

Health promotion group urges govt to set up 24/7 centralised dementia care centre

Armando Neves

The Healthy Macau Association (澳門健康協會) hosted a lunch banquet yesterday aiming to talk about the benefits of exercise for preventing dementia and maintaining hearing health, according to a statement released during the banquet.

The banquet was held at Plaza Restaurant in Zape.

The association's president, Kong Wai Sam, acknowledged in a speech the usefulness of the government's services for the elderly but also made a new proposal.

Kong urged the government to plan and set up a centralised dementia support centre. She suggested that the centre integrate professional teams and AI technology to provide 24/7 care support and family training, aiming to alleviate caregiving pressure, strengthen the city's social service network, and help build Macau into a more dementia-friendly city.

The statement pointed out that as the local population's ageing process has accelerated, dementia has become a public issue that cannot be overlooked. According to 2021 statistics from the Health Bureau (SSM), the statement said, there were over 6,000 dementia patients in Macau at that time, or nearly 0.9 percent of the population, with an annual increase of around 1,000 individuals.

According to the statement, as the elderly



Healthy Macau Association Chairman Johnny Au Ka Fai (third from left), lawmaker-cum-accountant Vong Hou Piu (third from right), TVB actor Jack Hui Ka Kit (second from left), lawmaker-cum-labour unionist Leong Sun lok (second from right), WIDEX HONG KONG HEARING & SPEECH CENTRE LTD. General Manager Tam Wing Sze (left) and the association's president, Kong Wai Sam, pose during yesterday's lunch banquet on stage at Plaza Restaurant in Zape. – Photo: Armando Neves

population continues to grow, the number of patients is projected to rise significantly in the next decade. Currently, the Dementia Medical Centre at the public Conde de São Januário

Hospital Centre provides cognitive function assessments for nearly 2,000 senior citizens annually, with a waiting time of about four weeks for an appointment.

The statement said the government plans to increase the number of elderly day-care service facilities to 10, expanding Macau's total service capacity to approximately 550 spots. Although the community support network is gradually improving, it still struggles to meet the continuously growing demand, the statement said.

Both lawmaker Leong Sun Iok and TVB actor Jack Hui Ka Kit, a special guest at the function, emphasised in their session on the stage the significant benefits of physical activity for mental and physical health. Drawing from personal experience, Leong said that daily jogging not only helps manage chronic conditions like hepatitis and hyperlipidaemia* but also maintains energy levels for work.

Hui underlined that jogging is suitable for all age groups, as it strengthens cardiorespiratory fitness, promotes social interaction, and reduces stress. Both pointed out that regular exercise helps enhance quality of life and interpersonal connections, encouraging the public to cultivate a habit of staying active. ■

* Hyperlipidaemia is a medical term for high levels of lipids (fats) in the blood. These lipids include cholesterol and triglycerides. They are essential for building cells and producing energy, but when levels become too high, they can lead to serious health problems, primarily by clogging arteries. – DeepSeek

Head of Lisbon funicular operator resigns after inquiry faults cable

LISBON – The head of Lisbon's municipal transport operator and its entire board resigned yesterday, two days after an inquiry pointed to a faulty cable in a deadly funicular crash last month.

Pedro Bogas and the board members have "given up" their posts at the publicly owned operator Carris, also known as CCFL, the city administration said in a statement.

It added that Mayor Carlos Moedas, who was re-elected earlier this month, promised to "re-establish as soon as possible complete trust in and credibility of a company that is fundamental to the city".

The accident, which saw the picture-postcard 19th-century Gloria tramway hurtle into a building after careering off

the rails, killed 16 people and laid bare fears over the safety of the popular yet ageing tourist attraction.

Portugal's air and rail accident investigations office (GPIAAF) determined after the tragedy that a cable linking two cabins disconnected shortly before the September 3 incident.

The office's preliminary report released on Monday said the cable was not up to the standards laid out by the city's transport operator, CCFL.

The city's other funiculars have been kept out of service since the accident and the GPIAAF said they should remain grounded until inspectors confirm they have braking systems "capable of immobilising the cabins in the event of a cable break". – AFP

Louvre crown dropped by thieves can be restored: museum director

PARIS – The director of the Louvre yesterday said a diamond- and emerald-studded crown dropped by thieves this weekend as they fled the museum with imperial jewels could be restored.

The 19th-century crown once belonging to empress Eugénie, the wife of Napoleon III, is covered in 1,354 diamonds and 56 emeralds, according to the museum's website.

"Initial assessments suggest that a delicate restoration is possible," Laurence des Cars said.

Des Cars said it had likely been damaged not by the fall but by the robbers trying to



This photo shows the crown of French empress Eugénie de Montijo displayed at Apollon's Gallery on January 14, 2020 at the Louvre in Paris. – AFP

extract it from too small an opening in its display case.

It was "crushed when being taken out of the display case", she said.

After a 2014 study, new ultra-resistant "high-end jewellery showcases" were ordered to house the crown jewels in the Apollo Gallery, des Cars said.

"The glass was not broken. It was split and the thieves managed to pass their hands through, but the glass held firm," she added.

The thieves fled with eight other items, including an emerald-and-diamond necklace that Napoleon I gave his wife, Empress Marie Louise. – (More on p.11) – AFP

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Strengthening China-ASEAN partnership injects stability, certainty into world development: FM

China and ASEAN countries are close neighbors with similar development philosophies and deeply intertwined interests, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said yesterday. – Story on p. 7

US defends truce and vows to disarm Hamas

Vice President JD Vance warned yesterday that the US and allies face a tough task disarming Hamas and building a peaceful future for Gaza, as Washington sought to reassure Israel over the next steps in its ambitious ceasefire deal. – Story on p. 10

Unspoiled corner of Portugal fears arrival of high-end tourism

Above the pine forests and dunes that stretch along the nearly deserted beaches of southwestern Portugal, cranes rise from building sites soon to be luxury hotels. – Story on p. 11

Contributing a Vivid Example of China's Governance to the Development of the Global Women's Cause

By Liu Xianfa, Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region

The Global Leader's Meeting on Women with the theme of "One Shared Future: New and Accelerated Process For Women's All-round Development", was grandly held in Beijing from October 13th to 14th, commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and discussing ways to promote the global women's cause. President Xi Jinping attended the opening ceremony and delivered keynote address titled "Carrying Forward the Spirit of the Beijing World Conference on Women and Promoting the New and Accelerated Process for Women's All-Round Development". He comprehensively and systematically introduced the achievements of Chinese modernization and the cause of women in China of the new era, putting forward China's propositions for accelerating the new process of women's all-round development in light of global trends, and announced China's solutions for further supporting the development of the global women's cause. With successful practices and fruitful achievements, China has contributed another vivid example of "China's governance" to the whole world.

In China, the cause of women has always been an important part of Chinese modernization. Since its founding in 1921, the Communist Party of China has remained committed to women's liberation and gender equality. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, a series of laws and regulations protecting women's rights were enacted,

leading to historic improvements in women's status. Women have made historic breakthroughs in education, employment, political participation and marital autonomy. Entering into the new era, the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at the core has emphasized safeguarding women's lawful rights and interests and promoting gender equality and women's all-round development as integral components of Chinese modernization. A series of pioneering, overall and long-term major decisions and plans have been made, and the women's cause in China has secured historic achievements and gone through historic changes. We have won the largest battle against poverty in human history and thereby brought moderate prosperity to 690 million women. We have reduced maternal mortality rate by nearly 80 percent since 1995, and joined the leading upper-middle-income countries in core indicators for maternal and child health. Nowadays women make up more than 40 percent of China's total workforce and more than half of the internet start-up entrepreneurs in China. In the new era, Chinese women, more confident and vibrant, are taking part in the whole process of state and social governance. The cause of women in China has enjoyed unparalleled broader developing spaces and a more promising prospect ever than before.

After its return to the motherland, Macao has witnessed a golden age of development of women's cause. The educational attainment, employment participation, industry coverage, professional level and income of women in Macao have all significantly improved. Women in all walks of life have made significant contributions with great courage and enthusiasm to the development of Macao, holding



Undated file photo of Commissioner Liu Xianfa. – Photo courtesy of the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region.

up half the sky. Since 2008, the Women's General Association of Macao has been granted special consultative status by the United Nations Economic and Social Council, thus officially enjoying qualification recognized by the United Nations to participate in international affairs and taking part in the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) sessions for 15 consecutive years. It has become an indispensable force of telling stories of China and the successful practice of "one country, two systems" in Macao to the international community.

China has always been a firm supporter and active contributor to the development of global women's cause. As President Xi Jinping pointed out, women play an important role in creating, promoting and carrying forward human civilization and the international community has a shared responsibility to advance the cause of women. China stands for the vision of building a community with a shared future

for humanity, and has turned the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilization Initiative and the Global Governance Initiative into concrete actions to promote all-round development of women with the efforts of actively providing opportunities and support for global women's cause through its development. China actively participates in global governance in the field of women, supports the United Nations in giving priority to related work, sets up the Prize for Girls' and Women's Education in partnership with UNESCO, and has announced three consecutive donations of \$10 million to UN Women. In the face of global challenges, China has dispatched more than 1,200 female officers and soldiers to participate in UN peacekeeping operations, providing humanitarian assistance to women and children affected by conflicts and disasters. China has been deepening exchanges and cooperation among women all over the world, maintaining friendly exchanges with women's organizations and institutions in over 140 countries, implementing projects worth more than \$40 million in women's sector in over 20 countries, cultivating over 200,000 female talents for more than 180 countries and regions, and providing assistance for women's employment in over 100 countries. The development of women's cause in China has provided a Chinese solution for global women's cause that can be referred to, and has been widely recognized and highly praised by the international community.

Rededicating ourselves to the purpose of the Beijing World Conference on Women and joining hands to create a bright future for the development of global

women's cause. Globally, gender-based violence, digital gap, and shadow of war and conflict still persist. Looking ahead, we should rededicate ourselves to the purpose of the Beijing World Conference on Women, and build greater consensus, broaden the paths forward, and take more concrete actions to accelerate the new process of women's all-round development. President Xi Jinping, standing at the height of the progress of human civilization and the peaceful development of the world, with a global vision and sense of responsibility as leader of a major country, has put forward four suggestions for the global women's cause: "we should jointly foster an enabling environment for women's growth and development", "we should jointly cultivate powerful momentum for the high-quality development of women's cause", "we should jointly develop governance frameworks to protect women's rights and interests" and "we should jointly write a new chapter in promoting global cooperation on women". A series of latest measures taken by China to support the development of global women's cause are also announced. China is willing to work with all countries in the world to confront global challenges, adhere to an action-oriented approach, accelerate the new process of women's all-round development with unity, confidence, courage and practice, promote the building of a more just and reasonable global governance system, and join hands to build a community with a shared future for humanity.

As an active advocate and firm doer of global cooperation on women's cause, China will continue to work with other countries and jointly open up a new chapter in women's all-round development!

Cultural heritage centre to reopen with new exhibits next week

Rui Pastorin

The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) said in a statement on Tuesday that the "Centre of Preservation and Transmission for Cultural Heritage of the Palace Museum in Macao" in Nape will be closed from tomorrow through Monday to show

new exhibits of the "Forbidden City Architecture Conservation Exhibition".

The centre is located on the ground floor of the Macao Museum of Art (MAM).

The current exhibition is the centre's first since its inauguration

in November last year. The centre itself is also the first cultural venue established through long-term collaboration between the local government and the Palace Museum in Beijing, according to the statement from the bureau.

The statement said that the exhibition has garnered over 30,000 visitors since it opened. The new exhibits will be displayed from October 28 through November 8, with the aim of introducing "more representative architectural components" and giving visitors a "more comprehensive understanding of the cultural significance and restoration practices of the Forbidden City's architecture", the statement said.

More information can be found by visiting www.icm.gov.mo, and www.culturalheritage.mo ■



This undated photo provided by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) on Tuesday shows the inaugural exhibits at the "Forbidden City Architecture Conservation Exhibition" displayed at the "Centre of Preservation and Transmission for Cultural Heritage of the Palace Museum in Macao" until today. It will close for a change in exhibits tomorrow.

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Macau Weather

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A FEW RAIN PATCHES AT FIRST.
FORCE 4 TO 5 NORTH TO
NORTHEASTERLY WINDS,
OCCASIONALLY FORCE 6 WITH
GUSTS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY
WILL RANGE BETWEEN
55% AND 90%.**



16°C~21°C

Source: SMG

CreatorWeek Macao 2025 'ambassadors' gear up to showcase city's creative 'tourism +'

Khalel Vallo

According to a statement by the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) yesterday, with "CreatorWeek Macao 2025" kicking off tomorrow, 20 local "ambassadors" are preparing to welcome international creators and highlight Macau's special blend of tourism, culture and creativity through immersive experiences and collaborative storytelling.

Jointly organised by MGTO and international media production company Branded, CreatorWeek Macao 2025 will be held from tomorrow through next Tuesday, the statement said.

During a recent preparatory meeting, the "ambassadors" explored Macau's cultural and tourism elements, learning how to integrate local stories into the five-day international creator gathering, the statement added. Selected through MGTO's Ambassador Recruitment Programme, the local participants will work alongside 20 creators from around the world to co-design itineraries that reflect Macau's image as a "young, international, and innovative" city, the statement said.

The statement also noted that public participation will be welcomed during this weekend's events, while a CreatorWeek Wellness Workshop at MGM Macau will feature fitness and yoga sessions led by celebrity coaches including Will Liu Geng Hong, Matt Tralli, Jacky Cai, and Ryan Narayan.

Meanwhile, CreatorWeek Meet & Greet at The Londoner Macao will offer fans a chance to interact with global influencers such as Merrick Hanna, Austin Sprinz, and Ian Boggs, the statement said, while CreatorWeek Live will bring free six-hour performances by 20 visiting and local musicians at Galaxy Macau and Broadway Food Street in Cotai, including acts like Berywam, XODIAC, PSYCHIC FEVER, and Lola Amour.

The statement added that the five-day event aims to deepen cross-cultural exchange and bolster Macau's role as a creative hub in the global "creator economy,"* with the goal to further enhance its reputation as a World Centre of Tourism and Leisure. ■

*The creator economy refers to the economic system built around independent content creators (like YouTubers, podcasters, bloggers, artists, etc.) who monetise their skills, audience, and content. This includes the platforms, tools, and services that support them (e.g., Substack, Patreon, Etsy, TikTok, YouTube Partner Program). – Deepseek



This poster provided by the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) yesterday promotes the "CreatorWeek Macao 2025" which kicks off tomorrow and end next Tuesday.

C-PLPEX, MIF & MFE kick off at The Venetian Macao



Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai (8th from left); Liu Xianfa (7th from left), commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao SAR; Yan Dong (9th from left), vice minister of Commerce of the People's Republic of China; Zhang Zhili (6th from left), vice minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of the PRC; and Secretary for Economy and Finance Anton Tai Kin Ip (3rd from left) pose with other officials during yesterday's opening ceremony at The Venetian Macao in Cotai. – Photo: Rui Pastorin

Rui Pastorin

The 2nd China-Portuguese-Speaking Countries Economic and Trade Expo (2nd C-PLPEX), the 30th Macao International Trade & Investment Fair (30th MIF) and the Macao Franchise Expo 2025 (2025MFE) all kicked off yesterday morning at The Venetian Macao, with the four-day event running through Saturday and featuring more than 1,100 exhibitors showcasing their products and services during the period.

Among the guests officiating at yesterday's joint opening ceremony were Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai; Liu Xianfa, commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao SAR; Yan Dong, vice minister of Commerce of the People's Republic of China (PRC); Zhang Zhili, vice minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of the PRC; Liu Decheng, chief of the Economic Affairs Department of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao SAR; Ji Xianzheng, secretary-general of the Permanent Secretariat of Forum Macao; Che Weng Keong, president of the Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM); and Secretary for Economy and Finance Anton Tai Kin Ip.

Addressing the ceremony, Tai said that the convention and exhibition industry is one of the key industries under the Macau government's 1+4 appropriate economic diversification plan. "Through years of dedicated effort, we have continuously elevated our comprehensive capabilities,

professional standards and core competitiveness", he said.

Tai also said that Macau's international recognition and economic influence also continues to expand.

This edition of MIF also marks its 30th anniversary, and Tai said that over the past three decades, "MIF has witnessed and promoted the growth of Macau's MICE industry from its inception to maturity. The exhibition area has expanded tenfold.

Tai, whose speech in Putonghua was simultaneously interpreted into Portuguese and English, stressed that this year's MIF is themed "Macao, Gateway to Global Business" and partners with Guangzhou to focus on areas such as biomedicine, advanced manufacturing and artificial intelligence (AI), aiming to deepen industry collaboration within the Greater Bay Area (GBA).

Moreover, on the concurrent C-PLPEX, Tai said it gathers over 300 exhibitors from Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs), featuring a collaboration in a diversity of fields such as cross-border e-commerce, agriculture, new energy, and the blue economy*.

Meanwhile, Vice-Commerce Minister Yan pointed out in his speech that trade between China and Portuguese-speaking countries has increased by nearly 20 times since Forum Macao's inception, as well as that Macau is "a key platform" connecting China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

Yan also highlighted three key areas that the Ministry of Commerce (MOC) will focus on to strengthen cooperation between China and PSCs.

First is strengthening industrial integration to create new opportunities for cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, support the development of Forum Macao and better align it with high-quality joint construction of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and foster new growth points for economic and trade cooperation, as well as leverage Macau's role as a hub on the maritime Silk Road, among others.

The second is to enhance trade and investment, as well as foster new momentum for cooperation between China and PSCs. "We will encourage Chinese and Portuguese-speaking countries' enterprises to expand trade in agricultural products, food and new energy, and support investment and cooperation in infrastructure and advanced manufacturing in this field".

Third, Yan said, is leveraging Macau's role as a platform to elevate cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries to a new level.

The concurrent exhibitions will run through Saturday, with a number of events scheduled, including those for members of the public. More details can be found on www.cplpex.mo, www.mif.com.mo, or www.mfe.mo ■

*The "blue economy" concept refers to the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth while protecting marine ecosystems. It focuses on activities like fishing, shipping, tourism, and renewable energy, aiming to balance economic benefits with environmental health. – Source: Poe

PJ vehicle flips on its side in Cotai, driver slightly injured

Staff Reporter

A Judiciary Police (PJ) vehicle flipped on its side near a roundabout in Cotai yesterday, slightly injuring its driver, the authorities said.

No passengers were in the vehicle when the accident occurred.

According to statements by the Fire Services Bureau (CB) and the Public Security Police (PSP), the accident occurred near Rotunda Flor de Lótus (蓮花圓形地) at around midday yesterday, the roundabout near the Studio City casino-hotel resort and the Macao Union Hospital complex.

No other vehicles were involved in the accident.

The CB statement identified the driver as a 39-year-old local man, who sustained slight abrasions and was taken to the

public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre for treatment.

The Public Security Police said that they have launched an investigation into the exact cause of the accident.

PJ van hits public bus last week

Yesterday's accident came after a PJ passenger van collided with a TCM public bus in Ilha Verde district on Tuesday last week.

The collision last week slightly injured five passengers on the public bus and its driver.

No passengers were in the PJ passenger van. Its driver, a local man in his sixties, was not injured.

The Public Security Police said on Tuesday last week that an initial investigation suggested the accident was caused by the driver of the PJ van failing

to stop at a give-way sign, and the driver was to be fined accordingly.

Judiciary Police underlined last week that their van was not used for anti-crime operations or criminal investigations. ■



A Public Security Police (PSP) tow truck pulls the Judiciary Police (PJ) vehicle that flipped on its side in Cotai yesterday upright. – Photo courtesy of Macao Daily News



Belgian vision meets Macau movement at T Theatre

Review by William Chan

Belgian artistes Tuur Marinus and Flup Marinus, in collaboration with a team of six Macau dancers, presented an innovative re-creation of their two contemporary works, *Still Animals* and *TH LNG GDBY*, at Macau's T Theatre in one show.

The event, organised by the local art collective Four Dimension Spatial, ran on Friday and Saturday night, with a rehearsal performance held last Thursday, which I had the opportunity to attend.

Still Animals

Still Animals, originally created in 2012, is a black box theatre performance inspired by Eadweard Muybridge's iconic photographic studies of animals and humans in motion.* In this re-creation, the piece was staged as an immersive installation, with performers placed inside a plexiglass box that evoked the display cases commonly seen in natural history museums.

The setup cleverly replicated the museum experience, with the box placed in the centre of the stage. Audience members were invited to walk around the box, observing the performers from multiple angles, as if they were examining an exhibit.

Each scene was carefully choreographed to mimic the behaviour of animals. The room was illuminated for around 20 seconds during each scene, with the performers striking animal-like poses or making mechanical, repetitive movements. Between these bursts of light, the stage would descend into darkness as the dancers reorganised into new positions for the next sequence.

This cyclical rhythm of light and movement created a mesmerising atmosphere, drawing viewers into a world where human and animal bodies became indistinguishable. The performers' poses felt frozen in time, much like taxidermy displays, but their subtle, mechanical movements introduced an unsettling vitality.

The piece also posed a deeper philosophical question: how do we perceive and represent bodies, both human and animal? By placing human performers in an artificial space designed to showcase animals, the work blurred distinctions between species and hinted at a dystopian future where animals may become so rare that humans must embody their memory.

TH LNG GDBY

TH LNG GDBY, originally created in 2022, marks a stark departure from the meditative stillness of *Still Animals*. Combining elements of dance performance and a cappella vocalisation, the work drew inspiration from "The Long Goodbye", a film adaptation of US rock band LCD Soundsystem's 2012 supposed farewell concert, which likely influenced its title.

The choreography was intricate yet grounded in simplicity, relying heavily on the dancers' ability to synchronise their movements with their own beatboxing**. The opening segment featured three dancers lying on the ground in a vertical line while three others pushed them counterclockwise across the floor. This movement emphasised friction, as the dancers maximised their contact with the floor, almost as if they were mopping it.

This motif of friction and tension, often avoided in traditional Western contemporary dance, formed the conceptual core of *TH LNG GDBY*. In contrast to the light, airy movements of ballet, where tension is minimised, this piece embraced heaviness and resistance.

In another sequence, the dancers lay in horizontal rows, interlocking arms and legs, pulling and pushing each other in a motion reminiscent of a train moving along tracks. Their costumes – jackets and trousers with horizontal fluorescent stripes – further reinforced this imagery, evoking janitors or workers mimicking the tools they use. The beatboxing sounds in this scene resembled the rhythmic creaks and clanks of an old train in motion or the repetitive swipes of mops against the floor.

The dancers also formed groups of three, rolling across the stage as a single tangled mass. The movement evoked gymnastics or even judo, as the performers relied on each other for balance and momentum, amplifying the physicality of their interactions.

The final segment invited audience participation, as the dancers encouraged us to beatbox while they sang a song based on our beats. This interactive moment highlighted the difficulty of producing loud, consistent percussive sounds while maintaining rhythm and tempo, deepening my appreciation for the dancers' ability to sustain flawless vocalisation throughout the 30-minute performance.

The performances showcased the Marinus brothers' ability to blend humour, aesthetics, and philosophical enquiry with the physicality of dance, and the local dancers brought their own energy and perspective to these re-creations. The result was a riveting and thought-provoking evening that left a lasting impression.

* *Muybridge's iconic photographic studies, created in the late 19th century, are a groundbreaking series of sequential images capturing animals and humans in motion. Using multiple cameras and his innovative zoopraxiscope, Muybridge analysed movement frame by frame, revolutionising scientific understanding of locomotion and laying the foundation for motion pictures. – Poe*

** *Beatboxing is a vocal percussion art form that involves producing sounds, rhythms, and beats using one's mouth, lips, tongue, and voice. It often mimics drum machines and other musical instruments and can be combined with singing and rapping. – Poe*



Performers mimic the behavior of animals using body movements inside a plexiglass box. – Photos provided by Four Dimension Spatial



Belgian artistes Tuur Marinus (right) and Flup Marinus talk with the local dancers at T Theatre last week.



Dancers lay in horizontal rows, interlocking arms and legs, pulling and pushing each other during Thursday's performance at T Theatre.

Gongbei Customs seizes 49 plants, 55 kg of tobacco



This undated handout photo provided by Zhuhai's Gongbei Customs yesterday shows two boxes of plants seized by its officers at Jiuzhou Port on September 3.



This undated handout photo provided by Zhuhai's Gongbei Customs on Tuesday shows tobacco seized by its officers at Wanzai Port last Wednesday.

Armando Neves

Zhuhai's Gongbei Customs announced in a statement yesterday that its officers at Jiuzhou Port seized 49 plants, including 12 listed as endangered.

According to the statement, on September 3, customs officers at the Jiuzhou Port Export Cross-Border E-Commerce Channel discovered anomalies in the X-ray images while inspecting two packages declared as "artificial potted plants."

The inspection revealed 49 plants wrapped in multiple layers of toilet paper inside the boxes.

According to appraisal by a professional institution, the statement pointed out that 12 of the 49 seized plants were identified as Agave victoriae-reginae (Queen Victoria Agave) and Aloe castanea (Cat's Tail Aloe), which are protected species listed in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) of Wild Fauna and Flora.

In accordance with regulations including the CITES and the People's Republic of China Regulations on the Import and Export of Endangered Wild Animals and Plants, it is prohibited to send endangered

species and their products by mail across the border, except when in possession of an import/export permit for wildlife. The statement noted that serious violations may lead to criminal liability.

Wanzai Customs seizes 55 kg of tobacco

Meanwhile, Zhuhai's Gongbei Customs announced in a separate statement on Tuesday that its officers at Wanzai Port seized 55 kilograms of tobacco.

According to the statement, last Wednesday, customs officers at the Wanzai Port Export Cross-Border E-Commerce Channel discovered discrepancies in the declaration of three boxes purportedly containing "storage boxes and canvas bags" during an X-ray inspection.

A follow-up inspection unearthed 44 bags of cigarette tobacco instead, weighing 55 kg.

Gongbei Customs reminded the public that according to the Tobacco Monopoly Law of the People's Republic of China, the export of tobacco requires approval from the administrative department under the State Council in charge of the central government's tobacco monopoly. ■

Over 3,700 fined for illegal smoking in Jan-Sept, up 30.1 pct year on year

Tony Wong

Anti-smoking inspectors fined 3,744 people for illegally puffing away in the first nine months of this year, the Health Bureau (SSM) has announced.

The number reported in the first three quarters of this year represented a year-on-year increase of 30.1 percent from the 2,877 recorded in the same period of last year.

The bureau announced Macau's anti-smoking data for the first nine months of this year in a statement on Tuesday.

In Macau, smoking is banned in all indoor public venues and facilities, except smoking lounges in casinos and at the airport.

In addition, smoking is also prohibited at certain outdoor public venues such as public parks and gardens, public beaches, footbridges, pedestrian underpasses, as well as an area within 10 metres of all public bus stops.

Illegal smoking carries a fixed fine of 1,500 patacas.

In addition to the 3,744 cases of illegal smoking, according to the statement, the Health Bureau, in conjunction with inspectors from other relevant public entities, fined 196 travellers for bringing e-cigarettes into or taking them out of Macau in the first three quarters of this year, while 103 offenders were fined for violating various other rules



This undated handout photo released by the Health Bureau (SSM) on Tuesday shows its anti-alcohol staff inspecting an eatery.

listed in the Tobacco Prevention and Control Law.

According to the statement, 842 out of the illegal smoking cases reported in the first nine months occurred in casinos, 552 in restaurants and other eateries, and 319 in parks and sitting-out areas.

11 fined for alcohol-related offences

Meanwhile, the statement also announced that in the first three quarters of this year, the bureau's anti-alcohol inspectors fined 11 offenders for violating the Law on the Prevention and Control on Minors' Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages, including three cases for

selling minors alcoholic drinks or providing them with such drinks at public venues.

According to the law, those selling alcoholic beverages to minors at public venues will be fined 20,000 patacas. The 20,000-pataca fine will also cover those providing alcoholic drinks to minors at public venues for commercial purposes.

The statement also reminded that even for non-commercial purposes, anyone is also barred from providing alcoholic beverages to minors at public venues. Nevertheless, violators in such circumstances will face a less heavy fine, ranging between 1,500 patacas and 20,000 patacas. ■

Macao Fashion Festival 2025 showcases creativity across GBA

Khalel Vallo

The four-day Macao Fashion Festival 2025 opened yesterday at The Venetian Macao's Florence Meeting Room bringing together designers and brands from across the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA).

Co-organised by the Macau Productivity and Technology Transfer Centre (CPTTM) and the Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM), the festival aims to highlight Macau's growing influence in the fashion industry and provides a platform to promote local creativity on a global stage, according to a statement by CPTTM yesterday.

Held concurrently with the 30th Macao International Trade &

Investment Fair (MIF), this year's festival is themed "Fashion Voyage." The event, which ends on Saturday, presents original designs, apparel, and accessories from Macau brands, inviting fairgoers to experience the cultural stories behind each collection.

In order to extend its global reach, the event is being live-streamed through a dedicated online mini-programme, allowing viewers worldwide to watch the shows and revisit key moments.

The festival features eight professional fashion shows. Yesterday's opening ceremony combined robotic technology with the creations of six emerging local designers. The opening day also included the "Style • Encounter Moment" Fashion Parade under the

Subsidy Programme for Fashion Design on Sample Making, presenting new collections from seven local designers.

Over the following days, the event will include the "Greater Bay Area Fashion Parade", featuring designers from Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Macau and Shenzhen and the "Crafting Dream: CPTTM Fashion Parade of Emerging Designers," which aims to showcase collaborative works from the MaConsef Incubation Project and Macau's WorldSkills fashion contestants, the statement added.

Through this presentation of style, technology, and cultural exchange, Macao Fashion Festival 2025 aims to position the city as an emerging hub for design and creativity in the GBA, the statement noted. ■



Models present the works of local designers during yesterday's opening day of the four-day "Macao Fashion Festival 2025" at The Venetian Macao in Cotai.



— Photos: Khalel Vallo

Police bust 2 illegal currency exchange dealers

Ada Lei

The Judiciary Police (PJ) separately arrested two men from the mainland on Monday and Tuesday respectively for engaging in illegal currency exchange activities, PJ spokesman Chong Kam Leong said during a regular press conference yesterday.

Chong identified the suspects as a 33-year-old male surnamed Guan and a 32-year-old male surnamed Chen, both of whom claimed to be jobless.

According to Chong, PJ officers on patrol in a casino in Cotai on Tuesday noticed that Guan was acting suspiciously. The officers witnessed Guan engaging in an illegal exchange deal with a gambler. Guan and the gambler agreed to exchange 18,800 yuan for HK\$20,000 in chips, with Guan providing a QR code for the gambler to transfer the relevant funds. After the transaction was completed, the gambler immediately entered the casino to gamble.

The police later intercepted both and seized a smartphone, HK\$34,000 in cash, HK\$12,000 in chips from Guan, along with HK\$8,500 in chips from the gambler. Under questioning, Guan admitted to having engaged in illegal exchange activities in Macau since July.

Meanwhile, Chong also announced that PJ officers on patrol in a casino in Cotai



Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Chong Kam Leong looks on during yesterday's regular press conference. — Photo: Ada Lei

on Monday noticed Chen and a gambler behaving suspiciously. The officers saw Chen showing his phone to the gambler for a QR code transfer before handing over cash. The gambler then entered the casino to exchange the cash for chips to gamble.

The police later intercepted both and seized HK\$53,500 in chips, 1,100 yuan in cash, HK\$200 in cash, and two smartphones from Chen, along with HK\$19,000 in chips from the gambler. Under questioning, Chen admitted to having engaged in illegal currency exchange activities multiple times that day.

Both Guan and Chen have been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), each facing an illegal currency exchange charge. ■

Govt urges citizens not to install balcony grilles

Ada Lei

According to a statement released yesterday by the Lands and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU), advertisements promoting balcony grille installation services have recently surfaced on social media and video platforms, openly endorsing illegal activities.

Consequently, the bureau urged citizens not to take chances by engaging with these illegal services.

The statement noted that the bureau has

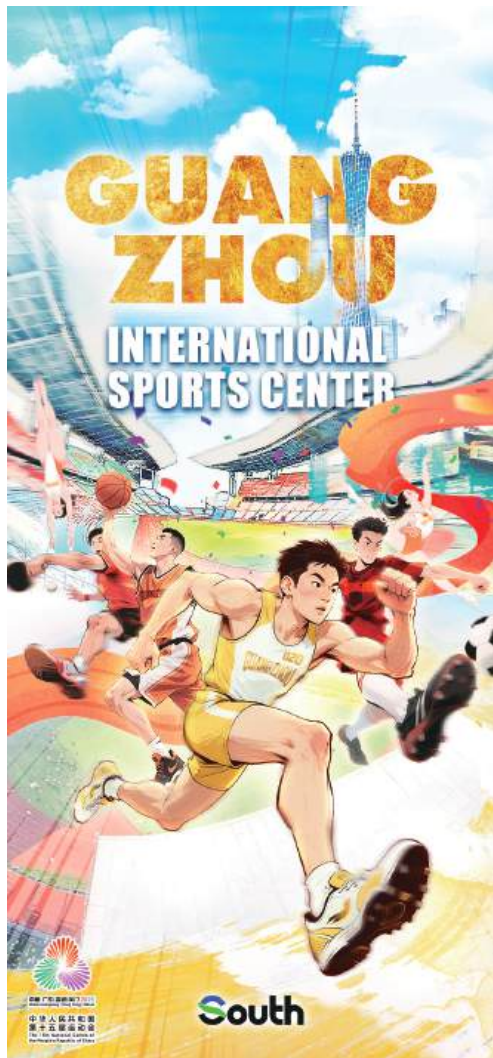
been closely monitoring advertisements for private engineering services. Recently, multiple advertisements for balcony grille installations have emerged on various online platforms, using short videos to promote these illegal activities. This approach solicits business and entices citizens to undertake unlawful work, thereby jeopardising public safety.

The statement reminded citizens that installing a balcony grille is illegal, and violations will be pursued once documented. To ensure building safety and a suitable living environment, citizens are urged to remain vigilant and avoid using balcony grille installation services, actively cooperating with the government to eliminate illegal structures.

The statement added that the Urban Construction Legal System has increased fines for individuals engaging in illegal works and introduced penalties such as "cutting off water and electricity" for non-compliance with demolition orders. The Lands and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) has specifically targeted illegal structures like balcony grilles. Recently, one case resulted in a fine of 180,000 patacas, while another case involving multiple installations incurred a fine of 240,000 patacas.

The bureau urges citizens to cooperate in maintaining building safety and a suitable living environment while avoiding illegal activities.

Balcony grilles have been a familiar sight in Macau for decades. ■



This undated and pixelated handout photo provided by the Lands and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU) yesterday shows advertisements promoting balcony grille installation services on social media platforms.

Airbus expands China presence via new assembly line

TIANJIN – Airbus yesterday inaugurated its latest Final Assembly Line (FAL) for A320 family aircraft in the northern port city of Tianjin, the second of its kind in both China and Asia as a whole.

The new facility will double final assembly capacity for the A320 family in China, demonstrating Airbus' confidence in the country's thriving civil aviation market, resilient supply chain and favorable business climate.

Via the FAL, A320 planes will be assembled from large components like fuselage sections and wings, painted, tested and delivered to customers in China and beyond, said Airbus CEO Guillaume Faury.

Preparations for assembly of the first plane are underway.

"We welcome the addition of Tianjin's second line to our global production system, as it provides us with the necessary flexibility and capacity to deliver on our plan to assemble 75 A320 family aircraft per month in 2027," Faury said at the inauguration ceremony.

Currently, the Airbus A320 family production network features a total of 10 FALs – four in Germany, two in France, two in the United States and two in China, with assembly capacity in Tianjin set to contribute 20 percent of the company's total globally.

CHINA SPEED

In April 2023, the Tianjin municipal government, the Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC) and Airbus signed a framework agreement for the second FAL project, with construction beginning in September of the same year.

"Now here we are just over two years later with a state-of-the-art factory which will serve customers from across China and beyond," Faury noted. "Our talented colleagues and partners here have brought a project to fruition with their famous 'China speed.'"

The new facility covers about 300,000 square meters, with a floor area of roughly 130,000 square meters consisting of 13 buildings. The final assembly hall, as the core building, spans 42,000 square meters, making up nearly one-third of the total floor area.

Construction of the 13 buildings, scattered within the operating plant, mandated zero disruption to flights and production, said Wang Guipu, chief engineer of the project, who is with China Railway Construction Bridge Engineering Bureau Group Co. Ltd.

Wang added that 80 percent of the building materials had been localized, with key materials such as self-leveling epoxy floors and hangar doors sourced domestically. Such localization significantly shortened procurement cycles and provided crucial support for accelerating the construction process.

SOARING MARKET

This additional FAL was established to meet soaring demand in China's civil aviation market, where key air transport indicators continue to reflect robust growth.

Data from the Civil Aviation Administration of China shows that from January to September 2025, the civil aviation sector had handled 580 million passengers and nearly 7.4 million tonnes of cargo and mail, up 5.2 percent and 14 percent year on year, respectively.

Airbus, notably, has been both a witness to and a participant in China's rapid aviation development since it delivered the first

aircraft, an A310, to the country back in 1985.

Eyeing great potential in the huge Chinese market, the aircraft manufacturer established an A320 family FAL in Tianjin in 2008, marking its first commercial aircraft assembly line outside Europe. To date, the facility has assembled over 780 aircraft for customers worldwide, mostly from China.

George Xu, executive vice president of Airbus and CEO of Airbus China, said the company's fleet market share in China has surged from around 20 percent in 2008 to over 50 percent today. "China has become our largest single-country market for commercial aircraft," Xu said.

The company forecasts that China's annual average air passenger volume growth rate will reach 5.3 percent over the next 20 years, outpacing the global average of 3.6 percent. By 2042, more than 9,000 of the over 40,000 new aircraft needed globally will be delivered to China.

This robust growth is underpinned by a deep industrial partnership. Approximately 200 Chinese suppliers now support Airbus' commercial aircraft production efforts, covering the entire industrial chain from raw materials to system assembly, a key factor that gives Airbus the confidence to establish an additional assembly line in China.

"The stable and reliable assembly line, high-quality surrounding infrastructure and resilient supply chain have left us feeling very satisfied with the ecosystem here, as well as our Chinese partners and suppliers," said Juan Tubio, general manager of Airbus (Tianjin) Final Assembly Co. Ltd.

DEEPENING COOPERATION

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the European Union.

EU Ambassador to China Jorge Toledo Albinana, who attended the groundbreaking ceremony of the new FAL project two years ago, was surprised by the speed of its construction.

The project is one of the best examples of Europe-China cooperation, which is the result of combined European and Chinese excellence, know-how, technology and innovation, skills and other aspects, he said at the inauguration ceremony.

The new facility is the latest example of foreign enterprises expanding investment in China in recent years, showing confidence in business prospects in the world's second-largest economy.

Data from the Ministry of Commerce (MOC) reveals that, by the end of June, China's actual use of foreign direct investment since 2021 had reached US\$708.73 billion, achieving its US\$700 billion target ahead of schedule for the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-2025).

Foreign-invested enterprises contributed one-third of China's foreign trade, one-fourth of value-added industrial output and one-seventh of tax revenues. They have also created more than 30 million jobs during this period.

While meeting with Faury in Beijing on Tuesday, Commerce Minister Wang Wentao said China's market has continued to expand steadily in recent years, becoming the world's second-largest consumption market as well as the second-largest import market globally.

The country will further advance Chinese modernization and foster new quality productive forces, the minister said, adding that this will create vast opportunities for foreign enterprises, including Airbus. — Xinhua

Strengthening China-ASEAN partnership injects stability, certainty into world development: FM spokesperson

BEIJING – China and ASEAN countries are close neighbors with similar development philosophies and deeply intertwined interests. This comprehensive strategic partnership continues to be consolidated, injecting stability and certainty into the development of Asia and the world, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said yesterday.

Guo made the remarks when asked to comment on China-ASEAN cooperation at a regular news briefing.

According to the latest statistics, in the first three quarters of this year, China's total imports and exports with ASEAN were valued at 5.57 trillion yuan, an increase of 9.6 percent year-on-year. During this period, ASEAN remained China's largest trading partner, and events such as the China-ASEAN Expo were successfully held. Amid rising external uncertainties, China-ASEAN cooperation has bucked the trend and scored many achievements.

Guo noted that high-level exchanges between China and ASEAN are increasingly

frequent, fostering deeper mutual political trust and strengthening the momentum of integrated development. Both sides attach great importance to aligning development strategies and have formulated the Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2026-2030), he added.

Giving full play to their complementary advantages, China and ASEAN are strengthening the integration and resilience of industrial and supply chains, Guo said.

Within this year, the two sides will formally sign the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area 3.0 Upgrade Protocol, empowering regional economic integration and global trade, he noted.

Guo said that the China-Laos Railway and the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway are operating smoothly, further improving connectivity and driving growth along their respective routes.

He added that cooperation in emerging areas such as artificial intelligence and the digital economy is flourishing, which has

helped create new prospects for innovation-driven development.

Guo also mentioned that cultural exchanges between China and ASEAN are accelerating. The China-ASEAN Year of People-to-People Exchanges has been fruitful in education, youth, think tank and media cooperation.

China has introduced the "ASEAN visa," and has realized mutual visa-exemption arrangements with Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia, and reciprocal visa-free treatment with Brunei, he said.

According to Guo, China and ASEAN are jointly committed to safeguarding regional peace and stability. China firmly supports ASEAN's centrality in the region and supports addressing ASEAN's internal issues in line with the "ASEAN Way," he said.

China is committed to properly managing differences with directly concerned countries regarding the South China Sea through dialogue and consultation, Guo said, adding that China will work with ASEAN to fully

and effectively implement the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, accelerate consultations on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea, deepen practical maritime cooperation, and jointly build the South China Sea into a sea of peace, friendship and cooperation.

"The more volatile the international landscape is, the more we need to steady the helm of cooperation and build a road of mutual benefit and win-win outcomes," Guo said.

The spokesperson said China is committed to fostering an amicable, secure, and prosperous neighborhood, adhering to the principles of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit, and inclusiveness, as well as to the vision of a community with a shared future.

China will work with regional countries to build a peaceful, safe and secure, prosperous, beautiful and amicable common home and advance the building of an even closer China-ASEAN community with a shared future, the spokesperson said. – Xinhua



Zambian Vice President Mutale Nalumango (third from left) and Chinese Ambassador to Zambia Han Jing (third from right) pose during the launch ceremony of the Zambia Food Aid Project in Lusaka, Zambia, earlier this week. The launch ceremony of the Zambia Food Aid Project, funded by China through the Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund in partnership with the United Nations World Food Program (WFP), was held in Lusaka, Zambia's capital, on Monday. – Xinhua

Mainland willing to strengthen high-level exchanges with Taiwan's KMT: TAO

BEIJING – The mainland is willing to bolster high-level exchanges with the Chinese Kuomintang (KMT) party in Taiwan, based on the existing common political foundation of upholding the 1992 Consensus and opposing "Taiwan independence," a spokesperson for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) said yesterday.

Zhu Fenglian made the remarks in response to a media query regarding the potential future visit by Cheng Li-wun, the newly elected chairperson of the KMT, to the mainland.

Zhu said the mainland is ready to consolidate and enhance mutual political trust with the KMT, maintain positive interactions, and respond to the aspirations of compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

In addition, the mainland is ready to work with political parties, groups and people from all

walks of life in Taiwan to promote cross-strait exchanges and cooperation, advance the peaceful development of cross-strait relations, secure the well-being of compatriots, and strive for national rejuvenation.

Facts have repeatedly proven that the 1992 Consensus serves as an anchor of peace across the Taiwan Strait. Adhering to the 1992 Consensus can bring peace to both sides of the Strait and benefit Taiwan compatriots, Zhu said.

The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) authorities in Taiwan have stubbornly clung to their separatist stance of "Taiwan independence," denied the 1992 Consensus, and undermined the development of cross-strait relations, Zhu noted.

The DPP has positioned itself in opposition to mainstream public opinion in Taiwan, inevitably incurring condemnation by the people, she added. – AFP

Guangdong reports robust growth in foreign investment

GUANGZHOU – Global enterprises and capital are showing strong confidence in Guangdong Province through substantial investments, the provincial government said yesterday.

From January to September, the province saw the establishment of 24,000 new foreign-funded enterprises, a year-on-year increase of 33.7 percent, highlighting its role as a top

destination for international capital.

Key data revealed a notable uptick, with actual utilized foreign capital reaching 78.13 billion yuan, an increase of 8.8 percent year-on-year. Investments from Hong Kong SAR grew by 18.4 percent, with remarkable increases from developed countries such as the Netherlands, France, and the UK.

The manufacturing sector stood out with a

23.5-percent rise in foreign investment. Industries such as specialized equipment and electrical machinery witnessed multiplied growth, signaling strong confidence in Guangdong's industrial capabilities and long-term potential.

Official data showed that Guangdong has cumulatively established over 360,000 foreign-funded enterprises and utilized over US\$600 billion in foreign capital. – Xinhua

Mainland welcomes clues on illegal activities of Taiwan military's 'psychological warfare unit': TAO

BEIJING – The mainland welcomes compatriots from both sides of the Taiwan Strait to provide clues on illegal activities of 18 core members of the Taiwan military's "psychological warfare unit," a spokesperson for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) said yesterday.

Zhu Fenglian made the remarks in response to a media query regarding a recent bounty notice issued by police in Xiamen, Fujian Province, for such clues.

It is hoped that compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait will actively provide clues, firmly oppose any form of "Taiwan independence" separatist acts, and be resolutely committed to safeguarding

national unification, Zhu told reporters.

The mainland public security authorities' move represents a concrete action to implement a central government document on punishing "Taiwan independence" separatist forces and a just move to safeguard the common interests of compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait and the fundamental interests of the Chinese nation, Zhu said.

Taiwan is part of China, Zhu noted, adding that anyone who endangers the country's sovereignty, security, and development interests will not escape the punishment of national laws.

The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) authorities in Taiwan have manipulated the

"psychological warfare unit" to smear and attack the mainland, spread the fallacy of "Taiwan independence," and incite separatist activities against the country.

"The facts are clear, and the evidence is conclusive," said the spokesperson.

Recently, mainland media named five Taiwan enterprises as supporters for the "psychological warfare unit." The DPP authorities claimed that the mainland is attempting to "intimidate" Taiwan businesses.

In response, Zhu said the mainland's lawful crackdown on such illegal activities is a just and necessary move to safeguard national security and the legitimate rights and interests of the people and enterprises. – Xinhua



SpaceX cuts off 2,500 Starlink devices at Myanmar scam centres

YANGON — SpaceX has cut service to more than 2,500 Starlink internet devices at Myanmar scam centres, a company executive said yesterday, after AFP revealed that their use had exploded in the illicit industry.

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

A highly publicised crackdown starting in February saw around 7,000 workers repatriated and Thailand enact a cross-border internet blockade.

But an AFP investigation this month revealed construction has continued apace, while Starlink receivers have been installed en masse, seeming to connect the hubs to the Elon Musk-owned satellite internet network.

SpaceX's vice-president of Starlink business operations, Lauren Dreyer, said the company "disabled over 2,500 Starlink Kits in the vicinity of suspected 'scam centers'" in Myanmar.

Her post on X did not say when the terminals were disconnected.

The online scam industry has boomed across Southeast Asia,

conning victims out of up to US\$37 billion in 2023, according to a United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime report.

Cambodia deported 64 South Koreans last week accused of links to scam networks, with police seeking arrest warrants for most on their return.

Thailand's deputy finance minister Vorapak Tanyawong resigned yesterday following allegations linking him to Cambodia-based cyberscam networks.

Myanmar's border regions with Thailand and China have become particularly fertile ground for the fraud factories where some workers are lured or trafficked, while others go willingly.

Starlink did not have enough traffic to register as one of the country's internet providers before February, but ranked top every day from July 3 until October 1, according to the Asian regional internet registry, APNIC.

The powerful US Congress Joint Economic Committee says it has begun an investigation into Starlink's involvement with the centres.

'Leaving in chaos'

Myanmar's junta said this week



This handout photo taken on Monday and released yesterday by the Myanmar Military Information Team shows members of Myanmar's military standing next to Starlink devices seized during a raid on the KK Park online scam centre in Myawaddy, Myanmar's Kayin State.

— AFP

it had raided KK Park — one of the country's most notorious scam centres — and seized Starlink terminals.

People there said raids were continuing yesterday, and an AFP reporter saw more than 1,000 people travelling north away from the site on foot, on motorbikes and crammed into pickup trucks.

"Around 10:00 am Myanmar military soldiers in four trucks arrived to our site," said one employee leaving KK Park, who declined to give his name for security reasons.

"Workers are leaving in chaos," he added.

Experts say Myanmar's military turns a blind eye to scam centres which profit its militia allies in the region who are crucial in the civil war.

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

The haul of Starlink terminals the junta said it seized this week numbered only 30, a fraction of the thousands

which independent analysts have documented at KK Park.

Nathan Ruser, an analyst at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, said the Myanmar military is attempting a "balancing act" to please both China and the militias aligned with the junta — "tokenistically" taking action "while actually not doing anything".

But as night fell yesterday, a resident of Mae Sot, just over the border in Thailand, said KK Park appeared largely abandoned.

"Usually at this time in the evening it is lit up brightly," they told AFP, speaking anonymously for security reasons.

"Today I only see some lights," they added. "I don't see the lights on in the dormitory buildings."

Erin West, a longtime US cybercrime prosecutor who resigned last year to campaign full-time against scam centres, said its closure would be "a drop in the ocean".

"If there is a crackdown at KK Park, this is a small portion of what's happening at KK Park," she told AFP.

"And KK Park is a small portion of the number of compounds in the world that are doing this dirty business." — AFP

Firework factory blast kills 2 in Philippines

MANILA — Two men were killed and five others were injured after an explosion rocked a firework factory in the municipality of Norzagaray in Bulacan province in the Philippines, just outside Manila, police said.

In a report, police said the blast, which occurred before noon yesterday, was so powerful that it damaged the windows and ceilings of 10 houses extending up to 200 meters from the blast site.

Firefighters from the Bureau of

Fire Protection found the bodies of the two victims at the scene.

Firefighters managed to extinguish the fire within less than an hour.

"Further investigation revealed that the fireworks factory was operating without the necessary permits and was deemed illegal," the report read.

The Provincial Police Office's Forensic Unit is investigating the cause of the incident and the owner of the illegally operating factory. — Xinhua

Thai minister resigns after alleged scam centre links

BANGKOK — Thailand's deputy finance minister resigned yesterday following allegations linking him to Cambodia-based cyberscam centres.

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul ordered Vorapak Tanyawong, a veteran financier who took office just last month, to submit a written explanation this week over the accusations.

Vorapak came under scrutiny after a report this week tied him to an alleged foreign fraudster linked to cross-border scam operations in Cambodia.

The "Whale Hunting" newsletter alleged that Vorapak's wife was paid US\$3 million in cryptocurrency this year by Chinese-Cambodian criminal networks that he was tasked to investigate as part of a government committee.

The newsletter has also reported that Vorapak was once listed as an adviser to BIC Bank, a Cambodian bank linked to an alleged money-laundering network.

Vorapak denied any involvement in illicit activities yesterday, telling reporters he was quitting to focus on his legal defence.

"To fight this legal battle, I need time and I am afraid it will interfere with my main role at the ministry of finance," he told a news conference.

Vorapak spent most of his career in the private financial sector before entering politics last year as an adviser to the then-finance minister.

He previously held senior roles at the Thai branches of top global banks including Bank of America and JP Morgan Chase.

Corruption allegations are not uncommon in Thailand, where close ties between business and politics often blur lines.

But scandals linking Thai officials with the multibillion-dollar scam industry, which has ballooned in Southeast Asia in recent years, have been rare. — AFP



Indonesian police parade a group of some 34 men arrested early on Sunday for allegedly holding a "gay sex party" at a hotel in Surabaya, the country's second largest city, yesterday.

— AFP

Ex-PM Paetongtarn quits as party leader

BANGKOK — Thailand's recently removed prime minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra resigned yesterday as leader of the party founded by her father, ex-premier Thaksin, signalling the potential end of the family's decades-long political dynasty.

Paetongtarn, 39, served less than a year as prime minister before being sacked by a court in August over an ethics breach related to her handling of a border dispute with Cambodia.

The Shinawatra clan has for two decades been the key foe of Thailand's pro-military, pro-royalty elite who view their populist brand of politics as a threat to the traditional social order.

But the Shinawatra dynasty has faced a series of legal and political

setbacks, including the jailing of 76-year-old Thaksin this year for corruption during his time in office.

The Pheu Thai party announced Paetongtarn's resignation in a statement yesterday, quoting her as saying the move would allow the party to "undergo a complete overhaul".

"My resignation will allow the party to upgrade so eventually we can win the election," she said in the statement.

Paetongtarn added that she would remain a party member and "continue to work hard for our Thailand".

Thaksin, who founded the first iteration of Pheu Thai in the late 1990s, was ousted in a 2006 coup and then went into exile for more than a decade.

Paetongtarn was the third Shinawatra to become prime minister, following her father and aunt Yingluck Shinawatra. She is also the last family member still active in politics.

Analysts say her departure as party leader could mark the end of the family's dominance in Thai politics, though some believe the Shinawatras still hold sway over Pheu Thai.

"It doesn't matter who leads Pheu Thai, it will always be run by the family in the backroom," Yuttaporn Issarachai, a politics expert at Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, told AFP.

He added that her resignation was mainly to safeguard against legal challenges to the party, after she was removed from office by the court. — AFP

Bangladeshi court detains army officers for landmark trial

DHAKA – A Bangladeshi court remanded in custody yesterday 15 high-ranking army officers on charges of enforced disappearances and atrocities committed during the 2024 uprising that toppled the government.

It is first time that formal charges have been brought for enforced disappearances in Bangladesh, and the first time so many senior military officials have faced a civilian trial.

The men, including five generals, are accused of running a secret detention centre during the tenure of the now-ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

All have served in Bangladeshi military intelligence or the feared paramilitary Rapid Action Battalion (RAB).

Defence lawyer Sarwar Hossain

said all rejected the charges.

The army has said it will assist the judicial process, but the situation has been tense since the court issued arrest warrants earlier this month.

“They declared their allegiance to the law of the land and their respect for the judicial process,” the court’s chief prosecutor Tajul Islam told reporters.

“That was reflected in the cooperation they have extended.”

UN Human Rights Chief Volker Turk, in a statement on October 15, said that the court process was an important step towards accountability.

“It is a significant moment for victims and their families,” Turk said.

The officers were brought by a prison van to the court, guarded by a heavy deployment of police.



Police personnel escort detained army officers to the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) court in Dhaka yesterday, over charges of crimes against humanity. – AFP

“These officers are confident of their innocence, and believe they will be released through due judicial process,” their lawyer Hossain said.

Bangladesh is prosecuting

former senior figures connected to Hasina – now a fugitive in exile in India – and her now-banned Awami League party.

Up to 1,400 people were killed in

the clashes between July and August 2024 as the security forces tried to quash anti-government protests, according to the United Nations.

During Hasina’s rule, RAB forces carried out scores of killings, and the organisation was sanctioned by the United States in 2021.

Hasina, 78, fled last year to New Delhi, where she has defied court orders to return to attend her ongoing crimes against humanity trial for ordering the deadly crackdown.

Her trial in absentia is in its final stages, with Hasina’s state-appointed defence giving closing arguments. The prosecution has demanded the death penalty for Hasina.

Hasina’s Awami League says that she “categorically” denies the charges. – AFP

N Korea fires multiple ballistic missiles, first launch in months

Hieun Shin

SEOUL – North Korea fired multiple ballistic missiles yesterday, its first such launch in months just a week before world leaders, including US President Donald Trump, descend on South Korea for a summit.

Seoul’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said it had “detected several projectiles, believed to be short-range ballistic missiles”.

The missiles were fired around 8:10 a.m. [local time] yesterday from an area south of the capital Pyongyang, Seoul’s military said.

They flew for around 350 kilometres, Seoul added.

The launch was the first of its kind since South Korean President Lee Jae-myung took office in June.

Trump has said he hopes to meet North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, possibly this year, following several meetings during the Republican president’s first term.

The North’s state media has indicated that Kim is open to future talks, with caveats that the United States give up its “delusional” demand that Pyongyang relinquish its nuclear arsenal.

North Korea this month showed off what it called its “most powerful” intercontinental ballistic missile at a military parade attended by top officials from Russia and China.

Pyongyang has said that the strike range of the new Hwasong-20 “knows no bounds”.

In September, Kim oversaw a test of a solid-fuel engine used for long-range nuclear missiles.

State media said it was the ninth and final test of the engine, indicating that a full test-fire of the new ICBM could be conducted in the coming months.

– AFP

‘Growing and active’ missile programme

The launch was “a response to Trump and his recent moves,” Park Won-gon, a professor at Seoul’s Ewha Womans University, said.

Kim Jong Un is also “asserting his regime’s presence during an event hosted by Seoul, as he’s done before,” he added.

Trump is expected to arrive in South Korea on October 29 for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum.

North Korea has for years staged test flights of long-range missiles it claims are able to reach the continental United States.

The US demand that Kim give up his banned weapons has long been a sticking point between the two countries.

But Pyongyang has recently indicated a fresh openness to talks with the United States.

Kim met Trump three times for high-profile summits during the US leader’s first term, before talks collapsed in Hanoi in 2019 over what concessions Pyongyang was prepared to make on its atomic weapons.

In September, Kim said he had “fond memories” of those talks with Trump and was open to another meeting.

“If the United States discards its delusional obsession with denuclearisation and, based on recognising reality, truly wishes for peaceful coexistence with us, then there is no reason we cannot meet it,” state media quoted him as saying.

Pyongyang is under successive rafts of UN sanctions over its nuclear and missile programmes.

North Korea has repeatedly stated that it has no intention of giving up its arsenal.

And it has worked to strengthen ties with old partners China and Russia.

Get married’: The reality of Japanese politics for women

TOKYO – After Sanae Takaichi took office as Japan’s first female prime minister, AFP spoke to some of her younger counterparts who called it a symbolic victory.

The three local councillors anticipate Takaichi’s win will do little to shift the male-dominated world of politics or entrenched expectations that women will prioritise family over career.

‘Get married’

After spending time away, Makoto Sasaki returned to her northern hometown Miyako, hoping to change local politics.

But as soon as she arrived, she was told by members of the public to focus on having a family.

“They said, ‘You won’t be able to get married if you work so hard,’” Sasaki told AFP.

They also said I “wouldn’t be a proper adult without giving birth”, she recalled.

“It was shocking.”

In Japan, gender roles are rigid, with women usually expected to look after the home and family, even if they work.

As a result, women are grossly underrepresented at all political levels, as well as in business and media.

Last year, Sasaki ran for election, aged 27, and became one of 22 local councillors.

“Unless we start cutting into these larger societal structures – like the gender gap, the division of household chores by gender, or care work – (the number of women politicians) won’t increase,” she told AFP.

Takaichi, whose hero is Margaret Thatcher, had promised to appoint

a cabinet with “Nordic” levels of women, but on Tuesday, she appointed just two, the same number as her predecessor, Shigeru Ishiba.

“My region, Iwate, has never had a female political leader, whether for governor or mayor,” Sasaki said, emphasising the magnitude of the problem in Japan, which ranked 118 out of 148 this year in the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report.

Men older than 70 make up about half of Sasaki’s council in Miyako, and there are just three women.

Juggling domestic labour

In the coastal city of Toba, Chihiro Igarashi “worries constantly” about juggling her work as a councillor with caring for her two children, aged two and three.

“The belief that mothers are the ones who step in when children need them in an emergency remains deeply ingrained,” said Igarashi, 37, stressing that her husband and in-laws fully support her.

For couples with children under six in Japan, women spend an average of seven hours and 28 minutes on housework, caregiving, childcare and shopping, while men spend 1 hour and 54 minutes, according to 2021 government data, the latest available.

Igarashi said she initially did not want Takaichi to be elected as prime minister because of her conservative policies, including opposition to same-sex marriage and support for a 19th-century law requiring married couples to share the same surname.

Takaichi also wants Japan’s imperial family to stick to its male-

only succession rules.

But equally, “her toughness is appealing... she must have made extraordinary efforts to reach the level,” said Igarashi, one of two women councillors out of 13 in Toba.

“In my region, it’s often civil servants, company executives or other locally well-known figures who become politicians,” she said.

“And they’re all men.”

Single mother stigma

Erika Tsumori, a 34-year-old councillor in Atsugi city, near Tokyo, wants women to be given a chance to work without the constraints of societal expectations and stigma.

As a mother of two raising her children alone, she was told during her campaign that she should try to hide her family dynamics.

“My city is conservative, so I was told (during the election) not to openly reveal that I was a single mother,” she said.

“I was also told I was not a proper candidate as I wore dangly earrings,” she added, explaining that people saw them as too casual.

Tsumori believes Takaichi’s win is a “symbolic victory” but that the situation is changing, with the number of women candidates growing.

In 2024, just over 23 percent of candidates who ran in the election for the powerful lower house were women, compared with nearly 18 percent in 2017 and 13 percent in 2005, according to official data.

Eventually, said Tsumori, “there will surely be more women politicians.” – AFP

Pakistan navy ship seizes drugs worth nearly US\$1 billion in Arabian Sea

DUBAI – A Pakistani navy ship seized narcotics worth more than US\$972 million from sailboats in the Arabian Sea, according to a statement Tuesday from the naval network overseeing the operation.

The Combined Maritime Force (CMF), a naval partnership that includes the United States, said the Pakistani naval vessel last week intercepted two different dhow sailing boats within 48 hours.

The crew seized several tons of crystal methamphetamine and a smaller amount of cocaine, the CMF statement said.

The intercepted vessels were “identified as having no nationality”, it said without indicating where they had originated.

It was “one of the most successful narcotics seizures for CMF,” said Royal Saudi Naval

Forces Commodore Fahad Aljoiad, commander of the CMF taskforce carrying out the operation.

The US Central Command in a post on X congratulated the CMF, which includes 47 countries’ navies and patrols more than 3 million square miles of sea including some of the world’s busiest shipping lanes to disrupt the smuggling of drugs and weapons. – AFP

ICJ ruling ‘attempt to impose political measures’ against Israel: foreign ministry

JERUSALEM – Israel rejected a ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) yesterday which said Israel was obliged to ease the passage of aid into Gaza and meet the “basic needs” of the population.

The ICJ also said Israel had not stood up its allegations that members of UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, also worked for Hamas.

“Israel categorically rejects the ICJ’s ‘advisory opinion,’ which was entirely predictable from the outset regarding UNRWA,” foreign ministry spokesman, Oren Marmorstein, posted on X.

“This is yet another political attempt to impose political measures against Israel under the guise of ‘International Law.’”

The wide-ranging ruling came as aid groups scrambled to scale up much-needed humanitarian assistance into Gaza, seizing upon a fragile ceasefire agreed earlier this month.

The “advisory opinion” is not legally binding but the court believes it carries “great legal weight and moral authority”.

The Palestinian Authority (PA), based in the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah,

welcomed the ruling which it said made “very clear that Israel must cease these illegal policies”.

“States have an obligation to bring Israel into compliance with its obligations in this regard,” the foreign ministry said in a statement on X.

“Israel must immediately lift the unlawful ban on UNRWA and allow all other international organisations invited by Palestine to operate freely and safely in Gaza and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,” it added.

Israel banned UNRWA from operating on Israeli soil after accusing some of its staff of taking part in the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack that sparked the Gaza war.

Hamas also hailed the ICJ’s advisory opinion, which said Israel must not use starvation as a means of waging war in Gaza.

“The court’s decision prohibiting the use of starvation as a method of warfare confirms that the occupation, by deliberately starving Palestinians, is committing a form of genocide,” the militant group said in a statement.

– AFP

Israeli lawmakers approve advancement of West Bank annexation bills

JERUSALEM – Israeli lawmakers yesterday voted in favour of advancing two bills on annexing the occupied West Bank, an ambition openly promoted by far-right ministers in recent months.

The vote came with US Vice President JD Vance visiting Israel to shore up a Gaza ceasefire brokered by President Donald Trump, who has made clear he would not back annexation of the West Bank.

“I will not allow Israel to annex the West Bank,” Trump told reporters at the White House in September. “It’s not going to happen.”

Israeli media reported that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had called on MPs from his Likud party to abstain from voting.

In a statement, Likud called the votes

“another provocation by the opposition aimed at damaging our relations with the United States”.

“True sovereignty will be achieved not through a showy law for the record, but through proper work on the ground,” it added.

During a preliminary reading yesterday, lawmakers voted in favour of examining two bills, which means they will be brought forward for further readings in parliament.

The first text, passed by 32 MPs to nine, proposed annexing Maale Adumim, a large Israeli settlement home to some 40,000 people just east of Jerusalem.

The second proposal to annex the entire West Bank was supported by 25 MPs while 24 voted against.

The Knesset, as the parliament is known, has 120 members.

Far-right members of Netanyahu’s cabinet have openly called for annexation of the Palestinian territory, occupied by Israel since 1967.

“Mr Prime Minister. The Knesset has spoken. The people have spoken,” Israel’s far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich posted on X.

“The time has come to impose full sovereignty over all of Judea and Samaria – the inheritance of our ancestors – and to promote peace agreements in exchange for peace with our neighbours with strength,” he said, using the Israeli Biblical term for the West Bank.

All of Israel’s settlements in the West Bank are illegal under international law.

In August, Israel approved a major settlement project between Maale Adumim and Jerusalem in an area of the Palestinian territory that the international community has warned threatens the viability of a future Palestinian state.

At a signing ceremony in September, Netanyahu vowed that there would be no Palestinian state.

“We are going to fulfil our promise that there will be no Palestinian state, this place belongs to us,” he said at the event in Maale Adumim.

Excluding Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem, the West Bank is home to around three million Palestinians, as well as more than 500,000 Israelis living in settlements.

Since the war in Gaza began in October 2023, violence has also surged in the West Bank.

– AFP

US defends truce and vows to disarm Hamas



US Vice President JD Vance (right) and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arrive ahead of a meeting at the prime minister’s office in Jerusalem yesterday. – AFP

JERUSALEM – US Vice President JD Vance warned yesterday that the United States and allies face a tough task disarming Hamas and building a peaceful future for Gaza, as Washington sought to reassure Israel over the next steps in its ambitious ceasefire deal.

Vance met Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the second day of a trip to Israel, part of a diplomatic blitz in support of the US-brokered plan to end the fighting, recover hostages and, eventually, rebuild the devastated Palestinian territory.

“We have a very, very tough task ahead of us, which is to disarm Hamas but rebuild Gaza, to make life better for the people of Gaza, but also to ensure that Hamas is no longer a threat to our friends in Israel,” Vance said.

Washington’s top diplomat, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, is due in Israel today and will meet Netanyahu tomorrow, an Israeli government spokeswoman said.

Vance had kicked off the three-day visit on Tuesday by opening the Civil-Military Coordination Centre (CMCC) in southwest Israel, where US and allied troops will work with Israeli forces to monitor the truce and oversee aid to Gaza.

Turkish troops?

“A lot of our Israeli friends are working together with a lot of Americans to actually mediate this entire ceasefire process, to get some of the critical infrastructure off the ground,” Vance said, after talks with Netanyahu in Jerusalem.

Vance pointed to the “international security force” as one of the bodies that would have to be set up.

Under US President Donald Trump’s 20-point plan, this military mission would keep the peace in Gaza as Israel withdraws.

Several US allies from the Arab and Muslim world are considering joining the force, but no US troops would be on the ground inside Gaza, instead coordinating from the CMCC in Kiryat Gat, Israel.

Reports that Israel’s outspoken critic and regional rival Turkey could provide troops have rattled Israeli opinion.

Netanyahu said decisions on the new security force would be made in discussion with the United States, but on Turkey’s role he said: “I have very strong opinions about that. You want to guess what they are?”

‘Great optimism’

Despite an eruption of violence on Sunday, when two soldiers were killed and Israel responded with a deadly wave of air strikes, Vance expressed “great optimism”

on Tuesday that the ceasefire would hold.

The Israeli premier, who has been criticised by some domestic opponents for accepting the US-backed ceasefire before Hamas was fully destroyed, defended the deal.

“We’ve been able to do two things. Put the knife up to Hamas’s throat. That was the military effort guided by Israel,” Netanyahu said.

“And the other effort was to isolate Hamas and the Arab and Muslim world, which I think the president did brilliantly with his team. So those two things produced the hostages,” he said.

Vance also championed the Gaza deal’s role as a “critical piece in unlocking the Abraham Accords” – a Trump administration plan to normalise relations between Israel and the Arab world.

Despite the weekend’s violence, Hamas has continued to hand over the remains of deceased hostages in small numbers as part of the ceasefire deal, and Palestinians have welcomed the truce, their cities lying in ruins.

Displaced civilian Imran Skeik, 34, living in a tent in Al-Saraya Square in the Al-Rimal neighbourhood in Gaza City, told AFP: “The situation is much better – the war has stopped, and there are no sounds of bombs and shelling like before.”

“We hope the ceasefire continues and that Israel and Hamas both stick to it. We’ve started to get some rest, but there are still many problems. Will we have to stay in tents – another kind of suffering?”

Hostage remains

The Israeli military said yesterday the remains of two more hostages returned the day before had been identified as elderly kibbutz resident Aryeh Zalmanovich and army NCO Tamir Adar.

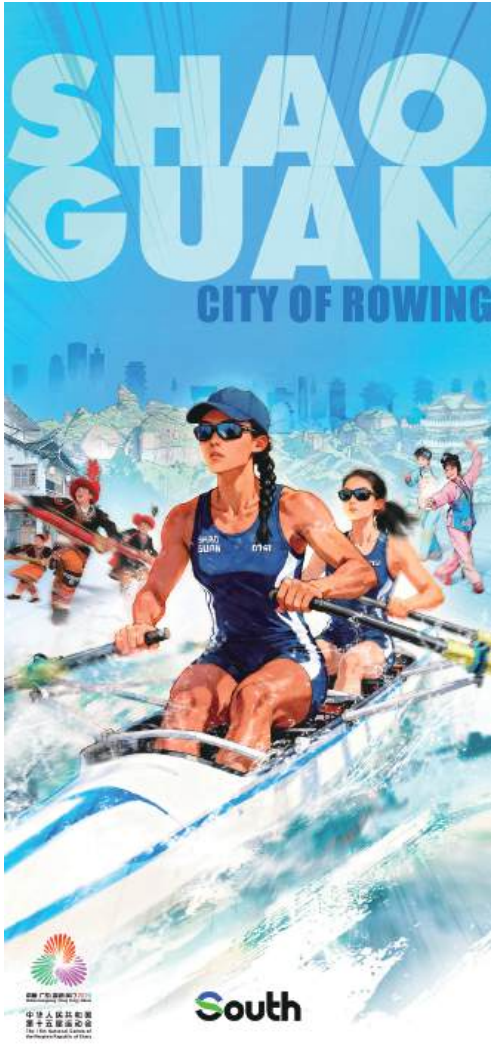
The militants have now released 15 of the 28 hostage bodies pledged to be returned under the deal, but Hamas has said the search is hampered by the level of destruction in the territory.

For each deceased Israeli hostage released, Israel returns 15 dead Palestinians. Yesterday, it sent back 30 more, bringing the total since the ceasefire to 195, the Gaza health ministry said.

The war, triggered by Hamas’s October 7, 2023 attack on Israel, has killed at least 68,234 people in Gaza, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory, figures the UN considers credible.

Hamas’s 2023 attack resulted in the deaths of 1,221 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official Israeli figures.

– AFP



Louvre director admits 'insufficient' camera coverage after heist

Erin Flanagan, Alice Hackman and Jerome Rivet

PARIS – The director of the Louvre yesterday admitted there was inadequate security camera coverage of the outside walls of the museum, three days after a brazen daytime heist stunned the French capital.

Senators grilled Laurence des Cars over how thieves were able to on Sunday make off with an estimated 88 million euros (US\$102 million) in jewels from the world-famous museum in just seven minutes.

The heist has renewed scrutiny of security at French museums.

"Despite our efforts, despite our hard work on a daily basis, we failed," des Cars told lawmakers in her first public statement since Sunday.

Des Cars said all alarms had functioned during the burglary, but admitted that security cameras did not adequately cover the thieves' point of entry.

"The only camera installed is directed westward and therefore did not cover the balcony involved in the break-in," she said.

"There are some perimeter cameras, but they are ageing," she conceded. Surveillance of the museum's outside walls "is highly insufficient".

But she defended the museum's 80-million-euro security plan, disputing a recent report that cited "persistent delays" in putting it into effect.

Earlier yesterday, French President Emmanuel Macron ordered "speeding up" security measures at the Louvre, after the Paris museum reopened its doors to tourists.

Des Cars said she had tendered her resignation on Sunday after the theft, but that the culture ministry had refused it.

Museum-goers flocked to the institution for the 9:00 a.m. opening, though the Apollo Gallery – scene of Sunday's theft – remained closed.

'Find the perpetrators'

The thieves made off with eight pieces,



Visitors queue to enter the Louvre Museum, next to the Pyramide du Louvre, designed by Chinese-US architect Ioh Ming Pei, in Paris yesterday. The Louvre Museum reopened its doors to visitors yesterday morning for the first time since Sunday's spectacular theft by four criminals. – AFP

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

The investigation "is progressing", Interior Minister Laurent Nunez told local media yesterday, saying "more than 100 investigators" had been mobilised.

"I have full confidence, that's for sure, that we will find the perpetrators," he said.

Calling the financial loss "extraordinary", Paris prosecutor Laure Beccau said the greater damage was to France's historical heritage.

The world's most visited museum, whose extensive collection includes the Mona Lisa from Italy, last year welcomed nine million people to its extensive hallways and galleries.

Gold coins stolen

The Louvre theft is the latest in a string of robberies targeting French museums, raising questions about security at the country's cultural institutions.

Trade union representative Christian Galani, who works at the Louvre, said the museum does not have enough security

guards after job cuts over the past 15 years, even as visitor numbers have jumped.

"You can walk through several areas without seeing a single guard," he said.

A French art specialist told AFP on the condition of anonymity that in 2024 they were able to get close enough to a work by Italian Renaissance painter Raphael to touch it "without any alarm going off or a curator calling out to me".

Less than 24 hours after the high-profile break-in, a museum in eastern France dedicated to Enlightenment philosopher Denis Diderot reported the theft of gold and silver coins after finding a smashed display case.

Just last month, criminals broke into Paris's Natural History Museum, making off with gold nuggets worth more than US\$1.5 million.

Also last month, thieves stole two dishes and a vase from a museum in the central city of Limoges, with the losses estimated at US\$7.6 million.

But thefts from the Louvre have been rarer.

In 1911, an Italian stole the Mona Lisa, but the painting was recovered and today sits behind security glass. – AFP

German firm behind Louvre heist truck basks in publicity

BERLIN – The German company that made the furniture hoist used in the Louvre heist has been taking advantage of the scandal to promote the device, posting tongue-in-cheek adverts about the quality of its equipment.

Böcker, a lifting equipment maker based near Dortmund, posted a picture of the mounted truck outside the Paris museum on social media with the caption: "When you need to get going again quickly."

The device, called the Agilo, can transport up to 400 kilograms with an engine that is "as quiet as a whisper", the post said.

Alexander Böcke, managing director of the company, told AFP the machine was sold "a few years ago to a French customer who rents this type of equipment in Paris and the surrounding area".

Similar pieces of equipment are a common sight around Paris, where elevators are small or absent in most apartment buildings.

The alleged jewel thieves had arranged to have the vehicle demonstrated to them last week and had stolen it during the demonstration, he said.

"They removed the customer's labelling and replaced the licence plates," Boecker said.

Watching news reports about the heist on Sunday, Böcker, 42, and his wife quickly recognised the furniture hoist as being one of theirs.

"When it became clear that no one had been injured in the robbery, we took it with a touch of humour" and "started thinking about how we could perhaps use this", he said.

"It was, of course, an opportunity for us to use the most famous and most visited museum in the world to get a little attention for our company," he said.

"The crime is, of course, absolutely reprehensible, that's completely clear to us."

In Sunday's heist, thieves parked the truck with an extendable ladder below the museum's Apollo Gallery shortly after it opened.

They then climbed up the ladder in broad daylight before using cutting equipment to get through a window and open display cases to steal the jewellery. – AFP

GM unveils plans for 'eyes-off' vehicle in 2028

NEW YORK – General Motors (GM) announced plans yesterday to incorporate Google's Gemini artificial intelligence (AI) platform into vehicles and to launch a vehicle capable of "eyes-off" driving in 2028.

At an event dubbed "GM Forward," the giant US automaker said Gemini would enable drivers to "talk to your car as naturally as you would to a fellow passenger," while the Cadillac Escalade would be capable of "eyes-off driving" in three years.

GM said it had already mapped 600,000 miles of "hands-free" roads in North America for its "Super Cruise" technology, which requires an attentive driver, "without a single reported crash attributed to the system."

Now it is promising to add eyes-off to hands-free.

"This combination of technology, scale, a decade of real-world deployment experience, and safety systems developed and tested for Super Cruise gives us the foundation to deliver

the phase of personal autonomy," GM said.

The Escalade, an electric sport utility vehicle, will also feature a computing platform that updates every major system in the vehicle, from propulsion and steering to infotainment and safety.

On Tuesday, GM shares surged nearly 15 percent after it lifted some full-year projections following better-than-expected third-quarter results.

Shares of GM rose 0.5 percent in morning trading yesterday. – AFP

VW warns of production hit from Nexperia chips row

FRANKFURT – Germany's Volkswagen (VW) warned yesterday that its car production could be hit by a shortage of Nexperia semiconductors amid a deepening row between China and the Netherlands over the chipmaker.

Dutch officials invoked a Cold War-era law last month to effectively take control of the Netherlands-based but Chinese-owned Nexperia, citing national security concerns, as the sector increasingly becomes a focus of geopolitical tensions.

The company then said Beijing had banned it from exporting certain goods from China since early October – potentially a serious problem for carmakers as its chips are widely used in vehicles' electronic control units.

VW, Europe's biggest carmaker, confirmed some Nexperia components are used in its vehicles but said production was

"currently unaffected".

"However, given the dynamic nature of the situation, an impact on production cannot be ruled out in the short term," added the company, whose 10 brands range from Audi to Seat and Skoda, without giving further details.

It said production of the VW Golf and Tiguan would be suspended tomorrow as part of planned measures and would resume the following week, though it denied earlier media reports this was linked to the chip shortage.

But Germany's Bild tabloid reported that the chip shortage would lead to the suspension of production at key VW plants from next week.

Talks were due to take place yesterday between auto industry leaders and the German economy ministry on the fallout

from the chip shortages, industry sources confirmed to AFP.

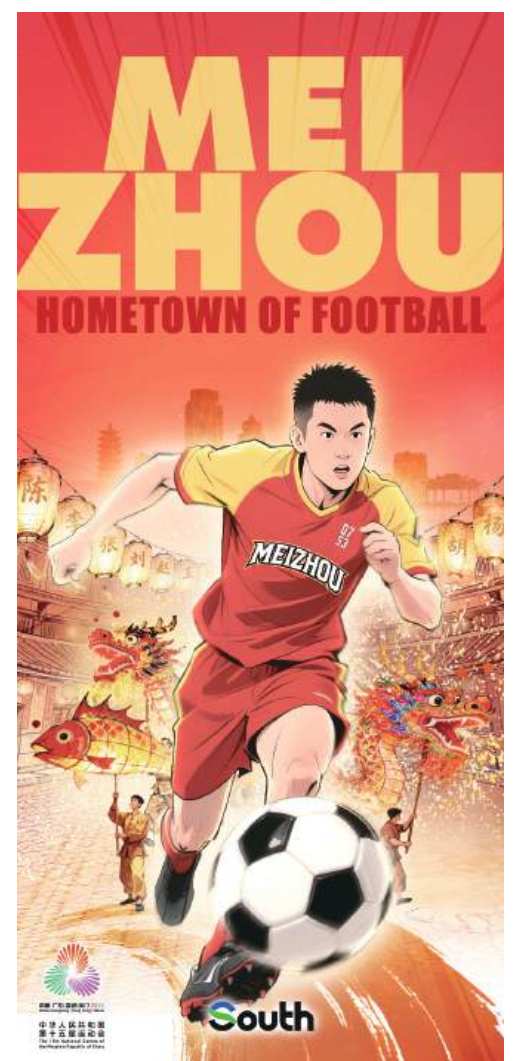
Hildegard Müller, president of Germany's VDA auto industry association, had warned on Tuesday that the fallout "could lead to significant production restrictions in the near future, and possibly even to production stoppages."

"The current focus should be on finding quick and pragmatic solutions," she said.

VW's share price tumbled over two percent in Frankfurt yesterday after reports emerged of the potential stoppages at its plants.

Stefan Bratzel, an auto industry expert at the Centre of Automotive Management in Germany, told AFP that carmakers were making "attempts to switch to other suppliers".

"But it is not easy to find other suppliers at short notice," he said. – AFP



Unspoilt corner of Portugal fears arrival of high-end tourism

Levi Fernandes

COMPORTA, Portugal – Above the pine forests and dunes that stretch along the nearly deserted beaches of southwestern Portugal, cranes rise from building sites soon to be luxury hotels – a sign of the region’s contentious transformation into a playground for the wealthy.

Rapid development in the coastal region of Comporta has alarmed locals and environmentalists, who fear a repeat of the unchecked growth seen in Portugal’s southernmost Algarve province, long a package holiday destination.

Dubbed “the new Portuguese Riviera”, Comporta has drawn high-profile visitors including Oscar-winning actor Nicole Kidman and Princess Caroline of Monaco.

Real estate consultancy Knight Frank lists the region, located about an hour’s drive south of Lisbon, among the five most sought-after luxury residential markets worldwide.

“Comporta appeals to a wealthy clientele seeking nature, privacy and wellness,” the company wrote in a recent report.

French designer Christian Louboutin was among the first international figures to discover Comporta’s charm, opening a hotel in Melides, a small village of whitewashed houses with blue doors.

Princess Eugenie, whose uncle is Britain’s head of state King Charles III, splits her time between London and Comporta, drawn by the region’s relaxed lifestyle.

“I can go to the supermarket in sportswear, my hair in disarray, and nobody cares,” she told the podcast Table and Manners in 2023.

‘Overrun by tourism’

Environmentalists warn that development projects threaten the region’s unique mix of dunes, pine forests, gnarled cork trees and an endless patchwork of rice fields.

Campaign group Dunas Livres (“Free Dunes”) says eight “mega-projects” are under development, each covering hundreds of hectares, which will increase water consumption in a region already threatened by drought.

“These hotel complexes, with golf courses, swimming pools and a very large number of tourist beds, obviously consume a



A billboard promotes a ‘beach and golf resort’ in front of an under-construction building in Comporta, Portugal, last month. Above the pine forests and dunes stretching along the nearly deserted beaches of southwestern Portugal, cranes rise from luxury hotel projects, a sign of the region’s transformation into a new playground for the rich. The coastal region of Comporta has attracted high-profile visitors, earning the nickname “the new Portuguese Riviera” and drawing comparisons to New York’s elite Hamptons. – AFP

lot of water,” Catarina Rosa, a biologist with the group, told AFP.

“Comporta, a true natural treasure, is being overrun by tourism,” she added.

The transformation traces back to the collapse of the Espírito Santo bank during the 2011 debt crisis.

The Espírito Santo family were once the sole owners of the 12,000-hectare Herdade da

Comporta (“Comporta Estate”) but sold large parcels to developers following the collapse of their banking empire.

Since then, investors including French developer Claude Berda’s Vanguard Properties and US-based Discovery Land Company have launched private residences, hotel complexes and golf courses.

Discovery Land is behind the CostaTerra

Golf and Ocean Club, planned to feature nearly 300 luxury villas.

‘Frenzy’

Local residents have mixed feelings about the changes.

Some have sold small properties for staggering sums, while others worry that skyrocketing real estate prices are disrupting their way of life or forcing them out.

A small house worth 20,000 euros (US\$23,000) two decades ago is now valued at one million euros, said Jacinto Ventura, a farmer and president of a local association in Melides.

“This real estate bubble, with no clear end in sight, has driven prices into a frenzy. And this frenzy has forced a large portion of the population to move away,” he told AFP.

Residents also complain about restricted access to public beaches and rising costs in local shops since the arrival of wealthy visitors.

While some are leaving the area, others are trying to hold on.

Belinda Sobral, 42, a former engineer who reopened her grandparents’ tavern in the nearby town of Grândola, said the problem is not tourism itself, but the pace of development.

“It has been too fast, without planning or respect for the locals,” the mother of two said.

“I want to preserve the identity of this place. Without memory, Comporta will become another Ibiza – a resort like so many others,” she added.

– AFP

Insurgents kill at least 2 policemen in Mozambique

MAPUTO – At least two members of Mozambique’s security forces were killed yesterday in a jihadist attack in northern Cabo Delgado province, conflict monitoring group ACLED told AFP yesterday.

Attacks by Islamic State (IS)-linked jihadists have picked up in recent months in the area where a deadly insurgency has been raging since October 2017.

“A vehicle of the police Rapid Intervention Unit (UIR) was attacked, we think while escorting a convoy of vehicles. At least two UIR officers killed,” ACLED analyst Peter Bofin told AFP.

The Mozambican military, which is supported by Rwandan forces in battling an Islamist insurgency that started in Palma’s Cabo Delgado province in October 2017, rarely comments on attacks.

The Mozambique military rarely confirms attacks and did not comment on the incident.

“The insurgents attacked the UIR vehicle

in the Muidumbe district, between the villages of Chitunda and Awasse,” a military officer who asked to remain anonymous told AFP, reporting four victims.

“Four of the 12 Mozambican troops in the vehicle were killed, and the rest were wounded but managed to escape,” he said.

The attack occurred on a road connecting two of the main northern cities, Macomia and Mocimboa da Praia, along which several military outposts are based, including some of the Rwandan army which has supported Mozambique in fighting the insurgency since mid-2021.

The European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations department (ECHO) recorded 519 insurgent attacks in northern Mozambique since January 2025 – “the highest number since the conflict began”, according to an October 1 report.

The United Nations’ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

has also reported last week a “significant increase in incidents involving kidnappings, killings, and the use of improvised explosive devices ... putting 2025 on track to exceed previous peaks in violence”.

Muslim-majority Cabo Delgado is one of the poorest parts of Mozambique but its rich gas fields have drawn some of Africa’s biggest investments, including a multi-billion-US-dollar liquefied natural gas project operated by French energy giant TotalEnergies.

The project has been stalled since an insurgent attack on the nearby town of Palma in March 2021 that killed more than 800 people, but TotalEnergies’ direction has said it hoped to resume this year.

Among the more than 800 people killed in the 2021 strike were TotalEnergies subcontractors, according to ACLED, which says the insurgency has claimed more than 6,200 lives in eight years.

– AFP

Spain to publish list of Franco-era symbols targeted for removal: PM

MADRID – Spain’s leftist government will publish next month a list of symbols of Generalissimo Francisco Franco’s regime to be removed from public spaces, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said Wednesday.

The move will coincide with the 50th anniversary of the death of Franco, who ruled Spain with an iron fist after his side emerged victorious from the country’s 1936-39 civil war that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives.

Sánchez told parliament that before the end of November, his government will publish “a complete list of Francoist symbols and elements, so they can finally be removed from our country and from our streets.”

From imposing neoclassical arches to quiet plazas named after regime loyalists, remnants of Franco’s nearly four-decade rule are still etched into the public landscape.

Campaign group Deberia Desaparecer

(“It Should Disappear”), created in 2022 to track what it calls illegal vestiges of the dictatorship, says there are over 6,000 such symbols still standing.

One of the most prominent is Madrid’s 50-metre tall Victory Arch, built in the 1950s on a busy roundabout to celebrate the victory of Franco’s fascist-backed nationalists in the civil war.

After Franco’s death on November 20, 1975, Spain underwent a transition to democracy.

But a sweeping amnesty law passed by parliament in 1977 shielded both former regime officials and anti-Franco activists from prosecution.

Many symbols of the dictatorship remained untouched.

Efforts to reckon with the past have gained traction in recent decades.

In 2007, then-Socialist Prime Minister

José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero introduced the “Historical Memory Law”, requiring public institutions to remove Francoist iconography from public spaces.

That momentum gathered pace in 2018 when Sánchez, also a Socialist, took office.

The following year, his government exhumed Franco’s remains from the Valley of the Fallen – a vast underground basilica near Madrid – and relocated them to a more discreet family vault to prevent his tomb from becoming a shrine for far-right supporters.

In 2022, a new “Democratic Memory Law” was introduced, to honour victims of the dictatorship and pressure local governments to eliminate regime symbols.

The main opposition conservative People’s Party (PP) has opposed the removal of Franco-era symbols, calling them politically motivated and harmful to national unity. – AFP





Arsenal's Swedish striker Viktor Gyokeres (right) celebrates with teammates after scoring their fourth goal during the UEFA Champions League match against Atletico Madrid at the Arsenal Stadium in north London on Tuesday. Gyokeres says he is eager to respond to manager Mikel Arteta's call to take his goal-scoring momentum into the Premier League, after Tuesday's impressive performance against Atletico Madrid. Attacker Gyokeres ended a run of seven games without a goal by scoring twice in Arsenal's 4-0 rout of Atletico in the Champions League at the Emirates Stadium. It took the 27-year-old's tally for the Gunners to five goals following his £58 million (US\$77 million) transfer from Sporting Lisbon, where he scored 97 times in 102 appearances. Gunners boss Arteta challenged Gyokeres to keep the goals coming, with Arsenal back in domestic action against London rivals Crystal Palace at the Emirates on Sunday. — AFP



Europa League beckons as Dyche prepares for Forest bow

PARIS — Nottingham Forest will be hoping it is third time lucky as new manager Sean Dyche takes over the reins of the two-time European Champions for the visit of Porto in the Europa League today.

Dyche, already Forest's third boss of a turbulent season, has arrived at the City Ground to take charge of a side seeking their first win in the competition after garnering just one point from their two previous outings.

Appointed on Tuesday to replace the sacked Ange Postecoglou, who won the Europa League last term with Tottenham but lasted only 40 days at Forest, Dyche will know that only victory will suffice to keep tempestuous owner Evangelos Marinakis happy.

For the 54-year-old, his Forest debut marks a personal milestone as it will be his first time in the dug-out for a European match proper since starting in senior management 14 years ago at Watford.

In 2018/19, his Burnley side played in the Europa League play-offs but were beaten by Olympiacos and missed out on the league stage.

Dyche has built a reputation as a pragmatic manager that delivers results, if not always spectacular football.

"There's some real talent here, so our job now is to find that balance," Dyche told the club's website on Tuesday.

"The risk and reward of going forward... but equally the solid base which has been such a big weapon for the club, particularly last season.

"Finding that balance will be key."

On the surface of things, Dyche's style

would align him with the man who started the season in the Forest hotseat, Nuno Espirito Santo.

Unpopular after replacing Steve Cooper two years ago, the Portuguese eventually won over the Forest faithful during a sensational 2024-25 Premier League campaign.

Nuno's team occupied the top four for much of the season, before faltering towards the end but nonetheless securing a return to Europe.

But after his falling-out with Marinakis and Postecoglou's winless reign, Forest now lie in the Premier League relegation zone with just five points from eight games despite a squad bolstered by over £180 million (US\$241 million) of investment during the summer transfer window.

In the league phase of Europe's second-tier competition, they lounge in the elimination zone going into matchday three after a 2-2 draw at Real Betis and a 3-2 home defeat to Midtjylland.

'Strong, fit, organised'

Having conceded five goals so far in the competition, Dyche will likely use the two days at his disposal to work on shoring up a leaky backline.

"The basics have always got to be in place. Strong, fit and organised is always a good place to start," Dyche said.

Next up are Portuguese league leaders Porto, who sit sixth in the Europa League standings with a perfect two wins from two.

However, they have only found the net three times in the process - offering

the hosts the chance to adapt to the new regime against a side that are not exactly free-flowing going forwards.

Kicking off his tenure by delivering a first win in Europe for Forest since 1995, against a high-profile opponent in 2004 Champions League winners Porto to boot, would do Dyche the world of good in getting both the fans and the owner on board from the get-go.

Struggling Rangers also have a new man at the helm in the shape of young German manager Danny Rohl.

The 36-year-old arrived on Monday in the wake of Russell Martin's departure after a disastrous start to the season - both domestically and in Europe - for the Glasgow giants.

The 32nd-placed side travel to Norwegian outfit Brann, looking to earn their first points of the campaign following one-goal defeats to both Genk and Sturm Graz.

Premier League club Aston Villa visit the Netherlands and Go Ahead Eagles, where Unai Emery's men will have their eye on maintaining their 100 percent record in the competition.

Elsewhere, Fenerbahce host Stuttgart, Nice make the trip to Celta Vigo and Celtic welcome Sturm Graz.

The games -

Aston Villa vs Go Ahead Eagles, Rangers vs Brann and Fenerbahce vs Stuttgart, will be played at 12:45 a.m. tomorrow morning Macau time.

Celtic vs SK Sturm Graz and Nottingham Forest vs Porto will be played at 3 a.m. tomorrow morning Macau time.

— AFP/MPD



La Liga chief laments Miami match collapse as others celebrate

MADRID - The cancellation of La Liga's plan to hold a Barcelona match in Miami in December is a "missed opportunity" for Spanish football, the league's president said yesterday, while elsewhere its collapse was celebrated.

Champions Barca were set to face Villarreal in the United States on December 20, which would have been the first European league fixture to be played abroad.

The match will now be held at Villarreal's Estadio de la Ceramica home as normal.

La Liga said their promoter for the match decided to cancel the organisation of the event because of "uncertainty generated in Spain in recent weeks".

The league's president Javier Tebas took to X to express regret at not being able to seize "this historic opportunity", adding that Spanish football had missed a chance to "develop, to project itself in the world and reinforce its future".

Villarreal were furious about the timing of the announcement to cancel the plans - the news breaking during their Champions League defeat by Manchester City on Tuesday - and also blasted La Liga's management of the whole event.

"(We) wish to express our deep displeasure with La Liga over the poor handling of the match scheduled to be played in Miami," said the club in a statement.

Villarreal said there had been "no progress" in terms of organisation and the club would have "withdrawn from the project" themselves later in the week if various issues were not resolved to

their satisfaction at a planned meeting with La Liga.

The plan to hold the match in the United States had also been criticised by various parties within Spain, contributing towards its cancellation.

The Spanish Footballers' Association (AFE) organised protests against it last weekend, with players from every team remaining immobile for 15 seconds at the start of each league match.

Spanish giants Real Madrid also railed against it institutionally, while goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois said Tuesday it would adulterate the competition.

Madrid captain Dani Carvajal told Tebas the game being held abroad would be "a stain" on the competition.

Tebas added: "We are appealing to the 'integrity of the competition' from those who have been questioning this same integrity for years, putting pressure on referees and managers, constructing distorted narratives or using political and media pressure as a sporting tool."

The president of Spain's Sports Council (CSD), Jose Manuel Rodriguez Uribe, said La Liga had not gone the right way about trying to arrange the game.

"The episode we experienced with Miami... shows that this is not the way to do things," he said yesterday.

"Before taking an initiative of this nature - a decision so significant that it could undoubtedly have affected the integrity of the competition - it was necessary to have dialogue, an

agreement among the participants, all the clubs.

"Of course, the players should be considered, as well as the fans."

'Seismic victory'

Rodriguez Uribe said "absolute transparency" was necessary, as well as "appropriate regulations" in place for this kind of game, which do not currently exist.

"At the CSD we will always prefer - as we have said from the very beginning - to bring sporting events to Spain rather than take them out," he added.

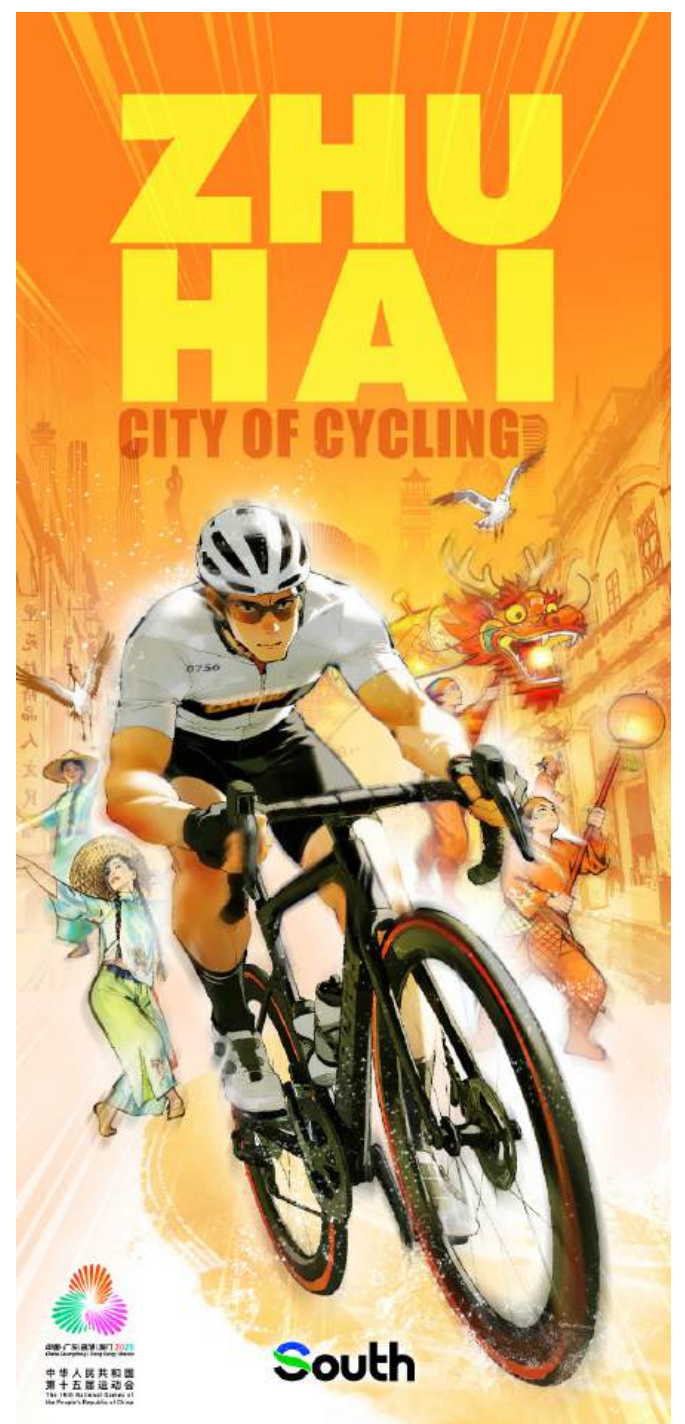
The AFE released a statement highlighting "the lack of transparency, dialogue, and coherence" from La Liga around the game.

"The players spoke out unanimously on the pitch last week to send a powerful message: without players, there is no football," added the footballers' association.

In February, Serie A still plan to hold a match between AC Milan and Como in Perth, Australia, despite a similar backlash from both fans and players.

Football Supporters Europe (FSE), a representative body on fan issues, celebrated the cancellation of the Miami match as a "seismic victory", and warned the Italian top flight to abandon their plans.

"Doubling down on this failed idea would be an act of self-inflicted damage to the league's reputation, to Italian football, and to the game as a whole," said FSE in a statement. — AFP



Gardner, Sutherland star as Australia beat England in World Cup



INDORE – Ashleigh Gardner and Annabel Sutherland starred with the bat as unbeaten Australia completed a convincing six-wicket win over Ashes rivals England yesterday in the Women's World Cup.

Playing without skipper Alyssa Healy, who missed out due to a calf injury, holders Australia restricted England to 244-9 with Sutherland taking three wickets in Indore.

Sutherland then hit 98 and put on an unbeaten fifth-wicket stand of 180 with Gardner (104) to lift Australia from a precarious 68-4 and carry them to victory in 40.3 overs.

Gardner made her second ton of the tournament and then swiftly celebrated in style by hitting the winning boundary to condemn England to their first defeat in this edition of the World Cup.

Seven-time winners Australia, England and South Africa have

already qualified for the semi-finals of the women's 50-over marquee tournament being co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka.

India, New Zealand and Sri Lanka are fighting to grab the one remaining semi-final spot.

For Australia, it was their fifth victory in six matches with one game washed out as they top the table on 11 points.

Defending 245, England's bowlers put Australia on the back foot when Linsey Smith dismissed Georgia Voll and Ellyse Perry in quick succession after Lauren Bell bowled Phoebe Litchfield with the third ball of the innings.

Sophie Ecclestone then struck to remove the dangerous Beth Mooney and give England, who lost 16-0 to Australia in the Ashes earlier this year, real hope of a statement win.

Sutherland and Gardner then dug in to put the chase back on track and, once set, took on the

England bowling with regular boundaries.

Earlier, England got off to a flying start with Tammy Beaumont, who made 78, leading the batting charge with a string of boundaries, including a hat-trick of fours off Kim Garth in the eighth over.

But all-rounder Sutherland came into the attack and struck in the next over as she bowled wicketkeeper-batter Amy Jones for 18 to end a brisk opening stand of 55.

Beaumont kept up the momentum with Heather Knight but Sophie Molineux broke through with her left-arm spin to send back Knight lbw for 20.

Beaumont raised her fifty with a boundary off Garth but soon England lost their way when skipper Nat Sciver-Brunt fell to Alana King's leg-spin and Sutherland took down Beaumont.

Alice Capsey and Charlie Dean (26) counter-attacked in their seventh-wicket partnership of 61.

Molineux then dismissed Capsey for 38 and two balls later Gardner had Dean out as England settled for a below-par total at a venue that has produced big runs and a highest of 326 by Australia in this tournament. – AFP

IOC chastens Indonesia over Israeli gymnasts' worlds exclusion



LAUSANNE

– Olympic chiefs yesterday ruled out any dialogue with Indonesia about hosting future events after Jakarta's refusal to issue visas for Israeli athletes at the ongoing world artistic gymnastics championships.

The Israeli Gymnastics Federation appealed against the Indonesian government's decision to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), demanding that it either guaranteed their athletes' presence or forced a move or cancellation of the event.

But CAS rejected the appeal, meaning that Israeli athletes have not been able to compete in the October 19-25 championships in the world's most populous Muslim-majority country.

The executive board of the International Olympic Committee yesterday reiterated its position that "all eligible athletes, teams and sports officials must be able to take part in international sports competitions and events without any form of discrimination by the host country".

In order to avoid similar situations in the future, the IOC board decided "to end any form of dialogue with the NOC (National Olympic Committee) of Indonesia about hosting future editions of the Olympic Games, Youth Olympic Games, Olympic events or

conferences until such time as the Indonesian government provides the IOC with adequate guarantees that it will allow access to the country for all participants, regardless of nationality, to attend."

The IOC board said it would also "recommend to all International Federations not to host any international sports events or meetings in Indonesia until such time as the Indonesian government provides adequate guarantees".

Additionally, Olympic chiefs requested that the NOC of Indonesia and the International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) go to the IOC headquarters in Lausanne "to discuss the situation that occurred ahead of" the championships.

The Indonesian government said that it had refused entry to Israeli gymnasts in support for Palestinians.

In July 2023, Indonesia pulled out of hosting the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC) World Beach Games following controversy over Israel's participation.

In March that year, Indonesia lost the hosting rights to the FIFA Under-20 World Cup after two governors objected to Israel's participation.

Both of those occurred before war between Israel and armed group Hamas broke out in Gaza, where there is currently a ceasefire in place. – AFP



Japan's Hashimoto wins men's all-around title at Jakarta World Gymnastics Championships

JAKARTA – Japan's Olympic champion Daiki Hashimoto claimed his third consecutive world title in the men's all-around final with a total of 85.131 points at the 53rd FIG Artistic Gymnastics World Championships in Jakarta, yesterday.

China's Zhang Boheng, the 2021 world champion, took the silver medal on 84.333 points, while Switzerland's Noe Seifert earned his first-ever world championship bronze with 82.831 points. Another Chinese gymnast, Shi Cong, finished fourth.

The men's all-around final marked the first day of finals at the 2025 world championships. Hashimoto and Zhang, who ranked first and third respectively in qualification, competed in the same group, starting from floor exercise before rotating through pommel horse, rings, vault, parallel bars and horizontal bar.

Unlike the qualification round that saw multiple mistakes, yesterday's final was tightly contested, with nearly all top contenders performing smoothly. Japan's rising star Shinnosuke Oka opened strongly on rings to take an early lead, but Hashimoto overtook him after an excellent pommel horse routine.

Zhang impressed on rings with a high-difficulty routine and a solid landing, moving from seventh to second place, while Oka regained the lead after parallel bars. Shi performed steadily on pommel horse, rings and vault, climbing into the top four.

The turning point came in the

fifth rotation when Oka fell on floor exercise and dropped out of medal contention. Hashimoto extended his advantage with another clean routine on parallel bars, while Zhang made a small mistake that left him about 0.4 points behind the Japanese leader. Shi continued to perform consistently on horizontal bar, staying close behind in third place.

In the final rotation, Russian neutral athlete Daniel Marinov fell on horizontal bar, adding tension to the close battle. Zhang, performing next, made a slight error but recovered quickly to complete his routine. Hashimoto, competing last, delivered a composed and precise horizontal bar performance, finishing with a perfectly stuck landing that sealed his victory.

"I think the key was to stay focused on myself," Hashimoto said afterward. "I've dealt with injuries along the way, but I've learned how to manage them. Winning three consecutive world titles is not easy, and I will keep working hard toward more."

Zhang said the new Olympic cycle had just begun and that he was still refining his routines. "The six routines are all relatively new for me, and I haven't competed them many times at major events," he said. "I believe with more time and training, my control and consistency will improve."

The men's all-around competition adopted a new format this year, changing from four groups of six athletes to six groups of four. It was

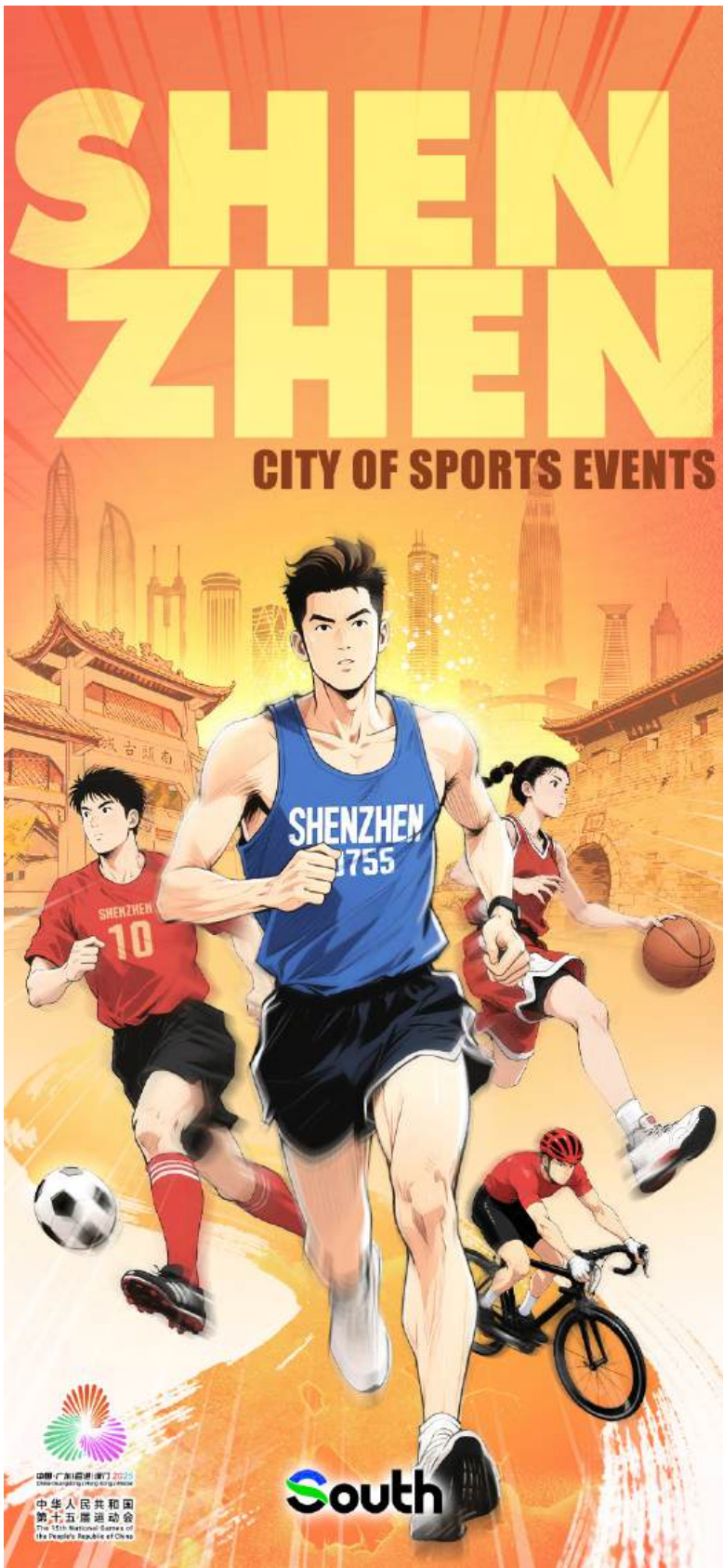
the first major international event to test the faster-paced rotation, though most gymnasts said the change had little impact on their performances.

– Xinhua



Hashimoto Daiki of Japan competes during the Horizontal Bar of Men's All-Around Final at the 53rd FIG Artistic Gymnastics World Championships in Jakarta, yesterday.

– Xinhua



Netflix shares sink as quarterly profit misses mark

Glenn Chapman

SAN FRANCISCO – Netflix shares sank yesterday after the streaming television powerhouse reported quarterly profit that fell short of market expectations.

Netflix recorded a profit of US\$2.5 billion on revenue of US\$11.5 billion in the recently ended quarter, saying it was hit with a US\$619 million expense due to an ongoing dispute with Brazilian tax authorities.

Netflix executives told financial analysts on an earnings call that absent the hefty cost in Brazil, it would have exceeded its operating margin forecast in the quarter.

“It’s not an income tax; it’s a cost of doing business in Brazil,” said Netflix chief financial officer Spencer Neumann.

“It’s not even specific to streaming, so we assume other companies will be impacted by this.”

A recent court ruling involving a different company doing business in Brazil boosted the likelihood of Netflix being hit with the expense, so it recorded it in the recently-ended quarter, according to Neumann.

Netflix shares were down more than six percent to slightly less than US\$1,163 in after-market trades that followed release of the earnings figures.

Ads and demon hunters

Netflix viewership in Britain and the US reached their highest levels in about three years, powered by a lineup that included its most popular film ever, “KPop Demon Hunters,” according to the earnings release.

Netflix expressed confidence in its momentum in the current quarter, citing attention-getting shows including the final season of “Stranger Things” and “The Diplomat.”

A new “Knives Out Mystery” is also slated for release on the platform this quarter, as well as ramped-up live events including professional American football and boxing.

An ad-supported membership level had its best sales quarter to date as Netflix continues to challenge traditional television programming, the company said.

Netflix has more than doubled its ad revenue this year, albeit off a small base relative to the number

of subscribers who pay to watch shows without marketing messages, according to co-chief executive Greg Peters.

Peters said interest in Netflix is gaining momentum with advertisers given the platform’s size, engaged audience, data analytics, and rich slate of content.

“Netflix had its best ad sales quarter to date but still did not provide a figure for how large the ad business is,” said Emarketer senior analyst Ross Benes.

“This gives the impression that the sustained revenue growth achieved this quarter, and forecast for next quarter, will predominantly continue to come from subscription fees.”

Netflix touts itself as one of the world’s leading entertainment services with over 300 million paid memberships in over 190 countries.

Buying and building

It is rumoured to be interested in acquiring global entertainment company Warner Brothers Discovery (WBD), analyst Benes noted.

“For that potential purchase to best compliment Netflix, the

planned split of WBD would make its studio more attractive without bogging it down with TV networks that aren’t as agile as Netflix,” Benes told AFP.

Netflix co-CE Ted Sarandos said on the call that the streaming service focuses on growing “organically” and is choosy when it comes to acquisitions.

“It’s our responsibility to look at every significant opportunity,”

Peters said when asked whether Netflix is interested in buying Warner Brothers Discovery.

“We have a clear framework to evaluate those opportunities, and we’ll do whatever we think is best.”

Warner Brothers Discovery yesterday put out word that it is reviewing its options as a result of unsolicited interest from “multiple parties” for all or parts of the company.

– AFP

Oasis guitars among music memorabilia worth US\$4 million at UK auction

Reem Hassan

LONDON – Legendary guitars, iconic glasses and handwritten lyrics from some of the biggest names in music are going under the hammer at a London auction this week.

Taking centre stage is Noel Gallagher’s cherry-red Gibson guitar, damaged by his brother Liam during a backstage brawl the night Oasis broke up at the height of their fame in 2009.

Reflecting on the row, Noel later told reporters in 2011 that a furious Liam had stormed into the dressing room with the guitar, which he was “wielding like an axe”.

“It’s historic. If you’re an Oasis fan, you look at that guitar and you immediately know what it is,” music specialist Mark Hochman told AFP at memorabilia specialist Propstore’s auction preview.

“It caused the break-up of the band. Liam smashed it. Noel got in a taxi, and that was it for 16 years,” he added.

In 2022, the repaired Gibson was sold for 385,000 euros (US\$445,000) at an auction in Paris.

But with the British supergroup now in the middle of a record-breaking comeback tour, the instrument is currently expected to fetch up to £500,000 (US\$668,300).

Noel’s Takamine acoustic guitar, used to record the hit song “Wonderwall”, will also go on the auction block during the sale on Friday and Saturday.

“If you ask anybody, name me an Oasis song... they’re going to say Wonderwall... I think it was the first song from the 90s to reach a billion streams,” said music specialist Richie Moores, who has been collecting Noel’s guitars for 20 years.



Noel Gallagher’s 1970s Fender F-35 acoustic guitar damaged by Liam Gallagher the night Oasis broke up and estimated to sell for US\$330,000-660,000 is displayed during a Propstore auction preview in London on Tuesday. Propstore, a leading entertainment memorabilia auction house, has announced it will auction over 550 lots of rare memorabilia from legendary artists, valued at more than US\$4 million later this week.

The guitars are part of the largest collection of Oasis memorabilia ever to come to auction, worth over £1 million (US\$1.34 million).

With interest in them “growing and growing and growing”, Hochman believes Oasis will become “one of the most collectable bands” in the long term.

‘Happier time’

From the wider sale, a pair of glasses worn by John Lennon during his infamous “Lost Weekend” period over 18 months in Los Angeles in the early 1970s is expected to sell for as much as £300,000.

The circular, orange-tinted glasses are one of the most recognisable personal items ever owned by the Beatles star.

“These particular glasses are the most historic and provenanced of any John Lennon glasses to

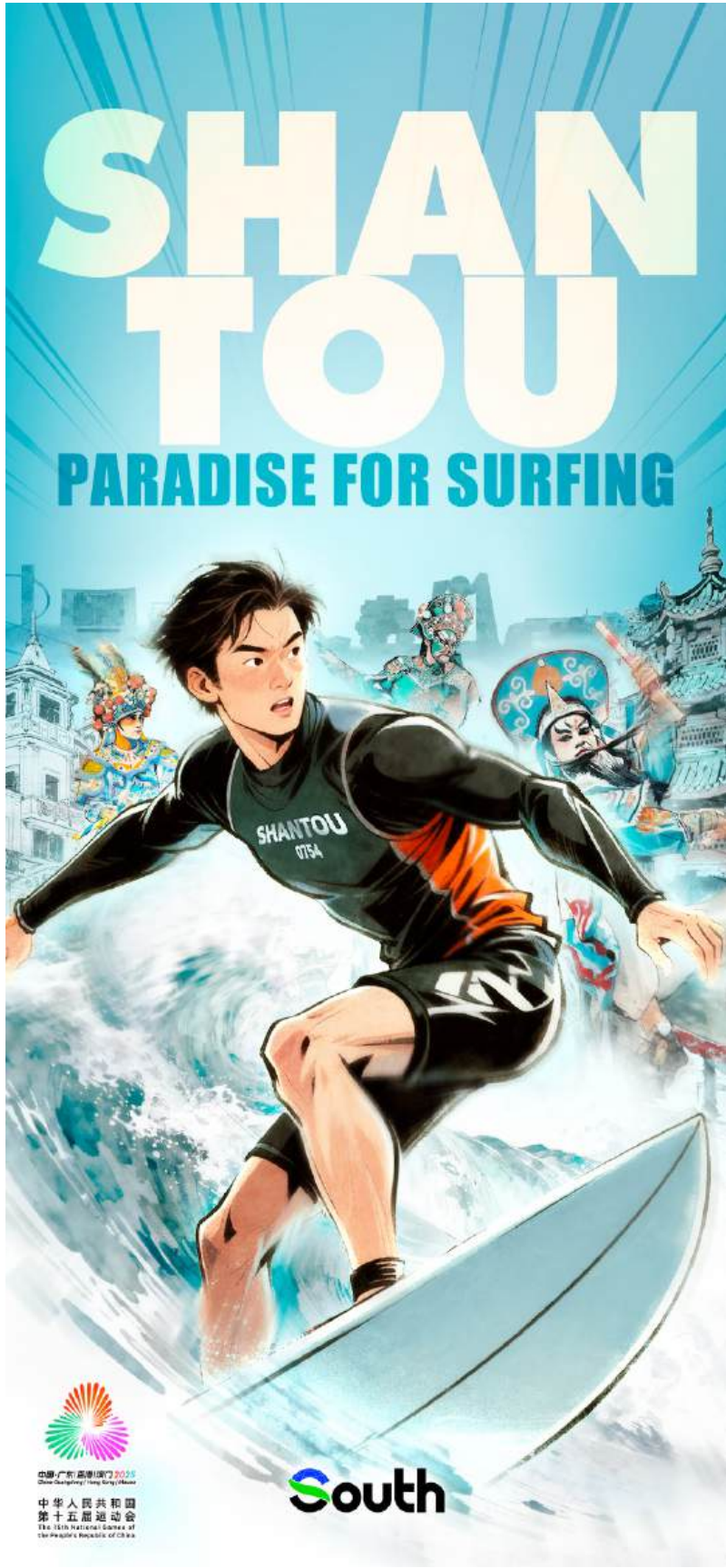
come to market, and that’s what makes them so valuable,” said Hochman.

Michael Jackson’s white fedora from the 1988 “Smooth Criminal” video is also up for auction, valued between £40,000 and £80,000.

Collectors will be able to snap up Elvis Presley’s classic “Grand Prix” sunglasses, a signature accessory that became synonymous with the king’s later career.

Memorabilia from David Bowie, Jimi Hendrix and other music legends will also be on offer, with the auction estimated to have a combined value of more than £3 million.

“We all remember the first groups we saw... I think we all remember the first records we bought,” Hochman said. “It takes you back to a happier time, and I think people need that.” – AFP



World Weather			
CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 3°C~13°C	Manila 23°C~32°C	New York 6°C~15°C	Lisbon 17°C~24°C
Shanghai 16°C~22°C	Bangkok 21°C~32°C	London 5°C~11°C	Rio de Janeiro 15°C~23°C
Hong Kong 20°C~25°C	Tokyo 10°C~19°C	Frankfurt 9°C~16°C	Luanda 22°C~30°C
Taipei 22°C~26°C	Singapore 25°C~31°C	Vancouver 11°C~13°C	Maputo 15°C~29°C
Guangzhou 17°C~24°C	Kuala Lumpur 23°C~31°C	Paris 7°C~15°C	Dili 21°C~33°C
Nanjing 10°C~20°C	Jakarta 25°C~31°C	Moscow 2°C~8°C	São Tomé 24°C~27°C
Guilin 12°C~21°C	Seoul 8°C~19°C	Las Vegas 13°C~26°C	Praia 21°C~32°C
Xi'an 8°C~13°C	Sydney 13°C~21°C	Monte Carlo 13°C~21°C	Bissau 22°C~33°C



Why we should recycle!

A swan makes a nest out of plastic rubbish near a sewage drain on the Danube river bank close to downtown Belgrade, Serbia on April 18, 2022. It's a plastic granule, usually round and translucent, averaging 5 mm, which, taken individually, seems harmless, but this king of escapes travels in flocks, and when millions of them spill into the ocean, it's nearly impossible to collect them and stop the damage.

— AFP

Protective mummy

A red-faced gibbon and her three-month-old baby sit in their enclosure at Cerza Zoo, in Lisieux, northwestern France, last Friday. The red-faced gibbon (*Nomascus gabriellae*) is listed as endangered by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), mainly due to deforestation and hunting, particularly for the pet trade and bushmeat.

— AFP



Not a walk in the park!

A shepherd walks with his animals as flocks of sheep are herded through the city centre of Madrid during the annual Transhumance Festival held on Sunday. Every year shepherds guide flocks of hundreds of sheep and goats through the streets of Madrid in defence of the historic cattle trails and ancient grazing rights increasingly threatened by urban sprawl.

— AFP



Checking out the view

This photo taken on Tuesday shows a squirrel at the Kolsai Lakes National Park in Almaty Region, Kazakhstan

— Xinhua



Shadow on the Sun

Israelis practice kitesurfing during sunset off the coast of Tel Aviv, on Tuesday.

— AFP

How much can you catch??

Hindu devotees collect rice distributed on the occasion of 'Annakut' or 'Govardhan Puja' festival at the Madan Mohan temple in Kolkata, India yesterday.

— AFP

