

UNU Macau AI Conference 2025 draws over 500 global participants

Rui Pastorin

The United Nations University (UNU) Macau AI Conference 2025 convened on Friday at the Galaxy International Convention Centre (GICC) in Cotai, attracting over 500 participants from more than 30 countries.

Held under the theme “AI for Humanity: Building an Equitable Digital Future,” the conference was a flagship event of the three-day UNU Macau Milestone Series, celebrating both the UN’s 80th and the UNU’s 50th anniversaries. The event was sponsored by the Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG).

According to a statement from UNU Macau, the one-day conference featured more than 150 speakers and 30 sessions selected from nearly 300 global submissions. The statement noted that keynote speakers provided a “clear framework for AI development that balances ethical imperatives with practical deployment, reinforcing the importance of global cooperation and regional leadership.”

The conference was structured around three thematic pillars: “AI Research for Narrowing the Digital Divide,” “Inclusiveness and Capacity Building in the AI Era,” and “Navigating the AI Ecosystem through Synergies and Interdisciplinary Innovation.”



UNU Macau Director Huang Jingbo delivers a speech on Friday at Galaxy International Convention Centre (GICC) in Cotai.

Macau’s emergence as a regional AI hub was underscored in sessions such as “AI-powered Applications in Macau” and the “Galaxy Entertainment Group Presents UNU Macau AI Conference 2025 Session: AI + Youth.” The latter showcased “four pioneering initiatives that place young people at the centre of inclusive, ethical, and accessible AI education and governance.”

A major highlight of the conference was the launch of the UNU Book Series on Artificial Intelligence and Sustainable Development, published in collaboration with Springer, part of Springer Nature*.

The statement included remarks from several speakers:

UNU Rector and UN Under-Secretary-General Prof. Tshilidzi Marwala emphasised the need for inclusive governance frameworks that safeguard human dignity while enabling technological progress. “These events form a cohesive platform to convene ideas, transfer knowledge to younger generations, and catalyse AI-driven solutions for the challenges we face, from climate resilience to digital inclusion, from governance to education.”

UN Under-Secretary-General



UNU Rector and UN Under-Secretary-General Prof. Tshilidzi Marwala delivers his opening remarks on Friday at the GICC. - Photos provided by United Nations University (UNU) Macau

and Special Envoy for Digital and Emerging Technologies Amandeep Singh Gill stated, “Together, these milestones remind us that our shared progress must be anchored in shared purpose, global responsibility and a long-term vision.”

GEG Director Philip Cheng Yee Sing said, “As part of Macau’s integrated tourism and leisure industry, we are committed to advancing smart technologies that drive innovation across the sector.”

UNU Macau Director Huang Jingbo highlighted the conference’s success in featuring diverse voices

from academia, the private sector, governments, the UN, and civil society, particularly from the Global South.

Science and Technology Development Fund (FDCT) Administrative Committee President Vincent U U Sang described the event as “a platform for strategic dialogue, and for shaping technologies for a better future.”

*Springer Nature is the parent company, one of the world’s largest and most respected academic publishing groups. Springer is a major publishing brand within that group. - DeepSeek



At the invitation of Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim of Malaysia, ASEAN’s rotating chair, Premier Li Qiang (right) shakes hands with a Malaysian official upon arrives at Kuala Lumpur International Airport to attend the leaders’ meetings on East Asian cooperation in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, yesterday. (Related stories on pages 6, 7 and 12).

- Xinhua

China has world’s most comprehensive maritime judicial system: report

BEIJING – A report from China’s Supreme People’s Court shows that the country has developed the world’s most comprehensive maritime judicial system, with the largest number of cases and the widest range of case types.

The report on maritime trials by Chinese courts was submitted yesterday to a session of the Standing Committee of the 14th National People’s Congress (NPC), the top legislature, for review.

According to the report, China established its first group of maritime

courts following a decision adopted by the NPC Standing Committee in November 1984. Over the past four decades, the country has set up 11 maritime courts with cross-regional jurisdiction and 42 detached tribunals.

The report notes that the number and scope of maritime cases have grown significantly during this period. Annual caseloads have surged from just 18 in 1984 to 34,400 in 2024. Case types have expanded from traditional maritime trade and shipping disputes to new areas such as marine resource

development, environmental protection, port and terminal construction, and ocean-related cultural and tourism industries.

China has also played a key role in shaping international maritime law. The Beijing Convention on the Judicial Sale of Ships, initiated through China’s judicial practice, became the first international maritime convention adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to be named after a Chinese city, according to the report. - Xinhua

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The Macau Post Daily

China, US reach basic consensuses on properly addressing several key economic, trade issues: China int’l trade rep

- Story on p. 7

Israel insists it calls shots in Gaza despite truce

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insisted yesterday that Israel would decide for itself when to strike its foes and which countries could join an international security force in Gaza, as Egyptian recovery crews arrived.

- Story on p. 10

East Timor joins ASEAN after 14-year campaign

East Timor joined the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) bloc as its 11th member state yesterday, after 14 years of campaigning.

- Story on p. 12

Police nab woman for stealing gurines from temples

Ida Cheong

A local woman was arrested on Thursday on suspicion of stealing nine “Earth God”* statuettes from four local temples, including three that were found in her home, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Chong Kam Leong said during a regular press conference yesterday.

In total, another 50 statuettes of divinities were also found at her flat, Chong said.

The suspect was identified as a 38-year-old local woman surnamed Lau who claimed to be jobless.

According to Chong, the Judiciary Police received reports from four temples in Coloane and Taipa between Tuesday and Thursday that nine “Earth God” statuettes were suspected to have been stolen, with the estimated losses ranging from several hundred to 3,000 patacas.

PJ officers identified the suspect and discovered that Lau had driven near the temples on the night of the incidents before proceeding on foot to steal the figurines.

Chong said that Lau was arrested on Thursday in the Barra district, adding that she refused to cooperate. A subsequent search of her car and home led

to the recovery of three “Earth God” statuettes matching the descriptions provided by the four temples. Furthermore, additional 50 or so statuettes of deities were found at her flat.

Chong added that the origins of the approximately 50 statuettes had not been confirmed at the time of the press conference, but the police suspect that the 50 statuettes were all stolen by the suspect. All the figurines suspected to have been stolen have been seized as evidence, and the case remains under further investigation, Chong said.

Chong urged temple administrators or members of the public discovering that their “Earth God” statuettes have gone missing to report their suspicions to the police as soon as possible.

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

* *Earth God aka Tudigong (土地公), literally translated as “Lord of the Land” or “Earth God,” is a tutelary deity in Chinese folk religion, as well as Taoism and Buddhism. Tudigong is the “divine magistrate” of a specific local area village, neighbourhood, field, or even a single household. - DeepSeek*



This undated handout photo provided by the Judiciary Police (PJ) shows three “Earth God” statuettes stolen from local temples, with their faces covered as a sign of respect for the divinities, found in the suspected thief’s home.

2025 GEG Lusofonia Festival celebrates with music, dance, cuisine

Khalel Vallo

The 2025 Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) Lusofonia Festival, which opened on Friday, invites residents and tourists to immerse themselves in the diverse cultures of the Portuguese-speaking world, with a special focus on Angolan culture.

The festival is being held at the Taipa Houses, running from last Friday to yesterday, and from this Friday through Sunday, showcasing the cultural and culinary heritage of Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs) through their respective music, traditional dance, arts and crafts, and cuisine.

With 10 Portuguese-speaking communities represented, comprising Angola, Brazil, Cabo Verde (Cape Verde), Guinea-Bissau,

Mozambique, Portugal, São Tomé and Príncipe, Timor-Leste (East Timor), India’s Goa, Daman and Diu, and the Macanese community, visitors can explore cultural products, enjoy performances by over 40 artistes, and taste specialties from the Portuguese-speaking world.

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

Friday’s opening ceremony was officiated by Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) President Deland Leong Wai Man and other local and foreign officials, including Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) Director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, and Consul General of Portugal Alexandre

José dos Reis Leitão, who is simultaneously accredited in Hong Kong and Macau.

The festival’s cultural offerings include performances on two stages, traditional games, and a temporary restaurant serving dishes from across the participating communities. The festival also features family-friendly activities such as table football (also known as foosball in North America) and interactive experiences for children.

According to an IC statement provided on Friday, the festival aims to provide a “cultural feast”, this time focusing on Angolan culture, cuisine and music.

The two-weekend event is sponsored by Macau’s integrated resort operator Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG). ■



This handout photo provided by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) on Friday shows IC President Deland Leong Wai Man (centre) posing with certificates of appreciation for the representatives of 10 Portuguese-speaking communities during Friday’s opening ceremony of the 2025 Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) Lusofonia Festival at the Taipa Houses amphitheatre.

Carnival aims to promote heritage protection law

Ida Cheong

The opening ceremony for the two-day “Law on the Conservation of Cultural Heritage” Promotion Carnival was held on Saturday, aiming to foster a stronger public appreciation and stewardship of cultural heritage through integration of knowledge and principles of the specific law into a diverse range of educational activities.

The carnival ended yesterday.

The event was held at Calçada da Igreja de São Lázaro (瘋堂斜巷) and Rua de Sanches de Miranda (美珊枝街), themed “Cultural Heritage – Protected and Shared by All,” featuring multiple interactive booth games and photo spots.

Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) President Deland Leong Wai Man said in a speech at the opening ceremony that this year marks the 20th anniversary of the successful inscription of the “Historic Centre of Macao” on the UNESCO World Heritage List, adding that over the past two decades, the government has actively enhanced the legal framework related to the city’s cultural heritage, including the establishment of the Cultural Heritage Protection Law in 2013 and the regulation of the Protection

and Management Plan for The Historic Centre of Macao in 2024.

Leong added that in order to celebrate this significant 20-year milestone, her bureau has launched various heritage-themed workshops and didactical activities, including the “Monument Restoration Vocational Training Course,” which has been provided continuously since 2022 for frontline construction and management personnel.

According to a statement released by the Cultural Affairs Bureau,

the Cultural Heritage Protection Law officially came into effect on March 1, 2014, establishing the legal framework for the protection, management, restoration, and revitalisation of Macau’s cultural heritage. The provisions cover the safeguarding of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, specifying procedures for heritage designation, protective measures, the establishment of buffer zones, and penalty mechanisms for violations. ■



Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) President Deland Leong Wai Man addresses the opening ceremony of the two-day “Law on the Conservation of Cultural Heritage” Promotion Carnival at Calçada da Igreja de São Lázaro (瘋堂斜巷) on Saturday.

– Photo: Ida Cheong

Published since Aug 2004

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- Printed by Tipografia Welfare Lda., 82-86 Rua dos Pescadores
- Wire services – AFP, Xinhua
- Chatbots: Poe, DeepSeek

Macau POST

Macau Weather

CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY INTERVALS.

LIGHT RAIN AT NIGHT.
FORCE 3 TO 4 NORTH TO NORTHEASTERLY WINDS, OCCASIONALLY FORCE 5 WITH GUSTS.

RELATIVE HUMIDITY
WILL RANGE BETWEEN
50% AND 80%.



21°C~27°C

Source: SMG

Another wet market revitalisation project set to enhance residents' well-being



This photo taken earlier this month shows the Tamagnini Barbosa Market Municipal Complex, located in the southern part of Toi San district, north of the now-defunct greyhound racetrack (Yat Yuen Canidrome).



A stallholder works at his stall selling local favourites on the ground floor of Tamagnini Barbosa (Toi San) Market earlier this month. – Photos: Tony Wong

Commentary by Tony Wong

The government's upcoming project to revitalise the Tamagnini Barbosa Market is good news for many residents. The plan, scheduled to begin in the first quarter of next year, will convert the entire first floor into a cooked food centre. Based on a recent visit and the recently announced project details, I believe this new facility will significantly enhance the well-being of those living in the neighbourhood.

The Tamagnini Barbosa district in the northern peninsula is known as Toi San in Cantonese.

While the wet-market municipal complex in the Toi San district currently has several stalls selling local favourites on the ground floor, it lacks a dedicated cooked food centre with a dining area. Earlier this month, after taking photos of the market, I bought a peanut-stuffed egg waffle from one of these stalls. With no seating available, I had to eat it in the street – an experience that was far from ideal.

This made me realise that the absence of seating discourages many people, including myself, from buying food there, as we prefer to sit down to eat.

Toi San Market opened in 2005.

Currently, only four of Macau's eight wet markets have cooked food centres: those at the S. Domingos, S. Lourenço, Iao Hon, and Patane municipal complexes. Unlike the first three, the Patane facility is officially classified as a "food court" due to its high-end design.

The upcoming revamp of Tamagnini Barbosa Market, details of which were announced earlier this month, is the latest project demonstrating the government's commitment to revitalising the city's wet markets. The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) is the public entity tasked with this management.

The bureau has made steady progress in its campaign. This is evidenced by the renovated Horta da Mitra Market, which reopened in January last year; the revamped Red Market (officially known as Almirante Lacerda Market), which resumed operations in May last year; and the upgraded Patane cooked food centre, which reopened as a "high-class harbour-view" food court in April last year.

Moreover, the Taipa Market is currently being revamped to convert its first floor into a dining space with 19 stalls for light meals or cultural and creative products. This project, which includes a new rooftop café, is scheduled for completion before the end of this year.

IAM officials indicated earlier this year that the S. Domingos wet market in the city centre will likely be the next for revitalisation after Tamagnini Barbosa Market.

150-seat cooked food centre with 16 stalls

After informing public broadcaster TDM about the project last month, the bureau held a press conference earlier this month to announce the details.

There are currently 23 stalls selling fresh food and traditional groceries across the market's two floors, plus nine stalls selling local delicacies on the ground floor. IAM officials acknowledged that many stalls in the market are currently vacant.

The revamp will convert the entire first floor into a cooked food centre with 16 stalls, while the entire ground floor will be dedicated to selling fresh food and traditional groceries. The ground floor will be reconfigured to house 23 stalls, operated by the current stallholders. As the total number of stalls will be reduced, their sizes will be enlarged.

The current nine stalls selling local delicacies will be relocated to the new cooked food centre on the first floor. The other seven stalls will be allocated to new operators through a public tender. The centre will have around 150 seats with various table types.

After the renovation, stalls selling the same types of fresh food will be grouped together. According to the project's floor plan, the 23 ground-floor stalls will comprise: one beef stall, one frozen meat stall, two pork stalls, six fish stalls, three chilled food stalls, four vegetable stalls, two fruit stalls, two tofu and bean sprout stalls, and two traditional grocery stalls.

IAM officials also noted that the new fish stalls will be designed to separate customer areas from logistics areas.

The market currently has two lifts; the renovation will install a third. All three will be barrier-free after the revamp, and a nursing room will be added to the cooked food centre.

Cooked food centre to open in Q3 2026, fresh food stalls to reopen in early 2027

The revamp will be carried out in two stages. The first stage, renovating the first floor for the cooked food centre, is scheduled to start in the first quarter of next year and be completed in the third quarter. During this time, stalls on

the ground floor will remain open, while the fresh food stalls from the first floor will be relocated downstairs.

During my visit earlier this month, preparatory work was already underway on the ground floor to facilitate this move before the first stage begins.

After the cooked food centre opens in the third quarter of next year, the second stage will begin, involving the renovation of the ground floor. This stage is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2027. Stallholders can choose to suspend their business during this time, but IAM will arrange

temporary stalls in a yet-to-be-determined location for those who wish to continue operating.

Food court or not?

Lastly, the artist's rendition presented earlier this month shows that the future cooked food centre in Toi San will have very different décor to the existing centres at S. Domingos, S. Lourenço, and Iao Hon. In fact, it appears quite similar to the Patane food court.

This raises the question: will the bureau eventually classify the new facility at Tamagnini Barbosa Market as a "food court" before its opening? ■

Plan for granting financial support for the scrapping of gasoline-powered motorcycles and their replacement by new electric motorcycles



Amount of funding and fee waivers: Up to

MOP 8,800



For more information on the Plan, please scan the QR-Code.



For information on public charging spots for electric motorcycles, please scan the QR-Code.

Funding Scope:
Owners of all validly registered gasoline-powered motorcycles in Macao

Implementing the National Dual Carbon Goals



Int'l Manga Artists' Exhibition Macau 2025 opens

Khalel Vallo

The "International Manga Artists' Exhibition Macau 2025" opened on Thursday at the city centre's Livraria Portuguesa ("Portuguese Bookshop"), bringing together more than 30 comic artists from across the globe to celebrate creativity and cultural exchange through the art of manga*.

According to a statement provided by the Association of Promoting Macau Comics and Animation Cultural Exchange (APMCACE), the exhibition is organised by the former and sponsored by the Cultural Development Fund (NDF), running until Saturday.

The exhibition showcases works by artists including the United States' Chad Hardin, Italy's Misu Yamaneko, and Japan's Hiroshi Kanatani. The exhibition aims to promote artistic and technical dialogue between local and visiting creators while encouraging the growth of the city's comic industry.

The participating artists spoke about their creative journeys and insights during yesterday's opening ceremony, highlighting the growing global appeal of manga culture.

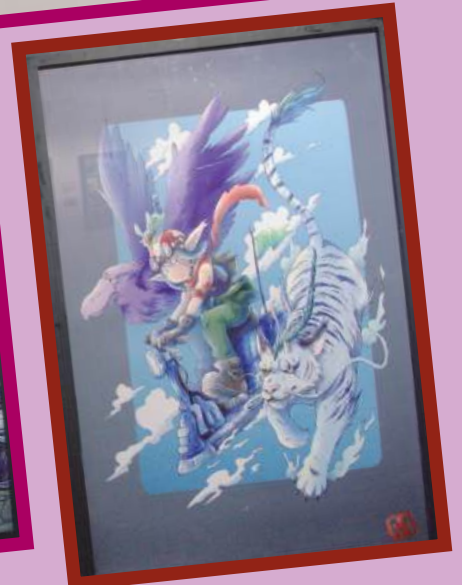
Speaking to the *Post*, Hardin, known for his work on Marvel Comics and DC Comics, reflected on the evolution of the comic industry and his passion for the medium. "When I went to a comic book store at 12 years old, I knew that's what I wanted to do for the rest of my life," Hardin said.

He noted the shifts in readership habits over time, observing that "people consume comics differently now – digital downloads have changed how we measure success." Hardin also said how Japanese manga influenced his early style, despite publishers once discouraging it. "I was told to stop drawing manga and draw American style," he said. "Then a few years later, manga became mainstream. The moral of the story? Stick to your guns."

Through exhibitions like this, Macau aims to continue to strengthen its role as a hub for cultural exchange, offering a platform for creators and audiences alike to celebrate the enduring power of storytelling through art, the statement noted.

**Manga ("whimsical drawings") is a diverse and sophisticated medium of Japanese comic art and storytelling, characterised by its unique visual language, serialised publication format, and categorisation by target demographics. It is a massive cultural export that has captivated millions of readers worldwide. – DeepSeek*

Photos by Khalel Vallo



Govt proposes to raise minimum wage by 2.94 pct to 35 patacas per hour

18,200 workers to benefit from one-pataca rise

Tony Wong

The government has finished drafting a bill that proposes to raise Macau's statutory minimum wage by one pataca an hour to 35 patacas per hour from the current 34 patacas, representing an increase of 2.94 percent.

The implementation of Macau's overall minimum wage system started on November 1, 2020. Since then, all employees in the private sector, except domestic helpers and those with disabilities, have been covered by a statutory minimum wage of 32 patacas an hour – equivalent to 256 patacas a day, 1,536 patacas a week, or 6,656 patacas a month – before the amount was raised to the current 34 patacas an hour – equivalent to 272 patacas a day, 1,632 patacas a week, or 7,072 patacas a month – on January 1 of last year, an increase of 6.25 percent.

The bill was announced by Secretary for Administration and Justice Wong Sio Chak, the new spokesman for the government's Executive Council, during a press conference at Government Headquarters on Friday. He said that the council, the government's top advisory body, has completed its discussion of the bill's final draft proposing amendments to the city's overall minimum wage law.

Wong took office as the govern-

ment's secretary for Administration and Justice on October 16, succeeding André Cheong Weng Chon, who became the Legislative Assembly's (AL) president on that day. Cheong was appointed last month by Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai to the legislature's new four-year term, which started on October 16, when he was elected by his peers as the hemicycle's speaker during a plenary session. Correspondingly, Sam also appointed Wong as a member of the Executive Council and its spokesman, succeeding Cheong, effective from October 16.

Friday's press conference was the first one that Wong chaired in his capacity as the spokesman for the government's Executive Council. During the press conference, Wong expressed confidence in his ability to fulfil the new role, pledging a commitment to continuously familiarise himself with the responsibilities.

The amendment bill announced on Friday has been submitted to the Legislative Assembly, which will schedule a plenary session for the debate and vote on its outline. If the outline is passed during the upcoming, still unscheduled plenary session, the amendment bill will be passed to one of the legislature's standing committees for an article-by-article review, after which it will be resubmitted to another plenary



Secretary for Administration and Justice Wong Sio Chak, the new spokesman for the government's Executive Council, speaks during Friday's press conference at Government Headquarters.

– Photo courtesy of TDM

session for its second and final debate and article-by-article vote.

The amendment bill proposes to raise the statutory minimum wage to 35 patacas an hour – equivalent to 280 patacas a day, 1,680 patacas a week, or 7,280 patacas a month – effective from January 1 next year. The city's overall minimum wage law requires the government to review the amount of the statutory minimum wage every two years.

The government completed its first review of the minimum wage amount, assessing the implementation between November 1, 2020, and October 31, 2022, in 2023. Later

that year, the government submitted a minimum wage amendment bill proposing to raise the amount to 34 patacas an hour to the Legislative Assembly (AL), which passed the bill in its final reading in December 2023. The current minimum wage of 34 patacas an hour has been in force since January 1 of last year.

During the press conference, Wong noted that the government completed its second review of the minimum wage amount earlier this year, which assessed the implementation between November 1, 2022, and October 31, 2024. According to Wong, this review evaluated the city's economic situation and labour market, as well as changes in employees' overall salary levels and employers' business operations during the two-year period.

Wong said that the government is now proposing to raise the city's statutory minimum wage to 35 patacas per hour, an increase of 2.94 percent, after considering the review's findings, consulting representatives from the labour and business sectors, and striking a balance between improved protection of workers' rights and benefits and the potential impact of a minimum wage hike on the city's business environment and consumers' ability to adapt to price increases.

Wong also mentioned that the proposed minimum wage increase is

estimated to benefit 18,200 workers, most of whom are employed in the property management and cleaning service sectors. After completing its second review of the minimum wage amount earlier this year, the government presented its proposal to representatives from the labour and business sectors during a meeting of the Standing Council on Social Concerted Action last month. During that meeting, it proposed raising the amount to between 35 and 37 patacas per hour, an increase of between 2.94 percent and 8.82 percent. The council is a government-appointed consultative body tasked with advising the government on its labour policies.

During Friday's press conference, reporters enquired about the government's final decision to propose raising the minimum wage by merely one pataca per hour to 35 patacas. Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) Director Chan Un Tong replied that the proposed minimum wage of 35 patacas an hour would be a "moderate, appropriate" amount that could strike the right balance between the labour and business sectors. He emphasised that the protection of low-income workers could be improved while ensuring that businesses' competitiveness would not be significantly impacted by the proposed one-pataca increase in the minimum wage. ■

Wolf United SGS win 3x3 GBA Tour 2025

Khalel Vallo

The 2025 3x3 Greater Bay Area Tour Macau Finals concluded with Wolf United SGS capturing the championship title after four days of intense competition held at Wynn Palace and the Ruins of St. Paul's.

The competition was co-organised by the Sports Bureau (ID) and StarMac Entertainment & Production Ltd, in conjunction with the Macau-China Basketball Association, Chaiioi Sports Company Limited, and Zhuixing Entertainment (Zhuhai Hengqin) Company Limited. Wynn Resorts provided one of the venues. The other was provided by the bureau.

Led by Latvian players Zigmars Raimo and Rihards Kuksiks, Hongkonger Chris Lam, and Igo

Kenya from Japan, Wolf United SGS emerged victorious in the final showdown, defeating the opposing team, Dongguan, by scoring 21-16 to secure their championship title.

After the final, Raimo commended the organisers and fans, saying that "it was a great final, and a great atmosphere. The fans are loving basketball here, and we are lucky we became champions." He added that playing in Macau was "incredible," praising the historical setting and the event's growing reputation on the 3x3 circuit.

The successful conclusion of the Macau Finals aimed to reinforce the city's role as a hub for regional sports events, with Wolf United SGS's victory concluding the 3x3 GBA Tour 2025 season. ■



Wolf United SGS champions (from left to right) – Rihards Kuksiks, Igo Kenya, Zigmars Raimo and Chris Lam – pose for a group photo during last night's "3x3 GBA Tour 2025 – Macau Finals" at the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Ruins of St. Paul's landmark.

– Photo: Khalel Vallo

Oktoberfest at MGM marks 15-year milestone

Rui Pastorin

The "Oktoberfest Macau at MGM 2025" celebration launched on Friday at MGM COTAI, bringing the festive atmosphere, food, beer, and music of the traditional Bavarian festival to Macau.

Held on the Roof Terrace of the Cotai integrated resort, this year marks the event's 15th anniversary, having welcomed more than 190,000 guests since its inception.

Speaking at Friday's opening ceremony, Kenneth Feng Xiaofeng, president and executive director of MGM China Holdings Limited, said: "This year, the festival will welcome its 200,000th guest – a true milestone that reflects MGM's long-standing commitment to developing cultural and tourism products for Macau.

Through this event, we aim to create synergy between gastronomy, tourism, culture, festivities, and entertainment, continuously injecting new energy into the city."

Other officiating guests at the opening ceremony included the Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany in Hong Kong Annika Bolten-Drutschmann, Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) Acting Director Cheng Wai Tong, Director of the Economic Affairs Department of the Liaison



Kenneth Feng Xiaofeng (second row, fifth from right), president and executive director of MGM China Holdings Limited, and Annika Bolten-Drutschmann (second row, sixth from right), consul general of the Federal Republic of Germany in Hong Kong, pose with other officiating guests during the opening ceremony of Oktoberfest Macau at MGM 2025 at MGM COTAI on Friday. – Photo: Rui Pastorin

Office of the Central People's Government in the Macau SAR, Sun Yaohua, German-Macau Business Association (GMBA) Chairman Tony Un (袁松山); and Högl Fun Band leader Michael Högl.

The Högl Fun Band performed several pieces at the opening ceremony, including the festival's original theme, "Nei Hou, Macau!", alongside a mix of traditional Bavarian tunes and pop classics.

In addition, the event features carnival games and children's

activities. This year also sees the introduction of a "Best Outfit Award". According to an MGM statement, guests are encouraged to dress in themed attire to "embrace the Oktoberfest spirit."

The event runs through this Sunday, from 6 p.m. to midnight daily. Tickets can be purchased at the service counters at MGM MACAU and MGM COTAI. Further details are available at: <https://www.tickets.mgm.mo/oktoberfest2025> ■

Lamborghini crashes into restaurant after driver hits accelerator, injuring 6



Firefighters work at the scene on Saturday where a sports car crashed into a restaurant in Block 3 of the Kuong Wa San Chun residential estate. — Photo courtesy of TDM

Staff Reporter

A Lamborghini crashed into a restaurant in Areia Preta district on Saturday afternoon after the driver mistakenly hit the accelerator instead of the brake, injuring six people. The authorities confirmed the injured comprised the driver, two staff members, and three patrons.

A Public Security Police (PSP) officer and a Fire Services Bureau (CB) officer briefed reporters on the incident at the scene.

The accident occurred near the Kuong Wa San Chun (廣華新邨) residential estate at around 2:30 p.m. when the car ploughed into the restaurant on the ground floor of Block 3.

According to the CB officer, the six injured individuals, aged between 37 and 75, were the male driver, two female restaurant employees, and three male customers.

All six sustained minor injuries, with one patron suffering a head injury.

They were rushed to either the private Kiang Wu Hospital or the public Conde de São Januário Hospital Centre for treatment.

The PSP officer confirmed that the driver passed a breathalyser test.

The driver, who is in his sixties, told police he accidentally hit the accelerator instead of the brake while attempting to park outside the restaurant.

The PSP officer stated that while the police are still investigating the exact cause of the accident, the driver could face charges of causing bodily harm by negligence. Based on the investigation's findings, the case may be transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP).

While the authorities did not reveal the brand of the luxury sports car, press photos showed that it is an Italian-made Lamborghini, a brand owned by Germany's Volkswagen Group. ■

Honoring history and consolidating consensus

China Daily Editorial

The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, voted on Friday to designate October 25 as a new statutory national commemoration day.

The decision to establish the Commemoration Day of Taiwan's Restoration is of profound historical, political and emotional significance. It reaffirms the irrefutable fact that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China: an undeniable truth enshrined in history, international law and the collective memory of the Chinese nation.

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the end of Japanese colonial rule of the island and its restoration to China, following Japan's surrender at the end of World War II.

That is why the Chinese mainland held a series of commemorative events on Tuesday to mark the occasion, reaffirming the nation's shared historical memory and honoring those who gave their lives for the country. The commemoration was not only a tribute to history but also a reaffirmation of China's commitment to peaceful reunification and national rejuvenation.

That Taiwan's return to China was a direct outcome of the victory in the World Anti-Fascist War is clearly recorded in legally binding international documents, including

the Cairo Declaration (1943), the Potsdam Proclamation (1945), and Japan's Instrument of Surrender (1945). Moreover, the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758, adopted in 1971, makes it clear that there is but one China in the world and the Government of the People's Republic of China is the only legitimate representative of the whole of China, including the Taiwan region. Together, these documents constitute irrefutable evidence that Taiwan's status as part of China has long been settled.

It is therefore revealing that the secessionist-minded Lai Ching-te authorities in Taiwan banned local officials from attending the mainland's commemorative events this week. A move that not only exposed the insecurity of the Lai administration but also laid bare its political agenda of seeking "Taiwan independence" by seeking to undermine the national identity shared by compatriots on both sides of the Strait.

Against this backdrop, the NPC Standing Committee's decision to formally establish the Commemoration Day of Taiwan's Restoration is of far-reaching importance. As a statutory commemoration, it provides a national platform to honor history, strengthen collective memory and consolidate consensus for national

reunification, serving as a constant reminder to younger generations that Taiwan has always been and always will be part of China.

It is telling that this decision came one day after the conclusion of the fourth plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee, which stressed promoting the peaceful development of relations across the Taiwan Strait and advancing the cause of national reunification. The establishment of the commemoration day is thus not only a historical tribute but also a forward-looking step in implementing that objective.

The cause of national reunification is both just and unstoppable. It is an internal affair that brooks no external interference. Any attempt to challenge the one-China principle or support "Taiwan independence" runs counter to the trend of history and the will of 1.4 billion Chinese people.

By designating October 25 as the Commemoration Day of Taiwan's Restoration, China is not only honoring its past but also charting a course toward a future in which the historical truth of one China is upheld and national identity is reaffirmed. The secessionists' cause is doomed to fail as the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation moves ever closer to fulfillment.

— Courtesy of China Daily

Strengthen alignment for regional development

China Daily Editorial

In an era marked by increasing global challenges and shifting geopolitical landscapes, the fruitful outcomes of Chinese Premier Li Qiang's visit to Singapore on the weekend signal the two countries' shared commitment to strengthen their cooperation and coordination, safeguard free trade and make unremitting efforts to support the Global Development Initiative to promote stability and prosperity in the region and beyond.

Premier Li reiterated China's dedication to honoring the foundational aspirations of diplomatic ties between the two countries and nurturing their long-standing friendship. As he said, reinforced political trust, expanded pragmatic cooperation and a deepening of bilateral relations will not only advance the two countries' respective modernization goals but also contribute significantly to regional peace, stability and development.

China's cooperation with its Southeast Asian neighbor sets a good example for the region of synergizing development strategies, deepening cooperation in various fields, establishing close communication and coordination on international and regional affairs, and jointly upholding multilateralism and free trade, so as to make greater contributions to regional peace and prosperity.

After his visit to Singapore, Li is scheduled to visit Malaysia, the

current rotating chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, where he will participate in the 28th China-ASEAN Summit, the 28th ASEAN+3 Summit, the 20th East Asia Summit and the fifth Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Leaders' Meeting in Kuala Lumpur from today to tomorrow.

China has been ASEAN's largest trading partner for 16 consecutive years, while ASEAN has been China's largest trading partner five years running.

Since its inception, the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area has been a cornerstone of economic relations between China and Southeast Asia. Initiated in 2002 and fully realized by 2010, CAFTA was China's first free trade area with external parties and ASEAN's first with a major economy.

China's cooperation with ASEAN countries has expanded from traditional areas to encompass the digital and green economies, supply chain connectivity and standards harmonization these years.

As the world grapples with economic uncertainty and the rise of protectionist sentiments, the completion, in May, of the negotiations on CAFTA 3.0, which is anticipated to be formally signed by the end of this year, demonstrates that by adhering to the principles of dialogue, cooperation and mutual respect, countries can achieve economic prosperity and stability.

The success of this free

trade region is a testament to the commitment of China and ASEAN to free trade and multilateralism. It demonstrates how diverse economies can come together to create a framework that not only addresses current challenges but also anticipates future needs. In doing so, it provides a model for other regions and countries seeking to navigate the complexities of the modern global economy.

Also, regional cooperation between China and ASEAN has yielded fruitful results and win-win benefits under the impetus of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

As the world's largest free trade agreement, the RCEP has structurally deepened regional economic integration through institutionalized trade and investment facilitation and regulatory coordination. Meanwhile, institutional innovations in bilateral investment, including the RCEP's negative list approach and efficient dispute resolution mechanism, have markedly boosted regional investment activity.

The world should take note of these landmark achievements, as they offer valuable lessons on the power of collaboration in an increasingly interconnected globe. Li's visit to Singapore and his participation in the ASEAN meetings in Malaysia are conducive to injecting greater certainty into regional economic development. — (Related news article on p.7)

— Courtesy of China Daily

Na Tcha phantom at the Santo Antonio Market Tour

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China, US reach basic consensus on properly addressing several key economic, trade issues: China int'l trade rep

KUALA LUMPUR — China and the United States reached basic consensus on properly addressing several important economic and trade issues of respective concerns, and will then go through their respective domestic approval procedures, Li Chenggang, China international trade representative with the Ministry of Commerce (MOC) and vice minister of commerce, said in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Li made the remarks when briefing the press following the new round of China-US economic and trade talks held over the past two days.

Over the past month or so, China-US economic and trade relations have experienced some turbulence and fluctuations, which have drawn attention from the world, Li said.

He said that since the China-US economic and trade talks in

Geneva this May, China has strictly followed the consensus reached in multiple phone calls between the two heads of state, faithfully and earnestly implemented the outcomes of the economic and trade talks, and carefully safeguarded the hard-won, relatively stable China-U.S. economic and trade cooperation relationship.

Such turbulence and fluctuations are not what China wishes to see, Li noted.

Over the past two days, the economic and trade teams from China and the United States engaged in in-depth and candid discussion on issues including the US Section 301 measures on China's maritime, logistics and shipbuilding sectors, extension of the suspension of reciprocal tariffs, fentanyl-related tariff and counternarcotics cooperation, expanding trade, and export controls, said Li.

The two sides conducted constructive discussions on solutions to properly address the concerns of both sides, and reached basic consensus, he added.

The US side expressed its position in a tough manner, and the Chinese side remained resolute in safeguarding its interests, Li said.

He noted that throughout the talks, the economic and trade teams of both countries maintained mutual respect and engaged in dialogue on an equal footing.

Going forward, the two sides will further enhance communication and exchanges, working actively to foster more stable and sound development of China-US economic and trade relations, said Li.

Li also expressed his appreciation to the Malaysian government for its warm hospitality and thoughtful arrangements as the host. — Xinhua



Vice Premier He Lifeng (right), also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, poses for a photo with US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent prior to their talks in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Saturday. — Xinhua

Li Qiang's Singapore visit strengthens ties, expands practical cooperation

Analysis

SINGAPORE — Premier Li Qiang concluded his official visit to Singapore yesterday, reaffirming the two countries' commitment to deepening cooperation and jointly promoting stability and prosperity in the region and beyond.

During the two-day visit, Premier Li met with Singaporean leaders and attended a roundtable with the business communities of both nations. He called for deeper collaboration across a wide range of sectors and welcomed Singaporean enterprises to share in the opportunities arising from China's continued development.

Upon his arrival on Saturday, Li highlighted that the development of China-Singapore relations has maintained strong momentum since the establishment of diplomatic ties 35 years ago. The relationship, he said, has been characterized by growing political mutual trust, fruitful practical cooperation, and closer people-to-people exchanges, setting a model of mutual learning and win-win cooperation among nations.

China, he said, stands ready to work together with Singapore to strengthen the alignment of development strategies, comprehensively expand mutually beneficial cooperation, continue to work together in the modernization drive, and contribute more to upholding true multilateralism and promoting common development in the region.

China and Singapore share strong economic ties as close neighbors and important partners. China has been Singapore's largest trading partner since 2013, while Singapore remains China's leading source of new foreign investment.

Flagship projects such as the Suzhou Industrial Park, the Sino-Singapore Tianjin Eco-City and the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor — a multimodal transportation network — have demonstrated the enduring vitality and resilience of practical cooperation.

People-to-people exchanges have also flourished. Since the introduction of mutual visa-free travel in February 2024, China has become Singapore's largest source of tourists. In the first nine months of this year, Singapore recorded 2.5 million arrivals from China. According to the Singapore Tourism



Premier Li Qiang (left) shakes hands with Singaporean Acting President Eddie Teo at Istana, the country's presidential palace, in Singapore, yesterday. — Xinhua

Board, the Chinese mainland also ranked first in tourism receipts.

Li's visit came shortly after the fourth plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, which deliberated over and adopted the recommendations for formulating the 15th Five-Year Plan, which, Li said, would open new opportunities for China-Singapore cooperation.

During talks with Singaporean Prime Minister Lawrence Wong on Saturday, Li said China is willing to strengthen development alignment with Singapore, make full use of bilateral cooperation mechanisms, and maintain the strong momentum of two-way trade and investment.

He welcomed more Singaporean enterprises to invest in China and expressed hope that Singapore would continue to support Chinese businesses operating here.

For his part, Wong voiced full confidence in China's economic prospects and reaffirmed Singapore's commitment to continued investment. He said Singapore stands ready to further enrich the substance of the all-round high-quality future-oriented partnership with China.

Following their talks, Li and Wong jointly witnessed the signing of several cooperation

agreements covering areas such as the digital economy, green development, information and communications, transportation, food safety, emergency management, and third-party collaboration.

Artificial intelligence (AI), the green transition, smart cities, and the digital economy are the future engines of growth, and China's progress in these areas complements Singapore's own development priorities, Hoo Tiang Boon, an associate professor at Nanyang Technological University, told Xinhua.

Yesterday, at the Singapore-China Business Roundtable, Li reiterated China's commitment to high-level opening-up. He pledged that China would continue to ease market access, improve the business environment, ensure equal treatment for domestic and foreign enterprises, address their legitimate concerns, and support both Chinese and Singaporean companies in pursuing greater development.

"Despite global headwinds, China remains a growth market for Singapore companies," the Singapore Business Federation (SBF) said in a press release. The SBF announced earlier this week that it will lead a delegation of over 500 representatives from 57 companies to the upcoming 8th China

International Import Expo (CIIE).

"The CIIE continues to serve as an important platform for Singapore businesses to engage Chinese and international buyers, reflecting growing confidence and sustained interest in the China market," it said.

At yesterday's event, Li also called on both sides to upgrade cooperation from "complementary elements" to "collaborative innovation," from "bilateral cooperation" to "tripartite cooperation," and to move from "participating in global division of labor" toward "jointly leading the formulation of rules."

Business representatives at the event said China-Singapore economic and trade cooperation continues to drive growth and prosperity in both countries and across the region. Singaporean enterprises expressed optimism about China's long-term outlook, emphasizing that the Chinese modernization process will generate new opportunities for nations worldwide, including Singapore.

During his visit, Li also stressed the importance of jointly upholding multilateralism, especially at a time when the world faces complex and interwoven challenges.

In a meeting with Singapore's Acting President Eddie Teo yesterday, Li reaffirmed China's readiness to work with Singapore to safeguard multilateralism and free trade, promote an equal and orderly multipolar world as well as a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization.

Li said China stands ready to work with Singapore and other ASEAN members to ensure the success of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area 3.0 and achieve greater development.

He also told Wong a day before that, as the multilateral trading system comes under strain, China is ready to cooperate with Singapore to strengthen communication and collaboration within the United Nations and other mechanisms, oppose unilateralism and protectionism, and uphold free trade and economic globalization.

Echoing Li's remarks, Wong said Singapore is committed to deepening multilateral cooperation with China, defending free trade, and advancing regional and global stability and prosperity. — Xinhua

Year-long funeral starts for Thailand's former queen Sirikit



Mourners wait at Chulalongkorn Hospital for the body of Thailand's former queen Sirikit to be transported to the Grand Palace in Bangkok yesterday. — AFP

Thanaporn Promyamyai

BANGKOK — Thousands of grieving Thai royalists lined the streets of Bangkok yesterday, saluting a procession taking former queen Sirikit's body to lie in state for a year-long funeral at the capital's Grand Palace.

Members of the royal family are venerated in Thailand, treated by many as semi-divine figures and lavished with glowing media coverage and gold-adorned portraits hanging in public spaces and private homes nationwide.

Former queen Sirikit, the mother of the current King Vajiralongkorn and wife of the longest-reigning monarch, died Friday at the age of 93.

Sirikit's body was carried in a slow-moving ambulance from Chulalongkorn Hospital late yesterday afternoon, flanked by motorbike outriders on a 10-kilometre procession to the Grand Palace.

Crowds of nurses clasped their hands and bowed as the convoy passed, while other spectators clutched portraits of the queen or wept as ranks of saluting police officers fell to one knee.

"I want to send her off for the last time, on her last journey, as one of her children — as a Thai who loves and respects her," 56-year-old Boontham Kornwaen told AFP outside the hospital.

The former queen's body will lie in state at the seat of the Thai royalty for one year

before cremation.

Black and white tributes to the royal matriarch were beamed onto towering billboards, on TVs in supermarkets and hotel lobbies and as pop-up notices on Thai banking apps.

Television newscasters wore black and media websites turned monochrome, while citizens have been asked to dress in muted colours and curtail celebratory public events for 90 days.

Tanaburdee Srimuang kept a vigil outside the Grand Palace since confirmation of Sirikit's death broke in the early hours of Saturday.

"I am not tired," the 24-year-old told AFP. "I am happy to be here for her for the last time."

About half of the people in a supermarket and on a shopping street in central Bangkok were wearing the traditional Thai mourning colours of black or white, an AFP journalist saw.

K-pop supergroup Blackpink went ahead with sold-out weekend shows at Bangkok's 50,000-seat Rajamangala National Stadium, but attendees were asked "to wear black attire as a mark of mourning".

'Mother of the Nation'

Throughout her 66-year marriage to king Bhumibol Adulyadej, Sirikit carved a reputation as a glamorous fashionista and the nation's caring mother figure.

Some Western media compared Sirikit to former US first lady Jackie Kennedy.

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul delayed his departure to Malaysia on Saturday for a summit of ASEAN leaders to sign a peace deal with Cambodia, witnessed by US President Donald Trump.

But he still jetted out for a quick turnaround endorsement of the pact, made after cross-border clashes in July killed more than 40 people and forced around 300,000 to flee their homes.

"I send my condolences to the Great People of Thailand," Trump posted on social media, en route to Malaysia where the pact was signed yesterday.

The lengthy reign of Sirikit's husband, from 1946 until 2016, was bookended by World War II and Trump's first election win.

Though Vajiralongkorn inherited the throne about nine years ago, many still revere Bhumibol as the nation's most steadfast figurehead — and Sirikit as his constant companion.

She retired from the public eye in recent years, her privacy sealed by strict lese majeste laws that limit what can be reported about the royal family.

Sirikit had "suffered several illnesses" while hospitalised since 2019, including a blood infection this month, the palace said in a statement.

But in her glamorous heyday in the 1960s, she mingled with US presidents and superstars such as Elvis Presley.

At home, she was referred to as the "Mother of the Nation" and her birthday was designated the country's Mother's Day. — AFP

Trump co-signs Thailand-Cambodia ceasefire agreement

Jan Hennop

KUALA LUMPUR — US President Donald Trump co-signed a truce between Thailand and Cambodia during the first stop on his Asia tour yesterday, touting new trade deals with the countries after they agreed to prolong a ceasefire along their border.

Five days of clashes erupted along Thailand and Cambodia's jungle-clad frontier this summer, as a territorial dispute triggered open combat, killing more than 40 people and forcing 300,000 to flee their homes.

Thailand and Cambodia agreed an initial truce in late July after intervention by Trump, as well as Chinese diplomats and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, who chairs the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) bloc.

A new joint declaration was signed by Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul and Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet, as well as Trump and Anwar, after the US leader landed in the Malaysian capital.

"This is a momentous day for all of the people of Southeast Asia, as we sign a historic agreement to end the military conflict between Cambodia and Thailand," Trump said.

The deal, sealed with a firm handshake between the Thai and Cambodian leaders,

contains broad rhetoric confirming both countries' "unwavering commitment to peace and security".

It also says they will organise de-mining efforts along their border, withdraw heavy weapons and allow access to ceasefire monitor teams organised by the ASEAN regional bloc.

Thailand has promised to release 18 Cambodian soldiers it has held in captivity for the past three months.

Soon after the agreement was signed, the White House announced trade deals with Thailand and Cambodia.

A non-binding memorandum of understanding with Thailand outlines increased cooperation on trading rare earth minerals, which are vital to tech products and of which China is the world's leading producer.

The headline of the Cambodian trade deal confirms the 19 percent levy the country had already secured this summer, a let-off from the 36 percent Trump had been threatening in his global tariff blitz.

The Thai-Cambodia truce has generally held since July 29.

But the countries have traded allegations of ceasefire breaches, and analysts say a comprehensive peace pact adjudicating the territorial dispute at the core of the conflict remains elusive. — AFP



Attendees cheer as they hear the news of the signing of a ceasefire agreement between Cambodia and Thailand in Kuala Lumpur, during a wedding in Phnom Penh yesterday. — AFP

ICC rejects claims it is not competent to judge Duterte

THE HAGUE — The International Criminal Court Thursday rejected claims it is not competent to judge the Philippines' former President Rodrigo Duterte, who is accused of crimes against humanity.

Duterte's defence last May contested the court's right to judge the 80-year-old former head of state, saying the Asian country had withdrawn from the court's jurisdiction.

But in a statement Friday, the ICC said it found "that the Court can exercise its jurisdiction in the present case over the crimes alleged against Mr. Duterte that were committed on the territory of the Philippines while it was a State Party."

Duterte faces three charges of crimes against humanity for his involvement in killings committed as part of his "war on drugs", which allegedly claimed thousands of lives.

He was arrested in Manila in March, transferred to the Netherlands, and has been held since in the ICC's detention centre in The Hague.

Shortly after the arrest, Duterte's lawyer, Nicholas Kaufman, told AFP that the court did not have jurisdiction because the Philippines' March 17, 2019 withdrawal from the ICC had become effective well before an investigation was opened in that country.

But the ICC said the crimes attributed to Duterte were committed while the country was a party to the Treaty of Rome that set up the court.

ICC prosecutors have accused him of involvement in at least 76 murders related to his "war on drugs".

The first of the three charges concerns 19 murders committed between 2013 and 2016, when Duterte was mayor of Davao City. The second relates to 14 killings of alleged drug bosses in 2016 and 2017, when he was president. And the third covers 43 killings of suspected low-level drug users or dealers.

In early October, the ICC denied a request for medical parole, pending a decision on Duterte's fitness to appear in court. — AFP



Afghanistan, Pakistan seek to firm up truce in Istanbul talks

Hazel Ward with Claire Gounon in Kabul

ISTANBUL – Afghan and Pakistani negotiators were locked in talks to hammer out a lasting ceasefire Saturday, with Islamabad warning that if the Istanbul talks failed it could lead to “open war”.

Two weeks ago, the Taliban government launched a border offensive following explosions in Kabul which it blamed on its Pakistani neighbour, triggering an outbreak of unexpectedly intense clashes that left dozens dead, among them civilians.

Vowing a strong response, Islamabad then carried out “precision strikes” against armed groups on Afghan soil which are at the heart of the dispute, security sources said.

After further clashes that left soldiers and civilians dead, both sides declared an initial 48-hour ceasefire which collapsed two days later, with Kabul blaming Islamabad.

A second truce took shape last weekend following talks in Doha thanks to mediation by Qatar and Turkey, although the terms remained unclear.

In Istanbul, negotiators were expected to detail the “mechanisms” announced in Doha that would ensure a return to stability.

“The (Istanbul) talks are going on,” Pakistan’s Defence Minister Khawaja Asif told reporters in the eastern city of Sialkot on Saturday, while warning that if they “do not yield a positive outcome, there will be an open war with Afghanistan”.

It was not clear where exactly the negotiators were meeting in Turkey’s largest city, nor how long the talks would continue.

The Afghan delegation is led by its deputy interior minister, Haji Najib. Islamabad has not said who it has sent to the talks.

For the Taliban government, the goal is to ensure Afghanistan’s territorial integrity.

For Islamabad, the negotiations must address “the menace of terrorism emanating from Afghan soil towards Pakistan,” its foreign ministry spokesman Tahir Hussain Andrabi said on Friday.

‘Essential’ meeting

Security issues are at the heart of

recurring bilateral tensions.

Facing a resurgence of attacks against its security forces, Islamabad has repeatedly accused its Afghan neighbour of “harbouring” groups it views as “terrorist”, primarily the Pakistani Taliban (TTP) – a charge Kabul denies.

Throughout the confrontation, Islamabad demanded that the Taliban authorities “regain control” over fighters present on Afghan soil.

From the Pakistani perspective, this would be key to the Istanbul talks, explained Ibraheem Bahiss, an International Crisis Group analyst in Afghanistan.

“The meeting in Istanbul is going to be quite essential because that’s where the so-called mechanism would be agreed on in terms of when Pakistan has concerns that anti-Pakistan elements inside Afghanistan are doing things against Pakistan,” he told AFP.

He said such “mechanisms” could involve intelligence sharing on armed groups.

“For example, Pakistan would give coordinates of where they suspect TTP fighters or commanders are, and instead of carrying out strikes, Afghanistan would be expected to carry out action against them,” he said.

But it was unclear if that would end the problem.

“I’m not so hopeful that a technical mechanism will really address the fundamental drivers of this escalatory cycle,” he admitted.

Before the latest skirmishes, Pakistan had long been the Taliban’s biggest supporter, bolstering them in Afghanistan for so-called strategic depth against arch-rival India.

Two weeks ago, the initial explosions in Kabul – which triggered the escalation – took place as the Taliban foreign minister was making an unprecedented visit to India.

Turkey has not commented on Saturday’s meeting beyond hailing the sides’ joint decision in Doha “to establish mechanisms to strengthen peace and stability” and pledging to “continue to support the efforts” to achieve that. – AFP

India arrests man for stalking, touching Australian women cricketers

NEW DELHI – Indian police have arrested a man accused of stalking and inappropriately touching two Australian cricketers participating in the ICC Women’s World Cup, officials said on Saturday.

The incident happened in the central Indian city of Indore on Thursday morning when the two players left their hotel to go to a cafe, police officer Rajesh Dandotiya told AFP.

“We received a complaint from the Australian team security and immediately acted, registered a case and identified the accused within six hours,” Dandotiya said.

Violence against women remains a chronic issue in the world’s most populous country, where an average of nearly 90 rapes a day were reported in 2022.

Dandotiya said the 30-year-old man who was arrested has a criminal record. The man followed the players and approached them “for a bad touch” about 800 metres from their hotel.

The two players were not identified by Indian police or Cricket Australia, which confirmed the incident.

“The matter was reported by team security to police, who are handling the

matter,” Cricket Australia said in a statement.

A statement from the Board of Control for Cricket in India called it “a deeply regrettable and isolated incident”.

Devajit Saikia, honorary secretary of the cricket board, promised to “review our existing safety protocols and strengthen them further, if necessary, to ensure such incidents are not repeated”.

The *Times of India* newspaper reported that the Australian team’s security manager received a distress message from one of the cricketers that said “there is a guy following us trying to grab us.”

Team officials were informed and went to their location to assist the players, the paper said.

A police patrol then escorted the players safely back to their hotel.

Police said they have opened a case against the arrested man for “inappropriate behaviour and stalking”.

Australia were playing South Africa in their pool match in Indore on Saturday.

India has made strides towards gender equality and women’s empowerment in recent years but safety for women remains a serious concern. – AFP

More than 60 UN members sign cybercrime treaty opposed by rights groups



Vietnam’s President Luong Cuong (right) shakes hands with United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres during a meeting at the Presidential Palace in Hanoi on Friday. – AFP

HANOI – Countries signed their first UN treaty targeting cybercrime in Hanoi on Saturday, despite opposition from an unlikely band of tech companies and rights groups warning of expanded state surveillance.

The new global legal framework aims to strengthen international cooperation to fight digital crimes, from child pornography to transnational cyber scams and money laundering.

More than 60 countries were seen to sign the declaration Saturday, which means it will go into force once ratified by those states.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres described the signing as an “important milestone”, but that it was “only the beginning”.

“Every day, sophisticated scams, destroy families, steal migrants and drain billions of dollars from our economy... We need a strong, connected global response,” he said at the opening ceremony in Vietnam’s capital on Saturday.

The UN Convention against Cybercrime was first proposed by Russian diplomats in 2017, and approved by consensus last year after lengthy negotiations.

Critics say its broad language could lead to abuses of power and enable the cross-border repression of government critics.

“There were multiple concerns raised throughout the negotiation of the treaty around how it actually ends up compelling companies to share data,” said Sabhanaz Rashid Diya, founder of the Tech Global Institute think tank.

“It’s almost rubber-stamping a very problematic practice that has been used against journalists and in authoritarian countries,” she told AFP.

‘Weak’ safeguards

Vietnam’s government said this week that 60 countries were registered for the official signing, without disclosing which ones.

But the list will probably not be limited to Russia, China, and their allies.

“Cybercrime is a real issue across the world,” Diya said. “I think everybody’s kind of grappling with it.”

The far-reaching online scam industry, for example, has ballooned in Southeast Asia in recent years, with thousands of scammers estimated to be involved and victims worldwide conned out of billions of dollars annually.

“Even for the most democratic states, I think they need some degree of access to data that they’re not getting under existing mechanisms,” Diya told AFP.

Democratic countries might describe the UN convention as a “compromise document”, as it contains some human rights provisions, she added.

But these safeguards were slammed as “weak” in a letter signed by more than a dozen rights groups and other organisations.

Tech sector

Big technology companies have also raised concerns.

The Cybersecurity Tech Accord delegation to the treaty talks, representing more than

160 firms including Meta, Dell and India’s Infosys, will not be present in Hanoi, its head Nick Ashton-Hart said.

Among other objections, those companies previously warned that the convention could criminalise cybersecurity researchers and “allows states to cooperate on almost any criminal act they choose”.

Potential overreach by authorities poses “serious risks to corporate IT systems relied upon by billions of people every day”, they said during the negotiation process.

In contrast, an existing international accord, the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime, includes guidance on using it in a “rights-respecting” way, Ashton-Hart said.

The location for the signing has also raised eyebrows, given Vietnam’s record of crackdowns on dissent.

“Vietnamese authorities typically use laws to censor and silence any online expression of views critical of the country’s political leadership,” said Deborah Brown of Human Rights Watch.

“Russia has been a driving force behind this treaty and will certainly be pleased once it’s signed,” she told AFP.

“But a significant amount of cybercrime globally comes from Russia, and it has never needed a treaty to tackle cybercrime from within its borders,” Brown added.

“This treaty can’t make up Russia’s lack of political will in that regard.” – AFP



Israel insists it calls shots in Gaza despite truce

Dave Clark

JERUSALEM – Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insisted yesterday that Israel would decide for itself when to strike its foes and which countries could join an international security force in Gaza, as Egyptian recovery crews arrived.

The Egyptian convoy, captured on camera by AFP reporters in Khan Yunis in the south of the Gaza Strip, included heavy machinery to help speed the search for the remains of deceased Israeli hostages lost in the rubble of the devastated Palestinian territory.

Low-loader lorries flying the Egyptian flag transported bulldozers and mechanical diggers into Gaza, accompanied by tipper trucks sounding their horns and flashing their lights, en route to an Egyptian aid committee based in Al Zawayda.

Under the terms of a US-brokered ceasefire, as Israeli forces withdraw after two years of brutal fighting against Hamas, an international force, expected to be drawn from mainly Arab or Muslim countries, is supposed to secure Gaza.

But Israel opposes any role for its regional rival Turkey, and Netanyahu, under fire from hardliners in his own coalition even for agreeing the ceasefire, took a stern line yesterday as government ministers met in Jerusalem.

“We made clear with respect to international forces that Israel will determine which forces are unacceptable to us,” he said, a day after US Secretary of State Marco Rubio wound up the latest in a parade of high-level visits by Washington officials.

‘We do not seek approval’

Aid agencies have complained that humanitarian convoys still do not have enough access to Gaza to alleviate the famine conditions in parts of the territory, and families there are still going hungry.

AFP journalists followed the family of 62-year-old grandmother Hiam Muqdad for a day in their Gaza City neighbourhood, where they live in a tent next to their ruined home and her barefoot grandchildren gather domestic waste and twigs to heat water.

“When they said there was a truce, oh my God, a tear of joy and a tear of sadness fell from my eye,” Muqdad told AFP. “The child’s dream is gone. In the past they used to go to the park but today children play on the rubble.”

Israel has withdrawn its forces within Gaza to the so-called “Yellow Line”, but remains in control of more than half the territory, approves every UN aid convoy going through its borders and has carried out at least two strikes since the ceasefire.

“Israel is an independent state. We will defend ourselves by our own means and we will continue to determine our fate,” Netanyahu told the ministers. “We do not seek anyone’s approval for this. We control our security.”

To underline this, Netanyahu pointed out that Israel had pummelled Gaza with 150 tonnes of bombs and missiles on October 19 after two of its soldiers were killed, and had conducted a strike on Saturday targeting an Islamic Jihad militant.

The United States and allies have set up a truce monitoring centre in southern Israel – the Civil-Military Coordination Centre (CMCC) – and dispatched a string of top officials from President Donald Trump’s administration to promote the ceasefire.

The latest Israeli strike came just as Rubio was leaving Jerusalem, but Washington’s top diplomat said he remained optimistic the ceasefire would broadly hold if Hamas agrees to disarm and hand over the rule of Gaza.

Rubio told reporters that Washington did not expect the Yellow Line to become Gaza’s

new border and that Israel would eventually pull back.

“I think, ultimately, the point of the stabilisation force is to move that line until it covers hopefully all of Gaza, meaning all of Gaza will be demilitarised,” Rubio told reporters on his plane as he flew on to Qatar.

The main Palestinian factions, including Hamas, have agreed to form a committee of technocrats to administer Gaza alongside the ceasefire and reconstruction effort.

But Hamas has resisted calls for its immediate disarmament and has launched a crackdown on rival Palestinian gangs and armed groups in Gaza.

Hostage recovery

On Saturday, Mousa Abu Marzouk, Hamas’s head of international relations and legal affairs, warned: “Excluding Hamas from maintaining stability in the Gaza Strip could lead to chaos and a security vacuum.”

Hamas insists it is serious about returning the remaining 13 hostage bodies.

They include 10 Israelis kidnapped during the group’s attack on October 7, 2023 that triggered the conflict, one Israeli missing since 2014, and a Thai and a Tanzanian worker.

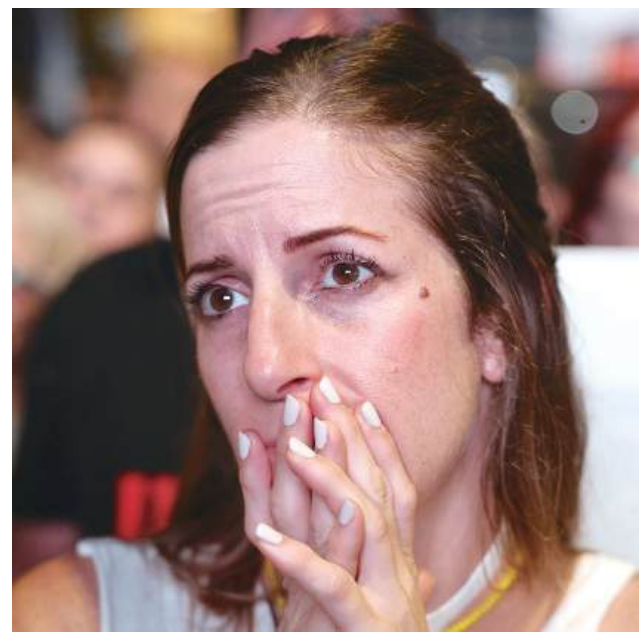
Hamas has already returned the remaining 20 living hostages and

But the group has warned that it will struggle to find the remains of the others in the ruins of Gaza, where more than 68,500 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire, according to the health ministry of the Hamas-run territory.

The UN deems the figures reliable.

The Egyptian crews and equipment that arrived yesterday may be able to help in the recovery mission, but an 81-strong group of Turkish rescue and recovery experts has yet to be given permission by Israel to enter Gaza.

– AFP



A woman reacts during a demonstration at Hostage Square in the Israeli coastal city of Tel Aviv on October 25, 2025, with protesters calling for the release of all the bodies of hostages held in Gaza by the Palestinian militant group Hamas. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio vowed on Saturday to secure the return of all deceased hostages still held in Gaza. – AFP

In Gaza’s ruins, a grandmother keeps family and hope alive

GAZA CITY – With no shoes to protect their tiny dust-covered feet, Hiam Muqdad’s grandchildren toddled unfazed through the bombed-out ruins of their Gaza City neighbourhood in search of clean water.

Clutching large black buckets and their grandmother’s hand, the infant trio seemed not to notice the scars left by two years of war, barely registering the enormous piles of rubble, warped metal and toppled buildings lining their path.

Muqdad, 62, told AFP she went out every morning with the children to search for water, sometimes finding enough for a few days and sometimes not at all.

“Children no longer say ‘I want to go to nursery or school’ but rather ‘I want to go get water or food or a food parcel’,” she said. “The child’s dream is gone”.

“In the past they used to go to the park but today children play on the rubble.”

Reaching a mound of broken breeze blocks, the children, whose parents live in the southern city of Khan Yunis, diligently scrambled for scraps that could be used to make a fire.

Torn pieces of cardboard, a discarded milk carton, a plastic bottle and a few thin twigs made up the haul.

Fuel secured, the group began their walk back through the hazy ruins to their makeshift home.

‘Tear of joy, tear of sadness’

Muqdad lost both her house and relatives during the gruelling war between Israel and Hamas, which flattened vast swathes of the Palestinian territory and displaced most of its population at least once.

After the US-brokered ceasefire came into effect on October 10, the family returned from the south to the Al Nasr neighbourhood of Gaza City to pitch a tent in the rubble of their ruined home.

“When they said there was a truce, oh my God, a tear of joy and a tear of sadness fell from my eye,” Muqdad said, recalling those she had lost.

The war, triggered by Hamas’s October 7, 2023 attack on Israel, has killed at least 68,519 people in Gaza, according to figures from the Hamas-run government’s health ministry that are considered reliable by the United Nations.

Muqdad’s house was entirely destroyed by a bulldozer, she said, explaining that afterwards she “couldn’t even find a mattress in it”.

Sheets of battered corrugated

metal mark out the small patch of sand the family now calls home, forming an island of life in the ruins.

Outside, the street is flattened, and only the skeletons of collapsed buildings remain.

Early each morning, with the sun still low in the sky, Muqdad emerges from the family’s igloo-shaped tent to set about instilling order into the chaos of displacement.

Sitting in front of a large Palestinian flag, she delights in showing her grandchildren the pasta they are going to cook on an open fire.

While she said it is enough to satisfy their hunger, Muqdad lamented that she “cannot buy vegetables or anything because we do not have cash and no income”.

Israel repeatedly cut off supplies into Gaza during the war, exacerbating dire humanitarian conditions.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) said on Thursday there had been little improvement in the amount of aid going into Gaza since the ceasefire, and no observable reduction in hunger.

‘Bring life back’

After two years of war, Gaza’s public services are crippled and the territory is buried under more than 61 million tonnes of debris, according to UN data analysed by AFP. Three quarters of buildings have been destroyed.

“We want to remove all the rubble,” Muqdad said, adding the destruction was particularly affecting the children’s mental health.

In the watery sunlight, the young children milled around on large mats spread out on the sand, sometimes passing the time sitting on upturned buckets.

After returning from their trip to collect fire material and water, Muqdad sat on the floor to begin washing the family’s clothes by hand in a large metal vat.

But as evening fell, the family’s thin foam mattresses were brought back into the tent and the day’s activities halted as darkness descended.

“I light a candle because I don’t have electricity or a battery or anything,” Muqdad said.

Despite the suffering and severe lack of daily essentials, Muqdad said she still held out hope that things could get better.

“We want to bring life back even a little, and feel that there is hope.” – AFP



Mourners gather around the body bags containing the remains of members of the Shahebar family, who were buried in temporary graves, after they were collected by the Civil Defence and brought to the Sheikh Shaaban Cemetery for burial, in Gaza City on Friday. Some 80 members of the extended family were killed during an Israeli bombing of a residential area in the Sabra neighbourhood of Gaza City on November 17, 2023.

– AFP

2 suspects arrested in Louvre jewel heist

PARIS – French authorities have detained two of the suspected burglars believed to have stolen precious crown jewels from the Louvre in a museum heist that stunned the world, officials said yesterday.

A swarm of investigators had been mobilised to track down the thieves who robbed the world-renowned museum in broad daylight on October 19, making off with jewellery worth an estimated US\$102 million in just a few minutes.

Paris prosecutor Laure Beccau said they had “carried out arrests on Saturday evening”.

“One of the men arrested was about to leave the country” from Paris-Charles de Gaulle airport, Beccau said.

A source close to the case told AFP the man was about to board a plane for Algeria.

The second man had been detained not long afterward in the Paris region, media reports said.

The two men were taken into police custody on suspicion of organised theft and criminal conspiracy. They could be held up to 96 hours.

Beccau deplored the public revelation of the arrests, first revealed in media reports, warning they “can only hinder the efforts of the 100 investigators mobilised” in the hunt for the jewels and the perpetrators.

Interior Minister Laurent Nunez also called for confidentiality while congratulating the investigators “who have worked tirelessly”, in a post on X.

In the heist on October 19, the robbers clambered up the extendable ladder of a stolen movers’ truck and, using cutting equipment, broke into a first-floor gallery that houses royal gems.

They dropped a diamond- and emerald-studded crown as they fled down the ladder and onto scooters, but managed to steal eight other pieces, include an emerald-and-diamond necklace that Napoléon Bonaparte gave his wife, Empress Marie-Louise.

‘Concern for the jewellery’

The brazen theft has made headlines

across the world and sparked a debate in France about the security of cultural institutions.

The Louvre’s director has admitted the burglars had taken advantage of a blind spot in the security surveillance of the museum’s outside walls.

But Beccau said public and private security cameras elsewhere had allowed detectives to track the thieves “in Paris and in surrounding regions”.

Investigators were also able to find DNA samples and fingerprints at the scene from items left behind by the thieves as they fled, including gloves, a high-vis vest, a blowtorch, and power tools.

They also dropped a crown that once belonged to Empress Eugenie, the wife of Napoléon III, which was damaged and needs to be restored.

The rest of the pieces have not been recovered and risk to be broken apart, their precious metal settings melted down.

Nunez expressed his “concern for the jewellery” in an interview with French weekly *La Tribune Dimanche* yesterday, saying the heist appeared to have been carried out by an organised crime gang but adding that “thieves are always eventually caught”.

“The loot is unfortunately often stashed abroad. I hope that’s not the case – I remain confident,” he added.

The Louvre theft is the latest in a string of robberies targeting French museums.

Less than 24 hours after the Louvre break-in, a museum in eastern France reported the theft of gold and silver coins after finding a smashed display case.

Last month, criminals broke into Paris’s Natural History Museum, making off with gold nuggets worth more than US\$1.5 million. A Chinese woman has been detained and charged with involvement in the theft.

Culture Minister Rachida Dati said on X on Friday she had requested findings from an investigation into the Louvre’s security by early next week to “announce concrete measures to secure” the museum. – AFP

US warship arrives in Trinidad & Tobago, near Venezuela

PORT OF SPAIN – A US warship arrived in Trinidad and Tobago yesterday for joint exercises near the coast of Venezuela, AFP reporters witnessed, as Washington escalates pressure on Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro’s administration.

The USS Gravelly, whose upcoming arrival was announced last Thursday by the Trinidadian government, was visible off the coast of the capital Port of Spain.

It is set to remain docked in Port of Spain until this Thursday, during which time a contingent of US Marines will conduct joint training with the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, according to the local government.

Trinidad and Tobago is located 11 kilometres northeast off the coast of Venezuela. Unlike most Caribbean countries and territories, which rely heavily on tourism, the country’s economy is primarily industrial, based on large reserves of oil and gas.

Covering an area of 5,131 square kilometres (about five times the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region), it has 1.5 million inhabitants.

The exercises are part of a mounting military campaign by US President Donald Trump against drug-trafficking organisations in Latin America, which has targeted Venezuela in particular.

US forces have blown up at least 10 boats they claimed were smuggling narcotics, killing at least 43 people, and Trump has also threatened strikes on land targets in Venezuela.

Maduro, a longtime Trump foe, has accused the United States of attempting to topple him.

The standoff escalated sharply on Friday, when the Pentagon ordered the deployment of an aircraft carrier strike group to the region.

– AFP, MPD

Prince Andrew under pressure over royal home, titles

LONDON – Britain’s scandal-tarred Prince Andrew faced continued scrutiny yesterday of his contentious living arrangements and titles, amid reports of talks with King Charles III about vacating his 30-room royal residence.

Speculation has been mounting for days that Charles may force his younger brother out of his long-time home on Windsor Castle’s sprawling grounds, following fresh outrage at accusations by one of Jeffrey Epstein’s main accusers.

One domestic news agency aired live video on the weekend of the entrance to the Windsor estate, west of London, in anticipation of the latest humiliating fallout from the claims against the 65-year-old prince.

Meanwhile, some lawmakers are pushing for the parliamentary motion needed to formally strip Andrew of his Duke of York title, despite the prince recently announcing he will no longer use it.

Even holding a House of Commons debate on the conduct of a royal would be unprecedented in modern times.

When it might take place remains unclear, and any motion is unlikely to be binding. But it would heap further pressure on the king and government to act.

It comes days after the publication of Virginia Giuffre’s memoir, in which the victim of US sex offender Epstein reiterated in shocking detail allegations she had sex with Andrew three times, including when she was only 17.

The prince, who denies any wrongdoing, agreed to pay US and Australian citizen Giuffre millions of US dollars in 2022 to end her civil sexual assault case against him.

She took her own life in April, aged 41, while Epstein took his own life in 2019 in prison awaiting trial on sex-trafficking charges.

‘Pincer movement’

Adding to the outcry following the chart-topping book’s release, The Times revealed on Tuesday the prince had not paid rent for two decades on his Royal Lodge home, where he lives with ex-wife Sarah Ferguson.

The arrangement stems from a seemingly favourable 2003 deal for the mansion owned by the Crown Estate, the royal family’s independently run land and property holdings.

British newspapers reported over the weekend that it had prompted ongoing talks between the king and the prince about Andrew vacating Royal Lodge.

The Sunday Times said he faced “a pincer

movement from parliament and Buckingham Palace to strip him of his dukedom and banish him” from Windsor.

The newspaper reported he may agree to move out if offered financial compensation and a suitable alternative home.

The *Daily Mail* said heir-to-the-throne Prince William and his family are set to move into a new residence near Royal Lodge and that he wants his uncle to leave beforehand.

In Westminster, the centrist Liberal Democrat Party, which has 72 MPs, is among those demanding the parliamentary debate.

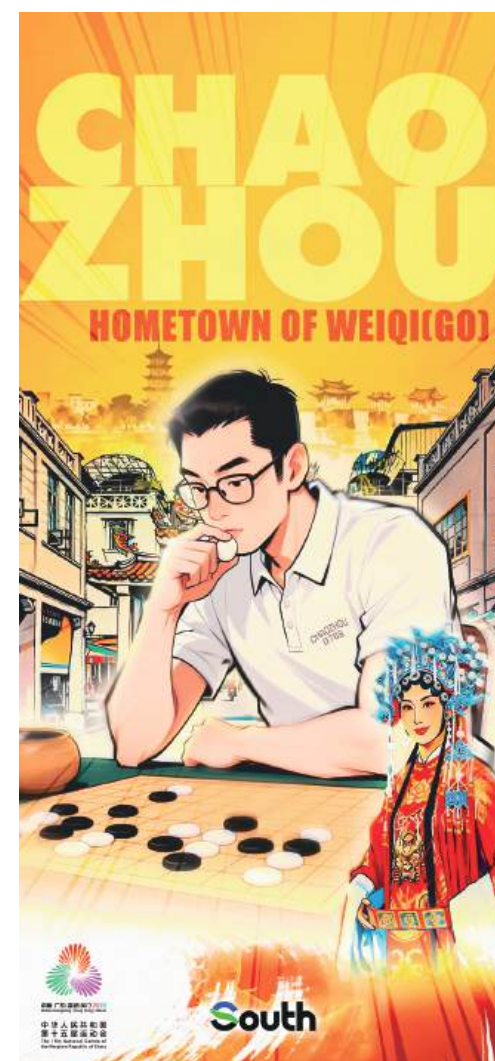
“We need to explore all options... to ensure parliament can scrutinise this properly, from Prince Andrew’s residence at Royal Lodge to his dukedom,” a party source told AFP.

“It’s right that we’re led by the king on this, and if parliament does have to act, we hope it can be hand-in-hand with the Palace.” – AFP



Supporters of the rightwing UK Independence Party (UKIP) march behind a banner in London on Saturday, vowing to “reclaim London from Islamists”.

– AFP



TotalEnergies approves restart of US\$20 billion Mozambique gas project

PARIS – France’s TotalEnergies said on Saturday the consortium it leads to build a US\$20-billion liquified natural gas (LNG) project in Mozambique has decided to lift a suspension on the work imposed in 2021 because of jihadist violence.

TotalEnergies said in a statement the “force majeure” halt to the Mozambique LNG project would be lifted but added that Mozambique’s government would need to approve the move before work could restart.

It said Mozambican President Daniel Chapo had been notified of the decision on Friday.

The statement confirmed a news report from local outlet Zitmar.

The Mozambique LNG project, the largest private investment in Africa’s energy infrastructure, is expected by analysts to generate thousands of jobs and help make the country one of the world’s biggest LNG exporters.

Work was frozen after jihadists launched a deadly attack on the site of the project near the Tanzanian border in March 2021, resulting in around 800 deaths.

No further attacks on that level have happened since, but the jihadist insurrection has not stopped – the UN said there had been some 633 attacks against civilians this year.

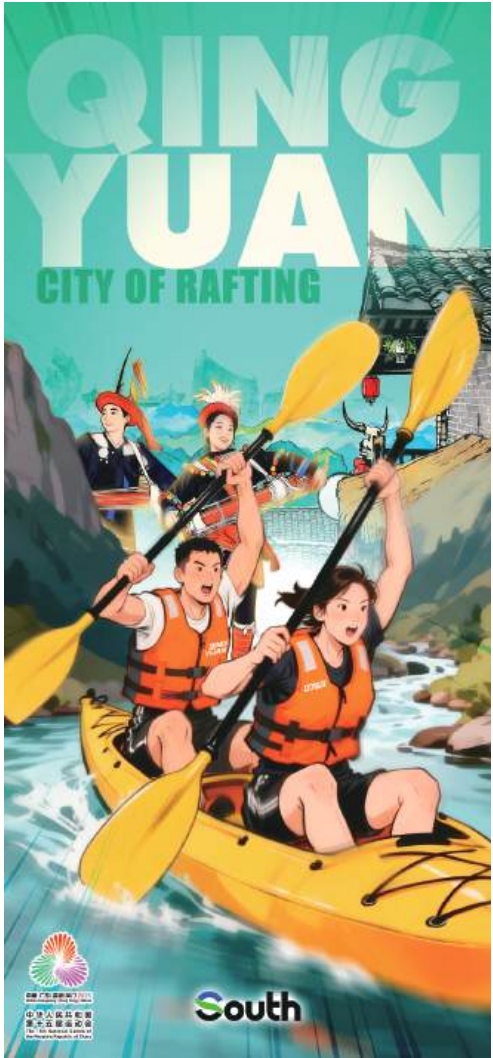
Chapo, on a visit to the United States on Saturday, was to go to the headquarters of US oil and gas giant ExxonMobil, which is weighing a different gas project in Mozambique.

The head of ExxonMobil’s operations in Mozambique said in September that the US company’s decision on the Rovuma LNG project was linked to TotalEnergies lifting its halt.

The French oil and gas company is the lead partner in the Mozambique LNG consortium, with a 26.5 percent stake. The consortium has said it could start making the first LNG deliveries four years after the project is started.

The African Development Bank (AfDB) in 2018 estimated that Mozambique has more than five trillion cubic metres of gas – enough to supply Britain, France, Germany and Italy for 20 years.

– AFP



East Timor joins ASEAN after 14-year campaign

Isabelle Leong

KUALA LUMPUR – East Timor joined the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) bloc as its 11th member state yesterday, after 14 years of campaigning.

Its Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão joined ASEAN leaders for a summit and signing ceremony in the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur, before posing for photographs together in interlocking arms.

“This is not only a dream realised, but a powerful affirmation of our journey – one marked by resilience, determination and hope,” Gusmão said.

“This is not the end of our journey. This is the beginning of an inspiring new chapter,” he added.

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, whose country currently chairs ASEAN, said East Timor’s accession “completes the ASEAN family – reaffirming our shared destiny and deep sense of regional kinship”.

“Within this community, Timor-Leste’s development and its strategic autonomy will find firm and lasting support,” Anwar said.

East Timor, officially known by its Portuguese name Timor-Leste, is the youngest country in the region, having regained independence in 2002 after four centuries of foreign rule.

President José Ramos-Horta had long campaigned for ASEAN membership, and an application was first submitted in 2011 during his first term.

The country’s admission is seen as one of the crowning achievements of Malaysia’s ASEAN chairmanship.

East Timor was granted observer status to the regional body in 2022 but its full membership was delayed by various challenges.

The country continues to grapple with high levels of inequality, malnutrition, and unemployment.

It remains heavily reliant on oil, with little diversification into other sectors, and some concerns remain over its ability to participate meaningfully in ASEAN’s development agenda.

It also faces challenges in infrastructure development and human resource capacity, seen as critical for effective participation in



East Timor’s Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão addresses the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. The impoverished half-island nation yesterday joined ASEAN as its 11th member state after 14 years of campaigning.

– AFP

ASEAN’s economic community.

In September, thousands of student-led protesters demonstrated against a multi-million-US-dollar plan to purchase Toyota Prado SUVs for each of the country’s 65 members of parliament and lifetime pensions for former MPs.

Demonstrators and police clashed for two days, before the parliament cancelled the vehicles’ procurement.

The parliament has also bowed to public pressure over MPs’ pensions.

ASEAN began as a five-member bloc in 1967 and has gradually expanded, with Cambodia the most recent addition before East Timor in 1999.

– AFP

Strike hits Portugal’s public services

LISBON – Public sector workers went on strike in Portugal on Friday, shutting schools, hospitals and courts, as part of calls for bigger salary rises than the government is offering.

Labour Unions have demanded a 15-percent hike for public workers but the minority centre-right government has offered only 2.5 percent.

According to a coalition of unions representing some 30 sectors, about 80 percent of public sector workers took part in the walkout.

It said in a statement that the movement was “the most significant in recent years” and the mass stoppage was “the response the government deserves”.

“There [were] hundreds of schools closed across the country and disruption at social security and finance offices,” added Sebastião Santana, coordinator of the coalition.

“A lot of appointments have been postponed in hospitals, even if there is a minimum service,” Santana added. “There is also a big participation in the justice sector.”

The government budget bill will face a vote tomorrow in the Assembly of the Republic (parliament) where centre-right Prime Minister Luis Montenegro does not have a majority.

The opposition Socialist Party (PS) has indicated it could abstain, however, to allow its passage.

The government is aiming for a state budget surplus in 2025 and 2026, while allowing for an increase for some pensions and reduced salary and corporate taxes.

– AFP

Mozambique among 4 African nations taken off money-laundering ‘grey list’

PARIS – A global money-laundering watchdog said on Friday that it removed Mozambique, South Africa, Burkina Faso and Nigeria from its “grey list” of countries subjected to increased monitoring.

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) deems countries on the grey list to have “strategic deficiencies” in fighting money laundering and terrorist financing but accepts they are cooperating with the agency.

Delegates at a FATF meeting in Paris said they were removing the four nations after “successful on-site visits” because they had completed action plans within “agreed timeframes”.

As a result they will no longer be subject to increased monitoring.

The FATF’s president, Elisa de Anda Madrazo, hailed the “record” number of

delisted countries as “a positive story for the continent of Africa”.

“South Africa sharpened tools to detect money-laundering and terrorist financing in South Africa. Nigeria now has stronger inter-agency coordination. Mozambique has improved financial intelligence sharing. And, finally, Burkina Faso has enhanced financial oversight of financial institutions and gatekeepers,” she said.

Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu welcomed delisting as “a major milestone... towards economic reform, institutional integrity and global credibility”.

Nigeria, which has been battling a jihadist insurgency in the northeast since 2009, was placed on the list in February 2023.

South Africa’s Treasury said the move

represented “a major policy and institutional achievement” for South Africans.

The country’s tax commissioner Edward Kieswetter vowed the delisting would not mark an “end to our vigilance”.

“The fight against financial crime and corruption is a continuous one,” Kieswetter said in a statement.

More than 200 countries and jurisdictions have pledged to implement the recommendations of the FATEF, which regularly reviews their efforts to combat money laundering and the financing of terrorism and weapons proliferation.

It also has a “black list” of nations that are considered high-risk jurisdictions, currently consisting of Iran, Myanmar and North Korea.

– AFP

UN has ‘stopped working’: Lula

KUALA LUMPUR – Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva took a swipe on Saturday at the United Nations and other multilateral institutions, saying they “stopped working” and failed to protect Gaza’s war victims.

Lula was speaking after meeting Malaysia’s Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim,

ahead of a major regional summit.

“Who can accept the genocide that has been going on in the Gaza Strip for so long?” Lula told reporters after the bilateral meeting to deepen ties between the two nations.

“The multilateral institutions that were created to try to prevent these things from

happening have stopped working. Today, the UN Security Council and the UN no longer function,” Lula said.

Lula also appeared to take a swipe at Trump, saying “for a leader, walking with their head held high is more important than a Nobel Prize.”

– AFP

Arsenal extend Premier League lead as Man City lose at Villa

Premier League LONDON – Arsenal stretched their Premier League lead to four points as Eberechi Eze's goal beat his former club Crystal Palace 1-0, while Manchester City lost 1-0 at Aston Villa yesterday.

Bournemouth are now the Gunners' closest challengers in second after they beat Nottingham Forest 2-0.

After Liverpool's latest defeat to Brentford on Saturday, Arsenal enjoyed the perfect weekend as both their title rivals fell further behind as they go from strength to strength.

Eze left the Eagles to join Arsenal in a £60 million (US\$80 million) deal in August and his first Premier League goal was decisive as Mikel Arteta's men were again able to lean on their set-piece prowess and a solid defence.

The England international blasted in on the volley after Palace failed to clear Declan Rice's free-kick six minutes before half-time.

Arsenal again failed to hit top gear going forward, but didn't need to as they kept a 10th clean sheet in 13 games in all competitions this season.

The only concern for Arteta was the sight of Rice and William Saliba having to be replaced in the second half due to injury.

Arsenal now lead fourth-placed City by six points and have a seven-point cushion over Liverpool in sixth.

Haaland streak ends

City appeared to be emerging as Arsenal's biggest obstacle in the title race after a nine-game unbeaten run.

But Pep Guardiola's men lost at Villa



Arsenal's English midfielder Eberechi Eze (second right) celebrates with teammates after scoring the opening goal of the English Premier League match against Crystal Palace at the Emirates Stadium in London yesterday. – AFP

Park for the third consecutive season as Erling Haaland's 12-game scoring streak came to an end.

Matty Cash's stunning strike from outside the box on 19 minutes secured a fourth consecutive league win for Villa as Unai Emery's men climb to seventh.

Haaland had a late goal ruled out for offside, but City's lack of goal threat other

than the Norwegian finally cost the visitors.

No City player other than Haaland has scored in the Premier League for a month.

Bournemouth climbed up to second as Forest's struggles continued despite a change in management.

Sean Dyche got his reign off to a winning start against Porto in the Europa League on Thursday, but Forest remain in the bottom

three after they were convincingly beaten on the south coast.

Marcus Tavernier opened the scoring for the Cherries directly from a corner as the swirling wind caught out Matz Sels.

Eli Junior Kroupi then blasted in his fourth goal in six Premier League games to double Bournemouth's lead.

Wolves remain bottom of the table after Burnley edged a 3-2 thriller in stoppage time at Molineux thanks to Lyle Foster.

Zian Flemming's double put the visitors 2-0 up inside 30 minutes but Wolves hit back before half-time through Jorgen Strand Larsen and Marshall Munetsi.

Foster's late strike propelled the Clarets five points clear of the relegation zone and left Wolves now six points adrift of safety.

Micky van de Ven struck twice as Tottenham moved into third place in the Premier League with a 3-0 win that ended Everton's unbeaten record at their new stadium yesterday.

Thomas Frank's side extended their impressive away form thanks to Dutch defender Van de Ven's first-half double and a late Pape Sarr header.

Everton were unbeaten in their first five games in all competitions at the Hill Dickinson Stadium, the plush new arena they moved to from Goodison Park in the close-season.

But injury-hit Tottenham shattered that unblemished start with just their second win in their last five league games.

While Tottenham have endured a torrid time in home games in 2025, they have the most away points in the Premier League this season. – AFP



Leverkusen bounce back from PSG drubbing against Freiburg

LEVERKUSEN – Bayer Leverkusen found some solace at home yesterday after a Champions League humbling by Paris Saint-Germain with a 2-0 defeat of Freiburg in the Bundesliga.

Dismantled 7-2 by the European champions at the same venue five days ago, Leverkusen took the lead midway through the opening half when Ernest Poku hit a low shot into the bottom right corner.

The hosts doubled up early in the second half when Edmond Tapsoba muscled through the Freiburg defence to head in an Alejandro Grimaldo cross.

The victory took the 2023-24

double winners to fourth spot in the table, two points clear of Stuttgart, who host Mainz in Sunday's final match.

Leverkusen have now won four in a row in the Bundesliga as part of a seven-match domestic unbeaten run.

Coach Kasper Hjulmand, who replaced the sacked Erik ten Hag two games into the league season, is yet to taste defeat in the Bundesliga.

The loss was Freiburg's first in the league since August.

These two sides played out a 2-2 draw in May but only three players who started for Leverkusen

yesterday were at the club last season.

After 22 minutes, Spain midfielder Aleix Garcia played a clever one-two with Poku to assist the latter's opener for the hosts.

It was the eighth time in eight league games this season Leverkusen have scored first.

Tapsoba's header seven minutes into the second half put Leverkusen on track for victory.

With 15 minutes remaining, Freiburg were reduced to 10 men when Philipp Lienhart picked up a second yellow, dashing their hopes of an unlikely comeback.

– AFP

Dybala ends drought as Roma edge Sassuolo to move 2nd



ROME – Paulo Dybala scored his first Serie A goal of the season to give Roma a 1-0 victory at Sassuolo yesterday to lift them level with leaders Napoli.

Roma moved to 18 points alongside the champions.

After 16 minutes Dybala set up Bryan Cristante for a shot. When Arijanet Muric saved, Dybala pounced to put the rebound into the empty net.

It was the Argentinian's 130th Serie A goal but his first from open play since last December.

"These are three important points," said Dybala.

"We knew we could move into first place before this match, but we're not getting carried away. The championship is still very long."

Under Gian Piero Gasperini, who took over in July, Roma have become stingy in defence but are struggling to score.

In eight games they have conceded three goals - two fewer than any other team - while scoring only eight.

Roma sit second because their goal difference is two worse than

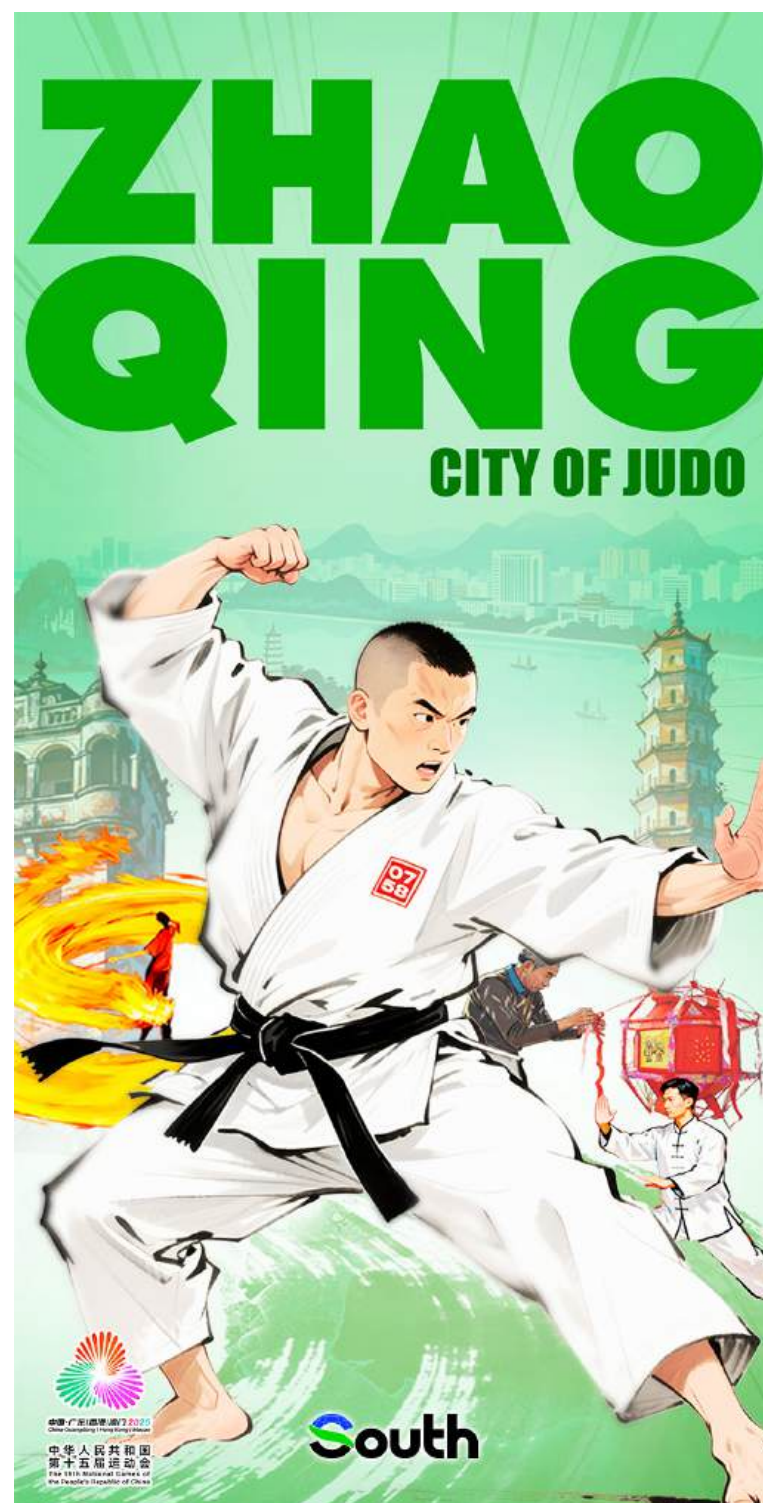
Napoli, who beat fourth-placed Inter Milan 3-1 on Saturday.

All four of their defeats this season have come at home, including a loss to Viktoria Plzen in the Europa League on Thursday and against Inter Milan in Serie A last Saturday.

"I'm very satisfied because the team reacted well after two defeats this week," said Gasperini.

"The priority now is to win again at home. We have to reward our fans. At home, we have to be more effective."

AC Milan, held to a 2-2 draw by Pisa on Friday at the San Siro, dropped to third, a point behind. – AFP



Alex Marquez wins Malaysian MotoGP in dominant style

MotoGP

SEPANG — Alex Marquez dominated the Malaysian MotoGP yesterday to clinch his third victory of the season, romping home more than two seconds ahead of fellow Spaniard Pedro Acosta.

Marquez, who confirmed his runner-up spot in the world championship this weekend behind brother Marc, won for the first time this year outside Spain following success at the Spanish and Catalan Grand Prix races.

Honda's Joan Mir was third to make it an all-Spanish podium, with Franco Morbidelli and Fabio Quartararo completing the top five.

Newly crowned world champion Marc Marquez was absent because of a season-ending injury.

Alex Marquez called it the "perfect race".

"It's a really important win for us to celebrate second (in the championship)," said the younger Marquez, 29.

Pole-sitter Francesco Bagnaia, who won Saturday's sprint, started well on a hot and humid Sepang circuit to hold a slender lead in the first lap with Acosta and Marquez in hot pursuit.

Marquez, who started second on the grid, made his move early in the second lap as the Ducati-Gresini star surged past Bagnaia during a sweeping corner, and maintained the lead until the finish line.

"Today the plan was clear," said Marquez.

"We improved the feeling a bit on the warm-up and later on I was clever on the plan to attack Pedro in the first lap and Pecco (Bagnaia) in the second one.

"Then I just tried to manage the tyres towards the end. It was a perfect race and I'm happy for that."

Ducati's Bagnaia had a tailgating Acosta behind him as the front three left the chasing pack behind.

As the race reached the halfway stage, Bagnaia's focus was to fend off intense pressure from Acosta, leaving Marquez to increase his advantage.

Acosta's pressure eventually paid off as the KTM rider found joy on the 13th lap to overtake Bagnaia into second place.

Unperturbed by the battle unfolding behind him, Marquez crossed the finish line in 40 min 09.249 sec.

Bagnaia's afternoon ended with

a bike issue late on that left him unable to finish the race.

'Prayers' after crash

Earlier, the Moto3 race was delayed and shortened after a nasty collision involving newly crowned world champion Jose Antonio Rueda and Noah Dettwiler during the sighting lap.

Both riders were airlifted to hospital and Dettwiler's team, CIP Green Power, said on social media several hours later that the 20-year-old Swiss "will need to undergo multiple surgeries".

"He is in good hands and we kindly ask you to respect his privacy," the team said, adding he was taken to a hospital in Kuala Lumpur.

"Noah is a true fighter and the entire CIP Green Power team is right behind him."

MotoGP organisers had said that both riders were conscious following the incident.

In an update on the 19-year-old Spaniard Rueda, MotoGP said: "Rueda is awake and alert, with a suspected hand fracture and a number of contusions."

"My prayers and thoughts are with the Moto3 guys," said Marquez.

— AFP

Sinner fights back against Zverev to claim 'special' Vienna crown

Tennis

VIENNA — Jannik Sinner clinched his fourth title of the season yesterday as the Italian rallied from a set down to beat Alexander Zverev in the final of the Vienna Open.

Sinner dropped his first set of the tournament before staging a comeback to see off Zverev 3-6, 6-3, 7-5 to land the 22nd title of his career.

It is his second triumph in Vienna, where he also lifted the trophy in 2023, and extended his winning run on indoor hard courts to 21 matches going into next week's final Masters 1000 of the year in Paris.

But the top seed had to do it the hard way after falling behind as world number three Zverev, who had won four of seven previous meetings, secured the only break of the first set to take the upper hand.

"It was such a difficult start in this final for me," said Sinner.

"I went a break down, had some chances in the first set but couldn't use them. He was

serving very well, but I just tried to stick there mentally and play my best tennis when it came."

Sinner replied though by racing 3-0 ahead in the second set as he forced a decider against the 2021 champion.

Zverev saved two break points in the fifth game of the third set but Sinner maintained the pressure despite battling a thigh issue in his first event since retiring with cramp at the Shanghai Masters.

Sinner created another opportunity at 5-all with a blistering backhand down the line and won a lengthy rally the following point to snatch the key break.

A routine hold wrapped up victory for the 24-year-old who has reached the final in eight of his 10 tournaments this season, with Sinner adding to his titles at the Australian Open, Wimbledon and Beijing.

"The third set was a bit of a rollercoaster, but I was feeling the ball very well at times, so I tried to push and I'm very happy of course to win another title," Sinner added.

— AFP

Roars, tears as local hero Tabuena wins International Series Philippines

Golf

Daniel Hicks

STA ELENA GOLF CLUB, LAGUNA — An emotional Miguel Tabuena fell to his knees and kissed the turf at his home Sta. Elena Golf Club after winning the International Series Philippines yesterday for the biggest victory of his career.

A brilliant third straight round of seven-under 65, including a spectacular chip-in for birdie at the 15th, saw the Filipino stretch away to 24-under par and win by three strokes.

The Japanese pair of Kazuki Higa (65) and Yosuke Asaji (67) finished joint second on 21-under to head a high-quality chasing pack.

But the day was all about local hero Tabuena, playing with a colossal weight of expectation on his shoulders at his home course in front of family, friends and large crowds following his every move.

The 31-year-old held his nerve until the final putt for par was safely in the cup.

"I'm still on a high right now," said Tabuena, his voice cracking with exhaustion, elation and pure emotion.

"I've always wanted to get my hands on one of these trophies and it was nice that the first one is at home, in my home club.

"I'm so thankful for everyone who came out, my family, my friends."

It was his fourth win on the Asian Tour but first on the elevated International Series of \$2 million events bankrolled by LIV Golf.

'Dream come true'

Tabuena dominated a loaded field containing four major champions to carry away the sparkling new trophy and a cheque for US\$360,000.

"I'm speechless right now and exhausted, but I'm glad that we were able to get it done this week."

The final group all started on 17-under par and it was Tabuena who made the early move with birdies at the second and third.

The challenge from playing partners Sarit Suwannarut and Sampson Zheng melted away as they both carded 69 to finish at 20-under par in a share of fourth.

It was a second successive Sunday of disappointment for Thailand's Sarit, who began last week's final round of the Macau Open with a two-shot lead only to card a three-over 73 and finish fourth.

Tabuena moves to second in the International Series order of merit with three events to play.

The series winner will be granted a place on the LIV Golf league roster for 2026.

"It's certainly different playing at home," said Tabuena, who shed more tears as he was hugged by his mother Lorna, father Luigi, wife Sandra and 22-month-old daughter Paloma on the 18th green.

"It's a dream come true. It's special."

It was the most prestigious tournament ever staged in the Philippines but none of the major winners managed to make a run at Tabuena.

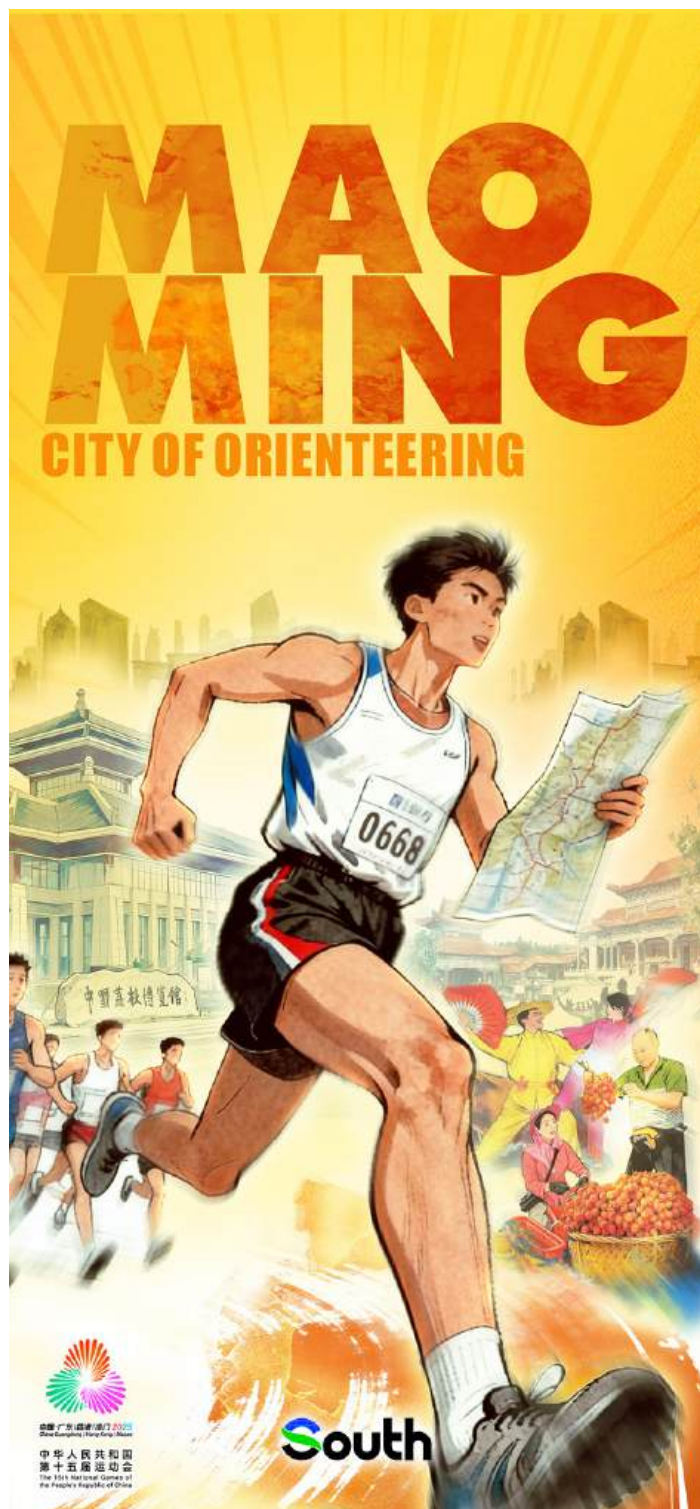
Charl Schwartzel, the 2011 US Masters champion, was the best of them as a final-round 68 took him to 14-under par and a share of 12th.



Philippines' Miguel Tabuena reacts after winning the International Series Philippines golf tournament at Sta. Elena Golf Club in Santa Rosa, Laguna province, Philippines yesterday. - AFP

Two-time major winner Dustin Johnson was a shot further back after a 67 and the 2018 Masters champion Patrick Reed finished on 11-under after a 70.

— AFP



LA shoemaker holds Hollywood's past in a dying art

Paula Ramon

LOS ANGELES – In a cobbler's workshop in Los Angeles, the footprints of Hollywood history are stacked floor to ceiling, watched over by a man who says his profession is dying.

Yellowing boxes hold the lasts* – foot-shaped moulds – used to create footwear for everyone who was anyone in America's entertainment capital for more than half a century.

Elizabeth Taylor lies toe-to-toe with Peter Fonda, Tom Jones and Harrison Ford.

In another stack sit the lasts for Sharon Stone, Liza Minnelli and Goldie Hawn.

Action heroes Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger are also present.

"There's a bit of everybody here," says shoemaker Chris Francis, the custodian of the famous feet moulds.

Francis came into the collection a few years after the 2008 death of Pasquale Di Fabrizio, an Italian cobbler known in Los Angeles as the "shoemaker to the stars."

"Di Fabrizio made for everyone, from the casino owners to the actors, the performers in Vegas, Broadway, Hollywood, for film – just anybody you could think of who was performing from the 1960s until 2008."

Some of the ageing boxes contain autographs or dedications from the A-listers.

Others, like those of Sarah Jessica Parker or "Sound of Music"

songstress Julie Andrews, hold drawings from television or film productions.

'Something that nobody else had'

Hollywood was once the ideal place for a shoemaker, says Francis, with its voracious creative industry that churned out a constant stream of people who needed to make themselves stand out from the crowd.

"Celebrities would brag about how much they paid for a pair of shoes, and they would want something that nobody else had," he said, pulling down a box containing the lasts of Adam West, the actor who played Batman in the original 1960s TV series.

Francis began his own couture journey making clothes, and was given his first gig after being discovered stitching a leather jacket on a park bench.

"Here in LA, it is easy to be in the right time in the right place," he laughed.

But it was footwear that he really wanted to create, and began practising in his kitchen at home.

"They were sort of crude at first; I was just teaching myself how to do it," he said.

In search of someone to teach him the art, Francis traipsed around Los Angeles looking for an internship.

"These guys are all old Armenian, Russian guys. They're all from like the old world –guys from like Iran, Syria.

"They wouldn't talk, or they didn't speak very good English. So you just have to watch and learn, and then just learn by making over and over and over again."

And if you don't pay attention, it can all go wrong, he said.



US shoemaker Chris Francis poses with the boxes containing the carved wooden forms ("lasts") of celebrities' feet made by Pasquale Di Fabrizio, the Italian cobbler who made shoes for Hollywood stars from the 1960s to early 2000s, in his workshop in Los Angeles, California, last Tuesday. Francis came into the collection a few years after the 2008 death of Di Fabrizio, known as the "shoemaker to the stars." – AFP

"There's no forgiveness in a shoe. If you miss a step, if you cut a corner, then the next 20 steps after that might suffer. So everything has to be on point the whole time."

Mass production

But in a changing world, such meticulous craftsmanship is not always rewarded.

Where Burt Reynolds or Robert De Niro might once have been happy to shell out thousands of US dollars for a pair of handmade shoes, the whole industry has been turned on its head.

"I'm finding more and more celebrities wanting shoes for free, which is just killing shoemakers like me," said Francis.

With his ageing rockstar looks, Francis says in darker moments he wishes he had taken the advice of some of the old cobblers who taught him the trade.

"They told me to go join a band," he said.

"When I first started, [one man] said: 'Why in the world do you want to be a shoemaker? They can buy shoes for US\$20 these days.'"

Francis, 48, says some of the old-time shoemakers have given up trying to create footwear from scratch, and now just fix the mass-produced shoes that have put them out of business.

"As a profession, it's extremely difficult to survive," he says. – AFP

* In simple terms, a last is a three-dimensional form, shaped like a foot, over which a shoe is constructed. It is the mould that gives a shoe its final shape, size, and fit. In summary, the last is the heart of shoemaking. It is the physical embodiment of the shoemaker's intent, transforming flat materials into a structured, functional, and beautiful object that fits the human foot. – DeepSeek

George Clooney explores passage of time in Netflix film 'Jay Kelly'

HOLLYWOOD – George Clooney plays an actor looking back at his past in Netflix's "Jay Kelly," but in real life, the US star has his eyes on the future.

"I'm not really ready to look backwards and sort of rest on it," the 64-year-old actor told AFP on Thursday at the film's premiere at the American Film Institute festival in Los Angeles.

Unlike his title character in "Jay Kelly," which will hit the big screen next month, Clooney doesn't want to dwell on the past.

"I sort of enjoy looking forward and seeing what's coming next," he said.

Directed by Noah Baumbach, "Jay Kelly" explores the emotional crisis of an actor after a three-decade career.

Obsessed with mending his relationship with his daughters, Clooney's character drags his manager, played by Adam Sandler, and press agent, played by Laura Dern, on a trip to Europe.

Along the journey, he reflects on his loneliness, past mistakes, and the price of success.

"I am lucky enough to not be as unhappy as he is and to have really good friends and people that I like," said Clooney of his character.

"I don't feel as isolated as he is."

Sandler, 59, said the movie offers an interesting take on the



US actor George Clooney smiles upon arrival for the AFI opening night premiere of "Jay Kelly" at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Hollywood, California on Thursday. – AFP

passage of time, watching an actor like him "get older on camera."

But, he said, "I don't look back at work I wish I would have done."

Instead, "I do say... time is ticking, let's make sure we get it all in there, and make sure we get it all in there outside of movies, family and stuff like that."

"And if we're doing movies, let's do stuff that's going to bring joy to people."

"Jay Kelly" will be available on Netflix from December 5.

AFI Fest concluded in Hollywood yesterday. – AFP

Japanese film about man-eating bear delayed after deadly attacks

TOKYO – A recent string of deadly bear attacks has prompted Japanese filmmakers to postpone the release of a gory horror movie with the same theme.

Bears have killed at least nine people in Japan so far this year, an unwanted record that the government has described as a "serious problem".

The film, titled "Brown Bear!" and featuring depictions of an animal "attacking and eating" humans, was initially set to hit cinemas next month.

Producers announced on Friday that the release would be delayed, adding that they "take seriously the fact that there have been a series of real-life attacks" in the country.

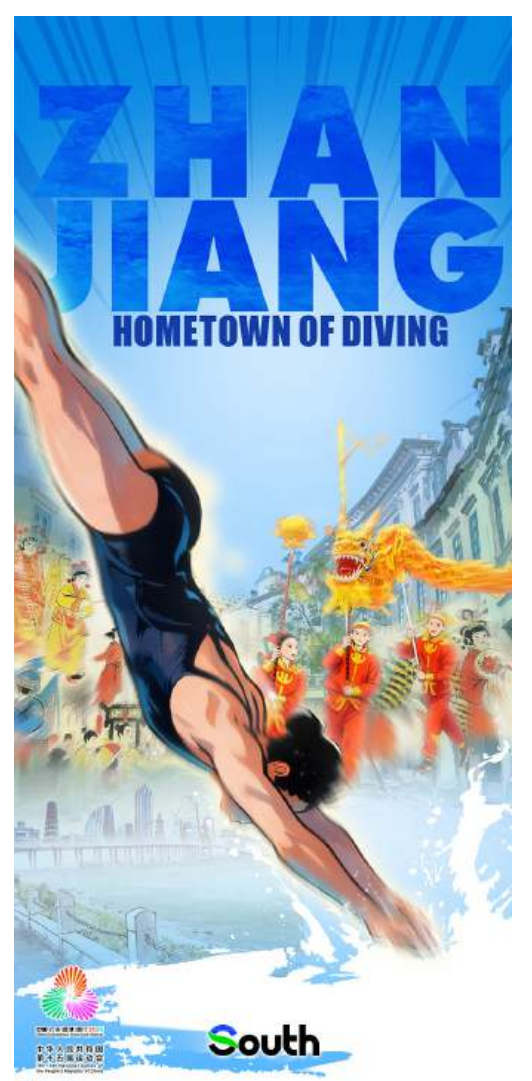
Bears have been increasingly encroaching into towns due to factors including a declining human population and climate change.

This week, Japan's new environment minister vowed to toughen bear controls, including by "training government hunters".

The film tells the story of a desperate university student applying for a shady part-time job that takes him deep into the woods where he encounters a ravenous, man-eating bear.

The producers said their gruesome portrayals of bear attacks were not gratuitous violence but a form of artistic expression "inherent to a monster thriller".

Nonetheless, "we will be considerate toward our real-life situation, and make sure to create a screening environment where viewers can feel safe and fully immersed", they said in a statement. – AFP



World Weather			
CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 2°C~13°C	Manila 24°C~32°C	New York 5°C~13°C	Lisbon 16°C~23°C
Shanghai 12°C~21°C	Bangkok 24°C~32°C	London 9°C~13°C	Rio de Janeiro 21°C~30°C
Hong Kong 21°C~27°C	Tokyo 12°C~21°C	Frankfurt 6°C~12°C	Luanda 22°C~28°C
Taipei 21°C~24°C	Singapore 25°C~34°C	Vancouver 5°C~9°C	Maputo 20°C~28°C
Guangzhou 18°C~28°C	Kuala Lumpur 24°C~35°C	Paris 8°C~15°C	Dili 22°C~33°C
Nanjing 8°C~19°C	Jakarta 24°C~31°C	Moscow 6°C~9°C	São Tomé 25°C~29°C
Guilin 12°C~24°C	Seoul 0°C~11°C	Las Vegas 13°C~27°C	Praia 21°C~33°C
Xi'an 5°C~16°C	Sydney 14°C~23°C	Monte Carlo 11°C~19°C	Bissau 23°C~34°C



Stay away from fields after dark!

A cardboard skeleton stands in a field of marigolds (*Tagetes erecta*) during preparations for the Day of the Dead celebration at Rancho San Juan Diego in Tlajomulco de Zúñiga, Jalisco, Mexico. On November 2, Mexico celebrates the Day of the Dead to pay tribute to deceased family members and friends. — AFP



Rose rouge

Light installations are seen at the Garden of Lights show at the Botanical Garden of the Polish Academy of Sciences in suburban Warsaw, Poland, on Saturday. This year's exhibition, themed "Beauty and the Beast," has attracted many residents and tourists. — Xinhua



Jumbo party

Female elephant 'Momo' (centre) adorned with golden embroidered decorations eats assorted fruit with other elephants during a celebration marking her 72nd birthday at Yangon Zoological Garden, Indonesia yesterday. — AFP

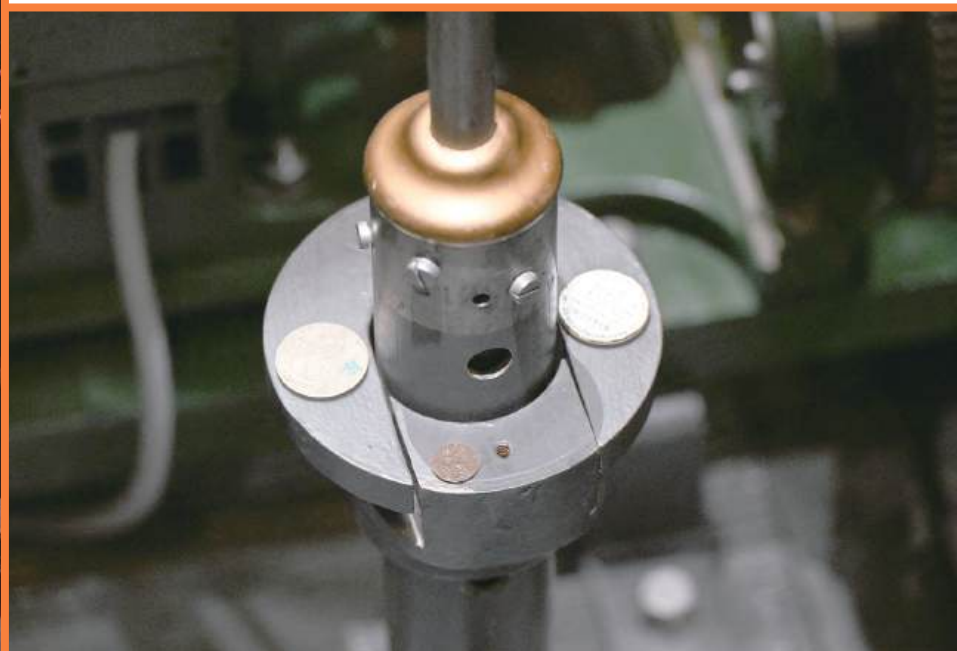
One-eyed ice queen!

A visitor participates in a Halloween costume contest during the West Side Hallo Fest in Bucharest, Romania, on Saturday. The three-day weekend festival attracts thousands of people on its third edition. — Xinhua



Scary diner

Costumed people participate in a Halloween event featuring a theatrical dinner show and a costume party at ArtSociates Art Gallery and Cafe in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia on Saturday. — AFP



Penny for your timekeeping!

A pendulum with coins on top is pictured in the mechanism of The Great Clock of Westminster inside the Elizabeth Tower, commonly known by the name of the clock's largest bell, Big Ben, at the Houses of Parliament in central London on Wednesday. — AFP