar Barrera, Joaquina, Christian Nodal, Nathy Peluso, Elena Rose, and Grupo Frontera. – AFP

## Michelle Yeoh to get honorary award at Berlin film fest

BERLIN – Chinese-Malaysian actress Michelle Yeoh (楊紫瓊) will be honoured with a lifetime achievement award at next year’s Berlinale film festival, organisers said on Friday.

Yeoh, 63, will receive the Honorary Golden Bear in recognition of her “outstanding achievements in film and cinema”, the festival said in a statement.

“Michelle Yeoh is a visionary artist and performer whose work defies boundaries – whether geographic, linguistic or cinematic,” Berlinale director Tricia Tuttle said.

The award will be presented at the festival’s opening ceremony in the German capital on February 12, 2026.

The Berlinale, running February 12-22, is Europe’s first big cinema showcase of the year and ranks along with Cannes and Venice among the continent’s top film festivals.

Yeoh was a member of the jury in 1999 and has appeared at the festival in “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon” and more recently “Everything Everywhere All at Once”.

“Berlin has always held a special place in my heart,” she said, crediting the event as “one of the first festivals to embrace my work with such warmth and generosity”.

Yeoh won the best actress Oscar in 2023 for her portrayal of Chinese-American laundromat owner Evelyn Wang in “Everything Everywhere All at Once” – becoming the first Asian woman to win the award.

Her film credits stretch back to the 1980s, but her Hollywood breakthrough came when she was cast as the first ethnic Chinese Bond girl in 1997’s “Tomorrow Never Dies” opposite Pierce Brosnan.

She also starred in the Oscar-winning 2000 martial arts film “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon”, the 2005 period drama “Memoirs of a Geisha” and the 2018 romantic comedy “Crazy Rich Asians”.

Last year’s Honorary Golden Bear went to Scottish actress Tilda Swinton, with previous recipients including Martin Scorsese and Steven Spielberg.

– AFP



Chinese-Malaysian actress Michelle Yeoh poses on the red carpet upon arrival for the European premiere of the film “Wicked: For Good” in London last Monday. – AFP

## K-pop star Nana subdues home intruder

SEOUL – K-pop star Nana helped overpower a home intruder and is recovering in hospital after suffering injuries during the tussle, South Korean police said yesterday.

The intruder, a man in his 30s, broke into the K-pop star’s home early on Saturday, before being taken down by Nana with the help of her mother and arrested.

The 34-year-old celebrity and her mother, who suffered serious injuries and lost consciousness, were being treated in hospital, South Korea’s Yonhap news agency reported.

The intruder broke into Nana’s residence in the suburbs of Seoul to steal valuables, an officer at the Guri Police Station told AFP.

“She and her mother overpowered the intruder, a man in his 30s, in a physical struggle, resulting in his arrest,” the investigator said.

The suspect is in custody on charges of aggravated robbery, he added.

Nana, whose real name is Im Jin-ah, is a singer-turned-actress with a strong fan base who first rose to prominence as part of Orange Caramel, a sub-unit of the

girl group After School. The trio’s music video for “Catallena” has more than 35 million views on YouTube.

“Nana also sustained physical injuries while trying to escape the dangerous situation,” South Korea’s Yonhap newswire reported.

“The mother has regained consciousness, and both of them are currently in need of treatment and complete rest.”

Nana debuted in 2009 as a member of After School before transitioning into acting, landing several leading roles in television dramas. – AFP

## ‘Last Chance U’ coach dies after shooting: US police

LOS ANGELES – A US football coach featured in the hit Netflix documentary series “Last Chance U” has died after being shot in the head on campus, police said on Friday.

John Beam, a coach and father figure who guided generations of athletes at Laney College in Oakland, California, was targeted on Thursday by a gunman who apparently knew him.

Beam, 66, was rushed to a hospital where he died of his injuries on Friday, Oakland Police said.

The shooting had sparked police appeals for help, as former players and public officials heaped praise on the coach.

Oakland Mayor Barbara Lee called him “a giant in Oakland – a mentor, an educator, and a lifeline for thousands of young people.”

“For over 40 years, he has shaped leaders on and off the field.”

Oakland Police arrested Cedric Irving Jr after a huge manhunt over what they said was a targeted attack.

Irving, whom the San Francisco Chronicle said had confessed to the crime, was taken into custody at a train station near Oakland before dawn Friday.

“Last Chance U” ran for five seasons on Netflix, chronicling the lives and struggles of young men playing on the football teams at US community colleges.

The first two seasons were set in Mississippi, the next two in Kansas, with the final season – which debuted in 2020 – set in Oakland, a city in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The show looks at the role that such programmes play in offering discipline and opportunity to young

men who often lack both.

Some of those who participate in these teams are hoping to move from their community college – publicly funded institutions that offer associate degrees – to larger universities with more developed football programmes that feed into the professional NFL.

Collegiate-level sport in the United States has a huge following, and can make stars of very young athletes well before they turn professional.

Some colleges have football stadiums that hold more than 100,000 fans, which are fully packed for virtually every game.

Many football fans avidly follow these theoretically amateur teams, despite the ever-changing cast of players.

– AFP



Puerto Rican singer Bad Bunny accepts the Album of the Year award for “Debi Tirar Más Fotos” during the 26th Annual Latin Grammy Awards at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas, Nevada on November 13, 2025. – AFP

### World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing -3°C~5°C	Manila 24°C~32°C	New York 4°C~10°C	Lisbon 11°C~18°C
Shanghai 3°C~14°C	Bangkok 23°C~31°C	London 3°C~9°C	Rio de Janeiro 21°C~30°C
Hong Kong 16°C~25°C	Tokyo 9°C~20°C	Frankfurt 1°C~8°C	Luanda 22°C~28°C
Taipei 17°C~23°C	Singapore 24°C~33°C	Vancouver 5°C~10°C	Maputo 17°C~21°C
Guangzhou 14°C~25°C	Kuala Lumpur 23°C~32°C	Paris 3°C~10°C	Dili 24°C~31°C
Nanjing 0°C~10°C	Jakarta 23°C~33°C	Moscow 2°C~3°C	São Tomé 24°C~29°C
Guilin 8°C~20°C	Seoul -2°C~6°C	Las Vegas 8°C~18°C	Praia 22°C~31°C
Xi'an -3°C~8°C	Sydney 13°C~24°C	Monte Carlo 12°C~17°C	Bissau 23°C~34°C



Xu Jie (right) of Fujian competes against Zou Tianyi of Jiangsu during the men's individual foil final at the 15<sup>th</sup> National Games in Hong Kong, yesterday. — Xinhua



Athletes compete during the men's omnium cycling scratch race at the 15<sup>th</sup> National Games in Hong Kong, on Saturday. — Xinhua



The golf bag of Tianjin's Yin Ruoning is seen during the third round of women's team/individual golf match at the 15<sup>th</sup> National Games in Hong Kong, on Saturday. — Xinhua

Liang Ruiji of Guangdong competes during the team show jumping phase of equestrian eventing at the 15<sup>th</sup> National Games in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, on Saturday. — Xinhua



Zong Yu of Hubei competes during the women's recurve individual archery final at the 15<sup>th</sup> National Games in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, yesterday. — Xinhua



Wei Wen (front) of Sichuan competes during the women's individual triathlon at the 15<sup>th</sup> National Games in Hong Kong, on Saturday. — Xinhua