

# Sam says 'multilateralism is inevitable choice' to tackle global issues

Staff Reporter

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai said yesterday that "multilateralism is the inevitable choice for addressing the difficult challenges facing the world."

Sam made the pragmatic remarks while addressing the opening ceremony of the 18<sup>th</sup> World Chinese Entrepreneurs Convention at The Venetian Macao in Cotai yesterday morning.

In his speech, Sam said that the achievements made by Macau since its return to the motherland in 1999 fully demonstrate the strong vitality and superiority of the "One Country, Two Systems" principle.

"A prosperous, safe and stable Macau will provide overseas Chinese entrepreneurs with a market space of greater potential and a broader international stage," Sam said.

He invited Chinese entrepreneurs from around the world to deepen their understanding of Macau, enhance mutual friendship, strengthen pragmatic cooperation, invest in Macau and Hengqin, invest in the Greater Bay Area (GBA), invest in the Chinese mainland, invest in the future, share new development opportunities and jointly create a new era of cooperation.

Sam also said that Chinese entrepreneurs are an important force in promoting world peace and development. The vast number of Chinese entrepreneurs have not only driven the prosperity and development of the economies of the countries and regions in which they operate, but have also become



Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai addresses the 18<sup>th</sup> World Chinese Entrepreneurs Convention during its opening ceremony at the Venetian Macao in Cotai yesterday.

– Photo: GCS

disseminators of outstanding Chinese culture, contributors to charitable and public welfare causes, and ties and bridges connecting China with the world.

Sam underlined that since its inception, the World Chinese Entrepreneurs Convention has continued to expand in scale. "As the most influential exchange platform for Chinese entrepreneurs worldwide, it has made positive contributions to promoting win-win economic

cooperation, mutual learning between cultures, and people-to-people connectivity," Sam said.

He also said that economic globalisation is an irreversible historical trend, and multilateralism is the inevitable choice for addressing the difficult challenges facing the world. "Only by strengthening the concept of a 'community' and working together can certainty be found amid uncertainty and new

prospects be created amid change," he said. The chief executive also said that Chinese entrepreneurs worldwide are inherently a community with a shared future, connected by blood and sharing weal and woe. They are an important force in linking China and the rest of the world and integrating East and West. Only by building consensus and joining hands in development can they achieve mutual success, mutual benefit and win-win results, and jointly safeguard a world economic order that is equal, open, diverse and stable, he added.

## 'Best period of development in its history'

Sam pointed out that since Macau's return to the motherland, under the strong leadership and vigorous support of the Central People's Government, it has enjoyed political stability, social harmony, rapid economic development, continuous improvement in people's livelihoods, and residents living and working in peace and contentment. It has ushered in the best period of development in its history and achieved unprecedented successes. Under the safeguards of the "One Country, Two Systems" principle and the Basic Law, Macau enjoys the status of a free port and a separate customs territory, implements a simple and low-tax system, and has an extensive international market network.

Sam also stressed that Macau serves as China's "precise liaison" with Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs).

Continued on p.6

## OpenAI signs US\$38 billion infrastructure deal with cloud giant AWS

WASHINGTON – ChatGPT-maker OpenAI signed a US\$38 billion deal yesterday with Amazon's AWS cloud computing arm, as the artificial intelligence (AI) company continues on a major partnership spree that has also included Oracle, Broadcom, AMD and chip-making juggernaut Nvidia.

Under the seven-year agreement, OpenAI, which is partly owned by AWS's archrival Microsoft, will gain access to computing resources including hundreds of thousands of state-of-the-art Nvidia GPUs

(Graphics Processing Units), the crucial component of the generative artificial intelligence revolution.

The deal, which will grow over its multi-year term, will also give access to tens of millions of more conventional CPUs (Central Processing Units) that will be used for the everyday deployment of so-called agentic AI.

"Scaling frontier AI requires massive, reliable compute," said OpenAI co-founder and CEO Sam Altman in a joint statement. "Our partnership with AWS strengthens the broad compute ecosystem that

will power this next era and bring advanced AI to everyone."

OpenAI will immediately begin utilising AWS computing, with all capacity targeted to be used before the end of 2026, and the ability to expand further in the coming years.

By some estimates, OpenAI has inked approximately US\$1 trillion worth of infrastructure deals this year, including a US\$300 billion Oracle deal and a US\$500 billion Stargate project with Oracle and SoftBank. (Related story on p.11)

– AFP

## Millions of Americans to get reduced food aid during shutdown: White House

WASHINGTON – The White House will send only partial food aid payments to 42 million low-income Americans, as the government shutdown crippling public services nears record length, Trump administration officials told a judge yesterday.

Two federal courts ruled last week that the Trump administration must use a US\$4.65 billion emergency fund towards the estimated US\$9 billion cost for November's payments before cutting off the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programme (SNAP).

Officials for the Agriculture Department said in a filing to a federal court in Rhode Island they would not make up the shortfall with other funding sources, meaning only "50 percent of eligible households' current allotments" would be disbursed.

– AFP

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## China widens visa-free access in latest opening-up move

China announced yesterday that it will expand its 240-hour visa-free transit program to more checkpoints, and extend its unilateral visa-exemption arrangements for more than 40 countries to December 31, 2026.

– Story on p. 7

## Christian, Muslim Nigerians push back on threatened US strikes

Nigerians across the religious spectrum pushed back yesterday on US President Donald Trump's threats of military intervention over the killing of Christians in the country.

– Story on p. 11

## Over US\$2 million in weapons seized in deadly Rio anti-drug raid: govt

Authorities confiscated more than US\$2 million worth of weapons during a recent anti-drug raid in Rio de Janeiro, the deadliest in Brazil's history, the state government said on Saturday.

– Story on p. 12



# Macau Customs seizes live terrapins, animal pelts & Chinese liquor

Armindo Neves

The Macau Customs Service announced in a statement on Sunday that its officers seized 20 live terrapins, 95 kilograms of animal fur and 1.5 litres of Chinese “white liquor” between October 26-27.

On October 26, customs officers at the Barrier Gate checkpoint intercepted a cross-border vehicle in the outbound lane based on an alert through the cross-border “risk management system” mechanism. An inspection revealed that the local driver attempted to smuggle 20 live terrapins and 95 kilograms of animal pelts into the mainland.

Customs officers at the Barrier Gate’s outbound passenger inspection hall noticed a male mainland driver acting suspiciously last Monday. A follow-up inspection showed 1.5 litres of Chinese

“white liquor” (白酒) concealed within his personal belongings in an attempt to smuggle several bottles into the mainland.

The statement said that the Macau Customs Service will take legal action against the two smugglers pursuant to Macau’s External Trade Law. If convicted, they face a maximum fine of 100,000 patacas, and the seized goods will be declared property of the local government.

Meanwhile, one of the smugglers faces an additional charge for the suspected violation of the Law on the Implementation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The live animals and the animal products seized from the suspect have been transferred to the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) for handling.

## Zhuhai Customs seizes 9.14 kg shark fin

Zhuhai’s Gongbei Customs announced in a statement on Saturday that its officers seized 9.14 kilograms of shark fin at Hengqin Port (checkpoint).

According to the statement, on September 25, customs officers at the checkpoint noticed anomalies during the X-ray scan of a traveller’s luggage. A follow-up inspection unearthed 160 shark fins weighing 9.14 kilograms.

The statement said that the Gongbei Customs Technology Centre identified the confiscated fins as those of *Carcharhinus obscurus* (Dusky Shark), *Carcharhinus amblyrhynchos* (Grey Reef Shark), *Carcharhinus limbatus* (Blacktip Shark), *Carcharhinus altimus* (Bignose Shark), and *Carcharhinus plumbeus* (Sandbar Shark), which are all covered as CITES Appendix II-listed species requiring international trade permits.

In the statement, Gongbei Customs reminded the public that according to CITES and the Chinese mainland’s Wildlife Protection Law, as well as the regulations on the import and export of endangered wild animals and plants, it is prohibited to trade, carry, or mail endangered species and their products across border checkpoints without legal import and export certificates. The statement noted that serious violations may lead to criminal liability. ■

# Portugal booth brings classic sangria to Lusofonia Festival

Khalel Vallo

The 2025 Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) Lusofonia Festival wrapped up on Sunday after two consecutive weekends at the Taipa Houses complex, celebrating the cultures of Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs) through their respective music, traditional dance, arts and crafts, and cuisine.

Among the festival’s booths and vendors, the Portugal booth drew festivalgoers to sample its sangria.

Sangria, an alcoholic beverage originating in Spain and Portugal, is a wine-based punch made with red wine, chopped fruit, and often a splash of brandy or citrus juice. It’s sweet and fruity, and is popular at social gatherings.

In an interview with the *Post*

on Saturday, José, one of the representatives of the Portugal booth, said that their aim was to offer festivalgoers a taste of Portuguese culture.

“In our stand, we prepared sangria for the Macau locals, aiming to transmit the Portuguese culture to the locals that don’t know anything about it,” he said, adding that their sangria followed the traditional recipe without modern twists. “It doesn’t stand out, it’s the classic sangria,” he said, adding that “we are not trying to make it differently, and we just want people to understand our culture and the simplicity of it.”

The Portugal booth aimed to showcase the Iberian country’s culture to local people of different ethnic backgrounds by putting authenticity above novelty. ■



Representatives of the Portugal booth posing with their cups of sangria during the second week of the 2025 Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) Lusofonia Festival on Saturday. — Photo: Khalel Vallo

# Police nab local couple for forging medical documents to defraud insurance of 246,000 patacas

Ada Lei

A local couple were arrested on Thursday for forging over 200 medical documents to defraud an insurance company out of 246,000 patacas, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Cheong Un Hong said during a regular press conference on Friday.

Cheong identified the suspects as a male surnamed Choi and a female surnamed Ieong, both in their thirties. Both claimed to be businesspeople.

According to Cheong, a local insurance company was conducting random checks in mid-July last year on claims submitted by a medical centre in Nape, when they discovered discrepancies in the documents provided by the couple. The doctor named in the documents had already left the practice, and there were no patient records for the couple at that medical centre, raising suspicions of forgery.

Cheong added that after learning that the incident had been exposed, the couple visited the medical centre and confronted the person in charge. During the meeting, they admitted that the documents were forged and

requested their return, but their request was denied. The centre then reported the case to the police on July 16, 2024.

The police discovered that Choi and Ieong not only forged documents from the medical centre but also created a total of 239 forged documents involving other patients and two medical centres in the northern district between November 2023 and June 2025. They submitted claims to the insurance company 16 times, with each claim ranging from 5,530 to 14,820 patacas, amounting to a total of 246,000 patacas.

Cheong noted that one of the

medical centres in the northern district was actually operated by the couple, and all the doctors’ signatures on the forged documents were counterfeit, with none of the listed patients having ever received treatment at that centre.

The police arrested the couple on Thursday morning at their flat in Sai Van and seized the forged medical documents, a tablet computer and three smartphones from them. Under questioning, the couple refused to cooperate.

The couple have been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing charges of forgery and fraud. ■



This undated handout photo provided by the Judiciary Police (PJ) on Friday shows the forged medical documents, a tablet computer and three smartphones seized from the couple.



This undated handout photo provided by the Macau Customs Service on Sunday shows the terrapins and animal pelts seized by its officers at the Barrier Gate checkpoint on October 26.



This undated handout photo provided by the Gongbei Customs last Tuesday shows shark fins seized by its officers at Hengqin Port (checkpoint) on October 2.

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## Macau Weather

MAINLY CLOUDY.  
A FEW LIGHT RAIN PATCHES.  
FORCE 3 TO 5 NORTH TO  
NORTHEASTERLY WINDS WITH  
GUSTS.  
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL  
RANGE BETWEEN  
60% AND 90%.



19°C~23°C

Source: SMG



## Event aims to promote preservation of local customs & traditional culture



Eventgoers visit the “Crazy Carnival” 2-day market on Calçada da Igreja de S. Lázaro (瘋堂斜巷) on Sunday. – Photos: Armindo Neves



ANWACLAY owner Angela Lao En-yu poses at her stall on Sunday.

**Armindo Neves**

The month-long “2025 Ferreira de Almeida Festival” in São Lázaro district was launched on Saturday.

“The event aims to promote the preservation of local customs and traditional culture,” according to Kelvin So (蘇冠忠), chairman of the organising committee

During the opening ceremony on Calçada da Igreja de S. Lázaro (瘋堂斜巷), So noted that the event has now reached its 11<sup>th</sup> edition, adding that this year’s event features collaborations with several artists and integrates the performing arts, cultural and creative design, and community culture.

The event, according to So, aims to attract both local residents and tourists to explore the old district, experience the unique charm of Macau’s neighbourhoods, and promote the preservation of local customs and traditional culture.

The event, according to the Macau Government Tourism Office’s (MGTO) official website, is organised by the Creative Industries Promotion Association of St. Lazarus Church District and sponsored by MGTO.

One of the events, a market titled “Crazy Carnival,” concluded on Sunday. The organisers told the *Post* that the two-day event on Calçada da Igreja de S. Lázaro attracted a daily average of around 2,000 visitors.

According to a statement released during the opening

ceremony on Saturday, the market featured street performances, including mobile acts such as music, dance, and magic shows.

The statement said that the market also showcased street installations reflecting the different characteristics of Macau’s neighbourhoods, around 40 cultural and creative art stalls, thematic workshops, and an interactive game zone.

The statement underlined that the market further incorporated Macau Grand Prix (MGP) themed elements, which aimed to promote the MGP and revitalise the special atmosphere of the district.

Angela Lao En-yu, founder of ANWACLAY, told the *Post* that she collaborates with her mother and their team to create stop-motion animations combined with 2D techniques.

Lao said they have produced works like “Fun Clay”, an English-language animated series and clay art targeting children aged between six and nine.

According to Lao, the content is often inspired by pets and incorporates local Macau aspects. She also said she plans to expand their creations to different age groups in future, continue to participate in local markets and promote stop motion animation art.

Anyone keen to learn more about the event details, please visit the MGTO’s official website: <https://www.macaotourism.gov.mo/en/events/whatson/12354> ■

## ‘Run of Hope Macau’ achieves ‘record-breaking participation’

**Rui Pastorin**

This year’s “Run of Hope Macau” at Four Seasons Hotel Macao achieved “record-breaking participation” on Sunday, marking its most successful year since the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a statement that day by the hotel operator.

The event was organised by Four Seasons Hotel Macao in conjunction with The International School of Macao (TIS) and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Macao, and powered by HSBC Life. Kicking off and ending at the 5-star hotel in Cotai, the event featured both a 5.6 kilometre run and a three-kilometre walk.

Over 400 participants laced up for the event, the net proceeds of which will benefit cancer research at Kiang Wu Hospital and care services at the ECF Orphanage, the statement noted.

Other activities at the event included a family fun day combining wellness and celebration and, prior to the run, a warm-up led by a lululemon ambassador, the statement said. There was also an exclusive wellness area at Splash poolside restaurant for participants after the run.

Moreover, the event showed the role of education in community health, with TIS students backing number three of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals, which according to the UN SDG website is to “ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”.

The initiative was inspired by Canadian athlete, humanitarian and cancer research activist Terry Fox (1958-1981), who lost a leg to

cancer. Fox, according to AI chatbot Poe, embarked on a cross-country run called the “Marathon of Hope” with a prosthetic aiming to run across Canada to raise money for cancer research.

Four Seasons properties across the globe host annual events in support of cancer research and care, according to the statement, with the first “Run of Hope Macau” taking place in 2009. ■



This photo provided by the Four Seasons Hotel Macao on Sunday shows participants of Run of Hope, which took place that morning in Cotai.

## Macao Orchestra performs concert for over 2,000 students

**Rui Pastorin**

The Macao Orchestra (OM) and the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) are presenting the concert programme “Music for Future – Music in the Campus” to take music to kindergartens and primary and secondary schools, with the first phase of the campus concert for the 2025-26 concert season having brought music to over 2,000 students at six local schools from October 15 to 17.

According to a recent statement from the bureau, the first phase of the campus concert was themed “The Four Seasons” and had the orchestra, led by Resident Conductor Tony Cheng-Te Yeh, visit Yuet Wah College, Sacred Heart Canossian College (Chinese Section), The International School of Macao (TIS), Escola Sun Wah, St. Joseph Diocesan College No. 5, and Lou Hau High School.

The statement said students were able to watch performances of works by Beethoven, Delius, Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev and Copland, among

other renowned composers.

The concert programme is one of the orchestra’s “key educational projects”, the statement said, organising performances with “appropriate arrangements of repertoire “for students of different age groups, and performing them in various ensemble sizes.

The statement noted: “Through vivid explanations and fun interactive

ways, the programme allows students to learn the rich connotations of classical music in a relaxed environment, thereby enhancing their interest and their ability to appreciate classical music”, welcoming schools to participate as they continue to stage the concerts.

One can find more information by contacting the orchestra on 2882 2860 or email to [moc@moc.com.mo](mailto:moc@moc.com.mo). ■



This photo provided by the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) on Friday shows the Macao Orchestra (OM) performing at one of the local schools.

## Macao imports dip 3.7 pct, exports rise 2.1 pct from Jan to Sept

**Staff Reporter**

Macau’s merchandise imports dropped by 3.7 percent year-on-year to 91.48 billion patacas (US\$11.4 billion) in the first three quarters, the Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEC) announced last week. Imports accounted for 89.9 percent of Macau’s external merchandise trade, resulting in a trade balance deficit of 81.17 billion patacas.

Total merchandise exports –

comprising domestic and re-exports – rose by 2.1 percent to 10.31 billion patacas. Re-exports accounted for 89.6 percent of total exports.

Food and beverage imports – Macau’s top segment of merchandise imports – rose by 4.8 percent to 16.86 billion patacas, accounting for 18.4 percent of all merchandise imports. Beauty, cosmetic, and skincare products – the second largest segment of merchandise imports – dropped by

1.2 percent to 6.94 billion patacas.

Tourists from the Chinese mainland, Macau’s number one source of visitor arrivals, make up a major part of the special administrative region’s shoppers. Most of Macau’s imports from January through September originated from the Chinese mainland (30.6 percent), France (14.5 percent), and Italy (10.2 percent). About 71.3 percent of total exports were shipped to Hong Kong. ■



## PUI CHING STUDENTS EXPLORE BLIND BOX CRAZE



Customers shop at the POP MART store in Galaxy Macau in Cotai. – Photos: Pui Ching Middle School



### Insights from counsellor on blind box addiction

**Dickson Ng Kuan Hou (S6A),  
Dickson Ho Hang U (S6F)**

The recent trend of blind boxes has raised concerns about the potential for addiction among youngsters. In May of this year, students from Pui Ching Middle School interviewed Jacob Choi Chan Hong, a counsellor from the Sheng Kung Hui Gambling Counselling and Family Wellness Centre, to hear his advice on this issue.

**Q: What is the mindset of consumers buying blind boxes?**

**A:** The psychological state of someone buying blind boxes involves uncertainty, expectations, and thrills that trigger dopamine release.

If we receive an item that doesn't meet our expectations, we may feel disappointed

and be tempted to buy another one. This can also affect our mood and alter our mental state, prompting us to make another purchase.

**Q: What advice would you give teenagers?**

**A:** In Macau, young people under the age of 21 are not allowed to enter casinos to gamble. To pursue excitement, some of them may opt to buy blind boxes.

It's not that seeking excitement is bad; after all, the desire for pleasure is a normal part of being human. However, this raises an important question: Is there a healthy way to meet these needs?

Engaging in positive social interactions, pursuing hobbies, and practising sports are much better options. Developing our personal talents and hobbies can definitely steer us away from addiction.

### What's behind the global craze of blind boxes?

**Zaira Wong Ieok Lam (S5D) & Jacinta Lei In Chi (S6C)**

What's the new trend that influencers, households, and even BLACKPINK's Lisa are embracing? You guessed it – it's none other than blind boxes! Resellers queue for hours to flip these mysterious figures at "skyrocketing" prices. But what's behind the appeal of this global craze?

Blind boxes are collectibles sold in sealed packaging, hiding their contents. Buyers love the thrill of surprise, often chasing rare or limited editions. This sense of anticipation has propelled the industry's meteoric rise.

However, beneath the allure of blind boxes lies a concerning dark side. Macau's Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) has flagged that many local youths are getting caught up in blind box-related issues, with some borrowing money to buy them, treating the phenomenon like a form of gambling.

**A student from Pui Ching Middle School is interviewing counsellor Jacob Choi Chan Hong at the Sheng Kung Hui Gambling Counseling and Family Wellness Centre in May this year.**



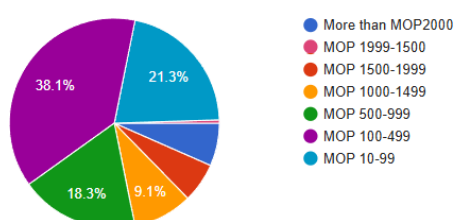
### Survey findings on blind box purchases

**Zaira Wong Ieok Lam (S5D)**

In May this year, students from Pui Ching Middle School conducted an online survey, gathering responses from 246 students aged 14-17 at our school. The results revealed a notable interest in purchasing blind boxes, along with some surprising and concerning trends.

9. How much have you spent on buying the blind boxes so far?

197 則回應

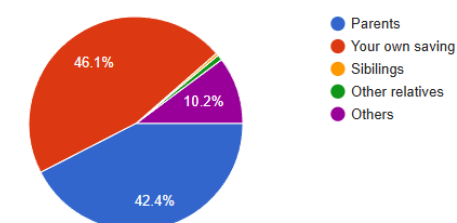


Among the respondents, about three quarters reported having bought at least one blind box before.

Specifically, 38.1 percent of students who had purchased blind boxes indicated spending between 100-499 patacas, while 18.3 percent spent 500-999 patacas, and 6.6 percent exceeded 2,000 patacas. This indicates that some students are deeply invested in this hobby.

4. Where did the money you spent on blind boxes come from?

245 則回應

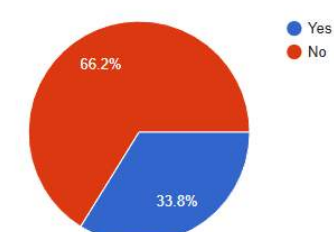


Financially, 46.1 percent of respondents who were blind box consumers used their own savings to buy blind boxes, whereas 42.4 percent relied on funds provided by their parents. Alarmingly, nearly 10 percent

of them admitted to borrowing money from others to finance their purchases.

11. Have you ever regretted buying the blind boxes?

198 則回應



Despite the enthusiasm for blind boxes, a third of respondents who had purchased them expressed regret over their purchases, primarily due to unmet expectations or realising they had overspent.

In conclusion, while blind boxes continue to be popular, they raise significant concerns regarding spending habits, regret, and impulsive buying behaviour.



## 72<sup>nd</sup> Macau Grand Prix Family Carnival fills Praça do Tap Siac

**Khalel Vallo**

According to a Saturday statement provided by the Sports Bureau (ID), the 72<sup>nd</sup> Macau Grand Prix Family Carnival took place in Praça do Tap Siac over the weekend, aiming to attract residents and visitors alike to experience the atmosphere of the upcoming 72<sup>nd</sup> Macau Grand Prix, slated to take place from November 13 to 16.

The carnival featured a miniature Guia Circuit, a mini race track, and a series of interactive experiences, allowing children to step into the roles of mini racing drivers and race officials, the statement said, adding that visitors also explored exhibits highlighting the behind-the-scenes work of the Grand Prix and collected themed souvenirs.

The event also featured several motor racing simulation activities, including the Mini Guia Circuit,

Outstanding Drivers Training Centre, Official Timing, Race Control, and Fire Elite, among others, the statement noted.

Meanwhile, in order to celebrate the upcoming 15<sup>th</sup> National Games and the 12<sup>th</sup> National Games for Persons with Disabilities (NGD) and 9<sup>th</sup> National Special Olympics Games (NSOG), this year's carnival integrated Games-themed photo booths and mascot performances, the statement underlined.

The Family Carnival ended on Sunday night. The statement pointed out that the Grand Prix Organising Committee (MGPOC) will continue its lineup of community events, including an Auto Show in Praça do Tap Siac this weekend.

More details of the event can be found by visiting the official website of the Macau Grand Prix at [www.macao.grandprix.gov.mo](http://www.macao.grandprix.gov.mo) or via the "Macau GP Macau Grand Prix" mobile app. ■



This undated handout photo provided by the Sports Bureau (ID) on Saturday shows children competing on a mini Guia circuit interactive race during the weekend's 72<sup>nd</sup> Macau Grand Prix Family Carnival in Praça do Tap Siac.

## Macau casino takings rise 15.9 pct last month, best result since Oct 2019

**Staff Reporter**

Macau's casinos generated gross gaming revenue (GGR) of 24.08 billion patacas last month, a year-on-year increase of 15.9 percent, the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) announced on Saturday.

Last month's GGR was the best since October 2019, when it amounted to 26.4 billion patacas.

Macau's gaming industry was severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic for three consecutive years, from January 2020 to December 2022. Month-on-month, GGR in October rose by 31.7 percent. In the first 10 months of the year, GGR increased by 8.0 percent year-on-year to 205.4 billion patacas.

Macau's government-concessioned gaming industry is operated by six rival integrated resort (IR) operators: Sands, Galaxy, SJM, Melco, Wynn, and MGM. Under their concession agreements with the government,

the IR operators are required to strengthen their non-gaming attractions and support the promotion of Macau's cultural heritage and old-quarter renewal projects. The operators pay 35 percent of their GGR as direct gaming tax to the government, in addition to a further 5.0 percent in levies for funding various public causes. However, the gaming law, amended in 2022, allows the government to reduce these additional levies (officially termed "contributions") for various reasons, such as when operators expand their foreign client markets or face unforeseen adverse developments affecting their business operations.

In the first three quarters of the year, according to the latest available official gaming statistics, baccarat generated 85 percent of local casinos' GGR across their 16 games of chance. Roulette, Europe's classic game of chance, generated a mere 0.5 percent. ■

## Macau hosts 15<sup>th</sup> National Games torch relay



The final torchbearer Kuok Kin Hang, a local karate athlete, carries the torch up the steps in front of the Ruins of St. Paul's on Sunday. — Photo: Maria Cheang Ut Meng

**Staff Reporter**

The Macau torch relay session for the 15<sup>th</sup> National Games on Sunday morning lasted about one hour, with Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai concluding the event by saying in a speech that "every step of the torchbearers has showcased Macau's urban charm of joint dedication".

Sam also pledged to spare no effort in ensuring the successful organisation of the Games' events in Macau.

The torch relay for the 15<sup>th</sup> National Games was held simultaneously in Hong Kong, Macau, Guangzhou and Shenzhen, marking the first tri-region torch relay in the history of the Games and the first time the torch has been carried in Hong Kong and Macau.

The 15<sup>th</sup> National Games will be held between November 9 and 21. For the first time, the Games will be held not just in one province, autonomous region or municipality but in three separate regions — Guangdong Province, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), and the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR).

After the launch ceremony was held at Shenzhen's Lianhuashan ("Lotus Hill") Park at 9 a.m. on Sunday, the torch relay started simultaneously in the four cities at 9:30 a.m.

The torch relay featured 200 torchbearers in total, with each of the four cities having 50 runners.

The relay in Macau was restricted to the peninsula, i.e., excluding Taipa and Coloane, with a total distance of 2.6 kilometres.

Macau's torch relay began at Government Headquarters in Nam Van, where Sam lit the first torch from the cauldron and handed it to Li Yi, who won the women's changquan gold medal for Macau at the Hangzhou Asian Games in

2023. "Changquan" is a wushu (Chinese martial arts) category.

In addition to Sam, the starting ceremony at Macau's Government Headquarters was also attended by Central People's Government Liaison Office in the MSAR Director Zheng Xincong, Foreign Ministry Commissioner in the MSAR Liu Xianfa, and Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Macau Garrison Deputy Commander Dai Jinsong.

The route in Macau passed several renowned landmarks and concluded at the UNESCO World Heritage-protected Ruins of St. Paul's.

The final torchbearer Kuok Kin Hang, who won a bronze medal in the men's karate at the 14<sup>th</sup> National Games, held in Shaanxi Province in September 2021, to become Macau's first-ever medallist at the Games, carried the flame up the steps in front of the Ruins of St. Paul's and lit the cauldron.

Nine of Macau's 50 torchbearers were current or former Macau athletes.

The Games' opening and closing ceremonies will be held in Guangzhou and Shenzhen respectively.

After the relay, the flames from the four cities were merged into a single flame in Guangzhou at the Guangdong Olympic Sports Centre, where the unified flame will light the main cauldron on November 9, officially opening the 15<sup>th</sup> National Games.

After the relay in Macau, which lasted about an hour, Sam said in a speech in front of the Ruins of St. Paul's that the flame of the National Games symbolises brightness and hope, with the torch relay representing the transmission of spirit and the gathering of strength.

The chief executive said that "every step of the torchbearers has showcased Macau's urban charm of

joint dedication", with each handover embodying the sportsmanship of unity and hard work.

Sam pledged that his government will spare no effort in ensuring the successful organisation of the Games' events in Macau, adhering to the principles of "simplicity, safety, and splendour", which, he said, will allow "the unique charm of Vibrant Macau to shine on a larger stage".

The 50 torchbearers in Macau's relay session comprised representatives from various segments of Macau's civil society as well as those from the mainland.

The Macau torchbearers included former president of the Legislative Assembly (AL), Kou Hoi In, Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Wallis O Lam, Pun Weng Kun, who heads Macau's preparatory office for the upcoming National Games, Sports Bureau (ID) Acting President See Lei Si Leng, as well as current lawmakers José Chui Sai Peng, Si Ka Lon, Ma Chi Seng, Alan Ho Ion Sang, and Wong Kit Cheng.

The torchbearers also included ex-legislators Andrew Chan Chak Mo, Chan Meng Kam, Dominic Sio Chi Wai, and Chan Hong.

The torchbearers also included civic leaders from various segments, such as Lao Ngai Leong, a veteran community leader of the city's returned overseas Chinese community.

The torchbearers also included a representative from each of the city's six gaming operators, namely Galaxy Entertainment Group Director Philip Cheng Yee Sing, Wynn Macau President Linda Chen Chih-ling, MGM China Chairwoman Pansy Ho Chiu King, her sister SJM Chairwoman Daisy Ho Chiu Fung, Sands China Sports Events Vice President Shen Yang, and Melco Director Chung Yuk Man. ■

## Macau GDP rises 8 pct in 3Q

**Staff Reporter**

Macau's gross domestic product (GDP) rose by 8.0 percent year-on-year in real terms in the third quarter, according to preliminary figures released by the Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEC) last week.

Third-quarter GDP rose to 103.86 billion patacas, reaching 92.6 percent of the one in the same

period of pre-pandemic 2019.

Macau's first COVID-19 case was reported in January 2020. The pandemic severely affected the local economy for three consecutive years.

According to the bureau, total exports of services grew by 10.5 percent year-on-year in real terms in the third quarter, fuelled by a 13.6 percent rise in visitor arrivals.

In the first three quarters, according to the preliminary figures, GDP increased by 4.2 percent year-on-year in real terms to 301.33 billion patacas.

Revised GDP figures for the third quarter and first three quarters will be released on November 14, according to last week's DSEC statement. ■



# Chronic diseases cause 80 pct of deaths in Macau: Health chief

Armindo Neves

The Health Bureau (SSM) announced in a statement yesterday that it held a launch ceremony at the Tap Seac Health Centre on Saturday for its “Chronic Disease Management Programme”.

SSM Director Alvis Lo Iek Long told the ceremony that chronic diseases account for around 80 percent of all deaths in Macau.

According to the statement, the programme aims to channel stable chronic disease patients to community outpatient services through collaboration with community organisations, thereby achieving resource allocation at the community level.

Dr Lo said that chronic diseases account for about 80 percent of deaths in Macau. The authorities aim to comprehensively enhance residents’ “awareness”, “treatment” and “control” rates for chronic diseases by 2030, Dr Lo said.

The statement noted that the programme applies the “Metabolic Management Centre” model from the Shanghai Institute of Endocrine\* and Metabolic Diseases, integrating smart healthcare platforms and artificial intelligence (AI) technology to achieve collaborative division of labour in community centre testing and follow-up, health centre diagnosis and treatment.

In the first phase, the statement said, the Tap Seac Health Centre will refer patients to the health centre under



Health Bureau (SSM) Director Alvis Lo Iek Long addresses Saturday's launch ceremony at the Tap Seac Health Centre. — Photo: GCS

the Women's General Association of Macau (commonly known as Fu Luen); by the first quarter of 2026, the programme will expand to the Macau General Union of Neighbourhood Associations' (UGAMM – widely known as Kai Fong, its short name in Cantonese) health centres, gradually extending to other areas such as the northern district.

The statement pointed out that the control rate for hypertension patients increased from 48.5 percent in 2023 to 62.5 percent in 2024. Nearly 40,000 diabetes patients have shown significant improvements in all three key indicators, with about 11,000 patients achieving synchronised control of all blood sugar, blood pressure and blood lipids indicators, the statement said.

The programme, the statement said, marks a new phase in Macau's chronic disease prevention and treatment, entering a stage of integrated medical and preventive care. Through community collaborative management, it alleviates the pressure on public healthcare and allows residents to enjoy high-quality, continuous health services in their communities, the statement said. ■

\* *The endocrine system is a network of glands and organs in the body that produce, store, and release hormones. These hormones act as chemical messengers, travelling through the bloodstream to regulate the activity of cells and organs throughout the body.* — DeepSeek

## Sam says 'multilateralism is inevitable choice' to tackle global issues

Continued from p.1

“Macau is making every effort to promote appropriate economic diversification, implementing the ‘1+4’ appropriate economic diversification strategy. While optimising, refining and strengthening the comprehensive tourism and leisure industry, it is developing four key industries: traditional Chinese medicine and big health, modern finance, high and new technology, and convention, exhibition, trade and cultural sports. It is accelerating its integration into and service of the overall national development, promoting appropriate economic diversification, high-quality and sustainable development in Macau, Sam stressed.

Sam also noted that in September 2021, the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin was officially launched. This, he underlined, is a major decision personally planned, deployed and promoted by President Xi Jinping, with the original intention of creating conditions for Macau's appropriate economic diversification. The In-Depth Cooperation Zone is creating a business and living environment that aligns with Macau's, and is committed to

becoming a new “highland” for promoting the construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), he said. Macau sincerely welcomes Chinese entrepreneur friends from around the world to invest, start businesses and develop in the vibrant land of “Macau + Hengqin”, and jointly create new miracles of development, he said.

Sam Hou Fai also said that the Fourth Plenary Session of the 20<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) has concluded with flying colours, where General Secretary Xi delivered an important speech.

“The session, in light of the international and domestic situation, clearly defined the guiding principles and main objectives for China's economic and social development during the ‘15<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan’ period, and drew a grand blueprint for development in the next five years,” Sam said, adding that, “looking at the present, the Chinese economy continues to demonstrate strong resilience and vitality, with the supporting conditions and basic trend for long-term improvement unchanged.”

Sam also said that its comprehensive institutional advantages,

market scale advantages, industrial system advantages and human resource advantages are even more prominent.

### ‘An important engine & stabiliser of global economic growth’

“China has always been an important engine and stabiliser of global economic growth,” Sam said, stressing that the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are in full swing, with unlimited potential. Looking to the future, China will adopt an even more open posture to inject new momentum and create new opportunities for global development.

As one of the four central cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and an important bridgehead for the country's high-level opening up to the outside world, Macau is bound to play a greater role and demonstrate greater achievements on the international stage,” Sam concluded.

*N.B. Text in the Chinese language provided by the Macau Government Information Bureau (GCS), translation arranged and edited, as well as subheadings added by the Post*

## Police nab 2 security guards for robbery

Ada Lei

Two male security guards from the Chinese mainland were arrested on Thursday for robbing a local man of a voice recorder and 500 patacas in cash, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Cheong Un Hong said during a regular press conference on Friday.

Cheong identified the suspects as a 38-year-old male surnamed Yao, and a 44-year-old male surnamed Luo.

According to Cheong, the victim had previously had a dispute with both Yao and Luo during work. On October 23, at around 7 a.m., he bumped into them on a street in Zape, leading to another dispute. During the altercation,

the victim used his voice recorder to document the argument. Luo then pushed him down, punching and kicking him, while Yao took the opportunity to steal the voice recorder and 500 patacas in cash from the victim. After managing to escape, the victim immediately reported the case to the police. Cheong added that the victim sustained multiple injuries and suffered a total loss of 800 patacas.

The police identified Yao and Luo as the suspects and apprehended the duo in Zape on Thursday. Under questioning, both suspects refused to cooperate.

Both have been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), each facing a robbery charge. ■

## Chinese, LAC business leaders forge deeper ties at summit

ZHENGZHOU – Government officials, diplomats, experts and business representatives from China and more than 20 Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries gathered yesterday in Zhengzhou, Henan Province, to chart a course for expanded trade and economic collaboration.

An initiative, officially called “Zhengzhou Initiative on China-LAC Business Cooperation,” was launched at the opening of the ongoing 18<sup>th</sup> China-LAC Business Summit held in Zhengzhou, which outlined five key areas of cooperation to boost trade, promote industrial upgrades, build connectivity hubs, enhance people-to-people exchanges, and explore an innovative, smart future.

Initiated by the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), the summit is China's first institutional platform for promoting economic and trade ties with LAC countries. The two-day event, themed “Embracing Innovation and Intelligence for a Shared Future,” includes an opening ceremony, plenary sessions, four parallel meetings

and five supporting activities.

CCPIT Chairman Ren Hongbin hailed the summit as a “flagship brand” for practical cooperation. He pledged to work with LAC partners to advance economic and trade relations on a larger scale, in broader areas and at higher levels.

Uruguayan Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Valeria Csukasi noted that cooperation with China has injected new vitality into Global South countries, emphasizing the summit's role in boosting trade and expecting further progress as the cooperation mechanisms deepen.

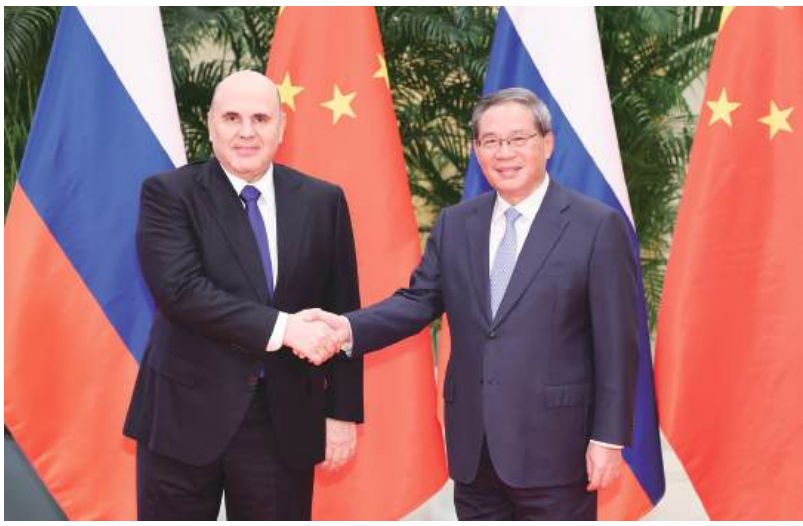
Concrete business engagements are underway, with enterprises from both sides set to reach intentions of cooperation in electronic information, cross-border e-commerce, agriculture and food, logistics, as well as new energy vehicles. Several memorandums of understanding are expected to be signed between trade promotion agencies and chambers of commerce.

This year's summit is co-hosted by CCPIT, the Henan provincial government and the People's Bank of China. — Xinhua



Jiang Feng, head of the Chinese Mission to the African Union (AU), addresses a training workshop at the Chinese-built Africa CDC headquarters in Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa yesterday. The Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) and the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC) yesterday jointly unveiled a three-week training workshop to advance public health capacity across Africa. — Xinhua





Premier Li Qiang (right) shakes hands with Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin in Hangzhou, east Zhejiang Province, co-chairing the 30th regular meeting of the Chinese and Russian heads yesterday. — AFP

## Wang Yi holds phone talks with German counterpart

BEIJING — Foreign Minister Wang Yi yesterday held phone talks with German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul at the request of the German side.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, said the important experience drawn from the development of China-Germany relations is that both respect each other, the guiding principle should be win-win cooperation and the proper positioning of bilateral ties is partnership.

For China and Germany, both major countries and important economies, maintaining sound and steady development of bilateral relations serves the interests of both nations, meets the expectations of all parties, and contributes to global peace and stability, he said.

Wang pointed out that, given the differences in history, culture, and social systems between China and Germany, divergences are inevitable.

The two sides should maintain communication and dialogue, dispel misunderstandings and strengthen mutual trust, while avoiding “microphone diplomacy” and unfounded accusations that run counter to facts, he said.

The Taiwan question is China’s internal affair and concerns China’s core interests, sovereignty and territorial integrity, said Wang, adding that the one-China principle is the most important political foundation of China-Germany relations.

China has given its unconditional support to Germany’s reunification, Wang noted, expressing hope that Germany, having experienced the pain of division itself, can fully understand and support China’s efforts to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and oppose all forms of “Taiwan independence.”

He called for establishing a more stable and sustainable policy framework to ensure that bilateral relations always stay on the right track.

For his part, Wadephul noted that Germany attaches great importance to its relations with China. He said that the China-Germany Strategic Dialogue on Diplomacy and Security held during Wang’s visit to Germany in July was highly successful and that both sides had a good, constructive and fruitful dialogue.

The German foreign minister expressed his expectation to visit China at the earliest convenient time for the Chinese side to have in-depth communication on major issues including those concerning bilateral relations.

Germany’s position on the one-China policy remains unchanged, Wadephul said, adding that Germany is willing to conduct close exchanges and dialogue with China in various fields, properly manage differences, and push forward the Germany-China comprehensive strategic partnership.

Wang extended a welcome to Wadephul for a visit to China in due time. — Xinhua

## China, EU hold ‘upgraded version’ of export-control dialogue mechanism meeting

BEIJING — Chinese and European Union (EU) trade officials have held an “upgraded version” of the China-EU export-control dialogue mechanism meeting, the Ministry of Commerce (MOC) said yesterday.

The dialogue meeting took place between Jiang Qianliang, director general of the MOC’s bureau of industry security and import and export control, and Denis Redonnet, deputy director-general of the

European Commission’s Directorate-General for Trade, from October 31 to November 1 in Brussels, the MOC said in an online statement.

The two sides carried out in-depth, constructive communication on mutual concerns in the field of export control, and agreed to maintain dialogue and communication to promote the stability and smooth operations of industrial and supply chains between China and Europe, said the statement. — Xinhua

# China widens visa-free access in latest opening-up move

BEIJING — China announced yesterday that it will expand its 240-hour visa-free transit program to more ports, and extend its unilateral visa-exemption arrangements for more than 40 countries to December 31, 2026, in the country’s latest move to further open up the country to the world.

The newly added ports (border checkpoints) include Guangzhou, Zhuhai’s Hengqin and Zhongshan, as well as the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge and the West Kowloon Station of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link, according to the National Immigration Administration (NIA).

The new policy, effective Wednesday, will raise the total number of checkpoints eligible for the 240-hour visa-free transit from 60 to 65 around China.

Travelers from 55 eligible countries who meet certain criteria can enter China through any of these checkpoints in 24 provincial-level regions and stay in the country for up to 240 hours, or 10 days, without a visa before heading to a third destination, said the NIA.

This is one of 10 new policies announced by the NIA on exit and entry administration to further facilitate outbound or inbound travel for both Chinese and foreign nationals.

A total of 10 international airports located in Tianjin, Nanjing, Chongqing and other cities will be added to the list of checkpoints allowing 24-hour direct transit for foreign nationals without having to undergo border check procedures, according to these measures.

The NIA also announced that starting November 20, foreign travelers to China will be able to complete their entry cards online before arrival. They can also choose to fill them out on-site using electronic devices provided at inspection points or opt for traditional paper entry cards.

### Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan

The newly released measures also include provisions to simplify travel for Chinese mainland residents visiting Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, as well as for Taiwan residents traveling to the mainland.

On the same day, the Chinese foreign ministry announced that China will extend its unilateral visa-exemption arrangements for more than 40 countries, including France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain, to December 31, 2026. The current visa-free policy for nationals of some of these countries ran until Dec. 31, 2025 before the extension.

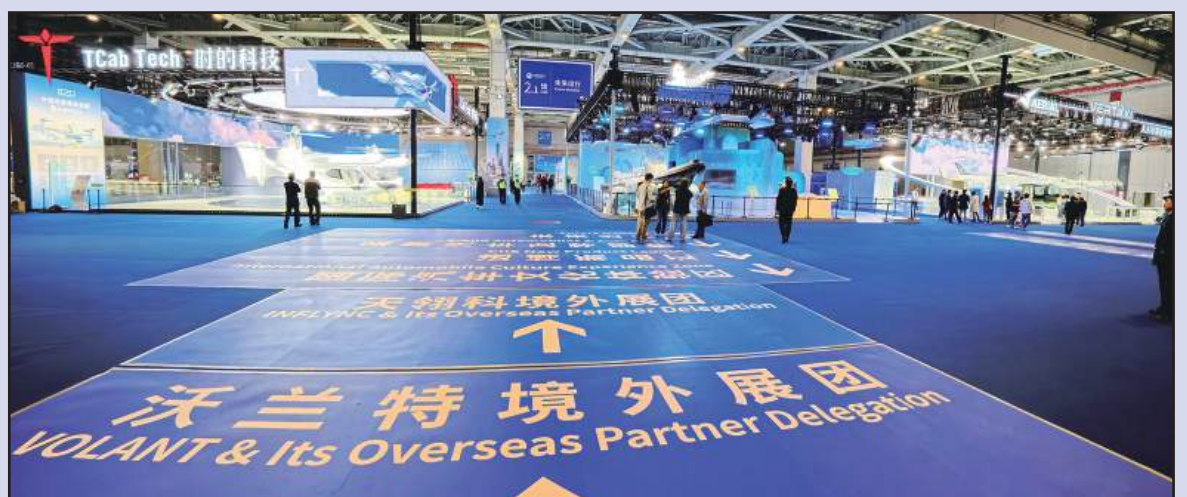
China has also decided to include Sweden in the visa-free scheme effective from November 10, 2025 to December 31, 2026, according to the ministry’s spokesperson Mao Ning.

The measures came on the heels of a key meeting of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee which adopted the recommendations of the CPC Central Committee for formulating the plan for economic and social development in the next five years.

The latest move was to implement the guiding principles of the CPC plenum, expand high-level opening-up to the world, and continuously facilitate personnel exchanges between China and other countries, Mao said.

In the third quarter of this year, foreign nationals made 7.246 million visits to China under its visa-free travel policies — a 48.3 percent year-on-year increase and accounting for 72.2 percent of all entries made by foreign nationals, according to NIA statistics.

On December 1, 2023, China began implementing trials of unilateral visa-free entry policies for ordinary passport holders from France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Malaysia. These policies were later expanded to more countries and extended in duration on several occasions. — Xinhua



This photo taken yesterday shows the Future Mobility exhibition area of the 8th China International Import Expo (CIIE) in Shanghai. The eighth CIIE will be held in Shanghai from tomorrow to next Monday. The event this year will feature 4,108 overseas exhibitors from 155 countries, regions and international organizations, with the total exhibition area exceeding 430,000 square meters, setting a new record in scale. — Xinhua

## China ready to promote ties with Spain through King Felipe VI’s visit: spokesperson

BEIJING — Through King Felipe VI’s visit, China stands ready to work with Spain to score more progress in the China-Spain comprehensive strategic partnership, a foreign ministry spokesperson said yesterday.

At the invitation of President Xi Jinping, King Felipe VI of Spain will pay a state visit to China from November 10 to 13.

“This is King Felipe VI’s first state visit to China after his enthronement and another visit by a Spanish king to China in 18 years,” spokesperson Mao Ning told a daily news briefing, adding that the visit is of great significance.

During the visit of King Felipe VI, President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Qiang, and Chairman of the National People’s Congress Standing Committee Zhao Leji will meet with him respectively, and exchange views on bilateral relations and international and regional issues of mutual interest, she said.

Noting that Spain is a major country in the European Union and China’s important strategic partner in Europe, Mao said under the strategic guidance of the two heads of state, bilateral relations have maintained robust development in recent years.

This year marks the 20th

anniversary of the China-Spain comprehensive strategic partnership, said Mao.

Through King Felipe VI’s visit, China stands ready to work with Spain to cement traditional friendship, expand mutually beneficial cooperation, have closer people-to-people and cultural exchanges, strengthen coordination on multilateral affairs, and score more progress in the comprehensive strategic partnership so as to deliver more benefits for the two peoples and inject more stability and positive energy into a turbulent international landscape, Mao added. — Xinhua



# Thousands evacuated as typhoon bears down on Philippines

Cecil Morella

MANILA – More than 150,000 people took shelter in coastal provinces of the Philippines yesterday as powerful Typhoon Kalmaegi made landfall in a region hit by some of the country's deadliest storms.

The typhoon, with winds of 150 kilometres per hour and gusts of up to 205 kph, made first contact in Dinagat Islands province, part of the Visayas island chain, before 11 p.m. [local time], the national weather service said.

Barely an hour earlier, 34-year-old Miriam Vargas sat in the darkness with her two children after the storm knocked out their electricity.

"As of now, there is strong rain and winds starting. We're sitting on the stairs and praying while trying to gauge the typhoon's strength," the single mother told AFP from Dinagat.

"The wind is whistling and there are sounds of things falling. The electricity went out about an hour ago, and we cannot see anything."

Roel Montesa, a disaster official on Leyte Island, said earlier that evacuations were "ongoing in Palo and Tanauan", naming two of the towns hardest hit by storm surges in 2013, when Super Typhoon Haiyan killed more than 6,000 people there.

Thousands of residents have also been evacuated since Sunday on neighbouring Samar island, where three-metre surges are predicted, according to civil defence official Randy Nicart.

"Some local governments are resorting to forced evacuations," he said.



*This handout photo taken yesterday and received from the Philippine Coast Guard-Eastern Samar Station shows coast guard personnel assisting in evacuating residents in Guiuan town, Eastern Samar province, central Philippines, ahead of the landfall of Typhoon Kalmaegi.* – AFP

## More storms expected

As of 8 p.m. [local time], "close to 156,000 individuals" had been pre-emptively evacuated, Office of Civil Defence deputy administrator Rafaelito Alejandro told a press briefing, adding landfall was expected some time after midnight.

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

With Kalmaegi, the archipelago country has already reached that average, state weather service specialist Charmaine Varilla told AFP, adding that at least "three to five more" storms could be expected by the end of December.

Just south of Leyte, in Dinagat Islands province, governor Nilo Demerey said 10,000 to 15,000 people had been pre-emptively

moved to safer areas.

Disaster official Joy Conales said residents of Dinagat's Loreto town were told to evacuate to higher ground.

The town has a one-storey-tall dike intended to protect its centre from big waves.

Scientists warn that storms are becoming more powerful due to human-driven climate change.

Varilla said that higher numbers of cyclones typically accompany La Niña, a naturally occurring climate pattern that cools surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean.

The Philippines was hit by two major storms in September, including Super Typhoon Ragasa, which toppled trees and tore the roofs off buildings, and killed 14 people in neighbouring Taiwan.

– AFP

# Singapore hopes to turn home of founding father Lee into monument

SINGAPORE – Singapore hopes to turn the site of the former home of founding father Lee Kuan Yew into a national monument, officials said yesterday following a long-running row between his children over the fate of the property.

The island state's National Heritage Board (NHB) said it intended to gazette Lee's estate, with the possibility of turning the area into a heritage park.

The former home of Singapore's first prime minister was deemed "to be of historic significance and national importance, and worthy of preservation as a national monument", the NHB and the Singapore Land Authority said in a combined statement.

The prime location at 38 Oxley Road in land-scarce Singapore has been the centre of a flaming row between Lee's children since his death in 2015 over whether it should be demolished.

The disagreement blew into the open in 2017, dividing the public as their feud generated global headlines.

Lee's oldest son and former prime minister Lee Hsien Loong favoured preserving the property which estate agents in 2024 said had an indicative price of around Sg\$30 million (US\$23 million).

But his two siblings – corporate executive Lee Hsien Yang and the late neurologist Lee Wei Ling

– have pointed to language in their father's will calling for its demolition.

The younger siblings accused their brother in 2017 of trying to exploit their father's legacy for political gain, though the issue simmered down as Lee Wei Ling was still living on the property.

Her death a year ago has left the five-bedroom bungalow empty, reigniting calls from Lee Hsien Yang – who bought the property from his older brother in 2015 – for the will to be implemented.

Yesterday's combined statement said that should a preservation order – a legal directive placing the property under the NHB's protection – be issued, Singapore's government intended to buy the site.

"If the site is preserved and acquired, the government will convert it into a public space, with one possible outcome being a heritage park," the statement said.

However, it added that "preserving the side does not obligate the government to preserve all the buildings and structures... in their current state," and authorities had yet to assess the buildings.

The property was the home of founding premier Lee from the mid-1940s until his death. He is credited with transforming the former British colony into a wealthy city-state in just a little over 30 years.

– AFP

# Thai ex-PM Thaksin's party elects new leader after daughter's exit

BANGKOK – One of Thailand's largest political parties, founded by ex-premier Thaksin Shinawatra, elected a new leader on Friday, the party said, following the resignation of his daughter, the former prime minister.

Paetongtarn Shinawatra, 39, stepped down as Pheu Thai party chief last week after a court removed her as prime minister in August over an ethics breach linked to a border dispute with Cambodia.

Analysts say her departure was a strategic move to shield Pheu Thai from potential legal challenges and could mark the end of the Shinawatra family's decades-long dominance in Thai politics.

Pheu Thai members elected Julapun Amornvivat, a former deputy finance minister, as their new leader, according to a livestream on the party's official Facebook page.

"I feel honoured to receive this privilege and thank all party members for their confidence," the MP from northern Chiang Mai province, a Pheu Thai stronghold, told reporters after the vote.

Julapun, 50, is the son of veteran politician Sompong Amornvivat, who served as deputy prime minister and led Pheu Thai in 2019.

He was among those promoting the party's flagship campaign policies ahead of the 2023 election, including a proposed 10,000-baht (US\$300) stimulus handout and the legalisation of casinos.

However, observers say that whoever leads Pheu Thai will remain under the influence of party patriarch Thaksin and his political dynasty.

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

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

The 76-year-old is currently serving a prison sentence for corruption during his time in office.

– AFP



*Julapun Amornvivat, Pheu Thai Party's MP for Chiang Mai, attends a party meeting to decide who to put forward as candidate for prime minister at parliament in Bangkok on August 15, 2024. One of Thailand's largest political parties Pheu Thai, founded by ex-premier Thaksin Shinawatra, elected its new leader Julapun Amornvivat on October 31, the party said, following the resignation of Thaksin's daughter Paetongtarn Shinawatra after a court found her guilty of an ethics breach linked to a border dispute with Cambodia during her time as prime minister.* – AFP

# Japan's PM seeks meeting with Kim over abductees

TOKYO – Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said yesterday she has requested to meet North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to resolve the long-standing issue of Japanese nationals abducted by Pyongyang decades ago.

After years of denial, North Korea admitted in 2002 that its agents had kidnapped 13 Japanese nationals in the 1970s and 80s, who were used to train Pyongyang's spies in Japanese language and customs.

Tokyo believes North Korea abducted at least 17 Japanese nationals, while others say many more might have been taken to Pyongyang.

Takaichi told an awareness event on the issue in Tokyo that she had requested a summit meeting with Kim Jong Un.

"In order to build a new, fruitful relation between Japan and North Korea, I am resolved to meet face-to-face with Chairman Kim Jong Un," she said.

Pyongyang has not yet publicly responded to Takaichi's request.

Several Japanese leaders have tried – but so far failed – to hold direct talks with Kim over the issue.

Former prime minister Junichiro Koizumi visited Pyongyang in 2002 and 2004, where he met with the North's then-leader Kim Jong Il, father of Kim Jong Un, and negotiated the return of five of the victims.

The North claimed at the time that the remaining eight were dead.

Takaichi's predecessor, Shigeru Ishiba, suggested setting up liaison offices in Tokyo and Pyongyang to move the issue forward, but they were never materialised.

Meanwhile, Japan has courted the United States, and especially President Donald Trump, in order to maintain international attention on the subject.

Trump met with the families of Japanese abducted during a visit to Tokyo last week.

"I will use any means necessary for this issue with the lives of the victims and our national sovereignty at stake," Takaichi said.

"The abduction is the priority of my cabinet," she added, echoing the pledges of past prime ministers.

– AFP



# Afghan govt says quake kills 20, injures over 500

*Atif Aryan with Aysha Safi in Kabul*

SAMANGAN – A strong earthquake killed at least 20 people in northern Afghanistan, authorities said yesterday, just months after another deadly tremor that left the country reeling.

The 6.3-magnitude quake struck overnight at a depth of 28 kilometres with the epicentre near the city of Mazar-i-Sharif, according to the US Geological Survey.

“All the houses were struck and people were hurt,” resident Ahmad Khan told AFP in Tashqurghan village as people searched through the rubble.

“We’re asking the government to help with reconstruction.”

Across Samangan and Balkh provinces “534 people have been injured and more than 20 fatalities have been taken to hospitals”, health ministry spokesman Sharafat Zaman told journalists.

In Mazar-i-Sharif, one of Afghanistan’s largest northern cities, an AFP correspondent saw residents scrambling out into the streets.

The city’s famed Blue Mosque, a 15th-century landmark known for its vibrant tiles, was also damaged.

Pieces of the structure, particularly from one of its minarets, broke off and lay scattered across the mosque’s grounds, one of the country’s few remaining tourist spots.

The culture ministry pledged to immediately take “the necessary measures to assess and repair the damage”.

Correspondents in the capital Kabul, around 420 kilometres by road to the south, also felt shaking.

Poor communication networks and infrastructure in mountainous Afghanistan have hampered disaster responses in the past,

preventing authorities for hours or even days from reaching far-flung villages to assess the extent of the damage.

## ‘Fear and uncertainty’

The defence ministry said it had cleared and reopened the main road between Mazar-i-Sharif and the town of Kholm, and that it had rescued people who had been stranded there overnight.

“Numerous homes have been destroyed, and significant material losses have been incurred,” Hamdullah Fitrat, deputy spokesman for the Taliban authorities, wrote on X, without specifying a number.

It is the latest natural disaster for the Taliban government, which has faced three major deadly earthquakes since taking over Afghanistan in 2021, even as the foreign aid that formed the backbone of the country’s economy

has dramatically dropped.

In August, a shallow 6.0-magnitude quake in the country’s east wiped out mountainside villages and killed more than 2,200 people.

According to the World Bank, the August earthquake caused an estimated US\$183 million worth of damage to buildings and infrastructure.

The UN’s humanitarian agency, OCHA, estimates 221,000 people are still in “acute need” of assistance in the east.

Save the Children, which is dispatching a team to Samangan, warned “thousands of children in the earthquake-devastated east of the country are facing the winter with only tents for protection”.

“Now, families in the north are also experiencing fear and uncertainty,” said Samira Sayed Rahman, the charity’s programme

development and advocacy director for Afghanistan.

Earthquakes are common in Afghanistan, particularly along the Hindu Kush mountain range, near where the Eurasian and Indian tectonic plates meet.

Large tremors in western Herat, near the Iranian border, in 2023, and in eastern Nangarhar province in 2022 killed hundreds and destroyed thousands of homes.

Many homes in the predominantly rural country - devastated by decades of war - are shoddily built.

Afghanistan is suffering from a humanitarian crisis compounded by drought, economic restrictions on the banking sector, and the pushback of millions of Afghan citizens from neighbouring Iran and Pakistan.

The United Nations and aid agencies have warned that hunger is rising. – AFP

## Bangladesh scraps music teacher plan after Islamist anger

DHAKA – Bangladesh has cancelled plans to hire music teachers for primary schools, a government official told AFP yesterday, after the move faced fierce opposition from Islamist groups in the Muslim-majority country.

In August, the ministry overseeing primary education issued a circular announcing the recruitment of music teachers – a decision that the interim government has now reversed.

“The government has scrapped the decision and issued an order”, a senior ministry official told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity.

“Both the music and physical education posts have now been dropped,” said the official.

The government has not commented publicly on the decision.

The reversal follows strong protests from Bangladesh’s largest Islamist political party, Jamaat-e-Islami, and other Islamist organisations that oppose the

inclusion of music in school curricula.

Mia Golam Parwar, a senior Jamaat leader, said it was unacceptable to appoint music and dance teachers without also hiring religious instructors.

“Imposing music and dance is a conspiratorial move and goes against Islam,” said Sajidur Rahman, a senior leader of Hefazat-e-Islam, an influential pressure group made up of multiple political parties, organisations and religious schools.

A.F.M. Khalid Hossain, who holds the religious affairs portfolio in the interim cabinet, met last week with education ministry officials to discuss the issue.

“The government will not make any decision that goes against public sentiment,” Khalid told reporters after the meeting.

The South Asian nation of 170 million people has been in political turmoil since Sheikh Hasina was toppled in August 2024.

Hasina, who was blamed for extensive human rights abuses, took a tough stand against Islamist movements during her autocratic 15-year rule.

Since she fled to India – where she has defied extradition orders to face charges of crimes against humanity – Islamist groups have grown increasingly assertive.

They have demanded restrictions on cultural activities they consider “anti-Islamic”, including music and theatre festivals, women’s football matches, and kite-flying celebrations.

Rasheda K. Chowdhury, a prominent education expert, criticised the government’s reversal on teaching music.

“What kind of nation are we trying to create?” she told AFP.

“The government should have convinced them that religious studies and music can go hand in hand; there is no conflict between them.” – AFP

## Bangladesh’s ex-PM Zia to contest elections: party

DHAKA – Former Bangladeshi prime minister Khaleda Zia will contest elections expected in February, her influential political party said yesterday.

The 80-year-old has been a dominant figure for decades in the country’s turbulent power struggles, and her Bangladesh Nationalist Party is seen as the frontrunner in the elections.

Her participation was announced by Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, a senior BNP leader, who said she will contest in three constituencies.

The uncompromising leader has been in poor health following years of imprisonment under her arch-enemy Sheikh Hasina, who was overthrown in a mass uprising in August 2024.

Zia, who led Bangladesh three times, was jailed for corruption in

2018 under Hasina’s government, which also blocked her from travelling abroad for medical treatment. She was released last year, shortly after Hasina was forced from power.

Her son, Tarique Rahman, 59, who has been in Britain since 2008, will also run, Alamgir told reporters.

Rahman, known in Bangladesh as Tarique Zia, has lived in London since 2008, saying he fled politically-motivated persecution. He is yet to return to Bangladesh.

Since Hasina’s fall, Rahman has been acquitted of the most serious charge against him; a life sentence handed down in absentia for a 2004 grenade attack on a Hasina rally, which he always denied.

For decades, Bangladesh’s politics has been defined by the bitter rivalry between Zia and Hasina – a feud dubbed the “Battle

of the Begums”, an honorific title in South Asia for a powerful woman.

The hatred traces back to the 1975 assassination of Hasina’s father, independence leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, along with most of her family, in a coup.

Three months later, Zia’s husband, Ziaur Rahman, then deputy army chief, effectively took control. He became president in 1977. He was himself assassinated in 1981.

Zia, then a 35-year-old mother of two, inherited the BNP leadership.

Initially dismissed as a political novice, Zia proved a formidable opponent, rallying against military dictator Hussain Muhammad Ershad, and later joining forces with Hasina to oust him in 1990.

The two women alternated in power for the next decade and a half. – AFP



*This handout picture taken and released by Customs Mumbai International Airport on Thursday, shows a silvery gibbon as it was seized from a checked luggage of a passenger travelling from Malaysia via Thailand, at Mumbai International Airport. Indian customs officers have arrested a passenger after discovering two endangered gibbons stuffed inside a checked bag, the latest animals seized from smugglers, enough to make up a zoo. One of the tiny apes from Indonesia was dead, while the other, in a video shared by Indian Customs, was seen cradled in the arms of an officer, softly hooting before covering its face with its arm. – AFP*

## Sole survivor of Air India crash has painful memories

LONDON – The only survivor of June’s Air India crash has told UK media of the mental and physical anguish he has endured since surviving the deadly disaster in the Indian city of Ahmedabad.

Vishwash Kumar Ramesh said in the interviews aired and published yesterday that the months following the crash, which killed 241 passengers on the London-bound plane and another 19 people on the ground, had been “very difficult”.

The British citizen, who lives in Leicester, central England, walked away from the plane wreckage, in what he has called “a miracle”, but lost his brother.

“God gave me life but took all my happiness, and from my family,” the 39-year-old told Britain’s domestic Press Association news agency.

“It completely brought down my family... it’s very difficult for me and my family.”

He added that his brother, Ajay, “was my strength” and “my everything”.

The Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner crashed shortly after take-off from Ahmedabad in western India on June 12, smashing into a medical college.

A preliminary investigation report by India’s Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) said fuel to the jet’s engines was cut off moments before impact.

It did not offer any other firm conclusions or apportion blame for the disaster.

It emerged last month that the father of one of the pilots has asked India’s top court for an independent investigation, arguing the official probe was unfairly blaming the crew.

In the interviews, which included several to British broadcasters, Ramesh was reluctant to talk about the crash, saying it was still “very painful”.

“I get flashbacks all the time. I just stay awake, I sleep maybe three to four hours,” he told PA.

Ramesh told the BBC he suffers pain in his leg, shoulder, knee and back, and has not been able to work or drive since the tragedy.

“When I walk, not walk properly, slowly, slowly, my wife help,” he added.

His advisers told the British broadcaster he was diagnosed with PTSD while he was being treated in hospital in India but that he has not received any medical treatment since being back in the UK. – AFP



# 'Heroic' worker praised as man charged over UK train stabbings

Chris Radburn and Helen Rowe

HUNTINGDON, United Kingdom – A man has been charged with 10 counts of attempted murder following a mass stabbing on a London-bound train, as a critically wounded train worker was hailed yesterday as a hero for stepping in to protect passengers.

"He went in to do his job and he left work a hero. And there are people who are alive today because of his actions and his bravery," Transport Minister Heidi Alexander said of the attack on Saturday evening (local time).

Alexander also praised the train's driver, whose quick thinking ensured it was able to make an unscheduled emergency stop at Huntingdon in eastern England that allowed passengers to escape the train.

Transport police said the suspected attacker, Anthony Williams, 32, also faced a separate attempted murder charge over another incident at a train station in



Press photographers attempt to capture a picture of the suspected perpetrator of multiple stabbings aboard a LNER Azuma train on November 1 near Huntingdon, as a prison van leaves Peterborough Magistrates Court yesterday. – AFP

London hours earlier on Saturday.

He appeared in court yesterday and was remanded in custody.

Police are also probing whether Williams was involved in three other knife incidents in his home town of Peterborough on Friday and

Saturday, including one in which a 14-year-old was stabbed.

Ten people were wounded in Saturday's train knife rampage.

The train company employee who was injured remains in hospital in a critical but stable condition.

Scunthorpe United football club meanwhile named its defender Jonathan Gjoshe as one of the victims, adding that he was receiving in-patient treatment for non-life-threatening injuries.

The train had been travelling from northern England to London's King's Cross Station at about 7:40 p.m. (local time) on Saturday.

Passengers told of seeing victims with stab wounds fleeing through the train warning others to escape.

## 'Heroic'

Chief investigation officer Stuart Cundy also paid tribute to the injured train company employee.

"Having viewed the CCTV from the train, the actions of the member of rail staff were nothing short of heroic and undoubtedly saved people's lives," he said.

Four other people remained in hospital though their condition was not life-threatening.

Alexander said there would be

an increase in visible police patrols on trains in coming days to reassure the public.

The incident had been "absolutely horrific" but the UK rail network was generally among the "safest forms of public transport anywhere in the world", she told Sky News.

The arrested man was not known to counter-terrorism police or the security services, she added.

Williams faces 10 counts of attempted murder, one of actual bodily harm and one of possessing a knife in connection with the train stabbings, said Tracy Easton of the Crown Prosecution Service.

Following an earlier incident at a train station in east London in the early hours of Saturday, he also faces another charge of attempted murder and possessing a knife.

"We know the devastating impact the events on Saturday's train has had and how the incident shocked the entire country," Easton said, adding: "Our thoughts remain with all those affected." – AFP

## Israel advances bill proposing death penalty for deadly terror attacks

JERUSALEM – An Israeli parliamentary committee yesterday advanced a bill proposing the death penalty for "terrorists" a move pushed for by far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir.

The National Security Committee approved the amendment to the penal code, which will now be passed onto the parliament for its first reading.

Israel's hostages coordinator, Gal Hirsch, said he and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu backed the measure.

Ben Gvir said he would stop his party Otzma Yehudit ("Jewish Power") voting with the governing coalition if the law isn't voted on by Sunday, threatening the government's survival.

While the death penalty exists for a small number of crimes in Israel, it has become a de facto abolitionist country, with the Nazi Holocaust perpetrator Adolf

Eichmann the last person to be executed in 1962.

A statement from the committee that includes the bill's explanatory note says "its purpose is to cut off terrorism at its root and create a heavy deterrent."

"It is proposed that a terrorist convicted of murder motivated by racism or hatred towards the public, and under circumstances where the act was committed with the intent to harm the State of Israel... will be sentenced to the death penalty – mandatory," the statement said.

The rule, it said, was "not optional and without discretion".

The text also proposes that the death penalty can be imposed by a majority of judges and the sentence cannot be commuted once the ruling is handed down.

Hirsch had previously opposed debating the bill citing concern for living captives held in Gaza.

"Since the hostages are now in Israel, this opposition is no longer relevant," he said, according to the statement.

"The prime minister supports this proposal. I consider this law to be an additional tool in our arsenal against terrorism and for the release of hostages," he added.

The bill was introduced by a lawmaker from Otzma Yehudit.

"There will be no room for discretion in this law," Ben Gvir said yesterday, according to the statement.

"Any terrorist who is preparing to commit murder must know that there is only one punishment – the death penalty."

Ben Gvir on Friday posted a video of himself standing over a row of Palestinian prisoners lying face down on the ground with their hands tied, in which he called for capital punishment.

– AFP

## Khamenei says Iran will not cooperate with US while it backs Israel



This handout picture provided by the office of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei shows him addressing a meeting with students in Tehran yesterday. – AFP

TEHRAN – Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said yesterday that Tehran would only consider cooperation with the United States if it changed its policy in the region including supporting Israel.

"If they completely abandon support for the Zionist regime, withdraw their military bases from here [the region], and refrain from interfering in this region, then it [cooperation] can be considered," said Khamenei.

"The arrogant nature of the United States accepts nothing other than submission."

The remarks came during a gathering with students in Tehran marking the anniversary of the 1979 takeover of the US embassy following the Islamic Revolution which toppled the Western-backed Shah.

In mid-June, Israel launched an unprecedented bombing campaign against Iran, triggering a war which saw the US join briefly with strikes on Iranian nuclear sites.

The 12-day war with Israel, which prompted an Iranian response with missile and drone strikes, derailed nuclear talks between Tehran and Washington which had begun in April.

A ceasefire between Iran and Israel has been in place since June 24.

"If the country becomes strong and the enemy realises that confronting this strong nation will not yield profit but will bring loss, the country will certainly gain immunity," Khamenei added.

Iran has been reeling under years of international sanctions, especially after the United States in 2018 withdrew from a nuclear accord and reimposed sanctions.

In September, the United Nations reinstated sanctions under the so-called "snapback" mechanism after Britain, France and Germany triggered the process.

On Sunday, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in an interview with Al Jazeera that Tehran remained "ready to enter negotiations" with Washington, but only on its nuclear programme, ruling out any talks on its missile capabilities.

He added that talks could resume "whenever the Americans are ready to negotiate on an equal footing and based on mutual interests. Apparently, they are not in a hurry. We are not in a hurry either." – AFP

## Israel returns 45 Palestinian bodies to Gaza

GAZA CITY - Israel returned the bodies of 45 Palestinians to Gaza yesterday, bringing the total number handed over under the ceasefire deal to 270, the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory said.

Under a ceasefire deal brokered by US President Donald Trump, Israel was to turn over the bodies of 15 Palestinians for every deceased Israeli returned.

Following forensic identification, Israel confirmed yesterday that remains handed over by Hamas the day before belonged to three hostages seized by Palestinian militants during the October 7,

2023 attack that sparked the war.

The remains were those of American-Israeli Captain Omer Neutra, 21 years old at the time of his abduction, Corporal Oz Daniel, 19, and Colonel Assaf Hamami, 40, the highest-ranking officer killed by Hamas.

Hamas's armed wing said it had found the remains earlier on Sunday "along the route of one of the tunnels in the southern Gaza Strip".

Hamas had been holding 48 hostages in Gaza when the truce came into effect on October 10, including 20 who were alive.

Since the start of the truce, Hamas has released the 20

surviving hostages and begun handing over the remains of 28 deceased captives.

Of the latter, it has so far returned 20 – including 18 Israelis, one Thai national and one Nepali.

Israel has accused Hamas of dragging its feet in returning the bodies, while the Palestinian group says the process is slow because many remains are buried beneath Gaza's rubble.

It has repeatedly called on mediators and the Red Cross to provide it with the necessary equipment and personnel to recover the bodies.

– AFP



# Christian, Muslim Nigerians push back on threatened US strikes

ABUJA – Nigerians across the religious spectrum pushed back yesterday on US President Donald Trump's threats of military intervention over the killing of Christians in the country.

Africa's most populous country, which is roughly evenly split between a mostly Christian south and Muslim-majority north, is home to myriad conflicts, which experts say kill both Christians and Muslims, often without distinction.

But claims of Christian "persecution" in Nigeria have found traction online among the US and European right in recent months.

"Christians are being killed, we can't deny the fact that Muslims are [also] being killed," Danjuma Dickson Auta, a Christian and community leader, told AFP.

Trump said on social media over the weekend that he had asked the Pentagon to map out a possible plan of attack.

Asked by an AFP reporter aboard Air Force One if he was considering putting US troops on the ground or using air strikes, Trump replied: "Could be, I mean, a lot of things – I envisage a lot of things."

"They're killing the Christians and killing them in very large numbers," he said on Sunday. "We're not going to allow that to happen."

Pushing back on the accusations,



A worshipper prays next to the altar after attending a Mass at the Church of the Assumption in Lagos on April 21, 2025.

– AFP

Nigerian President Bola Tinubu said religious tolerance was "a core tenet of our collective identity".

## Ethnic violence

Auta, 56, hails from Plateau state, where Christians and Muslims have long lived side by side.

The state has also seen explosions of violence – including deadly sectarian riots in the capital Jos in 2001 and 2008.

In recent years, Plateau and other states in Nigeria's "Middle Belt" have suffered deadly clashes between mostly Christian farmers

and Fulani Muslim herders over dwindling land and resources.

The conflict has often resulted in massive death tolls on the side of the farmers, with entire villages razed.

Smaller-scale attacks on herders – including retaliatory killings of random ethnic Fulanis or their cattle – often generate fewer headlines in both the local and international press.

Though the violence appears on the surface to fall across ethnic and religious lines, experts say the root causes lie in poor land management and policing in rural areas.

Words like "genocide" have been thrown around by those in Plateau frustrated by the escalating violence, though typically in ethnic, not religious terms.

Claims of a "Christian genocide" meanwhile have been pushed in recent years by separatist groups in the southeast.

US-based firm Moran Global Strategies has been lobbying on behalf of separatists this year, advising congressional staff on what it said was Christian "persecution", according to lobbying disclosures.

## Row over deportations, visas

Nigeria also faces a long-running jihadist conflict in its northeast and "bandit" gangs in the northwest who conduct kidnappings and village raids.

The north's population is mostly Muslim – meaning most of the victims are, too.

"Even those who sold this narrative of Christian genocide know it is not true," said Abubakar Gamandi, a Muslim who heads a fishermen's union in Borno state, the epicentre of the Boko Haram conflict.

Oxford Economics political analyst Jervin Naidoo said that "while the terrorism threat is real", Washington's amped-up rhetoric could be related to Abuja rejecting

demands to accept non-Nigerian deportees expelled from the United States as part of Trump's immigration crackdown.

"This move differs from countries like Eswatini, Uganda, Rwanda and Ghana, which have complied. In response, the US tightened visa rules for Nigerians," he noted.

Trump previously attacked South Africa over what he called a "genocide" against its Dutch-descended Afrikaner community and has offered them refugee status.

Critics of the president said the rhetoric was part of Trump's hardline diplomatic strategy, yet it has also resonated with some in Nigeria.

Reverend Joseph Hayab, chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria for the country's north, said he rejected the framing of "farmer-herder violence" and called Trump's comments a "wake-up call".

"People are twisting the story as if Trump said he is coming to fight Nigeria. No, he is coming to deal with terrorists," he told AFP.

Tinubu spokesman Daniel Bwala noted that "Donald Trump has his own style of communication", suggesting to AFP on Sunday that Trump's post was a way to "force a sit-down between the two leaders so they can iron out a common front to fight their insecurity".

– AFP

## French police recover US\$32 million in precious metals after gold lab heist

LYON – Armed robbers who used explosives to break into a gold refining laboratory in Lyon last week made off with metals worth US\$32 million, all of which police recovered shortly afterwards, a French prosecutor said yesterday.

The audacious raid in the eastern city took place on Thursday last week, with police swiftly arresting the suspected perpetrators and seizing 306 kilograms of precious metals, mostly gold.

Six people – five men and one woman, aged from 30 to 40 – were detained shortly after the incident at Pourquery Laboratories, Lyon prosecutor Thierry Dran said during a press conference yesterday.

"These are seasoned criminals," he said. The five men have previous convictions, three of whom for armed robbery.

The woman, who has no criminal record, and one of the men denied involvement, while the other four remained silent during questioning, the prosecutor said.

Dran said he had requested they be charged with several offences, including criminal conspiracy and robbery with violence, and placed in pre-trial detention, though it was not immediately clear if all six would face the same charges.

Officials had initially valued the haul at US\$13.8 million, but Dran said

yesterday its true worth was US\$32 million – more than double that amount.

The attack at the gold lab is the latest in a string of thefts that have stoked concern about inadequate security at France's museums and other places holding high-value items.

In one video posted on social media, a witness – apparently an employee at a neighbouring company – can be heard alerting the emergency services, saying he and his colleagues had heard a "huge explosion" and the robbers carried "Kalashnikovs".

Police arrested the suspects less than two hours after the robbery, seizing assault rifles, handguns and explosives in addition to the stolen loot.

The heist occurred on the same day French police arrested five more people, including a prime suspect, over last month's brazen Louvre museum heist.

But small-time criminals are believed to be behind the jewellery theft from the world's most visited art museum, the top Paris prosecutor has said.

In another high-profile incident, thieves last month broke into the French capital's Natural History Museum, making off with gold samples worth more than US\$1 million.

A 24-year-old Chinese woman was arrested earlier this month in Barcelona over the break-in and theft, prosecutors said.

– AFP

## Microsoft unveils US\$15.2 billion AI investments in UAE

ABU DHABI – US tech giant Microsoft yesterday announced US\$15.2 billion in investments in artificial intelligence (AI) and cloud computing in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Microsoft's vice chairman and president Brad Smith said Microsoft had invested US\$7.3 billion in the Gulf country since 2023 and would spend US\$7.9 billion more by the end of 2029.

The deal sent US chip-maker Nvidia shares up 2.6 percent, buoyed by hopes the AI juggernaut could see access for its most advanced chips expand to more markets.

"This is not money raised in the UAE. It's money we're spending in the UAE," Smith wrote in a blog post published during a visit to Abu Dhabi.

Smith said the investments had been encouraged by both the US and UAE governments and had involved a partnership with the country's G42 sovereign artificial intelligential company.

Roughly two-thirds of the money spent will go on building AI and cloud data centres in the UAE, and a third of it on planned local operating expenses.

In the blog post, Smith boasted that Microsoft was the first company to receive export licences from President Donald



Guests look at a model of the largest data centre in the UAE under construction in Abu Dhabi branded the Stargate initiative, a joint venture between G42, Microsoft, and OpenAI, during the Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Exhibition & Conference (ADIPEC) in Abu Dhabi yesterday.

– AFP

Trump's administration to supply GPU chips to the UAE.

In some cases, Washington has restricted international access to some of American industry's most advanced processors of the type that can run the latest AI models.

The UAE is a close US ally and popular investment destination but Washington is keen to avoid seeing the most advanced chips evade export controls and end up with competitors such as China.

Microsoft hailed the "substantial work we did to meet

the strong cybersecurity, national security, and other technology conditions required by these licences."

Updated licences granted in September allow the firm to "ship the equivalent of 60,400 additional A100 chips ... involving Nvidia's even more advanced GB300 GPUs" (Graphics Processing Units).

"We're using these GPUs to provide access to advanced AI models from OpenAI, Anthropic, open-source providers and Microsoft itself," Smith said.

– AFP



# Over US\$2 million in weapons seized in deadly Rio anti-drug raid: govt

RIO DE JANEIRO – Authorities confiscated more than US\$2 million worth of weapons during a recent anti-drug raid in Rio de Janeiro, the deadliest in Brazil's history, the state government said on Saturday.

Last Tuesday, the massive police operation in two favela (shantytown) complexes left at least 117 suspected criminals and four police officers dead, according to the latest official tally.

The Rio de Janeiro state government announced "one of the largest seizures" of military weapons in a single day from the raid – 120 weapons in all, including 93 rifles, valued at 12.8 million reais (about US\$2.4 million).

They also found ammunition, explosives, drugs and military equipment in the raid, which targeted Comando Vermelho ("Red Command"), one of the oldest and

most powerful gangs in the country, which controls large swathes of Rio de Janeiro.

According to authorities, some of the weapons come from other countries such as Argentina, Belgium, Germany, Peru, Russia and Venezuela, and included models used in conflict zones such as the AK-47 and the FAL.

Some rifles belong to foreign militaries.

"We are looking at an arsenal typical of a war scenario," Rio de Janeiro Civil Police Secretary Felipe Curi said in a statement.

Curi said authorities would investigate the routes used by criminal groups to bring the weapons to Rio de Janeiro.

The police raid has drawn condemnation from human rights organizations, and the United Nations has called for an investigation.



**A demonstrator using a mask depicting Rio de Janeiro's Governor Cláudio Castro shows his hands painted in red and carries a protest sign reading "Kill" in Portuguese as he takes part in a protest in São Paulo on Friday, demanding justice for victims of a massive police raid that left at least 117 suspected criminals and four police officers dead last Tuesday.** – AFP

Relatives of some of the victims denounced summary executions.

An AFP journalist on the scene saw a decapitated body.

Polls, however, show that the majority of Brazilians approved of the operation, which was described as a success against "narco-terrorism" by state Governor Claudio Castro.

Even leftist President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, accused by critics of being soft on crime, has sought to project a tougher stance against the gangs in his response to the raid.

"We cannot accept that organised crime continues to destroy families, oppress residents, and spread drugs and violence throughout the cities," Lula wrote on the X social media platform.

He has presented a bill to Congress proposing a 30-year prison sentence for members of criminal gangs.

On Thursday, Lula signed new measures into law to strengthen the fight against organised crime. – AFP

## Supermarket blast kills at least 23 in Mexico

MEXICO CITY – A supermarket explosion killed at least 23 people in northern Mexico on Saturday, according to local officials, with investigators saying the blast was an accident possibly caused by a faulty electric transformer.

"Sadly, a number of the victims we've found were minors," Alfonso Durazo, governor of Sonora state, said in a video message as he announced the toll.

Gustavo Salas, the state prosecutor, said most victims had died of toxic gas inhalation.

He confirmed in a video shared by his office that the dead include some minors, but did not elaborate as the process of identifying the bodies was still ongoing.

Salas added that 12 people were injured and treated at hospitals in the city of Hermosillo, where the explosion took place.

Durazo said he had "ordered an extensive and transparent investigation to determine the

causes of the incident and figure out those responsible."

The prosecutor's office said in a statement that "the working assumption is that the incident was accidental, and the investigation is looking into a transformer located inside the store."

Prosecutor Salas later said that there was no indication that this was an intentional act, but "we don't rule out any line of investigation."

The explosion happened at a Waldo's store in the city centre.

A statement shared on the supermarket chain's social media pages expressed "profound" sadness at the lives lost, and promised to work "transparently and responsibly" with the authorities investigating what had happened.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum expressed her condolences on X "to the families and loved ones of those who died."

"I have been in contact with the Sonora governor, Alfonso Durazo,

to provide support where needed. I've instructed Interior Secretary Rosa Icela Rodríguez to send a support team in order to assist the families and the injured," she added.

The governor said that "nobody will face this pain alone. From the very first moments, emergency, security and health services responded with great professionalism and commitment, controlling the situation and saving lives."

Mexican media reports said customers sought refuge inside the store after the explosion, only to become trapped by the flames. Images in local media showed the building's facade blackened from the fire with windows shattered.

Local authorities urged members of the public to avoid the area of the explosion, and cancelled celebrations scheduled to be held in honour of the Day of the Dead holiday. – AFP



**East Timor's Defence Minister Donaciano da Costa Gomes attends the ASEAN – China Defence Ministers' Luncheon as part of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Defence Ministers' Meeting in Kuala Lumpur on Friday. East Timor (also known as Timor-Leste, its official Portuguese name) formally joined ASEAN last week, becoming its 11th member state. East Timor restored its independence in 2002, after four centuries of foreign rule.** – AFP

## Fewer than 60 world leaders confirmed for Brazil climate summit

BRASÍLIA – Brazil said on Friday fewer than 60 world leaders have confirmed their attendance of an Amazonian summit this week ahead of the annual UN climate conference, a smaller number than previous years.

The COP30 climate conference in the city of Belém from November 10 to 21 will be preceded by a summit of heads of state and government on Thursday and Friday – held separately this year to ease accommodation pressures.

Some 50,000 people are expected in Belém, which is home to 1.4 million residents, more than half of whom live in shantytowns.

With a shortage of traditional hotel rooms, conference organisers scrambled to find alternative accommodation in private homes,

universities and schools, and even two cruise ships docked in the harbour some 20 kilometres from the conference centre.

Prices skyrocketed, and environmental groups warned COP30 could be "the most exclusionary in history."

Insisting the conference be held in the Amazon – a potent symbol of the importance of Earth's carbon-absorbing forests – President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva batted away concerns and said in February delegates can "sleep under the stars."

By Friday, 57 heads of state and government had confirmed their summit attendance, Brazil's chief negotiator Maurício Lyrio told reporters.

Last year, 75 leaders attended COP29 in Azerbaijan, about half the

number in Dubai in 2023.

The leaders of Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Norway, Colombia, Chile, Cape Verde and Liberia will attend, their governments have confirmed to AFP.

Beijing has said Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang will represent President Xi Jinping.

The United States and Argentina, led by climate skeptics, have not said who they will send, if anyone.

In all, 170 delegations are accredited for the main COP30 conference, taking place at a time of global political turmoil many fear will overshadow the climate emergency.

The United Nations has 193 member states and two observer states (the Holy See and Palestine). – AFP, MPD

## G Bissau army says thwarted 'subversion' attempt, several officers arrested

BISSAU – Guinea-Bissau's army announced on Friday it had thwarted an "attempt to subvert the constitutional order" and arrested several senior military officers on the eve of the start of general election campaigning.

"This action aimed to disrupt the electoral process," General Mamadu Turé, deputy chief of staff, told a press conference without specifying the number of officers arrested or what actions they planned to take.

Campaigning kicked off on Saturday in Guinea-Bissau, about three weeks ahead of the legislative and presidential elections likely to be dominated by incumbent Umaro Sissoco Embaló after the main opposition was disqualified.

Embaló told reporters after a cabinet meeting on Thursday that "no disorder will be tolerated", adding that the "government has taken all necessary measures to ensure the safety of each candidate during this campaign".

Brigadier General Daba Nawalna, director of a military training centre about 30 kilometres from the capital Bissau, is accused of being one of the masterminds of the plot and was among those arrested, Ture said.

Guinea-Bissau has laboured under a succession of coups since independence from Portugal in 1974 but since its 2014 presidential election, the Portuguese-speaking country has set itself on the path towards the rule of law. – AFP



## Van de Ven, Spence apologise as Frank defends Spurs 'foundation'



LONDON – Tottenham Hotspur boss Thomas Frank said yesterday that Micky van de Ven and Djed Spence have apologised for snubbing their manager and heading down the tunnel after Saturday's 1-0 defeat to Chelsea.

Spurs were booed off by their own supporters after failing to win for a fourth consecutive Premier League home game.

Van de Ven, who started the game as captain, and Spence have been two of the better performers in an inconsistent start to Frank's reign in charge.

But they barged past Frank at full-time as he tried to get them to acknowledge the home fans.

"Micky and Djed came into my office yesterday and just said they wanted to say sorry for the situation," said Frank.

"They didn't want it to look bad or any misconception that you can get in this beautiful media world.

"So, there was no disrespect meant at all towards me or the team. They were just frustrated with the performance from us and the booing during the game," added the 52-year-old Dane.

Despite their poor home form, Spurs sit fifth in the Premier League and are unbeaten after three games in the Champions League.

Victory at home to FC Copenhagen today would put Spurs in a strong position to

make the knockout phase of the Champions League for only the second time in six years.

Winning the Europa League last season masked an otherwise disastrous campaign that saw Ange Postecoglou sacked despite ending the club's 17-year trophy drought.

Tottenham finished 17<sup>th</sup> in the Premier League - their worst season in English football's top-flight since being relegated from the old First Division in 1976/77.

"Of course, we are coming on the back of a bad performance - there is a big flashing light right now. Everyone has a little bit of a struggle to look past that to see some of the very good performances we have had this year as well," added Frank.

"If anyone had said that we would now be 17 points after 10 games and unbeaten in the Champions League - everything is not perfect - but there is a decent foundation.

"Everyone would have taken that situation where we are now in terms of 22 (league) defeats last year (season) and finishing 17<sup>th</sup>."

Lucas Bergvall is set for a spell on the sidelines after suffering concussion in the early stages of the Chelsea game, but Spence and Mohammed Kudus should be fit to feature against Danish champions Copenhagen despite picking up knocks.

The game will be played at 4 a.m. tomorrow morning Macau time.

– AFP/MPD

## Vitinha says PSG-Bayern Champions League clash will show who's 'best'



POISSY – Portuguese midfielder Vitinha said Paris Saint-Germain's home clash with undefeated Bayern Munich in the Champions League today will be a meeting between "the two best teams in Europe".

PSG come into the sternest test yet of their European title defence top of the French Ligue 1 and with three wins from three so far in the league phase.

But their opponents, Bayern, have started their season with a European record 15 wins in 15 outings, and sit second behind only PSG in the standings in the continent's elite club competition.

"We are the two best teams in Europe. Bayern are in fantastic form. We're also doing well, continuing our momentum from last year," Vitinha told his pre-match press conference yesterday.

But as for who is mightiest between the two heavyweights, the 25-year-old said today's match will tell.

"The answer will be given tomorrow. We have to talk on the pitch," he told reporters.

"When you're a player, you want to play in this type of match because everyone wants to see it, and people will say, 'this team is better because they won'."



Paris Saint-Germain's Portuguese midfielder Vitinha runs with the ball during the French L1 against OGC Nice at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris on Saturday.

– AFP

PSG coach Luis Enrique was, however, more temperate in his build-up to the game.

"To find out who is the best team in Europe, we have to wait until the end of the season and see how many trophies each team wins," the 55-year-old said.

"Right now, it's clear they are very strong... It's incredible that they've won their last 15 matches. We already have trouble winning three or four matches."

If PSG have been less dominant than Bayern domestically - drawing

three matches and losing one in 11 league outings - Luis Enrique said supporters should still "trust" his side to show they can best the Bavarians.

"Do you think that I or the supporters should assess our team? I don't think so, we deserve to have a little trust," the Spaniard said.

"But tomorrow (today) at the Parc des Princes with our supporters, we have the confidence we need to overcome their pressing game."

The game will be played at 4 a.m. tomorrow morning Macau time.

– AFP/MPD



## Trent should be remembered for 'great' Liverpool moments, says Slot

Kieran Canning

LIVERPOOL – Liverpool

boss Arne Slot says he will give Trent Alexander-Arnold a warm welcome when Real Madrid visit Anfield today, even if the right-back receives a frosty reception from his formerly adoring fans.

The England international, a boyhood Reds fan, ran down his contract to join the Spanish giants in June for a nominal fee.

The 27-year-old played a huge role in the Reds' return to the top of English and European football under Jurgen Klopp and Slot, winning two Premier League titles and the Champions League.

"I have great memories of the player and of the human being," said Slot, who won the Premier League during his only season working with Alexander-Arnold.

"I have memories working with him, which were only positive and I have memories when I was watching

him in front of the television, which are only positive as well.

"I can remember multiple great moments of him wearing the Liverpool shirt."

The Dutchman told reporters yesterday: "He will get a warm welcome by me. Let's first wait and see if he's on the pitch tomorrow, and how our fans will react."

The England international was booed by Liverpool fans at times during his final few months at the club as his expected departure approached.

Liverpool have badly missed his presence in a difficult start to Slot's second season, with six defeats in their past eight games.

But the move to Spain is also yet to work out for Alexander-Arnold, who has been hampered by a hamstring injury and has found himself on the bench a number of times.

Real Madrid boss Xabi Alonso is expected to keep faith with Federico Valverde at right-back from the start

of today's blockbuster Champions League clash.

Just under a year ago Liverpool beat the 15-time European champions 2-0 at this stage of the competition.

However, Madrid arrive on Merseyside in far better form this time around, with French striker Kylian Mbappe in scintillating form.

Los Blancos are five points clear of Barcelona at the top of La Liga and have a perfect record of three wins from three games in the league phase of the Champions League.

"They have always been a big force in this competition," said Slot. "A very good team, but we are a very good team as well."

Slot confirmed Alisson Becker, Alexander Isak and Jeremie Frimpong are out injured, with only Isak in contention to return to face Manchester City in the Premier League on Sunday.

The game will be played at 4 a.m. tomorrow morning Macau time.

– AFP/MPD



Real Madrid's players take part in a training session on the eve of the UEFA Champions League match against Liverpool at the Real Madrid Sports City of Valdebebas in Madrid yesterday.

– AFP

## FIFA dismisses Malaysia's appeals in forgery scandal

Football

PARIS – FIFA yesterday announced it had dismissed the appeals lodged by Malaysia's football federation (FAM) and its seven players in the on-going eligibility scandal linked to forged documents used for an Asia Cup qualifier.

The world governing body suspended seven foreign-born

Malaysia national team players for a year and fined FAM US\$440,000 in September.

FIFA accused the country's federation of submitting doctored or false documents that said the players had Malaysian ancestry, making them eligible to represent the Southeast Asian nation.

An investigation by the body showed that Hector Hevel,

Jon Irazabal, Gabriel Palmero, Facundo Garces, Rodrigo Holgado, Imanol Machuca or Joao Brandao Figueiredo – who helped Malaysia to a 4-0 win over Vietnam in June in an Asian Cup qualifier – had no parent or grandparent born in the country.

FAM denied any deliberate wrongdoing and appealed the decision in October, before suspending its secretary-general and saying it would

establish an independent committee to investigate.

But yesterday, FIFA's appeal committee said "after analysing the submissions and conducting a hearing", it had "decided to dismiss the appeals" and "to confirm" sanctions against the parties.

FAM will have to pay its US\$440,000 fine, while the players will be fined US\$2,500 each and

banned from any football-related activity for 12 months.

FAM acting president Yusoff Mahadi said the Malaysia football body would contact FIFA for further details, before submitting "an appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport".

"This is the first time FAM has faced such a situation, and our legal team and management are very surprised by the decision," Yusoff added.

– AFP



# India's women cricketers hail new era but challenges remain

Arunabh Saikia

NEW DELHI — India's historic Women's World Cup victory has sparked an excitement which it is hoped will inspire the next generation and draw new fans to the sport.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, expected to meet the winners tomorrow, believes the "historic win will motivate future champions to take up sports".

Hosts India defeated South Africa by 52 runs on Sunday, claiming their first-ever Women's World Cup.

At the top level, gender parity has long been championed by former Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) secretary Jay Shah, who introduced equal match fees for men and women.

The 50-over World Cup also boasted a record US\$13.88 million prize purse, eclipsing the men's total from two years ago.

Shah, now International Cricket Council (ICC) chairman, hailed the win, citing the BCCI's "increased investment, pay parity with male cricketers (and), overhaul of the coaching staff".

Former India skipper Mithali Raj described it as the culmination of years of effort.

"For every person standing behind a young girl who dares to dream of wearing India's colours, this is a pivotal moment, a reminder that dreams do come true," she wrote, posting a photograph of herself embracing the trophy.

## 'Women's fast-growing influence'

Despite the triumph, women's sports in India still have far to go and the impact of the World Cup win may be gradual.

"The gender gap is stark, especially during adolescence and early adulthood," according to a 2024 State of Sports and Physical Activity report, backed by global consultancy firm Dalberg.

"The largest gender gaps unsurprisingly occur when caregiving responsibilities increase," it adds, citing household chores and care of children or the elderly.

The UN children's agency, in partnership with the ICC, sought to use the World Cup to "create equal opportunities for every girl and boy", UNICEF representative to India Cynthia McCaffrey said.

"As a cricketer, I know how the sport is a great equaliser," India's vice-captain Smriti Mandhana said,

who joined the UNICEF campaign.

Women now make up more than a third of India's estimated 655 million sports fans.

A 2024 Deloitte and Google study found women - 236 million fans, or 36 percent - are shaping the sports market, debunking the notion of a male-only fanbase.

India's Women's Premier League (WPL), staged first in 2023, delivered the BCCI roughly US\$700 million in franchise and media rights alone.

## 'Girls are not fragile'

Young women cricketers say the World Cup success will strengthen their sport.

At a net session in a New Delhi cricket academy, a bouncer slammed into Armeet Kaur's helmet, prompting a flurry of concerned apologies.

The 20-year-old brushed them off and told the bowler to carry on. The next ball, she stepped out of her crease and lofted it clean.

"Girls are not fragile," she said. "And the good thing is that people know that now - after seeing women's cricket on TV. That matters because what people think does have a bearing on the world."

Kaur credited systemic changes in

women's cricket for India's success.

"Now the money is almost at par with men's cricket, and there are more tournaments for women at all levels," she said.

"The good thing is that people no longer discourage girls from playing."

The World Cup drew record viewers: the first 13 matches attracted more than 60 million viewers, five times the 2022 edition.

While modest for the world's most populous nation, it signals growing interest in women's cricket.

That means Indian girls can see cricket as a viable career.

"I started playing because it was my passion," said Ishita Singh. "But now I want it to be my full-time profession."

Singh, 20, said she could confidently claim to be speaking on behalf of many of her peers.

"There were only two of us in the academy when I started playing some eight years ago," she said. "Now there are so many."

But Singh said she wished there were even more.

"Not enough girls play in India still," she said.

"And I want that to change."

— AFP



India's captain Harmanpreet Kaur reacts while fielding during the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025 one-day international (ODI) final against South Africa at the DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai on Sunday.

— AFP

## Eliud Kipchoge unveils plan to run 7 marathons on 7 continents

### Athletics

NEW YORK — Two-time Olympic marathon champion Eliud Kipchoge says he'll run seven marathons on seven continents over the next two years to raise funds for causes he believes in - even as he continues to race at the elite level.

Kipchoge's "World Tour" was announced after the Kenyan great, a former world record-holder, finished the New York Marathon on Sunday, crossing the line in 17<sup>th</sup> in 2hr 14min 36sec to cheers from the Central Park crowd.

"This unprecedented two-year journey will take (Kipchoge) across the world to compete in marathons on all seven continents, while continuing to race at the elite level," Kipchoge's management team said in a statement.

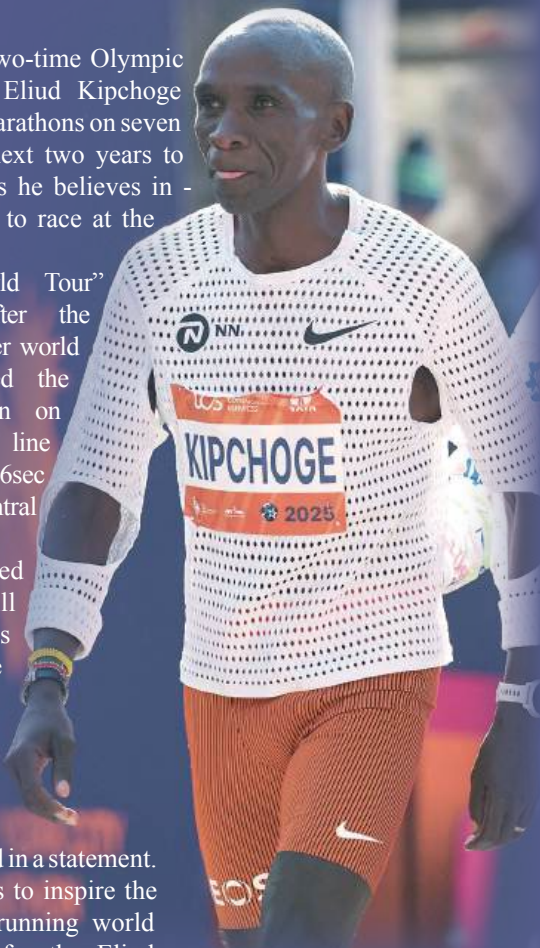
"This project aims to inspire the world to become a running world while raising funds for the Eliud Kipchoge Foundation in support of education and environmental causes worldwide, bridging the things that Eliud so deeply cares for."

Before Sunday's race, Kipchoge told Olympics.com that he wanted to run in Antarctica, saying his new project was a chance to "do that extreme thing that can make someone work hard."

Kipchoge, who will turn 41 today, said in a statement that his globetrotting project will let him "compete not only for records but for the people."

"I want to continue to push myself to run at my best but I also want to inspire, give back, and remind everyone that no human is limited."

— AFP



Eliud Kipchoge of Kenya walks away after competing in the New York marathon in New York on Sunday.

— AFP

## Rybakina downs Swiatek in WTA Finals

### Tennis

RIYADH — Elena Rybakina extended her winning streak to eight consecutive matches with an impressive 3-6, 6-1, 6-0 victory over second-seeded Iga Swiatek in round-robin play at the WTA Finals in Riyadh yesterday.

After cruising past Amanda Anisimova in her opener on Saturday, Rybakina claimed her second win of the week to move to the top of the Serena Williams Group and plant a foot in Friday's semi-finals.

Rybakina was the last of the eight singles players to qualify for this season's WTA Finals, and she did so by clinching the title in Ningbo and reaching the semi-finals in Tokyo in the last two weeks of qualifying

tournaments of the regular season.

"I've been playing really well the last few weeks. I was improving each match and of course the results were following after," said the 2022 Wimbledon champion.

"It's a great opportunity to play here against the top players. I'm really excited about the next matches and hopefully I can bring the same intensity and the same game."

Rybakina went into the clash having lost all four of her meetings with Swiatek in 2025, and it looked like she might suffer a fifth straight defeat to the Pole when she dropped the opening set in 35 minutes.

But the Kazakh sixth seed adjusted tactically, utilising her kick serve and big forehand to maximum effect to sweep 12 of the next 13

games and complete the upset in one hour and 37 minutes.

"It's always very tough to play against Iga, she brings so much intensity on the court. In the second set, I pushed myself, the serve improved and I'm happy I stepped in and played much better," said Rybakina.

"Mentally I'm happy I stayed focused no matter if I lost the first set, I was still trying to stay aggressive."

"I hope I can keep playing like this for the rest of the tournament."

American seventh seed Madison Keys will square off later in the day against compatriot Anisimova.

If fourth seed Anisimova wins, Rybakina will officially advance to the semi-finals as the winner of the Serena Williams Group.

— AFP

## Wang, Moregard triumph in WTT Champions Montpellier

### Table tennis

PARIS — Third seed Wang Yidi of China edged German veteran Sabine Winter in seven games to win the women's singles title, while Sweden's Truls Moregard swept Japan's Sora Matsushima in the men's final at the World Table Tennis (WTT) Champions Montpellier on Sunday.

Earlier in the day, both finalists beat South Korean opponents in the semifinals. Wang defeated Joo Cheon-hui 4-2, and Winter overcame Shin Yu-bin 4-1.

Winter started faster in the final, taking the first two games 11-8, 12-10. Wang responded with 11-5 and 11-4 to level the match. Winter moved back in front with an 11-6 fifth game, but Wang forced a decider with a 12-10 sixth and closed out the title 11-9.

Moregard reached the men's final by beating home favorite Alexis Lebrun 4-1, then defeated Matsushima in straight games, 11-9, 11-8, 11-7, 11-9.

Matsushima, 18, had beaten South Korea's Jang Woo-jin 4-1 in the semifinals but could not maintain that form in the final.

— Xinhua



Sweden's Truls Moregard (right) celebrates after winning the men's singles final table tennis match against Japan's Sora Matsushima in the World Table Tennis (WTT) Champions Montpellier 2025 at the Sud de France Arena in Perols, southern France on Sunday.

— AFP



# Swifties swarm German museum to see Ophelia painting

Sam Reeves

WIESBADEN, Germany – Taylor Swift fans sang and danced on Sunday to her new hit “The Fate of Ophelia” at a German museum exhibiting a painting thought to have inspired the video for the chart-topper.

Some came as Ophelia, in white dresses with flowers in their hair, while others donned sparkly outfits like those often worn by Swift, as they descended on the western town of Wiesbaden.

They were attending a special event to see the painting by artist Friedrich Heyser, which shows Ophelia, a character in Shakespeare’s Hamlet, in a white dress floating in a river among flowers before her death.

At the start of the music video for “The Fate of Ophelia”, from her latest album, “The Life of a Showgirl”, Swift appears in what

seems to be a mock-up of the work, lying in a white dress – before the painting comes alive, and she begins to sing.

Since the single’s release last month, the Wiesbaden museum has been flooded with Swift fans seeking to get a glimpse of the work. “It’s incredible that this picture, which inspired Taylor Swift, is hanging here in Wiesbaden,” Corinna Greiner, a 47-year-old office worker attending Sunday’s event with her daughter, told AFP.

“When I found out, I was simply overwhelmed.”

About 200 Swift fans flocked to the sold-out event, which started with a lecture from one of the museum’s experts about the painting.

“The Fate of Ophelia” was then blasted from speakers, and the fans got to their feet to dance in front of Heyer’s painting, before lining up to snap selfies with it.

## ‘Great atmosphere’

“I really love art, and I wanted to see the connection between the Ophelia painting and Taylor Swift in real life,” Isabelle Bastian, a 26-year-old student who was attending the event, told AFP.

“The atmosphere is great – it’s like a mini-concert.”

Heyser is thought to have completed the work featuring Ophelia – a noblewoman from Denmark in Shakespeare’s play, who goes mad and drowns – in around 1900.

It has been in the Wiesbaden museum’s collection since 2019. But the museum had no idea it was going to feature in Swift’s video until their social media channels lit up after the release of “The Fate of Ophelia” in October.

“We were very surprised,” museum director Andreas Henning told AFP.

“We had no idea that Taylor Swift would choose this painting, and we had no inkling of what that would mean.

“The Swifties are coming from Germany, France, and England – it’s a big phenomenon.”

The museum has not heard from Swift or her management about the

link between her hit, which is the lead single from her album “The Life of a Showgirl”, and Heyser’s painting.

But fans are keen for her to pay a visit.

“Taylor, come to Wiesbaden!” they chanted in unison at the end of Sunday’s event.

– AFP



Fans of US singer-songwriter Taylor Swift and other visitors listen to a lecture about the painting ‘Ophelia’ (circa 1900, left) by German artist Friedrich Heyser, as it is compared to a still from Taylor Swift’s music video ‘The Fate of Ophelia’ during a short guided tour at the Museum in Wiesbaden, western Germany. The work from the Museum Wiesbaden’s collection is believed to have been one of the probable inspirations for the video of Taylor Swift’s new song ‘The Fate of Ophelia’, which is said to have become the most streamed song in a single day. The museum offers fans a short guided tour of the artwork connecting Swift’s song with the story behind the character of Ophelia.

– AFP

# Funk legend turned painter George Clinton opens show in Paris

Jérémy Tordjam

PARIS – At 84, George Clinton is a funk legend, ubiquitous hip-hop sample source, father of psychedelic Afrofuturism... and now, a painter with a show opening in Paris.

Through it all, the self-taught US artist, the force behind the celebrated groups Parliament and Funkadelic, has hewed to his signature vision: “Gotta have that funk.”

Clinton exploded on the scene in the 1960s, making his debut in Motown before gathering a talented crew of artists to create P-Funk, a new, fusional musical style that would deeply influence the likes of Prince, Snoop Dog, Kendrick Lamar, D’Angelo, and the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

“We came out of the psychedelic era and everything was permissible,” Clinton told AFP.

“I could free my mind, I could do whatever the music turned out to be.”

Blending soul, funk, rock and disco, Clinton tapped the zeitgeist of an era of whirlwind change, crafting lines that captured the sexual liberation of the 1960s and 70s – “Free your mind and your ass will follow” – and delivering

epic four-hour concerts in platform boots and alien-inspired suits.

Today, the one-time New Jersey barber, who won a Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2019 Grammys, has moved on from multicoloured dreadlocks and mind-altering drugs.

He struggles some to get around, but is still an artistic force, keenly tuned in to the sounds of our times.

“As soon as I hear kids making new music that gets on my nerve, that’s the music I want, because that’s usually telling me, ‘This is the new shit,’” he said.

Funk has always been his “secret weapon”, he said.

“Funk protects you... from getting old... It’s that same attitude that frees your mind.

“It’s like ‘Star Wars’. ‘Use the force, Luke.’ Use the funk, Luke.”

## ‘All about the vibe’

Clinton got his start in the graphic arts signing autographs stylised as dog’s heads.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, he grew into a more serious artist, taking up acrylic and spray painting.

He made his art debut with a series of shows in the United States.

Now, he is on to Paris and the Mariane Ibrahim Gallery, a stone’s throw from the French presidential palace, where his work will be on display through mid-December.

The show features Clinton’s abstract paintings and a sculpture representing the “Mothership” – for his influential 1975 concept album, “Mothership Connection”.

Opening a show in world art capital Paris, “I feel like I’m somebody,” he said.

His signature style pervades his work.

“I paint the way I do music,” he said.

“I did a lot of paintings that came out really good, but I had no idea what they are when I first started and I don’t want to intellectualise it. It’s just whatever it is, it’s all about the vibe.”

But all is not carefree in Clinton’s world.

He has been locked in various legal battles for years over copyrights for his musical catalogue.

His eternal optimism is also being put to the test by the deeply polarised political climate in the United States, says Clinton, no fan of President Donald Trump.

“No matter how good it gets, there’s always something that’s come along trying to spoil the party,” he said, calling Trump “like a cartoon – not even a good cartoon”.

In his album “Chocolate City”, released 50 years ago, Clinton and Parliament imagined a White House under the sway of funk, with Aretha Franklin as first lady and Stevie Wonder as secretary of fine arts.

That dream looks distant today, but he still believes in a better tomorrow, Clinton said.

On one condition: “We have to keep up the funk.”

– AFP



US singer, songwriter, record producer and painter George Edward Clinton, poses during an exhibition of his paintings at the Galerie Mariane Ibrahim in Paris on October 23, 2025. At 84, Clinton is a funk legend, ubiquitous hip-hop sample source, father of psychedelic Afrofuturism... and now, a painter with a show opening in the French capital.

– AFP

# ‘Regretting You’ wins spooky slow N American box office

LOS ANGELES – Paramount’s “Regretting You,” the latest film adaptation of a Colleen Hoover novel, finished first place in a lacklustre Halloween weekend at the North American box office, industry estimates showed on Sunday.

Directed by Josh Boone, the romantic drama tells the story of a mother (Allison Williams) and teenage daughter (McKenna Grace) navigating life and love after tragedy strikes.

The film took in US\$8.1 million in its second week out, according to industry watcher Exhibitors Relations, narrowly beating Universal’s horror sequel “Black Phone 2,” which earned US\$8.0 million.

The thriller sees Ethan Hawke’s devilish villain return to terrorise a group of youths, this time at a camp.

Last week’s first place finisher – Japanese anime feature “Chainsaw Man – The Movie: Reze Arc” – dropped to

third place with US\$6.0 million.

It tells the dark fantasy story of orphaned teenager Denji, who is killed by the yakuza but reborn by merging with his pet devil to become Chainsaw Man.

In fourth place at US\$4.8 million was “Bugonia,” Greek filmmaker Yorgos Lanthimos’s latest collaboration with Oscar-winner Emma Stone.

The apocalyptic satire, which debuted at the Venice Film Festival, follows the abduction of a high-profile CEO (Stone) by two conspiracy theorists who believe she is an alien.

Fifth place went to “Back to the Future,” re-released for the film’s 40th anniversary.

The top 12 films took in US\$44.8 million for the weekend, according to Exhibitor Relations, a 32 percent drop from the same period the previous year.

– AFP

World Weather			
CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 6°C~15°C	Manila 25°C~30°C	New York 5°C~15°C	Lisbon 18°C~22°C
Shanghai 14°C~19°C	Bangkok 22°C~29°C	London 13°C~15°C	Rio de Janeiro 19°C~23°C
Hong Kong 18°C~24°C	Tokyo 7°C~17°C	Frankfurt 3°C~14°C	Luanda 23°C~29°C
Taipei 21°C~24°C	Singapore 25°C~33°C	Vancouver 8°C~11°C	Maputo 21°C~30°C
Guangzhou 15°C~18°C	Kuala Lumpur 24°C~34°C	Paris 9°C~16°C	Dili 23°C~33°C
Nanjing 9°C~19°C	Jakarta 23°C~33°C	Moscow 4°C~9°C	São Tomé 25°C~29°C
Guilin 12°C~16°C	Seoul 3°C~15°C	Las Vegas 12°C~26°C	Praia 20°C~34°C
Xi'an 8°C~18°C	Sydney 12°C~23°C	Monte Carlo 10°C~19°C	Bissau 23°C~33°C



1. **Going back 155 years**

Bike enthusiasts on their penny-farthing bicycles, also known as high wheel, take part in the traditional 'One Mile Race' competition at Letna Park in Prague, Czech Republic, on Saturday. — AFP

2. **Autumn hues**

Falling autumn leaves are seen along a country lane near the village of Jahnsfelde, north eastern Germany yesterday. — AFP

3. **Thriller recreated**

Costumed revellers take part in the Halloween parade in Manhattan, New York City, on Friday. — AFP



4. **Safety officers**

A falconer holds common buzzards during bird-control duties to prevent bird strike incidents during aircraft takeoffs and landings at the Beauvais Airport, in Beauvais, northern France on October 13. On the tarmac at Beauvais Airport, the piercing cries of a buzzard mingle with the roar of jet engines. To reduce the risk of collisions between aircraft and birds, birds of prey are trained to fly over the runways and scare away other birds. Since April 2025, the airport has been calling on falconers from the northern Oise region of France to scare away seagulls, gulls, crows and pigeons that could collide with aircraft engines during take-off and landing. — AFP

5. **Multicultural toy**

Dolls are displayed at a toy museum in the Iranian capital Tehran last Sunday. Inside a restored house in central Tehran, toys from every era - ancient Persia, Soviet Russia, the United States, and even Japan - share the same space, stirring playful childhood memories from long ago. — AFP

6. **Put me DOWN!**

A model walks the runway with a cat during a pet fashion show in Shanghai on Friday. — AFP