

New stalls start selling light meals, cultural products at Taipa Market



Residents queue to buy pastries from one of the new stalls in Taipa Market yesterday. – Photos: Tony Wong

Tony Wong

Newly set up stalls selling light meals or cultural and creative products, the operators of which were chosen by a public tender earlier this year, in Taipa Market started their trial operations yesterday, after the completion of the wet market's revamp.

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM), the public entity tasked with managing the city's wet markets, says that all of the new stalls are scheduled to officially open in the second half of this month.

Before yesterday, Taipa Market was a traditional wet market selling fresh food and groceries.

The bureau announced its plan in March this year to revamp Taipa Market, converting its first floor into a dining space with 19 stalls for light meals or cultural and creative products

as about half of the market's then 66 stalls were vacant. The renovation project, which also included the setting-up of a stall on the market building's rooftop (second floor) to be used for a café, got off the ground in June.

After its revamp, Taipa Market now has 52 stalls, comprising 28 on the ground floor, 23 on the first floor, and one on the rooftop.

Previously, there were no stalls on the rooftop.

As previously, the ground floor continues to be used for selling fresh food and traditional groceries.

The 23 stalls on the first floor now comprise four fruit stalls and 19 stalls for light meals or cultural and creative products.

The market building's renovation relocated the vegetable stalls from the first floor to the ground floor, while the four fruit stalls, which were previously on the first floor,



This photo taken yesterday shows a dining area and stalls still under decoration or preparations for business on the market's first floor.

have remained there after the revamp.

The bureau launched a public tender for the lease and operation of the 20 new stalls (19 stalls on the first floor and one on the rooftop) in April, for which 437 bids were submitted. Among the 437 bids, 399 were accepted. The bureau announced the winners of the 20 stalls in August.

After the market building's revamp was completed earlier this quarter, some of the new stalls for light meals or cultural and creative products on the first floor started their trial operations yesterday.

Before the trial operations commenced yesterday, the bureau briefed journalists on site on Friday about the operations of the new stalls.

During Friday's media briefing, IAM officials said that all of the 20 new stalls are expected to officially open in the second half of this month.

As seen by the *Post* on site, only several of the 20 new stalls started their business yesterday, while the remaining ones were still being decorated, or the respective operators were still preparing to start their business.

As seen yesterday, the café on the rooftop was still being decorated as well.

The bureau has set up four dining areas on the first floor and one dining area on the rooftop, equipped with dining tables and chairs.

The wet market is currently open between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. daily. IAM officials said on Friday that after the 20 new stalls officially open, the market's opening hours will be extended to 10 p.m.

The officials also said that the market's revamp cost about three million patacas.

The government has exempted stallholders of all wet market stalls in Macau from paying rent for many years. ■

Ocean discharge of Fukushima nuclear-tainted wastewater halted after 7.6-magnitude quake hits Japan

TOKYO — An earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 7.6 struck northeastern Japan last night, prompting the suspension of ocean discharge of nuclear-contaminated wastewater from the crippled Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant.

No abnormalities have been reported by nuclear plants in Hokkaido or in the northeastern prefectures of Aomori, Miyagi and Fukushima, public broadcaster NHK reported.

Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO)

said that the discharge of nuclear-contaminated wastewater from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant into the ocean was halted at 11:42 p.m. local time following the issuance of a tsunami warning.

In Aomori and Hokkaido, there have been reports of several non-life-threatening injuries. The Aomori prefectural government said that around 2,700 homes were left without power, Kyodo News reported.

The temblor occurred at 11:15 p.m. local

time at a depth of 50 km, measuring upper 6 on Japan's seismic scale of 7 in the city of Hachinohe, Aomori Prefecture, triggering a tsunami warning for coastal areas of Aomori, Iwate and Hokkaido prefectures, said the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA).

The waves are expected to be up to 3 meters high on the Iwate Prefecture coast, the central Pacific coastal areas of Hokkaido and the Pacific coast of Aomori Prefecture, the JMA said, urging people in affected areas to immediately evacuate to higher ground.

Waves of 50 centimeters were observed in the town of Urakawa, Hokkaido, at 12:21 a.m. local time today and in Kuji Port, Iwate Prefecture, at 12:10 a.m. local time, the JMA added.

According to Japan Railways, Tohoku Shinkansen bullet train services in northeastern Japan have been suspended in both directions between Fukushima Station and Shin-Aomori Station due to the quake.

At 1:53 a.m. local time the tsunami was warning was lifted. — Xinhua/MPD

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The Macau Post Daily

CPC leadership holds meeting on 2026 economic work, regulations on law-based governance

The Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee yesterday held a meeting to analyze and study the economic work of 2026 and review a set of regulations on the CPC's leadership over law-based governance in all respects. — *Story on p. 7*

UN slams world's 'apathy' in launching aid appeal for 2026

The UN yesterday hit out at global "apathy" over widespread suffering as it launched its 2026 appeal for humanitarian assistance, which is limited in scope as aid operations confront major funding cuts — *Story on p. 10*

Trump vows to sign order blocking AI regulation by states

US President Donald Trump said yesterday he will attempt to strip US states of the right to regulate the surging AI industry, arguing centralised rulemaking is vital to maintain US dominance. — *Story on p. 11*

Gongbei customs seizes 23 tonnes of frozen beef & chicken feet

Armando Neves

Zhuhai's Gongbei Customs announced in a statement on Friday that its officers seized 17.7 tonnes of frozen beef and 5.530 tonnes of frozen chicken feet at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) on November 15.

According to the statement, on that day, customs officers inspecting a cross-border goods vehicle at the cross-delta bridge Zhuhai Port (checkpoint) Inbound Cargo Inspection Zone discovered that a shipment declared as "Random Copolymer Polypropylene (PP-R) Pipe Fittings" was undeclared and mis-declared frozen goods,

consisting of around 10.7 tonnes of frozen beef and about 930 kilograms of frozen chicken feet.

The statement also said that at almost the same time, customs officers, inspecting another inbound shipment declared as "Drain Ball Valves", discovered a similar case of false declaration and concealment. In this case, the inspection led to the seizure of approximately seven tonnes of frozen beef and 4.6 tonnes of frozen chicken feet, the statement said.

According to the statement, neither driver transporting the batches of the seized frozen products was able to provide proof of legal

origin or the relevant inspection and quarantine certificates.

In the statement, Gongbei Customs reminded the public that

according to relevant regulations, evading customs supervision by hiding and taking goods subject to customs duties into the mainland

constitutes smuggling. If the circumstances are severe enough to constitute a crime, criminal liability will be pursued. ■



These two handout photos provided by Zhuhai's Gongbei Customs on Friday show frozen beef and chicken feet seized by its officers at the HZMB Zhuhai checkpoint on November 15.

Police bust local trio of illegal currency exchange dealers



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort the three hooded illegal currency exchange suspects from Macau to a PJ van outside the PJ headquarters in Zape on Friday. – Photo: Armando Neves

Ada Lei

The Judiciary Police (PJ) arrested three local men on Thursday for engaging in illegal currency exchange activities, PJ spokesman Chao Teng Hin said during a special press conference on Friday.

Chao identified the suspects as a 44-year-old driver surnamed Un, a 54-year-old construction worker surnamed Wong, and a 27-year-old man surnamed Lei who claimed to be jobless.

According to Chao, the police received a tip-off about a car that was repeatedly entering and exiting casino car parks in Cotai, which raised suspicion that the occupants were involved in illegal exchange activities. The police discovered that the group used a car registered in the name of Un to transport individuals to the casino car parks and nearby locations. They would enter the casinos to find gamblers needing to exchange yuan into Hong Kong dollars, eventually taking them to more discreet areas on the casino premises or inside their car to complete the transactions via mobile phone digital transfers.

Once the gamblers received their cash or chips in Hong Kong dollars, they would immediately return to the casino to gamble.

Chao noted that the police identified Un, Wong and Lei as the suspects and apprehended them on Thursday. Under questioning, the trio refused to cooperate.

The police discovered that Un was the registered owner of the car and the kingpin for supplying the funds and collecting the payments. Meanwhile, Wong and Lei were tasked with seeking out customers and engaging in illegal exchange activities. The profits from these illegal exchanges were then shared with Un.

Chao said that the group had been operating their scheme since January, conducting transactions amounting to 11 million yuan, resulting in profit of about HK\$330,000 for the trio. The police later confiscated the car involved and seized several mobile phones from them.

The threesome have been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), each facing an illegal currency exchange charge. ■

Police nab mainlander for robbing gambler of HK\$200,000 in chips

Ada Lei

A man from the Chinese mainland was arrested on Friday for robbing a middle-aged mainland woman of HK\$200,000 (206,000 patacas) in chips, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Chao Teng Hin said during a special press conference on Sunday.

Chao identified the suspect as a 31-year-old male surnamed Luo who claimed to be jobless.

According to Chao, the victim was gambling at a casino in Cotai early Friday morning when Luo approached her and invited her to his hotel guestroom "for tea and a chat", to which the victim agreed, taking with her the HK\$200,000 in chips she had won.

Chao noted that once inside the room, Luo suddenly attacked the victim with a glass bottle, striking her on the neck. He then restrained her by putting her in a headlock and punching her in the face, causing her to fall and briefly lose consciousness. Luo dragged her to the bathroom, where he bound her with clear tape that he had prepared in advance and locked her mobile phone in the room's safe to prevent her from escaping or contacting the police. He then fled the scene with the victim's HK\$200,000 in chips.

Chao added that about an hour later, the victim regained consciousness and was able to seek assistance from security guards in the hotel lobby, where she spotted Luo again. The guards apprehended Luo on the spot and immediately notified the police. The police were able to recover the victim's mobile

phone from the safe. The victim sustained multiple injuries to her face, eyes, jaw, and neck.

Chao said that Luo had come up with the idea of committing robbery after gambling away all his money and had prepared the tape to be used as binding beforehand. Luo also gambled away all the HK\$200,000 in chips that he had stolen.

Luo has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing a robbery charge.

Police arrest 2 mainlanders for robbery, but victim faces probe for illegal currency exchange

Meanwhile, the Judiciary Police (PJ) apprehended two men from the Chinese mainland for robbing a middle-aged mainland man of HK\$1.4 million in cash in an illegal currency exchange deal, Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Chao Teng Hin said during a special press conference on Friday.

Chao identified the suspects as a 28-year-old businessman surnamed Gao and 29-year-old businessman surnamed Wang.

According to Chao, the victim told the police that he learnt from a friend on Wednesday about an offer to sell a gold chain for HK\$60,000. Interested in purchasing the chain, the victim arranged to meet the seller in a hotel lobby in Cotai.

Chao noted that the victim followed Gao into a hotel guestroom, where Huang was waiting inside. The victim claimed that Huang presented a gold necklace for inspection, at which point Gao

suddenly restrained him from behind, trapping him in a headlock. The duo overpowered the victim, who attempted to fight back but was unsuccessful. They bound his limbs with a hotel bathrobe belt, confining him to the room. Afterwards, they took the victim's backpack, which contained HK\$1.4 million in cash, and fled the scene.

Chao added that the victim quickly managed to free himself and pursued the suspects to the lift area in the hotel corridor, where a struggle ensued, alerting hotel security guards who intervened and later reported the case to the police. Chao said that the victim sustained injuries to his neck, mouth, and the right side of his abdomen.

However, the police discovered that the victim had withheld information about the case. The police discovered that during the robbery, the victim and the duo were actually engaging in illegal currency exchange activities, and that the story about the "gold chain purchase" was believed to have been fabricated by the victim, while the robbery did indeed take place.

The police later recovered the stolen HK\$1.4 million in cash. Under questioning, both suspects refused to cooperate.

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

Chao said that the police would launch a separate investigation into the robbery victim's false claim, considering that he had actually participated in the two robbery suspects' illegal currency exchange deal. ■



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort the hooded robbery suspect in the first case to a PJ van outside the PJ headquarters in Zape on Sunday. – Photo: Maria Cheang Ut Meng



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort the two hooded robbery suspects in the second case to a PJ van outside the PJ headquarters in Zape on Friday. – Photo: Armando Neves

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Macau Weather

CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY PERIODS.
LIGHT RAIN AT NIGHT.
FORCE 3 TO 4 NORTHEASTERLY WINDS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 45% AND 85%.



17°C~24°C

Source: SMG

Macau ping-pong team clinches 3 gold, 3 silver & 6 bronze medals at NSOG



National Special Olympic Games (NSOG) Table Tennis Men's Singles 16 to 21 years old, Group H Champion Lam Iat Pan from Macau poses during Saturday's award ceremony at Tsuen Wan Sports Centre.



NSOG Table Tennis Men's Singles 22 to 29 years old, Group F Champion Wong Kuok Lon from Macau poses during Saturday's award ceremony at Tsuen Wan Sports Centre.



NSOG Table Tennis Women's Doubles 12 to 15 years old, Group A Champions Ho Chi Iao and Kuan Un Kuan, both from Macau, pose during Saturday's award ceremony at Tsuen Wan Sports Centre.

— Photos courtesy of Macau Special Games

Armindo Neves

The Macau Special Olympics announced on its Facebook page between Sunday and yesterday that the local team has clinched three gold, three silver and six bronze medals in the 9th National Special Olympics Games between

Saturday and yesterday.

The eight-day 12th National Games for Persons with Disabilities and 9th National Special Olympic Games, held not just in Guangdong but also in Hong Kong and Macau, ends next Monday. The first day of the Games was yesterday.

Due to the deadly inferno in Tai Po on November 26, the organisers decided to cancel the traditional torch relay and opening ceremony.

The National Special Olympic Games (NSOG) table tennis competition of the 12th National Games for Persons with Disabilities

(NGD) and the 9th NSOG started on Saturday and concluded today at Tsuen Wan Sports Centre.

On Saturday, during the first day of the NSOG table tennis competition, 10 local athletes won three gold, two silver and three bronze medals in Men's Singles and Women's Doubles.

The award-winning athletes are Leong Iat Pan, Men's Singles 16 to 21 years old, Group H Champion; Wong Kuok Lon, Men's Singles 22 to 29 years old, Group F Champion; Cheang U Hang, Men's Singles 16 to 21 years old, Group B Runner up; Lao U Kin, Men's Singles 16 to 21 years old, Group F Runner up; Leong Ion Lam, Men's Singles 16 to 21 years old, Group G, third place; Lam Kei Chon, Men's Singles 22 to 29 years old, Group B, third place; Ho Chi Iao and Kuan Un Kuan, Women's

Doubles 12 to 15 years old, Group A Champion; Ng Weng San and Lam U Tong, Woman's Doubles 22 to 29 years old, Group B, third place.

Yesterday was the second day of the NSOG table tennis competition, opening with the Mixed Doubles. The local team clinched one silver and three bronze medals, and the local winners are Cheang U Hang and Ng Weng San, 22 to 29 years old, Group C Runner up; Lao U Kin and Lao U Kin, 16 to 21 years old, Group D, third place; Leong Ion Lam and Ho Chi Iao, 16 to 21 years old, Group F, third place; Lam Kei Chon and Lam U Tong, 22 to 29 years old, Group B, third place.

Meanwhile, the NSOG Table Tennis Women's Singles and Men's Doubles competitions will start in Tsuen Wan Sports Centre today at 10 a.m. ■ (More on page 14)

Ethiopia's Senay, Kenya's Kipchirchir win 44th GEG Macao Int'l Marathon



This handout photo provided by the Sports Bureau (ID) on Sunday shows Mastewal Birhanu Senay, the women's winner of the 2025 Galaxy Entertainment Macao International Marathon at the Olympic Sports Centre Stadium in Taipa that day.



This handout photo provided by the Sports Bureau (ID) on Sunday shows Victor Kipchirchir (left), the men's winner of the 2025 Galaxy Entertainment Macao International Marathon on the way to his victory that day. The statement released by the organisers did not identify the other runner shown in the photo.

Khalel Vallo

Kenya's Victor Kipchirchir broke the men's local race record and Ethiopia's Mastewal Birhanu Senay won the women's race of the 2025 Galaxy Entertainment Macao International Marathon on Sunday.

According to a Sports Bureau (ID) statement on Sunday, the marathon was organised by the bureau in conjunction with the General Association of Athletics of Macau (AGAM) and, as in previous years, local integrated resort operator Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG).

The event marked the 44th edition of the race and attracted elite runners and long-distance enthusiasts across multiple categories. The marathon and half-marathon routes once again covered landmark sites including the Governador Nobre de Carvalho Bridge, A-Ma Temple and Sai Van Bridge, the statement noted.

According to the statement, the start ceremony was officiated

by Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Wallis O Lam, the bureau's Acting President See Lei Si Leng, GEG Chairman Francis Lui Yiu Tung, AGAM President Chan Pou Sin, and GEG Corporate Affairs Director Buddy Lam Chi Seng.

In the women's marathon, Ethiopian runners dominated, with Senay finishing first in 2:31:37, followed by Selam Fente Gebre and Kolole Mekashu Tefera, the statement said.

Meanwhile, Kipchirchir secured first place in the men's marathon with a local record time of 2:09:27, ahead of Rwanda's John Hakizimana and Ethiopia's Barecha Tolosa Geleto, the statement added.

In the Macau athletes' category, Fong Ieng Wai, Lam Weng Hang and Lo Sik Kin placed top three among men, while Wu Yangyang, Chio Tong Tong and Xu Zhonghuang led the local women's standings, according to the bureau.

In addition, the statement highlighted that the event also featured the half-marathon, mini-marathon categories, the Active Group Trophy competition, and the popular "Most Creative Costume Award", which drew strong participation.

Awards were presented by sport and government representatives, including members of the Sports Committee, Portugal's 1988 Olympic medallist Rosa Mota, and representatives from supporting organisations, the statement said, adding that participants can check their race results at <https://www.macaomarathon.com/>, with finishing certificates available at <http://www.marathon-photos.com/> for download from December 26.

The bureau said in the statement that the marathon aims to continue to reinforce Macau's major sporting events calendar and promote community sports participation. ■



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ADMISSIONS FOR 2026/2027
2026/2027 年度招收新生

ADMISSIONS ARE OPEN AT ALL LEVELS (Except F6)
歡迎報讀本校各個年級 (中六除外)

- K1: Please follow the DSEDJ announcements
- K1: 請留意教育及青年發展局公告
- Other levels: Registration from 1 Mar 2026
- 其他年級: 由2026年3月1日起
- Application forms are available at the School or you may apply via the school online application system on the website
- 報名表可從本校索取或使用學校網站上系統報名。



Kindergarten Public Information Day 幼稚園課程資訊日
6 Dec 2025, Saturday, 09:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
2025年12月6日 (星期六), 09:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Public Information Day - All Levels 全校所有年級課程資訊日
10 Jan 2026, Saturday, 09:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
2026年1月10日 (星期六), 09:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

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‘At the Threshold’ exhibition kicks off at Albergue SCM

Interview by Rui Pastorin

Portuguese artist and researcher Mariana Maia Rocha is showcasing her works in Macau for the first time in an exhibition titled “At the Threshold of Memory”, using art to give her take on Macau using pieces created during a near month-long residency in Macau.

Kicking off last night at the D1 Gallery of Albergue SCM*, the exhibition is a collaborative project between Cerveira Art Biennial Foundation and CAC - “Territories without Borders 2025-2026 I artist residency programme VAI-DEM / Collaboration with Cerveira Art Biennial Foundation”, which according to a statement provided at yesterday’s opening ceremony, invites Portuguese artists to Macau for cultural exchange.

Among the topics that the exhibition explores is the transient nature of Macau’s landscape, how urbanisation and globalisation affect the local identity, as well as engaging with themes of memory and mortality, among others.

Speaking with the *Post* after last night’s opening ceremony, Maia Rocha said that her works are displayed across the three sections of the venue, using various mediums to convey her concepts and ideas.

Maia Rocha’s exhibition starts with an installation featuring a line of shoes, leading into the gallery, with the idea behind it being her walking the streets of Macau, she said. Right at the centre is a large black and white drawing, created

with the use of graphite and charcoal powder. The subject depicted in one of the drawings, meanwhile, came after Maia Rocha’s research into the city’s archives, particularly seeing many pictures of typhoons and their aftermath, using her hand to emulate the movements involved.

Bamboo also plays a role in the exhibition as while this wasn’t the first time that Maia Rocha has integrated it into her art, she said she became very intrigued by the scaffolding found across the city when she first came upon it when she arrived around mid-November. It served as a main inspiration for some of the works, recording them in her other black and white drawings on display, while using them for a “photo-performance” across the city.

Latex, meanwhile, is used to create works that convey the idea of it being the “skin” of a street, particularly with its change in colour during its transition from its liquid to its solid state, also having a link to how skin changes during death.

Meanwhile, when asked about her experience in Macau during her residency, Maia Rocha said that overall, she enjoyed it for a number of reasons and explored the city not as a tourist, but to “feel it”. She also particularly liked the city centre and the more traditional parts of Macau, now seeing the city as a special place.

One can view the works until December 29, with the venue open from Tuesday to Sunday from noon through 7 p.m. On Mondays, it is open from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.

**Albergue is Portuguese for “hospice”. SCM stands for Santa Casa da Misericórdia (“Holy House of Mercy”), Macau’s oldest charitable organisation.*



Artist and researcher Mariana Maia Rocha introduces one of her exhibits after last night's opening ceremony of her exhibition “At the Threshold of Memory” at Albergue SCM. – Photos: Rui Pastorin



‘Vitória, Vitória’ offers readers light-hearted approach to pivotal moment in Macau history

Interview by Rui Pastorin

The bilingual book “Vitória, Vitória” was launched on Thursday during the 2025 Autumn Book Festival at the Tap Seac Multisport Pavilion, with the publication taking on an important moment in Macau’s history while doing so in a funny and light-hearted approach.

Written in Portuguese and Chinese, “Vitória, Vitória”, or “Victory, Victory” in English, was launched by the International Institute of Macau (IIM) in partnership with children’s book publisher Mandarin, with founder Catarina Mesquita having authored the book while the illustrations were created by Portuguese cartoonist Rodrigo de Matos.

The book offers a humorous perspective on the pivotal 1622 Battle of Macau by the Portuguese against the Dutch, with Portugal’s military victory on June 24 that year considered by the Portuguese as a blessing from Saint John. It also links the event to Arraial de São João* (St. John’s Festival, aka Feast of Saint John), which annually celebrates the victory.

IIM Secretary-General António Monteiro told the *Post* after the launch on Thursday that many academic books have been published

on the historical event, but for this particular book, they wanted to provide a more relaxed and funny way to tell “true stories and celebrations”, being a way for parents and their children to read about the history and get acquainted with what happened.

“This is a part of Macau history, it’s in the fortress, it’s in the walls, it’s in the Victory Garden and monument. So why do we have these elements?”, Monteiro underlined, pointing out the importance of youngsters asking “why?”. Another question that the book explores is what would Macau look like today had the Dutch won, pondering on the outcome on everything from the culture to the Macanese community. “This is the main question and to let us meditate very seriously on how Macau will be today”.

Monteiro also highlighted that the celebration of the victory is annually commemorated by the Macanese diaspora, but the main message that they hope to convey during the book launch is that the celebration is neither just a Portuguese nor Macanese celebration, but one that is for everyone from Macau because of the heroes who fought the battle 400 years ago and made the ultimate sacrifice, altogether securing victory.



Associação dos Macaenses (ADM) President Miguel de Senna Fernandes (from left to right), IIM Secretary General António Monteiro and cartoonist Rodrigo de Matos address the “Vitória Vitória” book launch during the 2025 Autumn Book Festival at the Tap Seac Multisport Pavilion on Thursday. – Photo: Rui Pastorin

People from Macau, especially the younger generation, need to understand that, he underlined.

Macanese Association (ADM) President Miguel de Senna Fernandes echoed these remarks to the *Post*, reiterating that while it is an important date for the Portuguese and Macanese community, it is not just for them, but “for Macau itself”, while also noting: “One of the things that this book points out is that it’s not arguing about history, but playing with facts”.

The book goes beyond just talking about the victory, an aspect that Senna Fernandes said he liked, further pointing out: “It is very important for the new generation who don’t want to read more about history. At least have something funny to read. And this book gives some input about the importance of the date. It deals not only with the Portuguese community. It deals with Macau as a whole”.

Like Monteiro, Senna Fernandes emphasised that it is important

for the younger generation to pick up the book to “have answers to any why” from asking why we have Jardim da Vitória (“Victory Garden”) to why Avenida 24 de Junho (城市日大馬路) is named the way it is, being an important input for the younger generation and gives them some background and history, hoping to bring them to this “collective memory”. With the new generation in Macau, whether they are Chinese, Portuguese or from elsewhere, this would at least tell them more about what happened during that moment in history. “I think this is the significance of what we’ve been celebrating”.

Monteiro concluded that through the book, they hope that readers eight years old and up would garner their interest in this topic and later pursue it themselves to do their own research. He added that the institute hopes that they can publish a second edition in Chinese and English to reach an international audience, hoping to receive good feedback. ■

**The festival has been included in the Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Macau since 2020. It was formerly a public holiday known as “City Day” in Macau.*

IAM suspends tinned food import application

Armindo Neves

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) announced in a statement on Friday that it had suspended a tinned food import application.

According to the statement, the bureau, during import inspection and quarantine procedures, detected excessive levels of the veterinary drug residue sulfamethazine in a batch of tinned food samples that were transhipped to Macau via Hong Kong. The bureau underlined that the affected product did not enter the local market.

The statement said that the bureau has immediately suspended the import application for the involved product and notified the relevant Hong Kong authorities.

The bureau also urged any businesses or members of the public in possession of the affected

product to immediately cease sales and consumption.

According to the statement, the affected product is named “MaLing” Shredded Pork and Preserved Vegetable, with a best before date of April 7, 2028, processing plant code 5000/01011, from the Chinese mainland, with a net weight of 240 grams. The sample was found to contain sulfamethazine at a level of 204 micrograms per kilogram, which exceeds the maximum residue limit for veterinary drugs in food as stipulated by Macau regulations, the statement said.

IAM explained that sulfamethazine is a sulphonamide antibacterial agent widely used in the animal husbandry industry, adding that the long-term excessive intake of sulphonamide drugs may cause allergic reactions and damage to the urinary system in humans. ■



This undated file photograph provided by the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) on Friday shows the problematic tinned food found to contain sulfamethoxazole exceeding the permitted residue limit.

New Zone A library slated for next year



Culture Affairs Bureau (IC) President Deland Leong Wai Man addresses Friday’s opening ceremony for the three-day “Macau Reading Festival” at the Taipa Houses.

Ida Cheong

Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) President Deland Leong Wai Man said in a speech during the opening ceremony of “Macau Reading Festival” on Friday that the bureau plans to open a public library in Zone A – officially known as “Eastern District 2” – next year, alongside updates to services and facilities at existing libraries, aiming to further enhance readers’ user experience.

Zone A is a large land reclamation residential building development area off the northeastern coast of the Macau Peninsula.

The opening ceremony for the three-day “Macau Reading Festival” was held at the Taipa Houses, which featured an “Outdoor Library”, “Art and Cultural Book Fair”, “Sky Cinema”, “Café and Cultural and Creative Market”, and game booths.

Leong noted that her bureau has organised numerous activities across



Visitors walk around the “Macau Reading Festival” at the Taipa Houses heritage complex on Friday. – Photos: Ida Cheong

different communities in recent years, such as the “Book for Book” activity, which has facilitated the exchange of over 10,000 books to date; a “POP-UP” library, providing platforms for free book browsing; the newly introduced “Mobile Library Vehicle”, providing outreach services while stationed in communities; and the “Joyful Reading Guide for Seniors”, which visits social service institutions to introduce practical library services to the elderly, encouraging more reading and greater use of library resources.

Leong added that her bureau has also integrated technology to expand the possibilities of reading. For instance, she said, the bureau’s collections of valuable books in digital format have been promoted in recent years, allowing residents free access to precious publications on electronic platforms anytime.

The latest batch of digitised rare books now available online include 279 titles.

Simultaneously, the Cultural Affairs Bureau proactively has collaborated with various entities to promote reading, including the “Student Reading Award Scheme” and the “School Reading Recognition Scheme” with the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ), along with the installation of self-service pickup lockers in schools, Leong said.

Leong pointed out that in 2025, a new “Parent-Child Reading Cooperation Scheme at Nurseries” was launched with the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS), providing book delivery services to nurseries (locally also known as crèches), facilitating collective library card registration, and distributing reading packs for infants and young children. ■

Sam vows to review upcoming tasks for promoting Hengqin's development

Tony Wong

Macau Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai has “recently” convened and chaired the third meeting of the Leadership Group for Promoting the Development of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, urging local officials with responsibility for the zone’s matters to conduct a comprehensive review of their upcoming tasks related to the zone’s development, advance key projects in an orderly and systematic manner, and continue to deploy their most capable civil servants to participate in the zone’s development, according to a statement by the Macau Government Information Bureau (GCS) yesterday.

The meeting, held at Government Headquarters, was attended by Sam’s five policy secretaries and his

chief-of-cabinet Chan Kak.

However, the statement did not say when exactly the meeting was held.

Sam, who took office in December last year, set up the leadership group in February.

According to the GCS statement, Sam said that since its establishment, the leading group has held three meetings, at which decisions have been made to strengthen the Macau government’s support for the in-depth cooperation zone’s development in areas including policy, legislation, personnel, and resource allocation.

Sam noted that adjustments were made last month to the composition of officials of the in-depth cooperation zone’s management and executive committees. Building upon a solid foundation, Sam said,

the two committees will continue to play a coordinating role in integration, focusing on promoting the zone’s high-quality development.

Looking forward, Sam said, the zone’s development will centre on key areas such as scientific and technological innovation, industrial advancement, enhancing convenience for Macau residents living or working there, and facilitating the efficient movement of people and goods between Macau and Hengqin.

According to the statement, Sam pledged that his government will launch and implement a comprehensive package of policies and measures with the aim of injecting greater momentum into the zone’s overall development, enabling it to present a renewed outlook and achieve new breakthroughs. ■



This undated handout photo released by the Macau Government Information Bureau (GCS) yesterday shows Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai addressing a meeting of the Macau government’s Leadership Group for Promoting the Development of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin held recently at Government Headquarters in Nam Van district.

MGTO chief expects ‘Light up Macao 2025’ to boost night-time economy

Ida Cheong

Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) Director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes said in a speech on Saturday during the opening ceremony she expected that “Light up Macao 2025” will encourage both residents and visitors to explore local neighbourhood communities more deeply, support local businesses, stimulate economic opportunities, and further promote community tourism, and the night-time economy.

The opening ceremony for the monthlong illumination festival was held at Nam Van Lake Nautical Centre, coupled with community and gastronomy events, aiming to invigorate the community tourism and night-time economy, based on MGTO’s objective of enriching the city’s reputation as a World City of Tourism and Leisure.

The “Light up Macao 2025” event is being held until January 11 in three major districts – Nam Van, the northern district and Zape, featuring 3D mapping shows, a carnival, flash mobs, performances and a total of 28 groups of radiant installations from Australia, the Chinese mainland, Portugal, South Korea and the United States, as well as local teams.



One of “Light up Macao 2025” light installations, complete with local mascot MAK, is displayed at the Nam Van Lake Nautical Centre in Praia Grande.

– Photo: Armindo Neves

Senna Fernandes noted that a special carnival on Rua de Luís Gonzaga Gomes (高美士街), Rua de Xiamen (廈門街) and Rua de Nagasaki (長崎街) near the Macau Grand Prix Museum, has 20 stalls offering food, creative cultural products, and games.

Meanwhile, a parallel event entitled “ZAPE Christmas Wonderland” is being held in the area between Rua de Cantão (廣東街) and Rua de Pequim (北京街), striving to present the festive Christmas atmosphere.

Meanwhile, two community

tourism funded projects “2025 Luminescent Night at Travessa do Armazém Velho” around Rua dos Ervanários (澳門的關前街區) in the city centre and the “Northern Winter Market” in Praça dos Lótus, Ilha Verde district (青洲坊蓮花廣場), aiming to create an amplified effect of community activities.

Senna Fernandes said that the sparkle-fest not just sets off the blended appeal of “tourism + events” but also beautifies the urban space and brings together various neighbourhoods’ community dynamics. ■

Supporting ‘Taiwan independence’ violates China’s constitution, international law: FM

BEIJING – Attempts to pursue “Taiwan independence” mean splitting China’s territory, and supporting “Taiwan independence” amounts to interference in China’s internal affairs, which violates both China’s constitution and international law, Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing said yesterday.

Wang made the remarks when holding talks with German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul, during which Wang elaborated on both the historical realities and legal foundations

regarding the Taiwan question.

Noting that this year marks the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Chinese People’s War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, stated that Japan, as a defeated nation, should have undertaken profound reflection and acted with greater caution.

“Yet now, its current leader is trying to exploit the Taiwan question – the very territory Japan colonized

for half a century, committing countless crimes against the Chinese people – to provoke trouble and threaten China militarily. This is completely unacceptable,” he said.

The Chinese people, together with all peace-loving people around the world, bear the responsibility to uphold the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, and have the obligation to prevent Japan from re-militarization and attempting to revive its militarist ambitions, Wang emphasized. – Xinhua

IPIM promotes business matching at AIE Macau-Zhuhai expo

Khalel Vallo

The Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) said in a Saturday statement that it aimed to strengthen its “Exhibition + Inspection + Matching” model during the very first Global Artificial Intelligence Machines and Electronics Expo (AIE), which ran from Thursday to Saturday in Macau and Zhuhai as a “Dual City Event”.

According to the statement, the model aimed to extend the impact of Macau’s major exhibitions, improve matching efficiency during event periods, and accelerate post-event project implementation.

The AIE event brought together about 1,000 global technology pioneers and 5,000 international buyers, the statement noted. As part of the initiative, IPIM arranged participation opportunities for local enterprises, using the event’s matching resources to assist them in identifying potential partners, the statement said.

The statement added that IPIM representatives also visited key exhibitors to present Macau’s business environment and connect international companies with local resources, and more than

350 technology enterprises from regions and countries including the Chinese mainland, Brazil and Portugal were visited by the IPIM representatives, resulting in 45 companies having expressed interest in establishing a presence in Macau, including listed firms.

In order to expand cooperation, IPIM and the Department of Commerce of Guangdong Province arranged a visit for a delegation of Macau entrepreneurs to the Zhuhai venue, the statement said, adding that they toured the exhibition and visited key industry facilities, including an e-commerce park and innovation incubators.

The Zhuhai exhibition covered 30,000 square metres featuring 455 exhibitors showcasing industrial robots, drones, autonomous vehicles, smart home solutions, and health-tech products, the statement noted.

The statement concluded that high-value technology exhibitions such as AIE support Macau enterprises in accessing overseas markets, aiming to strengthen regional cooperation and striving to accelerate industry upgrades under the special administrative region’s broader investment promotion strategy. ■



This undated handout photo provided by the Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) on Saturday shows IPIM representatives visiting key exhibitors at the Global Artificial Intelligence Machines and Electronics Expo (AIE) which took place between Thursday and Saturday last week.

CPC leadership holds meeting on 2026 economic work, regulations on law-based governance

BEIJING – The Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee yesterday held a meeting to analyze and study the economic work of 2026 and review a set of regulations on the CPC's leadership over law-based governance in all respects.

The meeting was chaired by Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee.

Noting that this year is a year of significance in the process of advancing Chinese modernization, the meeting said China has implemented more proactive and effective macro policies, and the main goals for economic and social development are expected to be successfully accomplished.

Over the past five years, China has effectively navigated various shocks and challenges, and seen significant enhancement of its hard

power in areas including economy, science and technology, and national defense, as well as its soft power in culture, institution and diplomacy, among others, according to the meeting.

The meeting emphasized that to do a good job in economic work next year, it is necessary to fully and faithfully apply the new development philosophy on all fronts, move faster to create a new pattern of development, promote high-quality development, adhere to the general principle of pursuing progress while ensuring stability, and better coordinate domestic economic work and endeavors in the international economic and trade arena.

It is also necessary to better coordinate development and security, implement more proactive and effective macro policies, make policies more forward-looking,

targeted and synergistic, continue to expand domestic demand and improve supply, develop new quality productive forces in light of local conditions, make thorough efforts to develop a unified national market, continue to prevent and defuse risks in key areas, and work to stabilize employment, enterprise operations, markets and expectations to ensure a good start to the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030).

The meeting emphasized that next year's economic work should adhere to the principles of pursuing progress while ensuring stability and improving both quality and effectiveness, and continue to implement a more proactive fiscal policy alongside a moderately loose monetary policy.

It is important to maintain the leading role of domestic demand, pursue an innovation-driven approach,

and press ahead with critical reform tasks, according to the meeting.

Coordination in development should be promoted to facilitate integrated urban-rural development and regional synergy.

With carbon emissions peaking and carbon neutrality as the goals, efforts should be made to promote a comprehensive green transformation.

Prioritizing people's livelihoods, practical measures should be taken to benefit the people. At the same time, bottom-line thinking must be maintained to actively and prudently defuse risks in key areas.

The meeting stressed the need to strengthen the leadership by the Party, especially the centralized, unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee.

It also called for having a correct understanding of what it means to perform well, doing a good job in

economic work according to local conditions, and pursuing high-quality and sustainable development.

It was noted at the meeting that formulating the regulations on the CPC's leadership over law-based governance in all respects is of great significance for developing a more sound system of socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics and for building a socialist country under the rule of law at a higher stage.

The meeting stressed the need to uphold and strengthen the Party's leadership and to enhance the level of law-based governance and law-based exercise of state power.

It also stressed the need to build confidence in unswervingly following the path of socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics, and to advance law-based governance in all aspects of endeavors. – Xinhua

CPC Central Committee holds symposium with non-CPC personages on economic work

BEIJING – The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) held a symposium with non-CPC personages on Wednesday in Beijing to solicit their opinions and suggestions on this year's economic situation and the economic work for 2026.

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, presided over the symposium and delivered an important speech.

Xi stressed remaining confident, leveraging China's strengths and tackling challenges, and working to sustain and build on the positive momentum in the economy, so as to make a good start in implementing the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030).

Li Qiang, Cai Qi and Ding Xuexiang, all members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, attended the symposium. Li briefed the symposium on this year's economic work and introduced considerations for next year's economic work.

At the symposium, representatives of non-CPC personages gave their opinions and suggestions on a number of issues, including optimizing industrial layout, expanding domestic demand and high-standard opening up, enhancing people's health and well-being, and boosting high-quality employment.

After listening to their remarks, Xi noted that the CPC Central Committee had implemented more proactive and effective macro policies this year, and the main goals for economic and social development are expected to be accomplished.

As the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) is set to approach a successful conclusion, China's strengths in economy, science and technology, and comprehensive national strengths have been significantly enhanced, Xi said.

Noting that non-CPC personages had carried out in-depth research on key issues arising in economic and social development and provided important references for the CPC Central Committee's scientific decision-making, Xi expressed thanks to them on behalf of the CPC Central Committee.

Xi stressed that to do a good job in economic work next year, it is necessary to fully and faithfully apply the new development philosophy on all fronts, move faster to create a new pattern of development, promote high-quality development, adhere to the general principle of pursuing progress while ensuring stability, and better coordinate domestic economic work and endeavors in the international economic and trade arena.

It is imperative to better coordinate development and security, implement more proactive and effective macro policies, make policies more forward-looking, targeted and synergistic, continue to expand domestic demand and improve supply, and optimize incremental resources while making good use of existing resources, Xi said.

Efforts will be made to develop new quality productive forces in light of local conditions, develop a unified national market, prevent and defuse risks in key areas, and stabilize employment, enterprise operations, markets and expectations, so as to both improve the quality of growth and appropriately increase output, he noted.

Xi expressed the hope that non-CPC personages will actively contribute ideas and efforts to the formulation and implementation of the 15th Five-Year Plan, and pool wisdom and strength to promote sustained and sound economic growth. – Xinhua

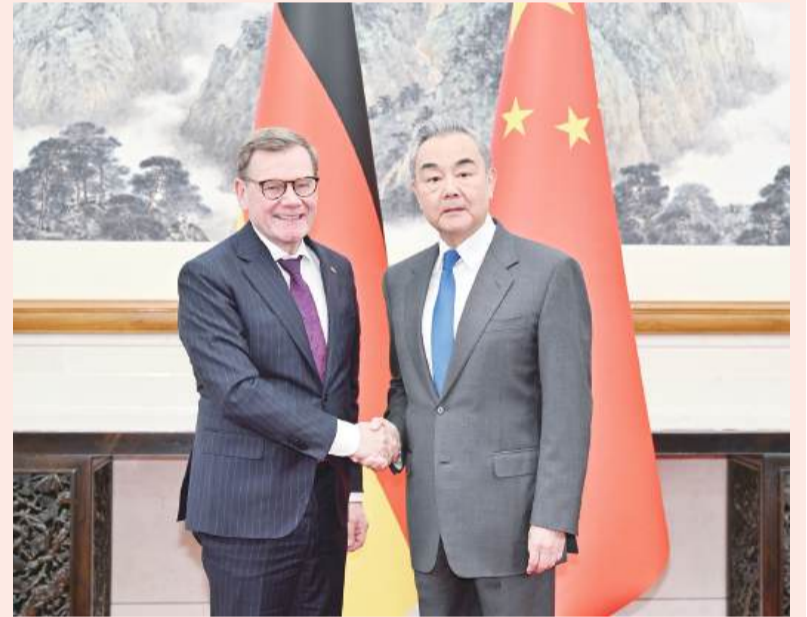
Wang Yi calls on China, Germany to shoulder responsibilities as major countries for more stable bilateral policy framework

BEIJING – China and Germany, as major countries, should shoulder their responsibilities, uphold mutual respect, transcend differences in social systems, historical backgrounds and cultures, and build a more mature model of positive interaction and a more stable bilateral policy framework, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said yesterday in Beijing.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, told German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul that it is hoped that Germany will view China's development as an opportunity for deeper cooperation and a driving force for mutual benefit and win-win outcomes, and work together to promote the steady and healthy development of the China-Germany all-round strategic partnership.

Noting that this is the first visit to China by a German foreign minister since the formation of Germany's new government – though the visit has encountered twists and turns – Wang quoted a Chinese saying: "Good things come to those who wait." He emphasized that "the timing is not the key; what truly matters is the purpose. The visit should be for cooperation, not confrontation; for enhancing mutual understanding and trust, not widening differences."

Wang further urged Germany to encourage the EU to return to a rational and pragmatic China policy, adhere to the correct direction of mutually beneficial cooperation, resolve differences through dialogue, and avoid politicizing economic issues, instrumentalizing trade issues, or securitizing normal cooperation.



Foreign Minister Wang Yi (right), also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, shakes hands with German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul in Beijing yesterday. – Xinhua

Wang emphasized that the one-China principle serves as an important political foundation for China-Germany relations, and there is no room for ambiguity. He further noted that unlike Germany, Japan has yet to conduct a thorough reflection on its history of aggression in the eight decades since the end of WWII.

Wadephul said that in the face of a turbulent global landscape, Germany and China need to shoulder special responsibilities, strengthen communication and coordination, and become reliable and predictable partners for each other.

He said that Germany remains firmly committed to the one-China policy, and this position is unwavering.

German enterprises in China have full confidence in the Chinese market and are willing to further deepen their presence in the country, Wadephul said, adding

that Germany supports the EU and China in seeking mutual benefit and win-win outcomes through dialogue and stands ready to play a constructive role in this regard.

The two sides also exchanged views on the Ukraine crisis. Wadephul elaborated on Germany's position and expressed hope that China would leverage its influence to help bring about an early end to the crisis.

Wang reaffirmed China's consistent stance, emphasizing that all parties should cherish the current momentum for a political settlement, work towards the same goal, and ultimately reach a fair, durable and binding peace agreement through dialogue and negotiations.

China supports all efforts conducive to peace and will continue to play a constructive role in this regard, Wang added. – Xinhua

Indonesia suffers food, medical shortages as Asia flood tolls rise

JAKARTA – Regions hit by floods that killed hundreds in Indonesia were suffering from food and medical shortages, authorities said, as elephants pitched in yesterday to help clear up debris.

Tropical storms and monsoon rains have pummelled Southeast and South Asia this month, triggering landslides and flash floods from the rainforests of Indonesia's western Sumatra island to highland plantations in Sri Lanka.

"Everything is lacking, especially medical personnel. We are short on doctors," Muzakir Manaf, the governor of Indonesia's Aceh province, told reporters late Sunday.

Indonesia's national disaster mitigation agency (BNPB) said 961 people in Aceh, North Sumatra and West Sumatra had been killed, while 293 were missing. More than a million people were displaced, the agency said.

Sri Lanka's military meanwhile deployed thousands of extra troops to aid recovery efforts after a devastating cyclone caused a wave of destruction and killed 635 people.

In Pidie Jaya, a district in Indonesia's Aceh badly affected by the floods, four elephants from a nearby training centre picked up large pieces of rubble with their trunks and helped shift stuck vehicles.

"We brought four elephants to clear the debris from the houses of the communities that were swept away by the flood," Hadi Sofyan, the head of a local conservation agency, told AFP.

"Our target is to clean the debris near the residents' houses so they can access their homes," he said, adding the elephants would be used for the rest of the week.

The downpours and subsequent landslides throughout western Indonesia have injured at least 5,000 people and devastated infrastructure, including schools and hospitals.



Mahouts riding Sumatran elephants rest as they help clear tree debris following flash floods in Meureudu, Pidie Jaya district, Indonesia's Aceh province yesterday. – AFP

In the city of Banda Aceh, long queues formed for drinking water and fuel, and prices of basic commodities such as eggs were skyrocketing, an AFP correspondent said.

Costs to rebuild after the disaster could run up to 51.82 trillion rupiah (US\$3.1 billion), the BNPB said late Sunday.

Extra troops

In Sri Lanka, more than two million people – nearly 10 percent of the population – have been affected by Cyclone Ditwah, the worst on the island this century.

Sri Lanka is expecting further heavy monsoon rains this week, topping five centimetres in many places, the Disaster Management Centre (DMC) said. It issued warnings of further landslides.

Army chief Lasantha Rodrigo said 38,500 security personnel had been deployed to boost recovery and clean-up operations in flood-affected and landslide-hit areas, nearly doubling the initial deployment.

"Since the disaster, security forces have been able to rescue

31,116 people who were in distress," Rodrigo said in a statement.

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake unveiled a recovery package, offering 10 million rupees (US\$33,000) for victims to buy land in safer areas and rebuild.

The government will also offer livelihood support and cash assistance to replace kitchen utensils and bedding and to buy food.

It is not clear how much the relief package will cost the government, which is still emerging from an economic meltdown in 2022 when it ran out of foreign exchange reserves to finance even essential imports.

Dissanayake has said the government cannot fund reconstruction alone and has appealed for foreign assistance, including from the International Monetary Fund.

Seasonal monsoon rains are a feature of life in South Asia and Southeast Asia, flooding rice fields and nourishing the growth of other key crops.

However, climate change is making the phenomenon more erratic, unpredictable, and deadly throughout the regions. – AFP

Philippines grapples with sharp, alarming HIV epidemic

MANILA – The Philippines is confronting the fastest-rising human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) epidemic in the Asia-Pacific region, with an average of 61 Filipinos diagnosed every day this year, up 22 percent from last year, prompting urgent calls for more decisive national action.

The World Health Organization (WHO) earlier identified the Philippines, Fiji, and Papua New Guinea as the countries in the region where HIV infections continue to climb. It said the three now face some of the region's sharpest surges in new HIV infections.

Fiji has recorded a tenfold increase in cases over the past decade, driven mainly by injecting drug use, while Papua New Guinea declared HIV a national crisis in June amid spikes among women of reproductive age and children.

In the Philippines, new HIV infections have risen sixfold from 2010 to 2024, with the WHO estimating a 550 percent jump from 4,400 cases in 2010 to 29,600 in 2024. Young men who have sex with men remain the most affected.

According to data from the Philippines' Department of Health, a total of 149,375 people had been registered with HIV as of September, including 5,583 new cases diagnosed between July and September. Of these new cases, 895 were already at an advanced stage of infection. Most new patients (95 percent) were male, and one-third were aged 15 to 24.

Cases in 2025 ranged in age from 1 to 73, with a median age of 27. People aged 15 to 34 accounted for more than 70 percent of new infections, reflecting a shift toward younger demographics.

An estimated 252,800 Filipinos will be living with HIV in 2025.

Monthly detections continue to climb, rising from an average of 1,435 cases in 2023 to 1,459 in 2024, and further to 1,731 in the third quarter of 2025, 17 percent

higher than the same period of last year. From July to September, 61 percent of new diagnoses came from Metro Manila and the outlying regions of Calabarzon, Central Luzon, Central Visayas, and Davao in the southern Philippines.

Since 1984, when the country recorded its first HIV case, males have accounted for 94 percent of all reported cases. Infections have increasingly shifted toward younger groups, with cases among those under 15 rising by 129 percent in the past five years and those aged 15 to 24 increasing by 106 percent.

Sexual contact remains the dominant mode of transmission, responsible for 96 percent of all cases recorded since 1984. Among these, male-male sexual contact accounts for the majority, a pattern that persisted into the third quarter of 2025.

Although the proportion of patients presenting with advanced HIV has declined since 2021, total deaths continue to rise.

From July to September 2025, 125 deaths were reported, mostly among adults aged 25 to 34. Cumulatively, the country has recorded more than 500 deaths annually since 2016, and a total of 9,903 deaths since 1984.

Migrant workers make up 7 percent of all diagnosed cases, nearly all attributable to sexual transmission. Reporting of transactional sex since 2012 has documented 17,577 cases, the vast majority involving men.

Public health advocates are urging expanded testing, youth-focused education, stronger community interventions, as well as greater support for treatment adherence and viral suppression programs.

Experts warn that without decisive and coordinated action, the Philippines risks losing ground in its fight against HIV, jeopardizing the health and future of an entire generation. – Xinhua

Son Heung-min blackmailer jailed in S Korea

Kang Jin-kyu

SEOUL – A woman who blackmailed South Korean football superstar Son Heung-min by claiming she was the mother of his child was jailed for four years yesterday, reports said.

The woman, surnamed Yang, extorted 300 million won (US\$200,000) from Son last year by sending him a foetal ultrasound image and threatening to go public.

She reportedly splurged the cash on luxury and designer goods, before her and an accomplice surnamed Yong tried to extort a further 70 million from the Los Angeles FC star.

Son contacted the police, leading to their subsequent arrest and indictment.

Yesterday the Seoul Central District Court gave a four-year term to Yang, who is in her 20s, for

blackmail, local TV said.

Co-conspirator Yong – with whom she was reportedly in a romantic relationship – was given a two-year term for attempted blackmail, Yonhap news agency said.

The two have been in custody since May.

Judge Im Jeong-bin said yesterday that Yang had taken "extreme measures" in her bid to tarnish Son's reputation.

"It was not limited to simple threats or demands for money – she went further by taking action, such as informing the media and advertising agencies, exploiting Son's status as a public figure," Im said, according to Yonhap.

Son "suffered considerable psychological distress as a result of the case becoming public", he added.

The South Korean football captain

appeared at a closed trial session and gave testimony as a witness last month, local media reported.

It remains unclear whether Yang – who local media have speculated terminated the alleged pregnancy – was actually carrying the star footballer's child.

"After learning about her pregnancy, Yang did not verify whose child it was," Judge Im said.

"Although Yang said she believed the foetus was Son's, her testimony was inconsistent and therefore difficult to accept," he added.

The 33-year-old former Tottenham captain Son was in October named the second-highest paid footballer in Major League Soccer.

Son arrived in California in August after the most expensive transfer in MLS history, estimated at US\$26 million. – AFP



Tourists from Singapore make a snowman after snowfall in a park in Chitose, in Japan's northern Hokkaido prefecture yesterday. – AFP

'Not black or white': Teens worldwide react to Australia social media ban

AFP bureaus

HONG KONG — Australia's landmark move to ban under-16s from social media will be closely watched by other countries, which could follow suit with similar laws.

AFP spoke to teenagers and adults around the world about the Australian ban, which comes in tomorrow. Here are some of their reactions:

Mumbai: 'Nothing is black or white'

At the seafront in India's Mumbai, 19-year-old Pratigya Jena scrolls with her friends through Instagram videos of a posing influencer and a camel at a beach.

Social media "should be partially banned because according to me nothing is either black or white", the student said.

"Gen Z are very active, they are doing really well on social media. And doing great things, especially young entrepreneurs," Jena said.

At the same time, children watching adult content online "has a very bad effect".

At a Mumbai park, cricket coach Pratik Bhurke, 38, said Australia's move would encourage children to spend time outdoors and could have "great benefits" in India too.

Berlin: 'Help to detox'

In the chilly German capital, Luna Drewes, 13, is watching selfie-style TikTok clips posted by other young people.

"Actually, a good thing in some ways because social media often portrays a certain image of how people should look, like girls have to be thin," she said of the ban.

Another teenager, Enno Caro Brandes, said: "I'm 15 so for me the ban would definitely come into effect. I can't really imagine giving it up completely.

"A ban is a bit extreme, but it could definitely help to do a detox."

Doha: 'Really stupid'

An AI baby singing and answering interview questions are among the videos served up to Firdha Razak, 16, as she scrolls in her room.

Razak is not in favour of a ban. "It's really stupid, honestly," although "there's not really much we can do as 16-year-olds" if governments decide to act, she said.

The families of many people in Qatar live abroad, so "it's going to be so much harder to talk to them".

Also in Doha, Youssef Walid,

16, said bans like Australia's were "a bit harsh" and hard to enforce.

"We can use VPN. We can easily bypass the security and easily make new accounts," he said.

Lagos: 'We were born with it'

At a Nigerian high school, Michelle Okinedo is revising for exams, checking over her hand-written notes. In the classroom — where phones are banned — students in uniform sit at separate desks.

"I see where the [Australian] government is coming from. Students nowadays, they are really distracted," Okinedo said.

Even so, "we were born with it", the 15-year-old added. "And I don't think it's something I want to stop."

Her mother, 50-year-old event planner Hannah Okinedo, agrees with a social media ban for under-16s, saying most parents "don't have time to monitor their children all day".

Mexico City: 'Express yourself'

Young Mexico City resident Aranza Gomez, 11, has had a smartphone with access to social media for one year.

Without it, "I would honestly feel sad. I wouldn't really have a good way to spend my time," she said.

Santiago Ramirez Rojas, 16, is sitting on a bench in the Tabacalera district, scrolling through posts containing news about Argentina and tour dates for a musician.

"Social media today is very important for expressing yourself, no matter how old you are," said Rojas.

But "there are many kidnappings that begin online" and "younger kids, around 10 or 12, are much more vulnerable".

Sydney: 'Not going to have any impact'

In Australia one family has diverging ideas on how the law will go.

"I don't think the government really knows what they're doing and I don't think it's going to have any impact on children of Australia," said 15-year-old Layton Lewis.

But his mother Emily Lewis hopes it will help children "have better, more authentic relationships".

"They'll make proper plans, like we used to, to meet up with their friends face-to-face and have proper conversations as opposed to these illusive friendships online," she said.

— AFP

Thailand-Cambodia clashes reignite, killing soldier and civilians

Chayanit Itthipongmaetee and
Suy SE in Phnom Penh

BANGKOK — Thailand launched air strikes yesterday on its neighbour Cambodia, with both sides trading blame for renewed fighting on their disputed border that has killed four Cambodian civilians and a Thai soldier.

Around 35,000 people in Thailand have been evacuated from border areas, the country's Second Army Region said.

Five days of combat between Thailand and Cambodia this summer killed 43 people and displaced around 300,000 on both sides of the border before a truce took effect.

But last month Thailand paused a follow-on deal backed by US President Donald Trump to wind down hostilities, saying a landmine blast at the border had wounded several soldiers.

Since then, Cambodian and Thai officials have reported sporadic skirmishes along their frontier, which reignited Sunday and yesterday.

Cambodia's information minister Neth Pheaktra told AFP that at least four Cambodian civilians were killed by Thai shelling yesterday in the border provinces of Preah Vihear and Oddar Meanchey.

Around 10 other civilians were wounded, including a Cambodian journalist who was hit by shrapnel from a Thai rocket, Neth Pheaktra said.

The Thai army said one soldier was killed and 18 others were wounded since fresh fighting began on Sunday.

Farmer Pannarat Woratham, who lives just a few kilometres from the border in Thailand's Surin province, said she fled Sunday afternoon to a temple sheltering the displaced.

It was the second time the 59-year-old had evacuated since late July when open combat was waged with fighter jets, missile strikes and ground troops, killing both civilians and soldiers.

"Of course, many of us thought the conflict was finally over. It shouldn't have happened again like this," Pannarat told AFP.

On the other side of the border, Cambodian Hul Malis said the Thai military entered the border village of Prey Chan, in northwestern Banteay Meanchey province, yesterday afternoon just 20 minutes after she fled.



This handout photo taken and released by Agence Kampuchea Press (AKP) yesterday shows a wounded local journalist who lost a tooth and had a piece of shrapnel lodged in his tongue following clashes along the Cambodia-Thailand border in Oddar Meanchey province.

— AFP

"They came in with tanks," Hul Malis said other residents told her.

"I am so scared and I am running away" to the provincial capital, she added.

Prey Chan was the site of a stand-off in September between several hundred Cambodian demonstrators and Thai forces who fired rubber bullets and tear gas at them. Both countries claim the area as their own territory.

Neth Pheaktra, the minister, told reporters at least 1,157 families had evacuated to safety in Oddar Meanchey alone.

The conflict centres on a century-old disagreement over borders mapped during France's colonial rule in the region, with both sides claiming a smattering of boundary temples.

'Military objectives'

Both sides reported a brief skirmish on Sunday, which Thailand's military had said left two soldiers wounded.

But the fighting escalated early yesterday morning.

Thai army spokesman Winthai Suvaree said it had launched air strikes against Cambodia in an act of self-defence.

"The Thai air power is being used only against Cambodian military targets," Winthai said at a press conference.

"The air strikes are highly precise and aimed solely at military objectives along the clash line, with no impact on civilians."

Cambodia's defence ministry spokeswoman Maly Socheata, however, said Thai forces had attacked Cambodian troops in Preah Vihear and Oddar Meanchey early yesterday, accusing Thailand

of "firing multiple shots with tanks" near centuries-old temples.

Maly Socheata later told reporters that the Thai military attacked Cambodian forces in Preah Vihear with an F-16 jet.

In an evening press briefing, she said the Thai military had not ceased their attack and expanded the battle along the border.

She maintained that Cambodia has not retaliated.

The Thai army, meanwhile, has accused Cambodian forces of firing BM-21 rockets towards civilian areas in Buriram province, with no casualties reported.

'Cycles of confrontation'

The United States, China and Malaysia, as chair of the regional bloc ASEAN, brokered the cessation of fighting in July.

In October, Trump co-signed a follow-on joint declaration, touting new trade deals with Thailand and Cambodia after they agreed to prolong their ceasefire.

But Thailand suspended the agreement the following month, and the two sides then traded accusations of renewed clashes in which Cambodia said a civilian was killed.

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim urged both sides yesterday to halt the fighting and utilise diplomacy.

Asked about Trump's intervention and Anwar's call for restraint, Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul told reporters in Bangkok that no one should tell his country to stop, adding "we're long past that point".

"If you want things to stop, tell the aggressor to stop," he said.

— AFP

UN calls on Taliban to lift ban on Afghan women in its offices

KABUL — The United Nations called on the Taliban authorities on Sunday to lift its ban on Afghan women working in its offices, saying the restriction puts "life-saving services" at risk.

Since the Taliban regained power in 2021, Afghan women have been barred from doing most jobs, visiting parks and beauty salons, and attending school beyond the age of 12.

In September, the Taliban authorities began prohibiting women staff members from entering UN offices.

"We call for the ban on Afghan women staff and contractors from entering United Nations premises to be reversed, and for their safe access to offices and the field," Susan Ferguson, the special representative of the UN's women's agency in

Afghanistan, said in a statement.

"The longer these restrictions remain in place, the greater the risk to these life-saving services," Ferguson said, adding that they violated the UN's principles of human rights and equality.

The statement did not say how many staff were affected, but UN sources indicated that several hundred women were facing the ban.

Staff have been working remotely for the past three months, notably providing assistance to the victims of deadly earthquakes and to Afghan migrants deported from neighbouring Pakistan and Iran, Ferguson said.

Describing their work as "indispensable", she said: "Only through their presence can we reach women and girls safely and provide

culturally appropriate assistance."

The Taliban authorities did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment.

In September, the UN's refugee agency suspended cash aid to returned Afghan migrants, citing the impossibility of interviewing and collecting information on the more than 50 percent of returnees who were women.

— AFP

MSF says conditions for Gaza medics 'as hard as it's ever been' despite truce

Interview by Callum Paton

DOHA – Conditions for medics and patients in Gaza are as severe as ever despite a nearly two-month truce in the territory, the president of medical charity Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said in an AFP interview.

Israel and Palestinian militant group Hamas agreed in October to a US-backed truce deal for Gaza which stipulated an influx of aid to the territory devastated by two years of war and in the grip of a humanitarian crisis.

"It's as hard as it's ever been," Javid Abdelmoneim said of conditions for medical staff operating in Gaza's hospitals, speaking on the sidelines of the annual Doha Forum on diplomacy on Sunday.

"While we're able to continue doing operations, deliveries, wound care, you're using protocols or materials and drugs that are inferior, that are not the standard. So you've got substandard care being delivered," he explained.

Abdelmoneim, who worked as a doctor in Gaza in 2024, said the ongoing truce was only a "ceasefire of sorts" with "still several to dozens of Palestinians being killed every day by Israel".

Despite the truce, 376 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, according to local health authorities, as well as three Israeli soldiers.

"We're seeing the injured patients in the emergency rooms in which we work throughout the strip," he added.

Aid agencies are pushing for more access for humanitarian convoys to enter Gaza while Israel has resisted calls to allow aid through the Rafah crossing from Egypt.

Aid 'weaponised'

The MSF president said that since the truce began, aid "hasn't come in to the level that's necessary".

"There isn't a substantial change and it is being weaponised... So as far as we're concerned that is an ongoing feature of the genocide. It's being used as a chip and that's something that should not happen with humanitarian aid," Abdelmoneim said.

In 2024, MSF said its medical teams had witnessed evidence on the ground in Gaza and concluded that genocide was taking place.

Israel's foreign ministry rejected the report saying at the time that it was "fabricated".

Abdelmoneim said both the lack of supplies and the destruction of hospitals in the Palestinian territory – still not offset by the provision so far of field hospitals – meant care remained inadequate.

"Those two things together mean increased infection rates, increased stays and greater risk of complications. So it is a substandard level of care that you're able to deliver," he said.

Alarm over safety of medical staff in Sudan

The MSF president also sounded the alarm over the safety of medical staff in Sudan where at the end of October the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) seized the North Darfur capital of El-Fasher, the army's last stronghold in the western region.

The paramilitaries' final advance after a bitter 18-month siege was followed by reports of widespread atrocities.

"One feature that has been consistent, no matter where you are in Sudan, no matter who controls the territory, are attacks on health care and blockages to supply movements and provision of health care," Abdelmoneim said.

'Freedom, protection access'

The World Health Organisation

(WHO) said at the end of October that it had received reports that more than 460 patients and their companions had been shot dead at a maternity hospital in El-Fasher during its capture by the RSF and of six health workers being abducted.

On Thursday, an RSF drone attack on the army-held town of Kalogi in Sudan's South Kordofan state hit a children's nursery and a hospital, killing dozens of civilians including children, a local official told AFP.

"Both sides need to allow humanitarian and medical workers freedom, protection and access to the population, and that includes supplies," said Abdelmoneim, who also worked as a doctor in Omdurman in Sudan in February.

The MSF president said the charity's medical teams receiving displaced people in Sudan and neighbouring Chad were encountering "harrowing tales of sexual violence, tales of ethnically targeted violence, extortion" as well of "evidence that really does point to famine-like conditions".

In Tawila, a town now sheltering more than 650,000 people fleeing El-Fasher and nearby Zamzam camp, also under RSF control, Abdelmoneim said the MSF had been told by survivors "that family members are detained and never seen again".

"So our question is, what has happened to that population?" he said.

The medical charity was backing calls by the UN Human Rights Council for an enquiry into the reported violations.

"We would encourage all member states to support that, an independent investigation inside El-Fasher," Abdelmoneim said.

– AFP



Palestinian children pull a cart past a mural on a destroyed building in the Maghazi refugee camp outside Deir al-Balah yesterday. Qatar and Egypt, guarantors of the Gaza ceasefire, have called for the withdrawal of Israeli troops and the deployment of an international stabilisation force as the necessary next steps in fully implementing the fragile agreement. – AFP

UN slams world's 'apathy' in launching aid appeal for 2026

Amélie Bottollier-Depois

UNITED NATIONS – The United Nations yesterday hit out at global "apathy" over widespread suffering as it launched its 2026 appeal for humanitarian assistance, which is limited in scope as aid operations confront major funding cuts.

"This is a time of brutality, impunity and indifference," UN humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher told reporters, condemning "the ferocity and the intensity of the killing, the complete disregard for international law, horrific levels of sexual violence" he had seen on the ground in 2025.

"This is a time when the rules are in retreat, when the scaffolding of coexistence is under sustained attack, when our survival antennae have been numbed by distraction and corroded by apathy," he said.

He said it was also a time "when politicians boast of cutting aid," as he unveiled a streamlined plan to raise at least US\$23 billion to help 87 million people in the world's most dangerous places such as Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, Haiti and Myanmar.

The United Nations would like to ultimately raise US\$33 billion to help 135 million people in 2026 – but is painfully aware that its overall goal may be difficult to reach, given US President Donald Trump's slashing of foreign aid.

Fletcher said the "highly prioritised appeal" was "based on excruciating life-and-death choices," adding that he hoped Washington would see the choices made, and the reforms undertaken to improve aid efficiency, and choose to "renew that commitment" to help.

The world body estimates that 240 million people in conflict zones, suffering from epidemics, or victims of natural disasters and climate change are in need of emergency aid.

'Lowest in a decade'

In 2025, the UN's appeal for more than US\$45 billion was only funded to the US\$12 billion mark – the lowest in a decade, the world body said.

That only allowed it to help 98 million people, 25 million fewer than the year before.

According to UN data, the United States remains the top humanitarian aid donor in the world, but that amount fell dramatically in 2025 to US\$2.7 billion, down from US\$11 billion in 2024.

Atop the list of priorities for 2026 are Gaza and the West Bank.

The UN is asking for US\$4.1 billion for the occupied Palestinian territories, in order to provide assistance to three million people.

Another country with urgent need is Sudan, where deadly conflict has displaced millions: the UN is hoping to collect US\$2.9 billion to help 20 million people.

In Tawila, where residents of Sudan's western city of El-Fasher fled ethnically targeted violence, Fletcher said he met a young mother who saw her husband and child murdered.

She fled, with the malnourished baby of her slain neighbours along what he called "the most dangerous road in the world" to Tawila.

Men "attacked her, raped her, broke her leg, and yet something kept her going through the horror and the brutality," he said.

"Does anyone, wherever you come from, whatever you believe, however you vote, not think that we should be there for her?"

The United Nations will ask member states top open their government coffers over the next 87 days – one day for each million people who need assistance.

And if the UN comes up short, Fletcher predicts it will widen the campaign, appealing to civil society, the corporate world and everyday people who he says are drowning in disinformation suggesting their tax dollars are all going abroad.

"We're asking for only just over one percent of what the world is spending on arms and defence right now," Fletcher said.

"I'm not asking people to choose between a hospital in Brooklyn and a hospital in Kandahar – I'm asking the world to spend less on defence and more on humanitarian support."

– AFP

Israel, Qatar, US hold trilateral meeting in New York

WASHINGTON – The United States, Israel and Qatar held a trilateral meeting in New York on Sunday, a senior White House official told AFP, months after Israeli jets conducted an airstrike in Doha, unsuccessfully targeting Hamas leadership.

The White House official confirmed that the meeting had taken place but did not provide any further details.

Two sources told US news outlet Axios it was "the highest level meeting between the countries since the deal to end the war in Gaza, for which Qatar served as a key mediator."

Axios also reported White House envoy Steve Witkoff hosted the meeting, with Mossad spy chief

David Barnea representing Israel and an unnamed senior Qatari official in attendance.

Qatar, along with Egypt and the United States, helped broker a comprehensive ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, which remains delicate as both Israel and Hamas accuse each other of breaching its terms.

On Saturday, Qatar and Egypt both called for the withdrawal of Israeli troops and the deployment of an international stabilization force to fully implement the fragile agreement to end the conflict in Gaza.

Speaking at a diplomatic conference in Doha, Qatari Premier Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said "a ceasefire cannot be completed

unless there is full withdrawal of the Israeli forces [and] there is stability back in Gaza."

Axios reported that the main focus of Sunday's meeting was largely "on the implementation of the Gaza peace agreement."

The Israeli strike on Doha on September 9 unsuccessfully targeted top Hamas negotiator Khalil al-Hayra and others in the Palestinian militant group.

The strike instead killed six people and sparked a wave of criticism, including a rebuke from US President Donald Trump.

Axios said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu later called Al Thani from the White House "at Trump's urging, to apologize for the strike." – AFP

US residents to get free entry to national parks on Trump's birthday

WASHINGTON – US residents will be able to enter its national parks like the Grand Canyon and Yosemite for free on President Donald Trump's birthday in the latest move by his administration to elevate his profile.

But Americans will lose the current privilege of doing the same on two national days commemorating civil rights icon Martin Luther King Jr and the end of slavery.

The Trump administration says the changes, which take effect January 1, are part of the president's push to put Americans first.

The National Park Service is also increasing entrance fees for non-residents.

Critics say changes to the list of what the administration calls "patriotic fee-free days" serve to promote the president while downplaying the US history of slavery and its civil rights struggle.

In 2025, the list of free days included Martin Luther King Jr Day, which falls on the third Monday of January, and Juneteenth on June 19, which commemorates the day in 1865 when the last enslaved Americans were emancipated.

A Department of the Interior statement said the eight free days in 2026 will include Trump's June 14 birthday – he turns 80 next year – which also happens to be Flag Day,

which marks the adoption of the US flag in 1777.

Cornell William Brooks, a former president of the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People, said that it was an insult to Martin Luther King Jr.

"The raw & rank racism here stinks to high heaven," he wrote on X.

Trump, who often trumpets how his support grew among black voters in the 2024 election, has a long history of self-promotion that is gathering steam as he approaches the end of the first year in his second term.

Last week, the Washington-based United States Institute of Peace was named after him.

The White House has also recently suggested naming a new stadium for the Washington Commanders NFL team after Trump, and some Republican lawmakers even support putting his face on the US\$100 bill.

The United States has 63 national parks, which are congressionally designated protected areas under government control. Last year, more than 330 million people visited.

From 2026, the cost of an annual entry pass will be US\$80 for US residents and US\$250 for nonresidents. Nonresidents without a pass will have to pay US\$100 per person to enter 11 of the most visited parks in addition to the standard entrance fee. – AFP

Sweden acquits activists who smeared paint on Monet painting

STOCKHOLM – A Swedish court yesterday freed six environmental activists involved in a climate protest where they smeared red paint on the protective glass of a Monet painting, saying they had not intended to harm the artwork itself.

The incident occurred on June 14, 2023 when two women dipped their hands in paint and glued their hands to "The Artist's Garden at Giverny", painted by French impressionist Claude Monet in 1900 and on display at Stockholm's National Museum.

The organisation Aterstall Vatmarker ("Restore Wetlands") posted a video on Facebook at the time where the two women, one a nurse and the other a nursing student, could be seen smearing the paint and gluing their hands to the glass.

The two then shouted: "The [climate] situation is acute" and "our health is threatened".

The Orsay Museum in Paris, which owns the work, said the following day that the painting had not been damaged.

But the two women, along with four others, were charged with vandalism.

The activists acknowledged their roles in the action but denied any intention of damaging the artwork, and said the action was done out of necessity as a result of "the climate crisis," according to the court.

The activists claimed they had deliberately chosen a painting with protective glass and used paint which would be easy to remove.

In its ruling, the court found that it did not seem like the activists had intended to cause any lasting damage to the painting, even though some paint ended up on the frame.

They were thus freed of the charges and did not need to pay any damages, the court said.

Per Hedstrom, director of exhibitions at the National Museum, told AFP that it had been important that the case went to trial since even though the activists were freed the incident had led to "a lot of work" cleaning up.

Hedstrom said he could not comment on the court's reasoning but said he worried the case could lead to other similar actions.

"It's hard not to interpret this as a potential signal that it would be ok to do things like this, as long as the purpose is generally considered good," he said. – AFP

Trump vows to sign order blocking AI regulation by states

WASHINGTON, DC – US President Donald Trump said yesterday he will attempt to strip US states of the right to regulate the surging AI industry, arguing centralised rulemaking is vital to maintain US dominance.

"There must be only One Rulebook if we are going to continue to lead in AI," he posted on his Truth Social platform, announcing an executive order that would seek to prevent state-level regulation.

Trump has made a major play to position the United States at the head of the global race to build and control AI tools predicted to transform everything from the way the economy works to military technology.

However, the White House is running up against deep skepticism in Congress and within his own MAGA movement, where many voices are wary of the technology's potential economic and social harms.

They point to polls that show increasing concern about AI, especially among young people who are nervous about getting or keeping a job.

Figures within his own MAGA movement, such as strategy guru Steve Bannon, complain of Trump's closer ties to Big Tech that put the president out of touch with his political base.

The announcement that he will sign an executive order centralising AI regulation comes after Congress has twice refused to vote for allowing the overriding of state-level laws on AI.

"We are beating ALL COUNTRIES at this point in the race, but that won't last long if we are going to have 50 States,



US President Donald Trump and his wife Melania pose upon arrival for the 48th Kennedy Center Honors gala at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, on Sunday.

– AFP

many of them bad actors, involved in RULES and the APPROVAL PROCESS," Trump wrote in his post.

"THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT ABOUT THIS! AI WILL BE DESTROYED IN ITS INFANCY! I will be doing a ONE RULE Executive Order this week."

The order is likely to stir more political opposition and legal challenges even if no details are yet known about what it would say.

A draft order seen by *The Hill* last month would have created a task force dedicated to challenging state AI laws and restricted certain broadband funding for states with AI laws deemed overly burdensome.

The idea to stop states going their own way has been advanced by Trump's AI and Crypto Czar David Sacks, a Silicon Valley

insider, with the support of AI's biggest players, including OpenAI boss Sam Altman and Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang.

"State by state AI regulation would drag this industry to a halt, and it would create a national security concern as we need to make sure that United States advances AI technology as quickly as possible," Huang told reporters during a visit to US Congress last week.

Industry bosses complain that there are more than 1,000 AI-related bills currently moving through state legislatures.

"How do you cope with those varied regulations [and] compete with countries like China, which are moving fast in this technology?" Google CEO Sundar Pichai told "Fox News Sunday."

– AFP

Starmer launches Tiktok account despite ban

LONDON – Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer launched a TikTok account yesterday despite the app being banned from government devices, as he attempts to connect to younger voters.

A spokesman for his office said "security mitigations" were in place to operate the Prime Minister's account.

"Tiktok, follow me," Starmer said in the first video posted on the account which showed him with his wife at the ceremony to switch on Downing Street's Christmas lights.

The second video showed Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky embracing Starmer outside his residence at 10 Downing Street, before they joined France's President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz for talks on proposals to end the war in Ukraine.

In March 2023 London banned

the use of Tiktok on government devices over data security concerns linked to the popular video sharing app's Chinese parent company ByteDance.

Similar bans exist in many other Western countries.

Prior to that ban, an official "10 Downing Street" account was launched in May 2022 when Boris Johnson was prime minister, but it stopped posting videos just three months later.

"Restrictions on the use of the app on most government devices remain in place and there's no changes to our security policy when it comes to TikTok," Starmer's spokesman said.

The move is seen as Starmer's latest attempt to connect more directly with voters, as he and his government struggle with stubbornly low popularity ratings.

On Friday, Starmer launched a Substack newsletter where he

championed the government's measures which seek to tackle child poverty.

"Communication is changing, and I want to be a part of that... That's why I'm now on Substack," Starmer wrote on the newsletter-sharing platform popular among writers and journalists.

The government has also embraced influencers, with two personal finance content creators given front row seats at a recent press conference.

Despite concerns about data security and other issues, TikTok remains one of the world's most popular social media apps, with around 1.5 billion users worldwide and more than 30 million regular users in the United Kingdom.

Starmer joins other world leaders including Macron, US President Donald Trump and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on the platform. – AFP

Brazilian police identify suspect in Matisse theft

SÃO PAULO – Police in Brazil have identified one suspect behind the theft of eight Henri Matisse engravings from a São Paulo library and found the robbers' getaway car, authorities announced yesterday.

A pair of gunmen stole the late French master's works, as well as five pieces by the Brazilian painter Candido Portinari, from a library in the centre of the Brazilian mega-city on Sunday.

Police say the thieves held up a security guard and an elderly couple visiting the Mário de Andrade Library, grabbed the engravings and other items from a glass dome where they were kept, put them in a canvas bag and fled through the main exit.

São Paulo's security department said investigations were ongoing to identify the second suspect.

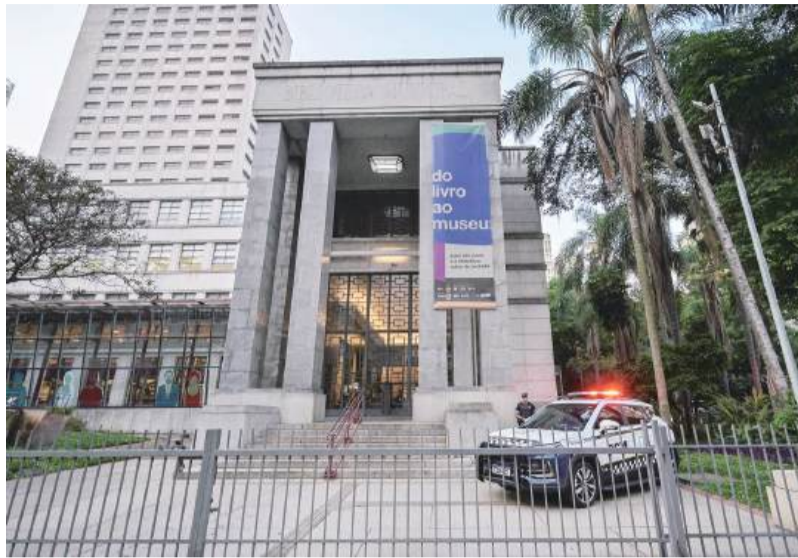
"The escape vehicle was also located" and sent for forensic analysis, it said in a statement.

Brazilian news site G1 aired a video apparently showing one of the thieves carrying several of the artworks through the street in broad daylight, then leaving them propped against a wall next to a pile of trash and running away.

São Paulo has a sophisticated surveillance system that uses security cameras and facial recognition technology.

Stolen on final day

Authorities have yet to disclose the value of the stolen pieces, which were part of a modern art exhibition entitled



A police patrol guards the Mário de Andrade Public Library in downtown São Paulo on Sunday. Eight engravings by the French artist Henri Matisse were stolen from the library earlier that day. – AFP

"From the Book to the Museum," highlighting a collaboration between the library and the Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo.

The theft came on the last day of the exhibit, which opened in October.

Newspaper Folha de São Paulo said the pieces on display included cut-paper collages from Matisse's limited-edition 1947 art book "Jazz," of which only 300 copies exist worldwide.

Works by Matisse (1869-1954), a towering figure of 20th-century modern art, can sell for millions of US dollars.

A series of around 60 of his drawings sold for more than US\$2.5 million at auction house Christie's in October, according to specialty site artnet.

The record price for a Matisse was US\$80.8 million in 2018, for his "Odalisque Couchée aux Magnolias" ("Odalisque Reclining Among the Magnolias").

The five engravings by Portinari (1903-1962), one of Brazil's most celebrated painters, were illustrations from the 1959 book "Menino de Engenho" ("Plantation Boy"), according to São Paulo city hall.

The art heist happened nearly two months after a group of thieves broke into the Louvre museum in Paris, stealing jewellery valued at around US\$100 million within a matter of minutes.

The high-profile break-in renewed focus on security protocols at museums around the world.

– AFP

Milei welcomes Argentina's first F-16 fighter jets

RÍO CUARTO, Argentina – President Javier Milei on Saturday hailed the arrival of Argentina's first six F-16 jets purchased from Denmark, describing them as "guardian angels" that will strengthen the South American country's armed forces.

The US-built aircraft are among the 24 used supersonic fighters bought last year from Copenhagen for roughly US\$300 million, an exchange Milei's government described at the time as Argentina's most important military acquisition in 50 years.

"After a long wait, I finally have behind me the first six F-16 fighter jets," Milei said on the tarmac of a military base in Rio Cuarto, some 600 kilometers west of Buenos Aires.

"Thanks to this significant investment, we will considerably strengthen our air force."

Following a ceremony, Milei boarded one of the F-16 Fighting Falcons – which had flown low over Argentina's capital before landing in Rio Cuarto – and was seen smiling in the cockpit next to his sister Karina Milei, who serves as general secretary of the presidency, and Defence Minister Luis Petri.

"Hundreds of thousands of Argentines were able to look up and see their guardian angels in the sky for the first time," the president said.

When the sale was announced in April 2024, Argentina's defence ministry said the modernised Danish

F-16s would form "the backbone of Argentina's air defence system."

They replace Argentina's French Mirage jets, the last of which were retired in 2017 after four decades of service.

The US administration of President Donald Trump, a Milei ally, approved the transfer of F-16s.

The US Embassy in Buenos Aires said in a statement on Saturday that Argentina's jet acquisition marks "a major step in the country's efforts to modernise its air capabilities and deepen defence cooperation with the United States."

It said the delivery was the first of four batches, with six additional aircraft to be delivered to Argentina each December through 2028. – AFP

Venezuela swears in 5,600 troops after US military build-up

CARACAS – The Venezuelan army swore in 5,600 soldiers on Saturday, as the United States cranks up military pressure on the oil-producing country.

President Nicolás Maduro has called for stepped-up military recruitment after the United States deployed a fleet of warships and the world's largest aircraft carrier to the Caribbean under the pretext of

combating drug trafficking.

US forces have carried out deadly strikes on more than 20 vessels, killing at least 87.

Washington has accused Maduro of leading the alleged "Cartel of the Suns", which it declared a terrorist organisation last month.

Maduro asserts the American deployment aims to overthrow him and seize the country's oil reserves.

"Under no circumstances will we allow an invasion by an imperialist force," Colonel Gabriel Rondón said on Saturday during a ceremony at Fuerte Tiuna, Venezuela's largest military complex, in Caracas.

According to official figures, Venezuela has around 200,000 troops and an additional 200,000 police officers.

– AFP

Bolsonaro son says could drop his presidential bid

BRASÍLIA – Brazilian Senator Flávio Bolsonaro said on Sunday he could abandon his presidential aspirations for a "price," and suggested amnesty be granted to his father, the imprisoned far-right former leader Jair Bolsonaro.

The ex-president's eldest son announced on Friday that his father, who is serving a 27-year sentence for plotting a coup and is banned from public office, has chosen him to lead the country's powerful conservative movement, shaking up the 2026 election race.

But suddenly Flávio Bolsonaro announced on Sunday that he was willing to "negotiate" a possible withdrawal of his own candidacy.

"It is possible that I won't go through with it until the end. I have a price for that. I'm going to negotiate," he told reporters outside an evangelical church in Brasília.

The 44-year-old said he would provide more details this week during a meeting with conservative leaders, but the comments nevertheless are likely to draw questions from both within and outside the movement.

Jair Bolsonaro's supporters in Congress have been trying to pass a bill that would pave the way for amnesty for the former president and his supporters convicted for the January 2023 assault on

government buildings in Brasília.

The former president's wife Michelle Bolsonaro, whose name has been floated as a possible candidate from the conservative camp, has thrown her support behind her stepson Flávio.

But his anointment by his father has been given a cool reception by the conservative establishment in Brazil, which had its sights set on Tarcísio de Freitas, the governor of São Paulo, the country's economic heartland.

São Paulo's major stock exchange suffered its sharpest drop in four years on Friday following the announcement of Bolsonaro's political heir.

But Flávio, seen as a hardliner on law-and-order issues and a loyal supporter of his father, suggested he was prepared to lean toward the middle.

"You are going to discover a different Bolsonaro, a much more centrist Bolsonaro," added the senator, who is considered more moderate than his father.

Flávio claimed to have secured the support of Freitas, and denied any "fragmentation" on the Brazilian right.

Other figures in the conservative camp meanwhile are maintaining their presidential aspirations for next year. – AFP



Brazilian senator and son of former president Jair Bolsonaro, Flávio Bolsonaro, speaks with reporters after attending an evangelical service in Brasília on Sunday. – AFP

Wave kills 4 in Tenerife

MADRID – Four people died in Tenerife over the weekend and one remained missing after a wave swept away bathers on the Spanish tourist island hotspot, according to the authorities.

Two of the victims were Romanians and two were Slovaks, their respective governments said. Two men and a woman died on Sunday after visiting a section of coastline closed to the public because of the strong swell affecting the Canary Islands archipelago off the coast of northwest Africa, the authorities told the local press.

Rescuers managed to resuscitate a fourth victim who had suffered a heart attack, but the woman died in a hospital in Santa Cruz de Tenerife yesterday, the

emergency services said.

Another person was still in hospital, while the authorities were searching for another missing person, a spokesperson for the emergency services said.

Slovakia's foreign ministry said in a statement it "has been informed of the death of two Slovak citizens" in the incident, while Bucharest first confirmed the death of one citizen, and later that of the second.

With waves reaching 2.0 to 3.5 metres expected around the Atlantic archipelago, the Canary Islands' regional government had issued a warning for rough seas at the weekend.

Many tourists had travelled to the Canaries as yesterday was a public holiday in Spain. – AFP

Fracturing Real Madrid need Mbappe magic in Haaland showdown

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
MADRID – Real Madrid desperately need superstar Kylian Mbappe at his magical best tomorrow in a pivotal Champions League clash against Manchester City and unstoppable striker Erling Haaland.

After just two victories in seven matches, fractures have emerged in Xabi Alonso's Madrid project, with some Spanish media reporting a defeat against City could lead to a premature dismissal.

So often this season Madrid have underwhelmed but been rescued by Mbappe's lethal brilliance, scoring 25 goals in 21 games to lead the scoring charts both in Spain and in the Champions League.

Pep Guardiola's City are spearheaded by Norwegian international Haaland, who has 20 goals in 20 games across all competitions and, along with Bayern Munich's Harry Kane, is Mbappe's only rival as the standout star of the current season.

The pair have also been drawn against each other at next summer's World Cup in the United States, with Mbappe's France to face Haaland's Norway on June 26 in Foxborough, Massachusetts.

The first chapter of that battle will be played out at the Bernabeu, where former Barcelona coach Guardiola would relish being able to add to Madrid's misery.

This season City are structured around Haaland, playing to the forward's strengths and aiming for the majority of their moves to end with the ball at his feet in front of goal.

What structure Alonso tried to impart at Madrid has crumbled away amid a tussle for power with the players, although Mbappe's quality has made him their key figure.

"The team is a flat, uninspired group clustered around Mbappe, whose goals merely mask the crisis," wrote Spanish newspaper AS on Sunday after a 2-0 home defeat by Celta Vigo.

"If he takes a day off, there's no alternative."

Mbappe has been Madrid's one constant this season, thriving when the team was doing well during a run of 13 wins from 14 matches, but also in recent weeks amid their struggles.

After a slow start to life in Spain following his move from Paris Saint-Germain in the summer of 2024, Mbappe found his top gear in the second half of last season.

In 2025 he has scored 55 goals for his club, four short of the 2013 record of 59 set by Cristiano Ronaldo, his childhood idol and Real Madrid's all-time top goalscorer.

Splintering Madrid

Mbappe has emerged as a unifying force at Madrid, even as the team splinters around him.

Alonso arrived aiming to impose himself as a coach cut from a different mould than Carlo Ancelotti and Zinedine Zidane before him, considered excellent man-managers, but with less of a tactical and technical focus.

With Mbappe as his only untouchable outfielder, Alonso started the season by rotating Vinicius Junior with Rodrygo Goes and Dani Carvajal with Trent Alexander-Arnold, constantly shuffling his pack.

Jude Bellingham was sidelined after shoulder surgery and Arda Guler was thriving in midfield.

The team ground out results but discontent among some star players grew, coming to a head with Vinicius' fit of rage after being substituted in the Clasico in October, which Madrid won.

Bellingham's return from injury further forced Alonso's hand over selection, along with Fede Valverde's reticence to play out of position at right-back.

A string of away matches, in part because the club were hosting an NFL game at the Bernabeu, contributed to their recent slump as the signs of Alonso's ideas about pressing have diminished and the big-name players start every match.

After a 1-1 draw at Girona at the end of November Mbappe called on the team to "show who we are" and "change this dynamic".

"It's not just about goals for Kylian... but he does other hugely fundamental things like leadership, influence, helping his team-mates, and that's so important day to day," said Alonso, appreciating the calls for unity from Mbappe.

Madrid thrashed Athletic Bilbao 3-0 last week, with the result an outlier in their recent form, with AS claiming the players were particularly motivated by the promise of two days off for a victory.

Those days, taken ahead of the defeat by Celta, may have contributed towards the defeat - which could have finished in a draw if Mbappe's lob had fallen under the crossbar rather than just over it, with the Galicians leading by a single goal.

It was a question of millimetres, but would again have been a case of Mbappe papering over the deepening cracks. And yet against the might of City and Haaland, in the eye of the storm, for Alonso even that would do.

The Champions League game will be played at 4 a.m. Thursday morning Macau time.

– AFP/MPD

Salah dropped by Liverpool for Inter Milan clash after outburst



LONDON – Mohamed Salah has been dropped from Liverpool's squad for their Champions League tie at Inter Milan after the Egypt star's extraordinary criticism of his treatment by boss Arne Slot.

Salah was not included in the squad announced by Liverpool yesterday despite being seen smiling when he trained with the first team earlier in the day.

Salah said on Saturday he felt like he had been "thrown under the bus" by Liverpool and that he no longer had a relationship with Slot after he was left on the bench for the third consecutive game in a 3-3 draw against Leeds.

In the midst of a dismal season by his high standards, the 33-year-old was not even used as a substitute at Elland Road.

"I said many times before that I had a good relationship with the manager, and all of a sudden we don't have any relationship," Salah told reporters at the weekend in response to being left on the bench again.

"I don't know why but it seems to me, how I see it, that someone doesn't want me in the club."

"It seems like the club has thrown me under the bus. That is how I am feeling. I think it is very clear that someone wanted me to get all of the blame."

It was reported that Salah's removal from the squad for the trip to Italy was taken with the full support of Slot, but it is believed no formal disciplinary action has been taken against him by the club.

Salah's exile is said to be in the best interests of all parties involved, with a brief period away from selection seen as the correct response given the nature and timing of his comments.

Salah's incendiary blast has sparked speculation that Liverpool will consider selling him in the January transfer window.



Liverpool's Hungarian midfielder Dominik Szoboszlai (left) and Liverpool's Egyptian striker Mohamed Salah attend a team training session at their training ground in Kirkby, Liverpool, north-west England yesterday, on the eve of their UEFA Champions League, league phase football match against Inter Milan in Milan. – AFP

The forward has repeatedly been linked with a move to the Saudi Pro League over the last two years.

After next weekend's home match against Brighton in the Premier League, Salah is set to depart for the Africa Cup of Nations.

Shadow of his former self

Salah, who signed from Roma in 2017, is Liverpool's third-highest goalscorer of all time with 250 goals in 420 appearances for the club.

He is the club's highest-paid player in history, having signed a new contract in April, and played a key role in Liverpool's two Premier League titles and one Champions League triumph during his iconic spell on Merseyside.

But Salah has been a shadow of his former self during Liverpool's struggles this season - the Premier League champions are now ninth in the table - with just four goals in 13 top-flight appearances.

He was dropped from the starting line-up for Champions League games against Galatasaray and Eintracht Frankfurt earlier this season in the first indication that Slot was growing frustrated with his poor form and lack of defensive effort.

Salah's last Liverpool start was in a 4-1 defeat by PSV Eindhoven on November 26, while he is without a goal since netting against Aston Villa at the start of November.

His astonishing outburst risked undermining Slot's authority at a time when he is trying to drag the team out of a slump which has seen them win just four of the last 15 matches.

Salah's absence also adds to Slot's problems on the pitch as Cody Gakpo, Federico Chiesa and Wataru Endo have also not travelled due to fitness issues.

As a result, Slot was only able to take a reduced 19-man squad on the flight to Milan.

– AFP



Union's Dutch goalkeeper Kjell Scherpen catches the ball during a training session yesterday on the eve of the UEFA Champions League match against Olympique de Marseille. The game will be played at 4 a.m. tomorrow morning Macau time. – AFP

3 things to watch ahead of the 2026 F1 season

F1

ABU DHABI – Lando Norris's success with McLaren in ending Max Verstappen's four-year reign as world champion on Sunday ushered in a winter of radical change for Formula One.

The 26-year-old Briton's title win at the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix came in the final race before new cars and technical changes arrive in 2026 - and signalled an end to a "winning by any means" culture in the sport.

AFP Sport looks at three things to watch going into next season:

Can Norris stick to doing it his way?

Norris said he won the title his way and with a team that respected its own "papaya rules" of equality under immense pressure.

His triumph prompted a wave of emotion not only for his win, but the way in which he won and then managed the impact of the occasion.

"I feel like I have managed to win it the way I wanted to win it, which was not by being someone

I'm not. Not trying to be as aggressive as Max or as forceful as other champions might have been in the past - whatever it may be.

"My style [is] of just trying to be a good person and a good team member."

Even Verstappen, seen by many as a natural heir to Ayrton Senna and Michael Schumacher, uncompromising in taking a "killer" approach to the job, as 1996 champion Damon Hill described it, softened his style this year.

The departure from Red Bull of long-serving and successful team boss Christian Horner created a less divisive atmosphere in the paddock too with respect for McLaren's onus on fair racing without team orders setting a new trend for the future.

"I'm not proud because I get to say I am a world champion," added Norris. "I'm proud because I feel like I made a lot of people happy."

His team-mate Oscar Piastri showed total respect for McLaren's rulebook during the season, even if

he was at times exasperated by his ill fortune, and he will be a strong rival again in 2026 with new teams, cars, rules and line-ups.

Mercedes favoured to be strong with new engine

Mercedes have been tipped to set the pace next season having developed a new power-unit that many of their rivals believe will launch their recovery as a leading team.

The team have been developing and testing for a long period with major investment in the project and expect Kimi Antonelli, who shone in many parts of his rookie season, to rise and challenge George Russell.

The cars will be lighter, smaller and more agile under the new regulations with the weight reduced by 30 kilos. They will also be shorter and slimmer.

Mercedes will supply their own factory team and also McLaren, Williams and Alpine, while Red Bull and sister team Racing Bulls will run Red Bull Powertrains, their own development following the break from Honda.

Ferrari will run their own engines as always and will continue to supply Haas and power the new Cadillac team.

Audi hope to join as serious contenders

After a mixed 2025 season ended with one podium, but only



World champion and race third-placed McLaren's British driver Lando Norris (centre) celebrates with his team at the end of the Abu Dhabi Formula One Grand Prix at the Yas Marina Circuit in Abu Dhabi on Sunday. – AFP

70 points, Audi - formerly Sauber - hope to become a serious midfield contender in 2026. They finished ninth ahead only of Alpine in the season just gone.

Audi will have an unchanged driver line-up of Nico Hulkenberg, who started his 250th Grand Prix on Sunday, and Gabriel Bortoleto, while new boys Cadillac, bringing in much American cash and colour with the backing of GM, will rely on the experience of Valtteri Bottas and Sergio Perez.

Verstappen will have a new Red Bull team-mate after the promotion

of Isack Hadjar from Racing Bulls, following an outstanding rookie season. His seat will be taken by 18-year-old Briton Arvid Lindblad alongside Liam Lawson.

The era-ending switch to new cars was welcomed by many drivers, but notably by seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton after a dismal debut season at Ferrari. Of his record 105 wins, only two have come since the end of 2021. Team-mate Charles Leclerc said the team, without a drivers' title since 2007, faced a "now or never" moment this winter.

– AFP

SEA Games to open in Thailand after chaotic build-up



Matt Surrusco
BANGKOK

The Southeast Asian Games officially open in Bangkok today against a backdrop of chaotic organisation and with fresh border clashes between Thailand and Cambodia threatening to overshadow the sporting showpiece.

The SEA Games run until December 20 in Bangkok and the nearby coastal province of Chonburi, with thousands of athletes from 11 southeast Asian countries competing in events ranging from football and fencing to skateboarding, sailing and combat sports.

They include world-class performers such as Olympic weightlifting gold medallists Hidilyn Diaz of the Philippines and Rizki Juniansyah of Indonesia, and Thailand's badminton silver medallist Kunlavut Vitidsarn.

Organisers have been criticised for some embarrassing stumbles even before the opening ceremony takes place at the Rajamangala National Stadium in Bangkok today.

On the first day of sporting events last week, national anthems failed to play before a men's football match between Vietnam and Laos, leaving the athletes and coaches singing without music.

The head of Thailand's Sports Authority, a SEA Games organiser, blamed an audio system glitch and issued an apology, according to local media.

Thailand then played East Timor in a largely empty stadium after Thai football fans boycotted the match because of ticket rules requiring registration with ID and disquiet over their seating allocation.

Authorities said the registration is necessary because of security and it will continue.

Controversy and tumult

Deadly flooding in the south of Thailand last month forced a late relocation of a dozen sports from hard-hit Songkhla province.

Cambodia, involved in fresh border clashes with Thailand yesterday, last month withdrew about half of their athletes, citing safety concerns.

They pulled out of eight events including football, wrestling, judo, karate and petanque - the French-origin boules game in which Thailand tops the world rankings.

Despite criticism on social media and from sports fans, Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, who took office in September, defended his government's efforts in staging the Games, noting the last-minute venue changes because of the flooding and fresh costs.

Sports Authority governor Gongsak Yodmani admitted in an interview with local media last week that a tight budget and the government transition had disrupted preparations.

"The opening ceremony might not be as grand, but it will be elegant and dignified," he said.

Thailand is hosting the SEA Games, which take place every two years, for the first time since 2007. They were first held in Bangkok in 1959.

The SEA Games are known for inclusion of non-Olympic sports from the region such sepak takraw, foot volleyball played with a rattan ball and pencak silat, a martial art popular in Indonesia.

Controversy and tumult at the Games are nothing new.

The previous edition, held in Cambodia in 2023, ended in chaos when Indonesia beat Thailand in a men's football final that featured seven goals, four red cards and two mass brawls. – AFP



New Zealand's Daryl Mitchell (left) reacts as West Indies' Justin Greaves (right) plays a shot during day five of the first Test match between New Zealand and West Indies at Hagley Oval in Christchurch on Saturday. A double-century from Greaves has led the West Indies to a historic draw in the first test against New Zealand in Christchurch. – AFP

Joint National Games for Persons with Disabilities, Special Olympic Games in GBA opens



GUANGZHOU

– A total of 7,824 athletes from 34 delegations have registered for China's 12th National Games for Persons with Disabilities and the 9th National Special Olympic Games, with the main competition schedule beginning today across Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao.

It is the first time the two events have been jointly hosted by the three regions of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. The Games feature 1,876 events across 46 sports, with competitions in six winter sports having already been completed. The program includes 131 events in 11 mass-participation sports and 599 events across nine

Special Olympics sports.

Venues are spread across Hong Kong, Macao and nine cities in Guangdong Province. Guangdong will host competitions in 34 sports. Hong Kong will stage boccia, wheelchair fencing, para table tennis (TT11) and Special Olympics table tennis, while Macao will host badminton for both Games.

The organizing committee said more than 11,000 athletes, coaches, referees and staff from across the county are taking part from December 8 to 15.

Volunteer services have been fully deployed, offering guidance, sign-language interpretation and other assistance for athletes and spectators. Around 45,000 volunteers are supporting the Games in Guangdong alone.

Under the slogan "Passionate National Games, Vibrant Greater Bay Area," the Games are also being used to promote innovation in assistive technologies. A range of advanced products will be put into use during competition, helping move technologies from laboratories into real-world testing and market application.

Chen Xuejun, deputy secretary general of the organizing committee, said the Games provide an opportunity to better integrate disability services into broader social development.

"We aim for higher-quality and more sustainable progress, so that people with disabilities can look forward to a brighter future," Chen said. – Xinhua

Paramount counters Netflix with hostile bid for Warner Bros

Alex Pigman

WASHINGTON, DC – Paramount launched an all-cash tender offer yesterday to acquire Warner Bros. Discovery (WBD) for US\$30 per share, challenging a previously announced deal between WBD and Netflix.

The hostile offer sets up a furious battle between Paramount – whose owner Larry Ellison is an ally of Donald Trump – and streaming behemoth Netflix to buy one of Hollywood’s most storied studios.

Netflix shocked the industry last week by announcing it had sealed an agreement to buy the Warner Bros. studio, drawing bitter reactions from voices in Hollywood worried about the future of their industry.

Trump weighed in on Sunday, saying Netflix’s effort to acquire Warner Bros. “could be a problem” as it would be left with a huge market share of the film and TV industry.

“We’re really here to finish what we started,” David Ellison, chairman and CEO of Paramount, told CNBC as his company made a sixth offer for Warner Bros since the bidding war began.

Unlike Netflix’s offer, Paramount’s latest bid includes cable channels such as CNN, TNT, TBS, and Discovery.

It would put the properties under the ownership of a company with close ties to the Trump administration.

The offer values the entertainment giant at US\$108.4 billion and represents a 139 percent premium over WBD’s September stock price of US\$12.54, when the bidding war began.

Paramount in a statement called Netflix’s bid, which values Warner

Bros. studios at nearly US\$83 billion, “inferior and uncertain.”

“WBD shareholders deserve an opportunity to consider our superior all-cash offer,” Ellison said.

Over the decades, Warner Brothers has produced film classics including “Casablanca” and “Citizen Kane,” as well as more recent blockbuster shows including “The Sopranos,” “Game of Thrones”, and the “Harry Potter” movies.

Paramount argued its deal provides greater regulatory certainty than the Netflix transaction, which it said would give Netflix a 43 percent share of global streaming subscribers and face “protracted regulatory challenges across the world.”

The combined company would unite Paramount’s portfolio – including Paramount Pictures, CBS, Nickelodeon and Paramount+ – with WBD’s assets including HBO Max and major sports rights.

Paramount said the merger would generate over US\$6 billion in cost savings while maintaining theatrical releases and increased content spending.

Keeping movies in cinemas is a very sensitive issue for the creative industry in Hollywood.

Netflix is already viewed negatively in some Hollywood circles, largely due to its reluctance to release content in cinemas and its disruption of traditional industry practices.

Many industry veterans consider theatrical releases essential to cinema’s appeal and prestige, and also integral to keeping a healthy Hollywood economy.

Warner Bros. Discovery’s share price skyrocketed by more than seven percent yesterday while shares in Netflix fell by over two percent.



The Paramount logo is displayed on screen during the Paramount Pictures presentation at The Colosseum at Caesars Palace at CinemaCon 2025 in Las Vegas, Nevada, on April 3, 2025. – AFP

‘One Battle After Another’ leads Golden Globes nominations with nine

Paula Ramon

LOS ANGELES – Paul Thomas Anderson’s politically charged “One Battle After Another” leads the nominations for the Golden Globes with nine, organisers announced yesterday, as the race to the Oscars kicked into high gear.

Norwegian family dramedy “Sentimental Value” was second with eight, followed by period horror movie “Sinners” with seven and Shakespeare family drama “Hamnet” with six.

“Wicked: For Good” ended up with five nominations – a disappointing showing for the smash hit musical, which failed to secure a nod for best musical/comedy.

The Globes, set for January 11, are widely seen as a bellwether for the Academy Awards.

The Golden Globes offer separate awards for dramas and comedies/musicals – widening the field of stars who could walk the red carpet, and fuelling the suspense.

“One Battle After Another,” which centres on an aging revolutionary (Leonardo DiCaprio) and his teenage daughter (Chase Infiniti), leads the contenders in the comedy/musical categories.

The film is a rollicking ride featuring leftist radical violence, immigration raids, and white supremacists.

It won a pile of nominations, including best comedy/musical picture, best director and five acting nods: DiCaprio, Infiniti, Sean Penn, Benicio Del Toro, and Teyana Taylor.

“Sentimental Value,” a moving story of a fractured family, won nominations for Swedish legend Stellan Skarsgard and co-star Renate Reinsve.

It is one of several foreign language films to gain traction in the main categories, along with Brazil’s “The Secret Agent” and South Korea’s “No Other Choice.”

“Wicked: For Good” – the blockbuster conclusion of the film adaptation of the hit Broadway musical – won nominations for Ariana Grande, as the bubbly pink-clad Glinda, and Tony winner Cynthia Erivo, as the green-skinned Elphaba.



Golden Globes President Helen Hoehne poses next to an oversized Golden Globe during the nominations announcement event for the 83rd Golden Globe Awards in Beverly Hills, California, yesterday. The 83rd Golden Globe Awards will take place on January 11. – AFP

It also earned two nods for best original song, but failed to make the best picture short list.

Variety chief awards editor Clayton Davis predicted before yesterday’s announcement that the best actress categories for the Globes would be a “Murderers’ Row” of worthy candidates – and indeed, they are.

The women up for comedy-musical lead acting honours include Oscar winner Emma Stone (“Bugonia”), Erivo, Rose Byrne (“If I Had Legs, I’d Kick You”), Kate Hudson (“Song Sung Blue”), Amanda Seyfried (“The Testament of Ann Lee”), and newcomer Infiniti.

On the drama side, past Oscar winners Jennifer Lawrence (“Die, My Love”) and Julia Roberts (“After the Hunt”) will do battle with Jessie Buckley (“Hamnet”), Reinsve, Tessa Thompson (“Hedda”) and Eva Victor (“Sorry, Baby”).

Each main category will have six nominees, not five as in past years.

‘Sentimental Value,’ ‘Sinners’ lead dramas

On the drama side, beyond the leader “Sentimental Value,” the top contenders all delve into the past.

“Sinners,” from “Black Panther” director Ryan Coogler, stars Michael B. Jordan as twins in the criminal underworld who encounter a sinister force as they return home to racially segregated Mississippi in the 1930s.

The film was a runaway box

office success, and both Coogler and Jordan secured nominations. It led the nods for the Critics Choice Awards on Friday with 17.

“It has so much going for it – it’s a big moneymaker, it was a culturally significant hit,” explained Davis.

“Hamnet,” from Oscar-winning director Chloe Zhao, stars Paul Mescal as William Shakespeare, who tries to forge a career as a playwright while his wife Agnes – played by Buckley – contends with the perils of plague and childbirth in Elizabethan England.

Both stars earned nominations, along with Zhao.

Guillermo Del Toro’s adaptation of “Frankenstein” earned five nominations including one for Jacob Elordi as the iconic monster.

Oscar nominations are due on January 22, so the picks for the Globes will begin to map the road to the Academy Awards.

The Globes also honour the best in television, with HBO’s black comedy anthology “The White Lotus,” sci-fi office thriller “Severance” and searing teen murder saga “Adolescence” leading the contenders.

Last year’s Globes gala hosted by comedian Nikki Glaser was a hit with audiences, with more than 10 million tuning in.

Glaser will return as host of the January 11 gala in Beverly Hills.

– AFP

‘Five Nights at Freddy’s’ sequel slashes to top of box office

LOS ANGELES – Horror video-game movie “Five Nights at Freddy’s 2” proved jump scares can still rake in the cash with a debut that ruled North American cinemas, industry estimates showed on Sunday.

The second film in Universal’s “Freddy’s” franchise – about animatronic characters at a pizza shop, the tween girl (Piper Rubio) who befriends them, and the murderous if cheesy events that follow – brought in US\$63 million in the Friday-through-Sunday period, Exhibitor Relations reported.

It earned another US\$46 million internationally.

“Critics’ reviews are poor, but

the genre is immune to reviews,” said David A. Gross of Franchise Entertainment Research.

“The audience score is more important, and it’s very good for a horror picture, although not as good as the first pic.”

Sliding to second spot was another sequel, Disney’s feel-good animated film “Zootopia 2.”

The buddy cop comedy featuring a menagerie of talking animals battling stereotypes earned US\$43 million, for a two-week total of US\$220 million and a worldwide haul nearing the US\$1 billion mark.

Dropping one spot to third place, with US\$16.8 million in its third weekend, was “Wicked:

For Good,” Universal’s second chapter in the musical saga of Oz’s most notable witches – the green-skinned, outcast Elphaba (Cynthia Erivo) and popular pink-wearing Glinda (Ariana Grande).

The “Wizard of Oz” retelling is based on the long-running Broadway musical, itself adapted from Gregory Maguire’s 1995 novel.

“JUJUTSU KAISEN: Execution” landed in fourth spot in its debut. The anime-based tale of violent sorcery released by GKIDS earned \$10.2 million.

In fifth with US\$3.5 million was Lionsgate’s “Now You See Me: Now You Don’t,” the third instalment in the crime heist franchise.

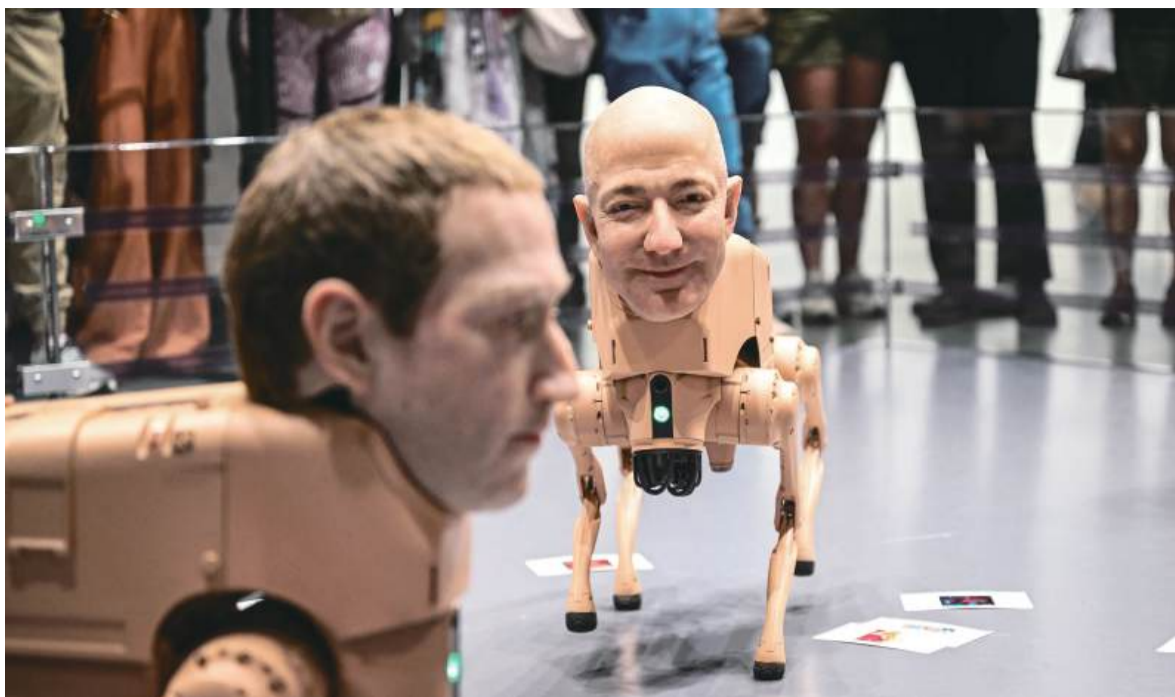
– AFP

World Weather			
CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing -5°C~7°C	Manila 23°C~32°C	New York 1°C~2°C	Lisbon 11°C~17°C
Shanghai 8°C~17°C	Bangkok 20°C~32°C	London 9°C~15°C	Rio de Janeiro 25°C~31°C
Hong Kong 18°C~23°C	Tokyo 1°C~12°C	Frankfurt 5°C~12°C	Luanda 23°C~29°C
Taipei 17°C~23°C	Singapore 23°C~32°C	Vancouver 7°C~10°C	Maputo 21°C~35°C
Guangzhou 16°C~25°C	Kuala Lumpur 23°C~32°C	Paris 11°C~15°C	Dili 24°C~30°C
Nanjing 5°C~17°C	Jakarta 23°C~32°C	Moscow 0°C~1°C	São Tomé 25°C~29°C
Guilin 9°C~22°C	Seoul -1°C~8°C	Las Vegas 8°C~20°C	Praia 20°C~27°C
Xi'an 2°C~13°C	Sydney 20°C~31°C	Monte Carlo 9°C~16°C	Bissau 18°C~33°C



Let me go!!!!

A member of the Budapest Zoo and Botanical Garden's care team holds a three-month-old tiger that was seized by the police to examine and vaccinate the animal at the zoo's clinic in Budapest, Hungary, yesterday. The police came across the illegally kept cub during a drug-related investigation. — AFP



Disservice to dogs

Wax heads of Mark Zuckerberg (front) and Jeff Bezos are seen on robot dogs as a part of an art installation called "Regular Animals" by digital artist Mike Winkelmann, also known as Beeple, during Art Basel 2025 at Miami Beach Convention Center in Miami Beach, Florida, on Sunday. — AFP



Evolution of a move

This photograph shows an art installation in Louis-Pradel square as a tribute to 40 years of skateboarding in Lyon created by visual artist Remy Bergeron during a preview of the annual edition of the "Fetes des Lumieres" (Festival of Lights) in Lyon, central eastern France on Thursday. — AFP



Perfect afternoon tea!

Cream cakes are prepared to be served to ballroom dancers during an afternoon Tea Dance in St Helens Town Hall, in St Helens, north west England on July 16. Tea dances, which evolved from the tradition of afternoon tea in the late 19th century, are enjoying a revival, especially since the pandemic. Often cited as an effective way to combat loneliness, the dances are also attributed to improving the participants' mental and physical health. Frequently hosted in Victorian and Edwardian-era halls, tea dances typically offer a mixture of ballroom and sequence dancing styles and feature refreshments of tea, coffee and cakes. — AFP



Cleaning out the evil

So-called 'Baerbele' women wear masks made of natural materials as they take part in the traditional 'Baerbele walk' in Sonthofen, southern Germany, on Thursday. During the Baerbele tradition in the Allgau region, southern Germany, unmarried women dress up with masks and rags on Saint Barbara's Day, adorned with bells they walk from house to house. — AFP



Early start

A performer dressed as Santa Claus greets visitors as he rides his sleigh with reindeer over a traditional Christmas market in Berlin, Germany, yesterday. — AFP