

MORS contest aims to upgrade tourism & gastronomy skills: UTM rector

Armando Neves

The Macao University of Tourism (UTM) hosted an award ceremony yesterday named “Macao Occupational Skills Recognition System (MORS) Gold Pin Competition Award Presentation Ceremony” and, according to UTM Rector Fanny Vong Chuk Kwan, the annual contest aims to drive the further advancement of the tourism and gastronomy industries.

The two-hour ceremony was held at The Parisian in Cotai.

According to a UTM statement, the competition attracted around 500 participants from 51 enterprises, competing across 12 skill categories including Western chef, bartender, and tea master. A total of 35 outstanding contestants were selected as winners, the statements said.

The statement also said that the top performers in the four categories of Front Desk Agent, Room Attendant, Western Restaurant Waiter/Waitress, and Western Cook/Chef will also each receive an international cert issued by the American Hotel & Lodging Association Educational Institute (AHLEI).

Vong said in her speech that this year’s competition covered 12 skill categories, showcasing the diverse expertise within the cultural tourism and gastronomy industries. MORS



Macao University of Tourism (UTM) Rector Fanny Vong Chuk Kwan addresses yesterday’s award ceremony at The Parisian in Cotai. – Photo courtesy of UTM

continues to align with Chinese mainland and international standards, she said.

According to Vong, for instance, the Tea Master qualification has achieved mutual recognition, while certifications like Barista have been incorporated into the “One Examination, Multiple Certification” framework, facilitating

regional talent mobility. She underlined that Macau trainees have won awards in the 2025 Guangdong Provincial Barista Vocational Skills Competition, demonstrating the effectiveness of these standards,

“Moving forward, our efforts will keep focus on deepening collaboration to cultivate

professionals with an international perspective and drive continuous advancement of the tourism and gastronomy industries”, Vong said.

In his speech, Macao Hotel Employees Association Chairman Lei Pou Loi said that MORS has set standards for 20 tourism-related occupations and is cultivating industry professionals through skills competitions and international certification. These standards are being promoted across the Greater Bay Area (GBA) through Guangdong-Macao cooperation, aiming to set a regional service benchmark, he said.

Lei also said that MORS not only aligns with Macau’s development positioning as “One Centre, One Platform, One Base”*, but also strives to enhance the overall image of the tourism industry and the professional level of its practitioners, contributing to Macau’s development as a Centre for World Tourism and Leisure. ■

* “One Centre, One Platform, One Base” is the local government’s strategic development blueprint for Macau – a World Centre of Tourism and Leisure; a Commercial and Trade Cooperation Service Platform between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (PSCs); a Base for Exchange and Cooperation with Chinese Culture as the Mainstream and Coexistence of Diverse Cultures. – DeepSeek



Shoppers visit a Christmas market in Shanghai’s Huangpu district yesterday. – AFP

US judge orders unsealing of more grand jury records in Epstein case

NEW YORK – A US federal judge yesterday ordered the unsealing of grand jury records on Jeffrey Epstein, in the latest move by a court to release documents related to the convicted sex offender.

The decision by New York Judge Richard Berman concerns proceedings launched against the disgraced financier in July 2019, the most serious case against him for the sexual exploitation of minors.

Those proceedings were cut short after Epstein’s suicide in prison in August that year during pre-trial detention.

Such records are generally kept secret, but the judge cited a bill that President Donald Trump signed last month requiring that the US Justice Department release by December 19 all unclassified records regarding Epstein, whose transgressions

remain politically explosive in the United States.

On Tuesday, another federal judge agreed to unseal grand jury records from the probe of Epstein accomplice Ghislaine Maxwell, who is serving a 20-year prison sentence for offenses including sex trafficking of a minor.

And on Friday, a judge in Florida ordered the release of grand jury transcripts from the investigation of Epstein in that state. Epstein pleaded guilty in Florida in 2008 to a state charge of soliciting a minor for prostitution.

There is no guarantee that the new documents will contain new revelations, and it remains unclear exactly when, and how, the US Justice Department will release all the documents to the public. – AFP

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The Macau Post Daily

China calls on all peace-loving countries to thwart any dangerous moves of reviving Japanese militarism: FM spokesperson

– Story on p. 7

Veggie ‘burgers’ remain on table as EU talks stall

EU wrangling over whether to give plant-based “sausages” and veggie “burgers” the chop and restrict such labels to meat products will grind on into next year after countries and lawmakers failed to reach a deal yesterday. – Story on p. 11

Brazilian lawmakers approve bill to cut Bolsonaro sentence after ruckus

Brazil’s lower house of Congress approved a bill yesterday that could slash former president Jair Bolsonaro’s prison sentence for plotting a coup, after efforts by a lawmaker to disrupt the proceedings sparked chaos in parliament. – Story on p. 12

Observatory launches feels-like temperature indicator, temperature drop alert

Armindo Neves

The Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) announced in a statement yesterday that in order to further enhance its temperature-related information services, it has introduced a “temperature drop alert” and “feels-like temperature” indicator.

According to the statement, the “temperature drop alert” primarily targets Macau’s autumn and winter climate patterns.

When a significant or substantially significant drop in temperature is forecast, the weather station said that it will issue the temperature drop alert in advance, according to the statement. The new service, the bureau said, aims to provide the

public with more comprehensive, diverse, and timely meteorological information, enabling them to take appropriate preventions ahead of time and mitigate the health impacts associated with sharply falling temperatures.

In the statement, the bureau also said that the “feels-like temperature” indicator will provide the public with real-time weather information that is closer to what they actually feel. The indicator, the statement said, combines real-time meteorological factors such as temperature, humidity and wind speed to calculate the typically perceived weather conditions for a person outdoors.

Based on the information, according to the statement,

members of the public can adjust their clothing and activity plans accordingly. Whether for daily commuting, outdoor work, or leisure activities, citizens can access more practical weather references through these two new features, further enhancing their “quality of life”, the statement said.

As of yesterday, the new alert and indicator were only available in Chinese and Portuguese. There was no announcement about whether and when both new features will be available in English as well, considering that tourism is one of Macau’s main breadwinners, based on its officially declared aim of becoming a World Centre of Tourism and Leisure. ■



This image provided by the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) yesterday shows its new “temperature drop alert” and “feels-like temperature” indicator.

Police nab local man for evasion of responsibility

Ada Lei

The Public Security Police (PSP) apprehended a local man on Saturday for his alleged crime of evasion of responsibility, PSP spokeswoman Cheong Im Sim said during a regular press conference yesterday.

The spokeswoman identified the suspect as a self-employed man surnamed Cheong who is in his seventies.

According to the spokeswoman, the Public Security Police (PSP) received a report last Thursday from a citizen who said that she had parked her motorbike in a parking space on Rua de Entre-Campos (田畔街) in Macau Peninsula on December 1. Upon returning to retrieve her bike last Thursday, she discovered that the rear light and rear mudguard had been damaged. She reported a total loss of about 3,000 patacas to the police.

Through their citywide CCTV surveillance, the police discovered that a car’s rear struck the motorbike while making a turn in Rua de Entre-Campos. However, the driver did not stop to address the situation and instead left the scene immediately.

The police identified Cheong as the suspect and apprehended him in Rua Marginal do Canal



Public Security Police (PSP) spokeswoman Cheong Im Sim looks on during yesterday’s regular press conference. — Photo: Ada Lei

das Hortas (菜園涌邊街) on Saturday. Under questioning, Cheong claimed that he was unaware of any collision with another vehicle at the time of the incident.

Cheong has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing a charge of evasion of responsibility. ■

Chef at integrated resort accused of soliciting bribes: CCAC

Khalel Vallo

The Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) announced in a statement yesterday that the executive chef working in the food and beverage department of an integrated resort allegedly solicited bribes.

According to the statement, its investigation was triggered by a tipoff which claimed that the executive chef solicited bribes in exchange for recommending individuals for employment, helping them pass probation or supporting contract renewals.

During the investigation, the CCAC discovered that between 2023 and 2024 the executive chef abused his position and took advantage of recruitment opportunities, staff probation assessments and performance appraisals to repeatedly solicit cash or gifts from his “fellow countrymen and subordinates”, the statement noted.

The statement did not elaborate

on the nationality of the suspect, and neither did it reveal the name of the resort where the offences were allegedly committed.

The statement added that the alleged kickbacks were given in exchange for successful entry into the company or the renewal of employment contracts.

The chef is suspected of bribe-taking in the private sector, while four other employees involved are suspected of bribe-giving, the statement noted.

The case has been referred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) for follow-up, and the statement said that similar incidents of misconduct in the private sector have been exposed in recent years.

In the statement, the local anti-graft body urged the public to remain wary of corruption, stressing that such behaviour affects employment rights and undermines Macau’s fair business environment.

Residents in general and private-sector employees in particular should always uphold integrity and report any suspected bribery or other illegal practices, adding that people should “not give in” when facing bribery attempts, the statement concluded. ■



Police nab mainlander for stealing 2 phones from tourists

Ada Lei

The Public Security Police (PSP) arrested a man from the Chinese mainland on Saturday for stealing two smartphones worth 18,000 yuan (20,000 patacas) in total from two female tourists, PSP spokeswoman Cheong Im Sim said during a regular press conference yesterday.

Cheong identified the suspect as a construction worker in his forties surnamed Xie.

According to Cheong, the police received a report in November from two female tourists from the Chinese mainland, who said that while taking photos of the hotel scenery near the pavement in Cotai, they placed two

smartphones in a handbag and put the bag down on the ground. After finishing their photo session and checking the bag, they discovered that both phones had vanished. Suspecting someone had stolen the phones, they immediately reported a total loss of 18,000 yuan to the police.

Through their citywide CCTV surveillance footage, the police identified Xie as the suspect and apprehended him on Saturday when he was re-entering Macau through the Barrier Gate checkpoint. Under questioning, Xie refused to cooperate.

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



This undated handout photo provided by the Public Security Police (PSP) yesterday shows PSP officers escorting the theft suspect into a police station.

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MACAU POST

Macau Weather

CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY INTERVALS.
A FEW RAIN PATCHES AT FIRST.
FORCE 2 TO 4 EAST TO NORTHEASTERLY WINDS.
RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 60% AND 98%.



18°C~24°C

Source: SMG

Meike Wüstenberg wins 'Best Film' award at Macau Int'l Short Film-fest



Macau International Short Film Festival Director Menn Chow (周萬生) (left) presents the "Best Film of the Festival" trophy to Institute of European Studies of Macau (IEEM) to President Paulo Canelas de Castro who collected it on behalf of German director Meike Wüstenberg at Teatro Capitol in the city centre last night.



German director Meike Wüstenberg delivers her message of gratitude via video during yesterday's Macau International Short Film Festival award ceremony at Teatro Capitol. – Photos: Khalel Vallo

Khalel Vallo

The 16th edition of the Macau International Short Film Festival concluded yesterday at Teatro Capitol on Rua de Pedro Nolasco da Silva (伯多祿局長街), with director Meike Wüstenberg from Germany winning the "Best Film of the Festival" award in the SHORTS category for "The Last Bet", a fictional film she directed.

The film was an entry from Germany. The free admission festival was held from last Thursday through yesterday at the cinema on the top floor of Teatro Capitol in the city centre, with a total of 122 short films and music videos showcased in over 30 screenings.

Entries were chosen from among 6,350 submissions from 123 countries and regions.

The synopsis of Wüstenberg's film shows an elderly couple having a tradition, which they bet on who will die first, with the last piece of chocolate as the prize, with each hoping to go before the other but for very different reasons, according to information provided at the festival.

The cash prize for the "Best Film of the Festival" is 16,000 patacas.

Remarking on her win at yesterday's Gala Award ceremony at the cinema, Wüstenberg said via video message that she had an overwhelming gratitude for the award, emphasising her happiness that audiences connect with her film's portrayal of an elderly couple's "annoyance and subtle love." She pledged, "I will treasure this award truly," and praised the festival.

Meanwhile, in the VOLUME category, the "Best Music" award, went to "Bobby Beauty Parlour" composed by India's Vishal-Chayan.

A total of 15 awards were distributed during yesterday's ceremony.

Director Carline Brilliens from Kenya won "Best Documentary" for "Our Voices Can Bring Change", while "Best Fiction" went to director Jake Wachtel from the United States for "The Sentry".

Meanwhile, director Matúš Vizár from the Czech Republic bagged the "Best Animation" award for the short animated film "Free the Chicken".

Moreover, the "Macau Cultural Identity" award went to "Developing Macao" directed by Zhang Linliang from Macau/the Chinese mainland; "Best Local Entry" was won by local and China's Taiwan region director Chan Chon Sin for "Nuptial Flight" while local director Leong Hou Wang took home the "Audience Choice" award for "In the Orbit Without You".

The other prizes featured the "Best Student Film" and four SHORTS Prestigious Awards, including "Best Director" and "Best Visual Effects", as well as two VOLUME Prestigious Awards comprising "Best Song" and "Best Sound Design". ■

Macau team clinches more NSOG medals - 6 gold, 4 silver & 7 bronze

Armindo Neves

The Macau Special Olympics (MSO) announced on its Facebook page yesterday that the local team has clinched more medals – six gold, four silver, and seven bronze – at the 12th National Games for Persons with Disabilities (NGD) and the 9th National Special Olympics Games (NSOG).

Tuesday was the last day of the NSOG table tennis competition, and the local team clinched one gold, one silver and three bronze medals in the Women's Singles and Men's Doubles competitions.

The latest local table tennis medal winners are Ng Weng San, Women's Singles 22-29 years old, Group E Champion; Kuan Un Kuan, Women's Singles 8-11 years old, Group A Champion; Lam U Tong, Women's Singles 8-11 Group A, third place; Ho Chi Iao, Women's Singles 12-15 years old, Group F, third place; Leong Ion Lam and Lao U Kin, Men's Doubles 16-21 years old, Group D, third place. All the ping-pong matches were held at the Tsuen Wan Sports Centre in Hong Kong.

Tuesday also was the first day of the NSOG boccia competition at the Zhongshan Gymnasium, and the local team promptly won one gold and one bronze medals.

The boccia medal winners are Ao Ieong In and Chan sou Kuan, Women's Doubles 22-30 years old, Group A Champion; Cheong Nga Man and Wat Hang Mei, Women's Doubles 12-21 years old, Group E, third place.

Yesterday, the NSOG boccia competition was still going on but also the first day of the athletics competition at the Zhongshan Sports Centre Stadium, and the local team obtained four gold, three silver and three bronze medals.



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中华人民共和国第十二届残疾人运动会
暨第九届特殊奥林匹克运动会
The 12th National Games for Persons with Disabilities & the 9th
National Special Olympic Games, the People's Republic of China

Logo of the 12th National Games for Persons with
Disabilities & 9th National Special Olympics Games

Yesterday's boccia and athletics medal winners are Wong Hou, Men's Singles Long Jump 16-21 years old Group one Champion; Chan Man Hin, Long Jump Men's Singles Group six third place; Wong Tak Hong, 100 metres Men's Singles Group two Champion; Ng Weng Kuan, 50 metres 12-15 years old Group three Runner up; Wong Tak Hong, Men's Singles Softball 8-11 years old Runner up; Chan Hio Lam, Women's Singles Softball 8-11 years old Group one Champion; Chang Hoi Iao, Women's Singles Softball 8-11 years old Group 2 Champion; Wu Un Un, Women's Singles 100 metres 12-15 years old Group two Runner Up; Lai Kuan Kuai and Cheng Man Chong, Men's Doubles 30 years old and older boccia Group A M11 third place; Chang Pui Kit and Ip Chon Hei Men's Doubles 16-21 years boccia Group F M08 third place.

The NSOG boccia and athletics competitions will end this Sunday.

By last night, the local team had won a total of nine gold, seven silver and thirteen bronze medals. ■

澳門樂團有限公司
Sociedade Orquestra de Macau, Limitada
Macao Orchestra Company, Limited



Macao Orchestra 【Musicians Recruitment】

Macao Orchestra is a prestigious professional ensemble based in Macao, with the tenet of Blending Chinese and Western Cultures, Interpreting Traditional and Modern Classics".

Since 1 February 2022, Macao Orchestra has been managed by Macao Orchestra Company, Limited, which is wholly owned by the Macao SAR Government. The orchestra is committed to presenting high-level musical performances to audience.

The Macao Orchestra is seeking highly qualified and motivated candidates for the following full-time positions:

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Monthly Salary and Benefits:

Associate Concertmaster: from MOP 47,000

Section Principal: from MOP 41,000

Tutti: from MOP 32,900

All positions include a monthly allowance of MOP 3,000, 13th-month salary, paid annual leave, health insurance and other benefits as stipulated by Macao Orchestra Company Limited.

Application Deadline: (GMT +8) 22nd Jan, 2026, 23:59. Late applications will not be accepted.

Details of this recruitment can be found at Macao Orchestra official website
<https://www.om-macau.org/en/om-musicians-recruit-2025/>

Contact Information:

E-mail: om-recruit@om-moc.com.mo

Tel: (+853) 88983518, 88983524, 88983530

Inquiry hours: Monday to Friday 10:00am to 13:00pm, 15:00pm to 18:00pm

(Off on public holidays).

Macao Orchestra Company, Limited



Sunny Sit Ka Kit presents 15 oils in 'Shaping. Viewing the Scene'

Rui Pastorin

The topics that local artist Sunny Sit Ka Kit is tackling in his paintings are of identity formation and the "responsibility of viewing" through 15 works displayed at the Rui Cunha Foundation (FRC) gallery.

Ending on Saturday, the exhibition is titled "Shaping. Viewing the Scene" and features works that were all created with oils that take inspiration from Sit's experiences as a husband and father to explore its themes. It is divided into two series: "Private Space" and "Public Space", with fellow artist Kit Tam Chon curating the works.

According to a statement on the FRC website, "Private Space" sees Sit draw on his family experiences as a starting point and, using calm and careful brushwork, he shows the complex feelings of fatherhood, responsibility, and freedom on canvas.

Sit's "Public Space" series, meanwhile, looks at social media and public events, reflecting on his "bystander perspective" to explore themes like ethics, the pressure people feel from society, and what it means to exist, according to the statement.

Sit serves as the vice-director of the Macau Youth Art Association and a director of the Macau Artist Society. He has garnered various awards and nominations across the Greater Bay Area (GBA), among which have been recognised in the 2023 National Arts Fund Young Artistic Creative Talent Support Programme and has received multiple prizes from the Macao Visual Arts Exhibition such as the "Excellent Work Award" and "Youth Artist Award", as listed in a statement at the gallery. During the Art Macao: Macao International Art Biennale 2023, his work was also featured in the Collateral Exhibition.

In terms of exhibitions, in addition to Macau, he has held solo exhibitions in Guangzhou and Zhongshan.

Moreover, he works as a guest lecturer at City University of Macau (CityU) and the Macao Polytechnic University (MPU), and is pursuing a PhD in Fine Arts.

The exhibition is organised by the gallery in conjunction with the Macau Youth Art Association and the Macau Artist Society. The gallery is located at 749 Avenida da Praia Grande (澳門南灣大馬路). It is open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. today and tomorrow, and from 3 p.m. through 7 p.m. on Saturday.

Photos: Rui Pastorin

Landmark Casino in Zape to shut for good Dec 30: govt

Tony Wong

Landmark Casino in Zape will close for good after midnight on December 30, just one day before the expiration of the statutory three-year transition period after which all “satellite casinos” in Macau must close.

The Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) announced the casino’s upcoming closure in a statement yesterday.

Except Le Royal Arc Casino located in L’Arc Hotel in Nape, which currently is still a third-party-operated satellite casino but is scheduled to become a casino directly run by gaming concessionaire SJM after the three-year transition period, Landmark Casino, at New Orient Landmark Hotel in Zape, is now the city’s last remaining satellite casino set to close down permanently, following Fortuna Casino’s closure on Tuesday night this week.

The government announced in June that in compliance with the three-year transition period stipulated by the new legislation amending the gaming law, all of the city’s then 11 satellite casinos decided to close for good by December 31 this year. Grandview Casino in Taipa, which closed in late July, was the first of them to cease operations.

After Grand Dragon Casino, also in Taipa, closed in September, two satellite casinos in the peninsula, namely Emperor Palace Casino in Nam Van district and Waldo Casino in Zape, ceased operations in late October.

Afterwards, three other satellite casinos closed down permanently at

different times last month, namely Legend Palace Casino located in the Macau Fisherman’s Wharf entertainment complex in Nape, Casa Real Casino in Zape, and Ponte 16 Casino located in the Ponte 16 hotel resort in the Inner Harbour district.

After Kam Pek Paradise Casino in Zape ceased operations on Monday night last week, its adjacent Fortuna Casino closed for good on Tuesday night this week.

Consequently, Landmark Casino is now one of the city’s last two satellite casinos and will be the 10th satellite casino to cease operations, with the other remaining one being Le Royal Arc Casino.

The so-called satellite casinos in Macau are formally owned by gaming concessionaires but are actually run and managed by third parties as they are housed on premises that are not owned by the respective gaming concessionaires.

After the three-year transition period, which is scheduled to end on December 31 this year, all satellite casinos must close, unless the respective gaming concessionaire chooses to hire a “management company” to operate the casino. However, such a management company is only allowed to receive a management fee from the respective gaming concessionaire, no longer being permitted to share in the casino’s revenues.

The three respective gaming concessionaires, SJM, Galaxy, and Melco, decided in June to terminate the operations of all 11 satellite casinos before the expiration of the transition period based on their



A tourist coach is parked outside New Orient Landmark Hotel on Avenida da Amizade in Zape late last month where Landmark Casino is housed on three podium floors.

– Photo: Tony Wong

respective commercial decisions, meaning that none of the three gaming concessionaires decided to continue operating these casinos through the hiring of management companies after December 31 this year.

Among the 11 satellite casinos, Waldo Casino was formally owned by Galaxy, while Grand Dragon Casino was owned by Melco, with the other nine by SJM.

Unlike its other satellite casinos, SJM has signed an agreement to acquire the ownership of L’Arc Hotel in order to convert Le Royal Arc Casino into a “directly-operated” casino after its scheduled closure as a satellite casino. After the acquisition gets off the ground, Le Royal Arc Casino will continue operating, but no longer as a third-party managed business but as a casino directly operated by SJM.

As Le Royal Arc Casino is set to become a casino directly operated by SJM, Landmark Casino, located

in New Orient Landmark Hotel on Avenida da Amizade, is now the city’s last remaining satellite casino set to close down permanently.

Yesterday’s DICJ statement announced that after business negotiations, Landmark Casino’s third-party operator and SJM decided to terminate the operations of the casino after 11:59 p.m. on December 30, i.e., just 24 hours before the expiration of the three-year transition period.

The statement pledged that the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau, in collaboration with the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL), will ensure that SJM fulfils its promise to ensure the employment of those working at Landmark Casino after its closure.

According to the statement, there are currently 1,169 employees working at Landmark Casino.

Meanwhile, SJM noted in a statement yesterday that all gaming tables and slot machines currently

operating at Landmark Casino will be redeployed to other SJM casinos.

The statement also pledged that SJM will provide all its local employees working at Landmark Casino with gaming positions at other SJM casinos, while local employees working there who are employed by its third-party operator “will be invited to apply for related vacancies” offered by SJM where they will be given employment priority.

Historical number of casinos

According to the earliest data available on the website of the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ), Macau had only 11 casinos in 2002, before the number increased to its historical peak of 42 in 2021. Afterwards, the number of casinos began to decrease in the second quarter of 2022, when there were 37 casinos. The number dropped to 30 in the fourth quarter of the same year, after which the number had remained unchanged at 30 until the second quarter of this year.

Following the closure of Grandview Casino (July) and Grand Dragon Casino (September), the number of casinos dropped to 28 at the end of the third quarter of this year, according to the DICJ website.

At the end of this month, when Landmark Casino is scheduled to close, the number of casinos, according to calculations by the *Post*, will drop to 20, comprising five owned by SJM, five by Sands, three by Galaxy, three by Melco, two by Wynn, and two by MGM. ■

Macau products showcased at Singapore food expo

Kristina Vallesteros

A dedicated Macao Pavilion was set up at the Asia Pacific Food Expo 2025 in Singapore between last Friday and Monday this week, according to a statement recently issued by the Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM).

The pavilion was a collaboration between IPIM and the Industrial Association of Macau (AIM). It featured 26 local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). According to the statement, approximately 350 “Made-in-Macau” and “Macau Brand” products were showcased, including health products, baked goods, noodles, and alcoholic beverages. Some exhibitors launched new products on-site.

The statement noted that over 80 percent of the participating companies hold the “M-Mark” Macau Product

Quality Certification, and more than half of the products are halal certified. These certifications are intended to increase the visibility and acceptance of Macau products in ASEAN markets, the statement added.

The pavilion included corporate booths, a service promotion area for IPIM, and a tasting zone with interactive photo spots. Multiple business matching sessions and 12 tasting events were arranged during the four-day expo.

The Asia Pacific Food Expo, held at the Singapore Expo, is described in the statement as one of the region’s most influential food trade exhibitions. IPIM said in the statement that it will continue to organise and support local industries in participating in major international exhibitions to expand business opportunities. ■



This undated handout photo recently provided by the Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) shows the Macao Pavilion during the “Asia Pacific Food Expo 2024”.

Pedro Ramos provides portal to Macau’s past & present

Rui Pastorin

A new exhibition by Portuguese professional photographer Pedro Ramos titled “Macau’s Reflections – Now and Then” – opened last night at the Portuguese Bookshop on Rua de São Domingos (板樟堂街), showcasing photos from a key moment in the city’s history to its present day.

Located in the basement gallery of the bookshop, the exhibition has been organised by the Macau-based 10 Marias Cultural Association, with the works on display until December 30.

Upon entering the exhibition, gallerygoers will immediately be met by a wall of moments from the city’s past and its return to the motherland in 1999. Through Ramos’ lens, exhibitiongoers will find photos of Macau’s architecture, markets, street life and cultural traditions, as well as photos of the present including Macau’s modern architecture and integrated resorts. A statement provided by the organiser described the photos as being both a portal to the past and a colourful future, with Ramos providing a reflection and view of the city.

Ramos has a personal



A gallerygoer views a set of images displayed among the photos unveiled yesterday in Pedro Ramos’ “Macau’s Reflections - Now and then” at the Portuguese Bookshop.

– Photo: Rui Pastorin

connection to the city, having grown up in Macau where he completed his primary and secondary education at the Liceu de Macau (澳門利濟中學), which was a Portuguese-curriculum public secondary school. He has had a career in photography since 1998, covering commercial, portrait, fashion, architectural, and travel photography. He is now based in Portugal, according to the statement.

The statement pointed out that

Ramos has had collaborations with entities such as Canon Portugal, FNAC Portugal (a well-known chain of bookshops), and the Oeste Tourism Board, as well as ongoing work as a photography instructor in institutions such as the Social Services of Caixa Geral de Depósitos. Stay tuned for more pictures and an interview with Ramos in an upcoming page 4.

One may view the images on display at the gallery from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily. Admission is free. ■

The Ritz-Carlton holds 'Kids'mas' event

Kristina Vallesteros

The Ritz-Carlton held a festive event for over 40 children from the St. José Ka-Ho Children and Youth Home in Coloane, according to a statement yesterday from the five-star hotel.

The "A Merry Merry Kids'mas" event took place on Tuesday in the integrated resort's ballroom. Activities included Christmas-themed creative workshops, a tree-lighting ceremony, and a gift presentation. The statement noted

that each child also received a specially selected present.

The gifts were provided through a month-long fundraising campaign held in November. According to the statement, guests, employees and the community at large contributed by purchasing gifts from a "Wishing Album" that displayed the children's anonymous wishes.

The event was part of the hotel's Community Footprints programme, which the statement said aimed to support the local

community. The hotel partnered with the St. José Ka-Ho Children and Youth Home, which provides boarding support for children from underprivileged backgrounds.

Vice President of Operations at JW Marriott Hotel Macau and The Ritz-Carlton, Rauf Malik, was quoted by the statement as saying before the event: "Through 'A Merry Merry Kids'mas' we hope to create lasting memories for these children and remind them that they are cared for and valued." ■



This undated handout photo provided by The Ritz-Carlton shows kids from the St. José Ka-Ho Children and Youth Home, guests and hosts during the 'A Merry Merry Kids'mas' celebration at The Ritz-Carlton in Cotai on Tuesday.

Group of Friends tangible fruit of GGI

China Daily Editorial

On September 1 this year, President Xi Jinping put forward the Global Governance Initiative (GGI) at the Tianjin Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. It is a strategic proposal aimed at addressing the deficits in global governance capabilities and enhancing international cooperation.

With the aim of shaping a community with a shared future for humanity that embodies fairness, inclusivity, solidarity and shared responsibility, the GGI outlines five guiding principles – adhering to sovereign equality, abiding by international rule of law, practicing multilateralism, advocating the people-centered approach, and focusing on taking concrete actions – as the cornerstone of global governance.

The initiative underscores China's growing role on the world stage and its commitment to participating actively in resolving global challenges and reforming existing international frameworks to better reflect the realities of the world today, particularly by addressing the historical underrepresentation of emerging markets and developing nations in global governance.

If putting forward the GGI was a demonstration of China's recognition that global governance needs to be reformed to better deal with the changing realities and grave challenges of the times, the Group of Friends of Global Governance that was officially established at the United Nations headquarters in New York on Tuesday is a manifestation of China's will to act in order to put the GGI into practice.

This new group promoted by

China aims to bring countries together on an inclusive platform to draw on collective wisdom and mobilize joint efforts for reform and improvement of the global governance system.

As Fu Cong, China's permanent representative to the UN, said at the launch meeting, China hopes to join hands with like-minded countries to deepen exchanges and cooperation on major global governance issues.

By fostering dialogue and cooperation among a diverse array of nations, the Group of Friends of Global Governance seeks to build consensus on key issues and develop innovative solutions that are reflective of the interests and needs of the global community.

The meeting was attended by representatives of nearly 40 founding members of the group, who said in a joint statement issued after the meeting that the members "commit to deepening dialogue and coordination on global governance issues, engaging with relevant stakeholders, amplifying our collective voice, building and expanding consensus, and delivering concrete outcomes that respond to the yearnings of our peoples and the legitimate aspirations of our nations".

The establishment of the group highlights China's commitment to working within the UN framework to promote peace, stability and sustainable development. Moreover, it signals China's resolve to bring countries together to pool their strength, uphold the banner of multilateralism and work together for a future of inclusivity and fairness.

This approach contributes to building a more resilient and responsive international order

capable of addressing the complex challenges of the 21st century.

As Fu rightly noted, the UN was created for the purpose of upholding a global order of fairness and justice. The two world wars taught the international community a lesson that effective global governance was needed to avoid another. And the UN has indeed played an important role in that respect.

Yet, the rise of unilateralism and trade protectionism, the military conflicts between some countries, especially that between Russia and Ukraine, the widening divide between the Global South and its developed Western counterpart, the bickering concerning the global endeavors to tackle climate change and ecological conservation all pose severe challenges to the UN system and establishment of a fair and just global order.

By establishing the Group of Friends of Global Governance, China is manifesting its belief that a more effective global governance system calls for the equal participation of as many countries as possible, to first build consensus and then take action.

That explains why the group extended an invitation to other like-minded UN member states to join the initiative.

China's establishment of the group and its putting forward of the GGI, along with the Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative and Global Civilization Initiative, show it is playing an increasingly constructive role in shaping the global landscape for the building of a community with a shared future for humanity.

— Courtesy of China Daily

Govt plans to roll out smoking ban on streets on pilot basis

Tony Wong

The Health Bureau (SSM) said yesterday that it is planning to implement a smoking ban on the pavements in Alameda Dr. Carlos D'Assumpção, the two-way avenue outside Dr. Carlos D'Assumpção Park in Nape, next year on a pilot basis.

Lam Chong, who heads the bureau's Tobacco and Alcohol Prevention and Control Office, made the remarks when attending a current affairs phone-in programme yesterday hosted by Ou Mun Tin Toi, the Chinese-language radio channel of public broadcaster TDM.

Lam said that as the smoking ban will be implemented on a pilot basis first, violators will not be fined, and instead they will be urged by anti-smoking inspectors not to smoke while walking on the pavements in the avenue. Lam stated that the pilot project aims to gather opinions from civil society regarding the bureau's plan to ban smoking on pavements adjacent to certain streets deemed suitable for the smoking ban.

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

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

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

According to Macau's anti-smoking law, the Health Bureau can also designate certain other outdoor public venues as no-smoking zones in addition to those listed by this law. Since November 24 this year, smoking has been banned in outdoor areas within 10 metres of entrances of three schools and a creche on a permanent basis. Those violating the smoking ban will be fined 1,500 patacas.

The bureau indicated earlier this year that it was studying the feasibility of setting up no-smoking zones in more outdoor public areas with dense pedestrian flows. ■



This undated file photo shows pedestrians walking on the pavement in Alameda Dr. Carlos D'Assumpção in Nape. — Photo courtesy of TDM

CHRISTMAS CONCERT

聖誕音樂會

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER CHURCH, COLOANE

聖方濟各聖堂, 路環

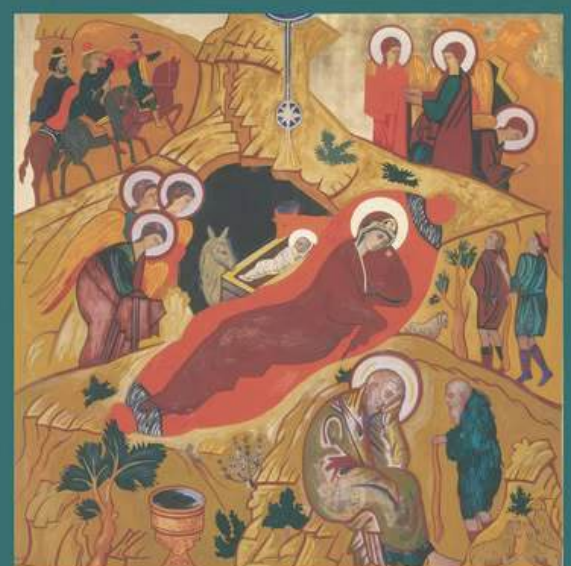
Sunday, Dec 14 at 6PM

12月14日 18:00

Sunday, Dec 21 at 6PM

12月21日 18:00

FREE ADMISSION



China calls on all peace-loving countries to thwart any dangerous moves of reviving Japanese militarism: FM spokesperson

BEIJING – A foreign ministry spokesperson said yesterday that China calls on all peace-loving countries to guard against and thwart any dangerous moves of reviving Japanese militarism and jointly defend the hard-won victorious outcomes of WWII.

Spokesperson Guo Jiakun made the remarks at a regular press briefing, in response to a query about recent comments by some foreign media outlets that Japan is transforming from a constitutionally pacifist state to a modern military power, and the country is attempting to resurrect militarism, which can only threaten regional and global peace and stability and is worthy of vigilance.

Guo said that Japan has in recent years been revamping its security and defense policies, accelerating the revision of its pacifist constitution, and breaching the exclusively defense-oriented principle, and that the country has removed the ban on exercising the right to collective self-defense, eased restrictions on arms exports, attempted to alter its three non-nuclear principles, and developed the so-called “enemy base strike capability.”

He pointed out that Japanese senior officials even claimed that Japan has not ruled out the possibility of possessing nuclear submarines. “These moves have put Japan’s neighboring countries and the international community on high alert,” said Guo.

“We noted that after increasing its defense budget for 13 consecutive years, Japan now has the second highest military budget among Western countries. According to a European think tank, the revenues of Japan’s top five defense firms surged by 40 percent year-on-year in 2024,” said Guo.

“For a country who styles itself as constitutionally pacifist, talks about reflecting on its wartime past and claims to follow the exclusively defense-oriented principle, how does Japan justify its military buildup?” said Guo.

He went on to say that in fact, after WWII, the Japanese government has never completely reflected on its wars of aggression, many Japanese war criminals returned as active political figures and Self-Defense Forces members, some prime ministers and political

dignitaries have insisted on visiting and paying respect to the Yasukuni Shrine, where Class-A war criminals are honored. Historical facts have been soft-peddled and whitewashed in distorted textbooks, Guo added.

“Japanese right-wing forces did reflect upon the wartime past. However, they reflected not on Japan’s war crimes, but on why Japan was defeated,” Guo noted.

He said that the reckoning with Japanese militarism has never been completed. Instead, people will see the rising trend of reviving militarism.

It is imperative for the international community to remind Japan that the Potsdam Proclamation in Article 6, 7, 9 and 11 stated that there must be eliminated for all time Japanese militarism and its breeding ground, for we insist that a new order of peace, security and justice will be impossible until there is convincing proof that Japan’s war-making power is destroyed politically and legally, and warlike ideas are fundamentally eliminated, said Guo.

He further pointed out that the Potsdam

Proclamation also requires Japan to be completely disarmed and not to maintain such industries as would enable her to re-arm for war, and it’s promised in the Japanese Instrument of Surrender that Japan will carry out the provisions of the Potsdam Proclamation in good faith.

These instruments with legal effect under international law and recognized by Japan clarified its international obligations as a defeated country, constitute the important cornerstone of the post-war international order, and serve as the political and legal prerequisite for Japan’s return to the international community, noted the spokesperson.

“Japan’s attempt of ‘re-militarizing’ itself through accelerated military buildup will only make the world once again question where Japan is headed and demand another reckoning with its war crimes. China calls on all peace-loving countries to guard against and thwart any dangerous moves of reviving Japanese militarism and jointly defend the hard-won victorious outcomes of WWII,” said Guo.

– Xinhua

China welcomes all countries with same vision to participate in Group of Friends of Global Governance: FM spokesperson

BEIJING – The Group of Friends of Global Governance is open to all UN member states and welcomes the participation of all countries sharing the same vision, said foreign minister spokesperson Guo Jiakun in Beijing yesterday.

Guo made the remarks after China’s Permanent Mission to the UN announced on Tuesday the inauguration of the Group of Friends of Global Governance at the platform of the UN.

Chinese President Xi Jinping put forward the Global Governance Initiative during the SCO Tianjin Summit, charting the course for the reform of the global governance system and providing invaluable stability and certainty for the turbulent world, Guo told a regular press briefing, adding that the initiative received extensive recognition and positive response from the international community.

Guo said that China initiated the Group of Friends of Global Governance to bring parties together for closer exchanges and cooperation on major issues on global governance, and draw on collective wisdom and mobilize joint efforts for reforming and improving global governance.

He further pointed out that participating countries highly recognized and supported the

Global Governance Initiative, commended China’s leading role in global governance, warmly congratulated on the inauguration of the group, and expressed hopes that the group will provide new impetus for upholding multilateralism and reforming and improving the global governance system.

Guo said that after the meeting, the 43 founding members of the group issued a joint statement, stressing they will jointly uphold the legacy won by the World War II, reinforce the role of the UN, address global challenges and respond to the yearning of the peoples.

“Global governance is a matter for all. It bears on the vital interests of every country and calls for everyone to participate, engage in decision-making and share the fruits,” said Guo, adding that the group is open to all UN member states and welcomes the participation of all countries sharing the same vision.

“We also support the group to enhance exchanges and cooperation with various countries, the UN Secretariat and relevant international organizations, build a more just and equitable global governance system, and make new contribution to world peace and development,” said the spokesperson. – AFP

China to inject more force for good into human rights development in the world: FM spokesperson

BEIJING – China actively participates in human rights affairs in the United Nations (UN) and has broad-based exchange and cooperation in human rights with other countries, said a foreign ministry spokesperson in Beijing yesterday, adding that China is willing to inject more force for good into human rights development in the world.

December 10 marks the Human Rights Day. Spokesperson Guo Jiakun made the remarks at a regular news briefing while responding to a query on China’s progress in promoting and protecting human rights and China’s efforts to enhance international human rights cooperation.

Guo said that this year marks the 80th anniversary of the founding of the UN. The UN adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 77 years ago and established the Human Rights Day 75 years ago, which embody humanity’s ambitious dream – the full enjoyment of human rights by all people. The vision of promoting and protecting human rights is taking deeper roots.

“China always attaches great importance to respecting and protecting human rights and pursues a human rights development path that meets the trend of the times and suits its national conditions,” Guo said.

Over the 14th Five-Year Plan period, China has made remarkable achievements in national development, advanced the whole-process people’s democracy, effectively and fully implemented the rule of law, enjoyed thriving cultural programs and industries, better ensured people’s well-being, consolidated gains in poverty elimination, steadily improved the ecological environment, and elevated the protection of various human rights to a new stage, he added.

The spokesperson said that as a constructive player, China actively participates in human rights affairs in the UN and has broad-based exchange and cooperation in human rights with other countries.

Guo said that the Second Workshop on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is being hosted by China in Beijing. Representatives from over 40 countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Oceania, and officials and experts from the UN attended the workshop. They have had in-depth discussions and reached broad consensus on promoting and protecting economic, social and cultural rights.

In October 2025, the fourth plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee adopted the recommendations for formulating the 15th Five-Year Plan. This has drawn a blueprint for China’s economic and social development in the next five years and demonstrated China’s vision of having mutually beneficial cooperation with the rest of the world, the spokesperson added.

“To advance Chinese modernization will also give a boost to all-round development of human rights in China,” said Guo, adding that China will actively implement the Global Governance Initiative proposed by President Xi Jinping and inject more force for good into human rights development in the world.

He said that some countries politicize and weaponize human rights issues, which amount to a grave challenge to global human rights governance. Certain country refuses to repent for its past crimes, such as bacterial warfare, the forced recruitment of “comfort women” and the massacre of civilians during its war of aggression. Rather, they continue to infringe on the rights of indigenous people, such as the Ainu and indigenous Ryukyans, and adopt policies that discriminate against foreigners.

“We urge the relevant country to face up to and resolve their own severe human rights issues, take a constructive part in the international cooperation in human rights, and stop interfering in other countries’ internal affairs under the pretext of so-called human rights issues,” Guo said. – Xinhua



People select products during a supply and marketing fair at a park in Lhasa, the capital city of China's Xizang Autonomous Region, yesterday. The event has gathered more than 1,000 characteristic agricultural products from Xizang, including highland barley products, yak meat products, dairy products and so on, providing a platform for farmers and herdsmen to increase their income and people to purchase authentic specialties. – Xinhua

'We are suffering': Thai, Cambodian evacuees want border fighting to end

Chayanit Ithipongmaetee with Suy Se in Siem Reap, Cambodia

Thailand — Artillery rounds echoed in the distance as Thai rubber tapper Boonkerd Yodeerum settled into a folding bed, sheltering with his family under a bridge near the Cambodia border where fighting has erupted once more.

The 64-year-old was working when he heard explosions on Sunday near his home in eastern Thailand's Surin province, just a short distance from the border.

"My first thought was 'Oh no, not again'," he told AFP yesterday.

"Then we rushed here under the bridge for safety," he said as his wife and nephew rested on a bamboo frame in their makeshift shelter.

They fled to the same place where they had sheltered five months prior — and years before, during previous outbreaks of deadly violence between the Southeast Asian neighbours.

The family are now among half a million evacuees seeking safety on both sides of the long-disputed border.

At least 14 people, including Thai soldiers and Cambodian civilians, have been killed, officials said, while jets, tanks and drones were waging battle.

Both sides blame each other for instigating the reignited conflict, which has expanded to five provinces of both Thailand and Cambodia, according to an AFP tally of official accounts.

Having seen similar events play out before, Boonkerd said he was frustrated that the decades-old territorial dispute again rumbled on with no end in sight.

"They said negotiations would bring peace," he said.

A truce was reached in July following intervention by US President Donald Trump, "but you can see how long that lasted. I don't trust it anymore," added the Thai farmer.



People gather to receive aid at a temporary camp after they evacuated amid clashes along the Cambodia-Thailand border in Cambodia's Siem Reap province yesterday. Half a million evacuees in Cambodia and Thailand were sheltering in pagodas, schools and other safe havens yesterday after fleeing renewed fighting in a century-old border dispute in which US President Donald Trump has vowed to again intercede. — AFP

On the other side of the border, in Cambodia's Srei Snam, an open roadside area with makeshift tents houses hundreds of families, including many women with children.

Yin Bei, 30, fled home with her husband and their two-month-old daughter as soon as they heard loud blasts ringing nearby on Monday.

"Having such a war is very difficult for us. I have a baby so I am suffering," she told AFP. "I want this war to end quickly".

'Really end'

Chea Chong said it was his third time being displaced as a result of the conflict.

"They are fighting so hard," the 73-year-old Cambodian man said. "Please talk to each other. We are neighbours... Just end it, we are suffering".

At an evacuation centre in Surin city in Thailand, Ratana Chantrai gently soothed her fluffy cat Look Gling.

Her home lies just five kilometres from the frontier with

Cambodia, and she said the loud blasts from the previous outbreak of violence in July had given her severe anxiety.

"All I could think about was getting out and bringing our four cats to safety," she said.

She had packed bedding and a few clothes in advance, but was not sure when it would be safe to return home.

"The clashes shouldn't keep coming back and force us to flee again so often. I don't want the next generation to live with this," she said.

"I just want the fighting to end, really end".

Nittaya Sirithongkoon, a retired hospital worker, said it pained her to see the two countries fighting.

"Cambodia is basically our neighbour, like family," she said, adding that many in her community spoke Khmer, Cambodia's official language.

"The politicians... keep fighting among themselves. I want the government and every political party to think about the nation first". — AFP

Myanmar junta hunts 10 for anti-election protest

YANGON — Myanmar's junta said yesterday it is hunting 10 activists who staged an anti-election protest, pursuing them under laws punishing organised dissent against the poll with up to a decade in prison.

Myanmar's military snatched power in a 2021 coup triggering civil war, but has set new elections starting December 28 — pledging the vote will plot a path to peace and democracy.

International monitors and ousted lawmakers dismiss the poll as a plot to rebrand continuing military rule, while rebels have vowed to block the vote from the vast territories they control.

This summer, the junta enacted new legislation dictating prison sentences up to 10 years for group protests against the election.

A junta statement said eight men and two women were being hunted after "shouting and scattering leaflets written in opposition to the elections" in Mandalay city last Wednesday.

The group intended "to cause the public to misunderstand election-related activities" the statement said, adding "efforts are continuing to arrest and take action against the perpetrators".

The protestors include Tayzar San, a leader of Mandalay's post-coup pro-democracy movement who has long eluded capture by military authorities.

A video on his account on Facebook — a platform blocked in Myanmar since the coup — showed a gaggle of protestors flinging colourful pamphlets into the air at a dawn street market.

"The dictatorial system is the common enemy of the country," shouts Tayzar San, his fist raised in the air.

Myanmar opposition groups have called for more protests nationwide on Wednesday to coincide with Human Rights Day, asking citizens to vacate public spaces in a "silent protest".

Mahn Winn Khaing Thann — prime minister of the self-declared "National Unity Government" staffed by many lawmakers ousted in the coup — said in a video message "the movement is intended to firmly and emphatically reveal that the entire populace boycotts the military's unlawful, sham election".

But in downtown Yangon — a hotbed of post-coup protests which were swiftly crushed by the junta — traffic hummed as usual and election officials plastered pro-vote posters on bus shelters.

"Every shop from our market area is open today as usual," said one shopkeeper near a Yangon market, who asked to remain anonymous for security reasons.

"Owners will be in trouble if they close," he added.

Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party won the 2020 elections by a landslide, but the military quashed the result, jailed the Nobel Peace Prize winner and dissolved her party.

A report by the UN human rights office said "since the coup, the military has routinely suppressed peaceful assemblies through violence and intimidation, making them increasingly rare and risky". — AFP

Philippines' unemployment rate rises to 5 pct in Oct

MANILA — The Philippines' unemployment rate climbed to 5 percent in October 2025, up from 3.8 percent in September, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) data released yesterday.

PSA Chief Claire Dennis Mapa said in a press conference

that about 2.54 million Filipinos were out of work in October, a sharp increase from 1.96 million in the previous month.

The October unemployment rate figure also exceeded the 1.97 million unemployed recorded in October 2024, when the jobless rate stood at 3.9 percent. — *Xinhua*

N Korea fires artillery salvo as kicks off key party meeting

SEOUL — North Korea fired a salvo of artillery from a multiple rocket launcher system, South Korea's military said yesterday, as Pyongyang kicked off a key meeting of its ruling party top brass.

The rockets were fired towards the Yellow Sea from the west of the Korean peninsula on Tuesday, an official from Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff told AFP.

Yonhap News Agency reported, citing military officials, that the firing was part of the North Korean military's regular winter-time exercises.

Pyongyang has not commented on the launch, which came the same day that it began a major meeting of top officials.

That meeting, led by leader

Kim Jong Un, will discuss key policy issues as well as plans for an upcoming Workers' Party congress — North Korea's first in five years.

On the first day officials approved "five agenda items" for discussion this week, including a review of the work of the party's Central Inspection Commission, responsible for rooting out corruption, state media reported.

Lim Eul-chul, a professor at the Institute for Far Eastern Studies at Kyungnam University, told AFP the meeting would likely focus on the economy.

"There is a strong possibility that Kim Jong Un will present policies aimed at achieving breakthrough economic development over the next five years," he said.

The launch also comes a week after South Korea's dovish President Lee Jae Myung said he felt an apology was due to the North over his predecessor's alleged order to send drones and propaganda leaflets across the border.

Pyongyang has not responded to the overture from Lee, who has sought to mend fractured ties with the North.

North Korea last fired multiple artillery rockets last month, just hours before US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth visited the border separating it from the South.

It also fired similar weapons minutes before President Lee held talks with Chinese leader Xi Jinping in November, Seoul said. — AFP



People march with effigies of Philippines' Vice President Sara Duterte and Philippines' President Ferdinand Marcos during a protest held to mark the International Human Rights Day in Manila yesterday. — AFP

Australia bans under-16s from social media in world-first crackdown

Steven Trask

SYDNEY — Australia banned under-16s from social media in a world-first crackdown yesterday, declaring it was time to “take back control” from formidable tech giants.

A raft of popular apps and websites — Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and X among them — face US\$33 million fines if they fail to purge Australia-based users younger than 16.

Australia becomes one of the first nations to push back so forcefully against tech companies with immense political power, in a move other countries are looking at closely.

“Enough is enough,” Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said.

“It is one of the biggest social and cultural changes that our nation has faced.

“We will take back control.”

The government says unprecedented measures are needed to protect children from “predatory algorithms” filling phone screens with bullying, sex and violence.

The laws came into effect after midnight local time across Australia.

Hundreds of thousands of adolescents woke up to find themselves locked out of apps they once scrolled through for hours each day.

Bianca Navarro, 10, was already counting the years until she could log in again to YouTube.

“It will be pretty sad because I have six years until I can watch it,” she told AFP.

Blacklisted

Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat and Reddit are forbidden from creating or keeping accounts belonging to users in Australia under 16.

Streaming platforms Kick and Twitch are also on the government’s blacklist, as are Threads and X.

The ban has been hailed as a godsend for parents sick of seeing children stuck to their phones.

Mia Bannister blamed social media for the suicide of her teenage son Ollie, who killed himself last year after he was bullied online.

He was also being served endless dieting videos that fuelled an eating disorder, she said.

“I’m sick of the social media giants shirking responsibility,” she told AFP in the lead-up to the ban.

“The problem is we hand them a phone and we hand them the greatest weapon we could hand them.”

A growing body of research suggests too much time online is taking a toll on teen wellbeing.

But it is hard to draw firm conclusions that separate phone use from other lifestyle factors, experts say.

Father-of-five Dany Elachi said the restrictions were a long-overdue “line in the sand”.

“We need to err on the side of caution before putting anything addictive in the hands of children,” he told AFP.

‘Really distracted’

Tech-savvy teenagers the world

over have taken an interest in Australia’s measures.

“Students nowadays, they are really distracted,” said Nigerian high-schooler Michelle Okinedo, 15.

“Social media today is very important for expressing yourself, no matter how old you are,” said Santiago Ramirez Rojas, 16, from Mexico City.

YouTube, Meta and other social media giants have lined up to condemn the ban.

Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, said children were already flocking to darker online spaces.

“We’ve consistently raised concerns that this poorly developed law could push teens to less regulated platforms or apps,” the US-based firm told AFP in a statement.

“We’re now seeing those concerns become reality.”

Elon Musk’s X told young users the ban was “not our choice”.

“It’s what the Australian law requires.”

Lesser-known chat and image-sharing apps Lemon8 and yope, which are not currently listed in the social media ban, have shot up the download charts in Australia.

While most platforms have begrudgingly agreed to comply, for now, legal challenges are in the wind.

Online discussion site Reddit said Tuesday it could not confirm local media reports that said it would seek to overturn the ban in Australia’s High Court.

An Australian internet rights group has launched its own bid to have teenagers re-instated to social media.

Rushed or reasonable?

Australia’s efforts will be closely watched by all those worried about the dangers of social media.

New Zealand and Malaysia are mulling similar restrictions.

The Australian government concedes the ban will be far from perfect at the outset and canny teenagers will find ways to slip through the cracks.

But platforms face the threat of Aus\$49.5 million (US\$33 million) fines if they fail to take “reasonable steps” to stop this happening.

It remains to be seen how Australia’s internet safety regulator will interpret what counts as reasonable.

Social media companies bear the sole responsibility for checking users are 16 or older.

Some platforms say they will use AI tools to estimate ages based on photos, while young users may also choose to prove their age by uploading government ID.

Which platforms fall under the ban continues to be debated.

Popular apps and websites such as Roblox, Pinterest and WhatsApp are currently exempt — but the government has stressed that the list remains under review.

Most social media platforms already require users be at least 13, a legacy of US laws setting the minimum age for data collection without parental consent. — AFP

Moo dunnit? Dog lets bull, horse into living room in Australia



This frame grab taken from video footage provided by Australian lawmaker Andrew Mackay yesterday shows a bull and a horse inside his house in Darwin. — AFP

SYDNEY — A lawmaker in Australia was left in udder disbelief when he came home to discover his pet dog had let a bull and a horse into his living room.

Andrew Mackay, a Northern Territory politician, posted the incriminating evidence from his pet cam to social media at the weekend.

His two pet dogs can be seen exiting the living room into a yard after one of them, a mutt named Thunder, nudges open a glass door.

Then a pet steer, or castrated bull, named Sue gingerly wanders into the Darwin home.

It’s followed by a pet horse, Cricket, which has a good sniff of the couch.

The animals embarked on their escapade while Mackay and his fiancée were out for a meal.

The couple raced home after the lawmaker checked his pet cam remotely and noticed “a cow’s head moving into the frame”.

“And then we’ve discovered that about 10 minutes after we’d left to go to dinner, the dogs had decided to nuzzle open the glass door and let themselves out,” he told AFP.

Soon after, the steer scratched his neck on the door and

accidentally opened it all the way, allowing him and the horse inside.

“Over the next hour and a half, they took turns playing inside, knocking things off cabinets,” Mackay said.

The horse found a bowl of vegetable scraps meant for the chickens, and threw pieces around the room.

“The fish tank has been drunken from, and I don’t know how many fish I had before, but I assume they’re all still alive,” he added.

“But he did drop the water by a considerable amount.” — AFP

51 hurt in Japan quake as warning persists

TOKYO — The number of people injured in a 7.5-magnitude earthquake in Japan rose to 51 yesterday, authorities said, after warning an even bigger tremor was possible in coming days.

The quake late Monday off the coast of the northern region of Aomori shook buildings, tore apart roads, smashed windows and triggered tsunami waves up to 70 centimetres high.

The country’s Fire and Disaster Management Agency said yesterday the injury toll was 51, rising from 30 initially reported by the prime minister a day earlier.

The Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) had published a rare special advisory early on Tuesday, warning that another quake of similar or greater size was possible for another week.

“Due to the occurrence of this earthquake, it is believed that the relative likelihood of a new large-scale earthquake has increased compared to normal times” in the area, the JMA said the second time it has issued such a warning.

“If a large-scale earthquake occurs in the future, there is a

possibility of a massive tsunami reaching the area or experiencing strong shaking,” it said.

The agency put the chance at around one in 100 for the next seven days, local media reported.

The advisory covered the Sanriku area on the northeastern tip of Japan’s main island of Honshu and the northern island of Hokkaido, facing the Pacific.

In August 2024, the JMA issued its first special advisory, for the southern half of Japan’s Pacific coast warning of a possible “megaquake” along the Nankai Trough.

The 800-kilometre undersea trench is where the Philippine Sea oceanic tectonic plate is “subducting” — or slowly slipping — underneath the continental plate that Japan sits atop.

The government has said that a quake in the Nankai Trough and subsequent tsunami could kill as many as 298,000 people and cause up to US\$2 trillion in damage.

The JMA lifted last year’s advisory after a week but it led to panic-buying of staples like rice and prompted holidaymakers to cancel hotel reservations.

Geologists Kyle Bradley and Judith A. Hubbard said this week that there was no way to tell whether a strong earthquake will be followed by a similarly strong, or even stronger, one.

“Instead, we must rely on historical statistics, which tell us that very few large earthquakes are soon followed by even larger events,” they said in their *Earthquake Insights* newsletter.

5.9-magnitude quake jolts Aomori Prefecture, last night

Meanwhile, an earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 5.9 struck Aomori Prefecture, northern Japan, late last night, the country’s weather agency said, adding no tsunami warning was issued.

The temblor occurred at 11:52 p.m. local time off Aomori’s Pacific coast at a depth of 30 km, measuring 4 on Japan’s seismic scale of 7 in Gonohe Town in Aomori, said the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA).

The epicentre was located at a latitude of 40.9 degrees north and a longitude of 142.8 degrees east.

— AFP/Xinhua

French far right sparks debate with proposal to reopen brothels

Anna Smolchenko and Gabriel Bourovitch

PARIS – Marine Le Pen’s far-right party wants to bring back France’s once legendary brothels, sparking a fresh debate about prostitution in a country with a long history of liberal attitudes to sex.

Brothels, or “maisons closes”, existed in their hundreds in France before they were outlawed in 1946.

Prostitution is legal in France, although a law introduced in 2016 did make it illegal to buy sex, shifting the criminal responsibility to clients who can be fined if caught.

Now the far-right National Rally (RN) plans to submit a bill that would allow brothels to re-open and be run as cooperatives by sex workers themselves in order to ensure their safety.

Jean-Philippe Tanguy, a member of the party, revealed this week that he has been working on the legislation that he claims has the backing of Le Pen.

The 39-year-old argues that the 2016 law criminalising clients has only worsened the daily lives of sex workers, forcing them to work “even

harder” in appalling conditions.

“The only solution is for prostitutes to be their own bosses, to be empresses in their own kingdom,” Tanguy told RTL radio.

“It would be a kind of cooperative, an institution run and owned by the prostitutes themselves,” he said. The move, he argues, would allow sex workers to contribute to social security and have unemployment and retirement benefits.

In a pioneering move, sex workers in next-door Belgium were last year given full employment rights, such as paid leave.

‘Don’t want to work with RN’

Tanguy’s bombshell initiative was unveiled as France, stuck in a political and economic limbo, is struggling to adopt a budget and cut its budget deficit.

The plan has raised eyebrows and reignited debate about prostitution and sex workers’ rights.

France’s old “maisons closes” combined the lure of private pleasures with chic bars and restaurants for party-goers,

attracting stars such as Humphrey Bogart, Cary Grant and Edith Piaf, as well as politicians and foreign dignitaries.

Painter Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec drew much of his inspiration in the French capital’s brothels, including “Le Chabonais” for the elite.

Conservative daily *Le Figaro* asked if France was heading “towards a return of brothels.”

“Surprise! Marine Le Pen herself has given her approval to this reform. When will the madams return?” quipped satirical weekly *Le Canard Enchaîné*.

The party of three-time presidential candidate Le Pen has been steadily gaining ground and senses its best ever chance of taking the Élysée in the 2027 presidential elections.

But some sex workers who support the idea of self-ruled cooperatives rubbish the proposal, saying the anti-immigration party wanted to prevent foreign women from plying their trade in France.

“It will never pass. It’s just a publicity stunt,” one sex worker, identified only as Mia, told media outlet 20minutes.

The STRASS association that defends the rights of sex workers, which has campaigned for the decriminalisation of prostitution and the establishment of cooperatives, sought to distance itself from National Rally (RN).

“We don’t want to work with the RN,” spokesman Thierry Schaffauser told AFP.

“What we want is for the other parties to agree to work with us and stop ignoring us. This leaves a void that the RN is rushing to fill.”

‘Sexual populism’

While some of Tanguy’s colleagues admitted they were caught off guard by his initiative, others rushed to his defence.

“This is not the reopening of brothels as we imagine them,” RN vice-president Sébastien Chenu told journalists on Tuesday.

“Nor is it an urgent matter, obviously,” he said, adding the idea had “come up in conversation” during parliamentary proceedings.

The lawmaker, who participated in a study group on sex work, said the 2016 law on the criminalisation

of clients “has solved nothing.”

Equality Minister Aurore Berge said France had no plans to change its stance.

“Desire cannot be bought,” she said on Instagram.

“Prostitution is not ‘the oldest profession in the world.’ It is the oldest system of male domination over women.”

In 2024, Gabriel Attal’s government unveiled a national strategy to combat prostitution, which included measures against massage parlours.

The Communist Party denounced a “reactionary vision that reduces women to bodies for sale”, while Socialist MP Jerome Guedj slammed the proposal as “a form of sexual populism”.

The Mouvement du Nid (“Nest Movement”), an anti-prostitution group, condemned a vision that it said was “absurd” and “disconnected from people’s lives,” stressing that “brothels do not protect women, but clients.”

“Prostitution is neither work nor sex,” said CFDT union chief Marylise Leon. — AFP

Earliest evidence of humans making fire discovered in UK

Daniel Lawler

PARIS – Excited scientists announced yesterday they have discovered evidence in the UK of humans deliberately making fire 400,000 years ago, dramatically pushing back the timeline for when our ancient relatives are known to have mastered this crucial skill.

Learning to light our own fires was one of the great turning points in human history, offering our ancestors warmth, a place to socialise and a way to cook food – which helped us evolve our unusually big brains.

There are signs that humans were using fire more than a million years ago in Africa, but it is believed these flames were originally lit by natural causes such as lightning.

Finding solid evidence that our ancestors were sparking their own fires has proven extremely difficult, possibly because the tools did not last throughout the millennia.

That is why a team led by researchers from the British Museum were so pleased to find a human fireplace dating back 400,000 years near the village of Barnham, in Suffolk, eastern England.

Previously, the oldest evidence of fire-making anywhere in the world was found in France – and dated back 50,000 years.

“This is the most exciting discovery of my 40-year career,” Nick Ashton, a curator at the British Museum and senior author of a study in *Nature* describing the find, told a press conference.

Interestingly, the researchers believe the fireplace belonged to perhaps the most-maligned

member of the human family tree: the Neanderthal.

We did start the fire

The Barnham archaeological site was first identified in the late 1800s, when ancient elephant tools were found there.

The first hint that the site could be home to a fireplace came in 2021, when scientists came across sediment that showed signs of being repeatedly heated.

But it took four years of painstaking work to prove that the heated clay was not caused by wildfire.

“The big turning point came with the discovery of iron pyrite,” Ashton said.

This mineral is used to create the spark to light tinder. It is also very rare in the area, indicating that ancient humans brought it to the site, the researchers said.

They also found fire-cracked handaxes that could have struck the pyrite.

Sarah Hlubik, a pyroarchaeologist at St Mary’s College of Maryland in the United States not involved in the research, told AFP that “this is a really exciting find”.

Being able to start our own fires – rather than grabbing burning branches from a naturally lit blaze – provided a lot of benefits that likely influenced human history.

The fire’s warmth allowed humans to explore farther into colder areas, the researchers said.

The ability to make fire also provided a place for humans to gather after dark, likely making us more talkative, social animals.

Everyone “can connect with the idea of a group of humans around a

campfire – it’s something we’ve all experienced,” Ashton said.

But perhaps the most important was the change in our diets.

“We are the only things on the planet that rely on cooked food,” Hlubik pointed out.

Cooking food – particularly meat – saved energy previously used on digestion that is believed to have helped develop our bigger, more powerful brains.

There is fossil evidence from around 400,000 years ago which suggests that the period when humans brains were approaching their modern size, the researchers said.

Neanderthals not so dumb

While the identity of the Barnham fire-starters is not known, the researchers think they were likely Neanderthals because of fossils found nearby.

There has been a long-running debate about whether Neanderthals were able to make their own fire, with the sites in France once used to cast doubt on their abilities.

But this discovery “negates the argument that they just never had that technology”, Hlubik said.

It also adds to a recent “re-evaluation” of Neanderthals, who were long dismissed as overly primitive, according to study co-author Chris Stringer of the British Museum.

But the new evidence “fits with the picture of a more complex model of Neanderthal behaviour – and increases their similarity to us,” he added.

– AFP



Miami's Mayor-elect Eileen Higgins holds a press conference yesterday in Miami, Florida, the day after winning the mayoral seat. Higgins, a Democrat, beat her Republican challenger Emilio González, a former city manager endorsed by President Donald Trump, in a runoff election. The position of Mayor for the City of Miami is officially nonpartisan. — AFP

Greenland's forced contraception victims can claim US\$47,000: Denmark

COPENHAGEN – Denmark yesterday announced that women affected by a forced contraception programme in Greenland will be able to claim 300,000 Danish kroner (US\$47,000) in compensation.

Between the late 1960s and 1991, Danish authorities aimed to reduce the birth rate among Greenland’s indigenous Inuit population by forcing around 4,500 women to wear a contraceptive coil – or intrauterine device (IUD) – without their consent.

In late September, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen travelled to Greenland’s capital Nuuk to present a formal apology to victims in person.

The campaign in the vast autonomous Danish territory “has had major consequences for Greenlandic women, who have suffered both physical and psychological damage, and which to this day affects perceptions of Denmark”, Danish Health Minister Sophie Lohde said in

a statement yesterday.

“Unfortunately, we cannot take away the pain suffered by these women, but compensation helps to acknowledge and apologise for the experiences they have been through,” Lohde added.

Just days before Frederiksen’s September trip to Greenland, Denmark announced the creation of a “reconciliation fund” to compensate the affected women, as well as other Greenlanders who had suffered discrimination, but did not specify compensation amounts.

To obtain the compensation announced yesterday, victims must be able to “substantiate their account” and “declare on their honour that they were given the contraception without their knowledge or consent”, the statement said.

The compensation scheme is expected to begin on June 1, 2026.

– AFP

What's at stake as Yemeni separatists gain ground?



Yemeni supporters of the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council (STC), which wants to revive an independent South Yemen, wave the old South Yemen flag, as they rally in Al-Aroud Square demanding a "second independence", in the coastal port city of Aden on Monday. — AFP

Sahar Al Attar and Sofiane Alsaar

DUBAI – UAE-backed south Yemeni separatists have taken control of vast new areas, rattling the anti-Houthi government and threatening to further divide a country fractured by more than a decade of civil war.

Yemen is already split between the Iran-backed Houthis who control much of the north and a fractious patchwork of anti-rebel groups in the internationally recognised government.

The separatists of the Southern Transitional Council (STC) are part of that anti-Houthi government, but their advances have raised fears that the group might secede in an effort to revive the once independent South Yemen.

What is the STC?

Headed by Aidaros Alzubidi, the STC is a coalition of groups that want to bring back South Yemen, which existed from 1967 until its unification in 1990 with North Yemen.

They now control almost all of South Yemen's former territory.

The STC has gained influence during Yemen's civil war, which has pitted the Houthis against forces backed by a Saudi-led military coalition that includes the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Close to Abu Dhabi, the separatists are part of the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC), the eight-member body that heads the internationally recognised government.

Alzubidi is the PLC's vice-president while Saudi-backed Rashad al-Alimi, who has heavily criticised the separatists' advance, is its president.

The STC already controlled swathes of Yemen's south coast, including al-Mukalla, the capital of the country's largest province Hadramawt.

Last week, its forces swept inland, seizing the key city of Seiyun as well as oil fields in the mostly desert area bordering Saudi Arabia.

In recent days, some local leaders in neighbouring Mahra province, which borders Oman and is a key smuggling route, also joined their alliance, the STC told AFP.

Will the STC secede?

The advance and the lack of resistance "suggests a level of coordination with at least some of the government forces," according to Elisabeth Kendall of Cambridge University.

Its speed and success are "symptomatic of PLC failures" she said.

"The PLC has proven weak and divided, riddled by infighting and unable to govern effectively," she said, warning that its future was now unclear, with fears rising that the STC might secede.

A senior government official dismissed the possibility of such a move succeeding.

"The declaration of a new state isn't feasible nor viable nor possible," he told AFP, requesting anonymity to discuss sensitive matters.

"Secession isn't possible as it requires national, regional and international consensus which doesn't exist now," the Yemeni official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The STC is likely seeking to renegotiate the current power-sharing agreement within the PLC amid reports of a potential resumption of talks between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis.

The larger civil war has been effectively frozen since a UN-brokered ceasefire in 2022, though talks to bring it to a formal end are yet to succeed.

What do the UAE and Saudi Arabia want?

Riyadh has called for STC forces to withdraw from the newly seized territory while an Emirati official said Abu Dhabi's position on Yemen was "in line with Saudi Arabia".

The two Gulf monarchies have one shared objective, to counter the Houthi rebels, but they have diverging long-term interests.

Secession would offer the UAE "control over lucrative energy resources, ports, trade routes and strategic security locations," Kendall said, leaving "Saudi with a bellicose Houthi-dominated state on its border".

Their territorial gains are "undoubtedly unsettling for Oman," she added, which sees the province of Mahra as its "backyard". — AFP

Veggie 'burgers' remain on table as EU talks stall

BRUSSELS – EU wrangling over whether to give plant-based "sausages" and veggie "burgers" the chop and restrict such labels to meat products will grind on into next year after countries and lawmakers failed to reach a deal yesterday.

Many of Europe's livestock farmers see plant-based foods that mimic meat as potentially misleading for consumers, and a threat to their already troubled sector.

Lawmakers at the European Parliament (EP) in October backed a proposal to reserve a list of labels including burger and sausage for foods containing meat.

The European Union's 27 member states yesterday looked to hash out the initiative with negotiators from the parliament as part of a broad-ranging package of new measures to protect farmers.

But after several hours of talks, no agreement was reached. Negotiations are set to continue next year.

Some countries seem reticent to move ahead with a ban.

Food retailers in Germany, Europe's largest market for plant-based alternative products, have spoken out against the move, along with environmentalists and consumer advocates.

Beetle with a beef

Among high-profile opponents of the ban is former Beatle and prominent vegetarian Paul McCartney, who co-signed a letter to the EU's executive arguing against the measure.

"We urge you not to adopt these restrictions, as we are deeply concerned about the significant global impact they could have," the letter said.

"The evidence is clear: existing legislation already protects consumers; consumers themselves overwhelmingly understand and support current naming conventions."

But livestock farmers argue the opposite, with French industry group Interbev saying current labelling "confuses consumers and undermines recognition" of meat products.

EU consumption of plant-based alternatives to meat products

has grown five-fold since 2011, according to data from BEUC, a consumer group.

Concerns over animal welfare and greenhouse gas emissions by livestock farms as well as health arguments have fuelled the boom.

This is not the first time there has been a push to beef up rules on the labelling of such products in the EU.

The debate has stirred emotions in France, which passed a similar label ban in 2024 to appease angry farmers – only for it to be overturned the following January in line with a ruling by the EU's top court.

And a similar proposal was rejected by European lawmakers in 2020.

The balance of power has since shifted, as the 2024 European elections saw big gains by right-wing parties that cultivate close ties to the farm sector.

But even among those groups, there is no clear consensus, with centre-right leader Manfred Weber insisting the proposal was "not a priority at all". — AFP

Creating a European defence industry a tough call: Airbus

PARIS – The head of Airbus yesterday said constructing a European defence industry, especially around a future joint fighter jet, was a struggle, urging manufacturers and governments to improve cooperation.

Guillaume Faury told France Inter radio that the industry was a "real uphill battle" but added: "When we manage to work together, we achieve some pretty good things."

He said he believes that the SCAF fighter jet programme, for which French aircraft manufacturer Dassault is the main contractor, with Airbus also involved on behalf of German and Spanish manufacturers, "will happen."

But he said he regretted an ongoing "fairly significant disagreement" with Dassault

"on how to conduct the aircraft's development".

For Faury, "the SCAF is a combat system which comprises an aircraft, drones, what we call a combat cloud, and a digital system connecting all the components."

"The manner of cooperation for each of pillar is not yet finalised," he added.

In September, Dassault Aviation CEO Eric Trappier said the French group was capable of developing the sixth-generation aircraft "on its own" and said there should be review of the project's three-way partnership.

"With any cooperation, you must develop something that benefits all parties involved," Faury responded.

"If one party says it's on my terms or not, that's not very conducive" to

collaborative success, he argued.

"Today, we're caught between two opposing visions... We need to be able to develop an aircraft which meets the needs of the French, but also the Germans and the Spanish."

According to the German government website, the three countries' defence ministers – Boris Pistorius of Germany, Catherine Vautrin of France, and Margarita Robles of Spain – are scheduled to meet tomorrow in Berlin.

Their agenda has not been revealed, however.

During a visit to Berlin a month ago, French President Emmanuel Macron referred to an "obligation to achieve results" regarding the FCAS, while German Chancellor Friedrich Merz stressed the need to reach a decision by year end. — AFP

Not lovin' it: McDonald's pulls Dutch AI Christmas ad

THE HAGUE – US burger chain McDonald's said yesterday it had removed an AI-generated Christmas advert in the Netherlands after it was filleted online.

The advert, "the most terrible time of the year", depicts Christmas chaos, with Santa caught in a traffic jam and a present-laden Dutch cyclist slipping in the snow.

The message: retreat to a McDonald's restaurant until January and ride out the festive season.

But the generative AI ad sparked a (Mc)flurry of criticism on social media.

"This commercial single-handedly ruined my Christmas

spirit," said one user. "Good riddance to AI slop," posted another.

McDonald's Netherlands said in a statement to AFP: "The Christmas commercial was intended to show the stressful moments during the holidays in the Netherlands."

"However, we notice – based on the social comments and international media coverage – that for many guests this period is 'the most wonderful time of the year'."

Melanie Bridge, chief executive of The Sweetshop Films, which made the ad, defended its use of artificial intelligence in a post on LinkedIn.

"It's never about replacing craft, it's about expanding the

toolbox. The vision, the taste, the leadership... that will always be human," she said.

"And here's the part people don't see: the hours that went into this job far exceeded a traditional shoot. Ten people, five weeks, full-time," added Bridge.

But this too sparked online debate.

Emlyn Davies, from independent production company Bomper Studio, replied to the LinkedIn post: "What about the humans who would have been in it, the actors, the choir?"

"Ten people on a project like this is a tiny amount compared to shooting it traditionally live action."

— AFP

Brazil lawmakers approve bill to cut Bolsonaro sentence after ruckus

Juan Sebastian Serrano

BRASÍLIA – Brazil’s lower house of Congress approved a bill yesterday that could slash former president Jair Bolsonaro’s prison sentence for plotting a coup, after efforts by a lawmaker to disrupt the proceedings sparked chaos in parliament.

The far-right former leader has been serving a 27-year term since November after his conviction for a scheme to stop President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva from taking office after the 2022 elections.

Lawmakers had been discussing a bill that would significantly reduce sentences for several crimes, including attempting a coup d’état – opening up the prospect that Bolsonaro, 70, could see his sentence cut to just over two years.

After a heated debate that saw one lawmaker forcibly removed by police, the lower house of Congress approved the bill yesterday morning (local time). It still awaits Senate ratification before becoming law.

Bolsonaro’s supporters in the conservative-majority Congress have for months weighed different options to ease his punishment, including a possible amnesty that fizzled out after countrywide protests.

After that failed, congressman Sôstenes Cavalcante said, “The first step to achieving our goal will be the reduction of sentences.”

On Tuesday, efforts to vote on the bill led to turmoil in the Chamber of Deputies.

Police forcibly removed government-allied leftist deputy Glauber Braga after denouncing a “coup offensive” and occupying the Speaker’s chair, according to footage broadcast on local television.

The broadcast was interrupted, journalists were removed from the plenary hall, and the debate was suspended. The session resumed after order was restored.

Braga said he was exercising his right “not to accept as a done deal an amnesty for a group of coup plotters.”



Lawmakers of Brazil’s lower house of Congress celebrate after approving a bill that could slash former president Jair Bolsonaro’s prison sentence for plotting a coup, in Brasília yesterday. – AFP

If the bill passes into law, “Bolsonaro will see his sentence reduced... to something like two years and four months in prison,” Paulinho da Força, who is leading negotiations on the bill, said in a video sent to AFP.

It would also grant parole to about 100 Bolsonaro supporters imprisoned for the January 8, 2023 assault on government buildings in Brasília, shortly after Lula took office.

However, it will be up to the judiciary to reformulate sentencing under the new conditions approved by Congress.

Bolsonaro’s defence team has also asked the Supreme Court to authorise his release for a surgical procedure due to his deteriorating health, according to documents obtained by AFP.

As they requested weeks ago, his lawyers again sought for the court to allow the ex-president to serve his sentence at home for “humanitarian” reasons.

‘Authoritarian measures’

Lindbergh Farias, leader of the ruling Workers’ Party (PT) in Congress, said the initiative was “unacceptable” as it was clearly aimed at “creating a specific law to benefit Bolsonaro.”

Conservative house president Hugo Motta meanwhile faced criticism for ordering journalists out.

In a statement, the FENAJ national press association and a journalists’ union slammed the “episode of censorship and aggression against the press.”

The bill had been stalled for several months but resurfaced a few days after Bolsonaro anointed his son, Senator Flávio Bolsonaro, as his successor ahead of 2026 presidential elections.

Flávio said on Sunday he would be willing to withdraw his 2026 presidential candidacy in exchange for an amnesty for his father.

In late November, Jair Bolsonaro’s lawyers said they would appeal his detention that “could put his life at risk” due to his frail health.

Bolsonaro has a history of abdominal issues after being stabbed during the 2018 campaign, and has required several follow-up surgeries.

The recently submitted medical documents obtained by AFP “reveal a significant worsening of Bolsonaro’s health” requiring his “immediate hospitalisation,” his defence team said in the request to the Supreme Court.

– AFP

Guinea-Bissau junta says coup leader barred from running for president

BISSAU – Guinea-Bissau’s ruling junta, which seized power last month, has said that its leading general will not be allowed to run for president after handing power back to civilians.

After ousting outgoing leader Umaro Sissoco Embaló on November 26 in the wake of the presidential vote, the army suspended the electoral process and announced it was taking control of the coup-prone west African country for a period of one year.

The junta then raised suspicions that Embaló had orchestrated the coup to keep himself in power by appointing his ally General Horta N’Tam as interim president.

In a “charter of the transition” published by the presidency on Monday, which is intended to provide a legal framework for the period under military rule, both N’Tam and the junta’s prime minister “are not eligible to stand as candidates in the presidential and legislative elections at the end of the transition period”.

Under the framework, neither will also be able to head a political party.

The charter does, however, provide for the adoption of a law offering amnesty to those who

committed “acts of subversion of the constitutional order on November 26, 2025”.

It is set to be approved at a later date by a legislative body appointed by the junta.

The reasons for the coup have remained unclear, with observers and the opposition raising the possibility that Embaló engineered the takeover to halt the electoral process as he was losing at the ballot box.

After first pointing to the threat of a plot by the cocaine-trafficking hotspot’s powerful drug barons to destabilise the country, the junta last week argued that the threat of ethnic civil war justified its intervention.

“There is room for doubt about the length of the transitional period because, when it comes to the military, caution is needed when interpreting their statements,” Paulino Quade, a lawyer and professor at the Amílcar Cabral University law school, told AFP on Tuesday.

Before November’s coup, Guinea-Bissau had already undergone four military takeovers and a litany of attempted insurrections since gaining independence from Portugal in 1974.

– AFP



Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez (right) meets with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas at the Moncloa Palace in Madrid yesterday. – AFP

Madeleine McCann’s father says ‘lucky’ to survive media attention

LONDON – The father of missing British girl Madeleine “Maddie” McCann has called for greater scrutiny of the UK’s media, saying in an interview published yesterday that his family received a “monsterring” from sections of the press.

Gerry McCann told the BBC that elements of Britain’s media made him feel like he was being “suffocated and buried” following the disappearance of his daughter.

Madeleine was three years old when she vanished in 2007 from the apartment inn southern Portugal where her family was holidaying.

It triggered a massive global search and nearly two decades of

unrelenting media attention, but the case remains unsolved.

McCann said in the rare interview that he and his wife Kate were “lucky we survived” press intrusion that left him feeling like he was “drowning”.

“Journalists coming to the house, photographers literally ramming their cameras against our car window when we had two-year-old twins in the back, who were terrified,” he recalled.

McCann also alleged that the press “repeatedly interfered” with the investigation into Madeleine’s disappearance.

The media “published material which should have been confidential, should be passed on to the police,

witness statements, many other things that have gone out.

“So if you were the perpetrator, you knew a lot more than you should have done – and as a victim, as a parent, it’s absolutely dismaying,” he added.

Push for regulation

The McCanns are among more than 30 people who have reportedly signed a letter to Prime Minister Keir Starmer urging his Labour government to resume an inquiry into media practices.

The so-called Leveson Inquiry was established in 2011 following a scandal in which journalists at the now defunct *News of the World*

hacked the phones of high-profile Britons, including a murdered schoolgirl.

The probe led to the establishment of a new press regulator, but a second phase to study relationships between journalists and politicians and the police was cancelled by the previous Conservative government and has not been restarted by Labour since it won power in July last year.

“It’s not acceptable to me now, more than a year on, that Leveson and press regulation is no longer a priority,” said McCann.

Madeleine’s father added that he felt a Polish woman who falsely claimed to be his daughter and was convicted last month of harassing

his family had been egged on by some press outlets.

“A lot of media channels exploited her early on, putting her on front pages,” he said of 24-year-old Julia Wandelt, who was acquitted of a more serious charge of stalking.

The prime suspect in Madeleine’s disappearance, Christian Brückner, has never been charged in the case. He was released from prison in northern Germany in September after serving a sentence on separate rape charges.

McCann said that after 18 years “the hope is slim” that he will find Madeleine “but it’s not extinguished”.

“We need to find out what’s happened to her.”

– AFP

Arsenal ensure Women's Champions League play-off berth



PARIS – Holders Arsenal ensured they will reach at least the knockout play-offs of the Women's Champions League on Tuesday with a 1-0 win over Dutch side Twente.

England forward Beth Mead scored the only goal of the encounter in the 10th minute as Renee Slegers' side continue their recovery after losing two of their three opening matches of the league phase.

A third win of the campaign moved Arsenal up to sixth in the standings with only one matchday remaining as they sit one point outside the top four.

Mead said a top-four finish was Arsenal's "aim".

"We've got to put three points on the table next week [at Leuven]," she told Disney+.

"We had an up-and-down campaign last time, you know, you can turn these things around. We just want to finish the Champions League year with a win."

The four highest-placed sides in the table will progress automatically to the quarter-finals with fifth to 12th entering a two-legged play-off to secure a last-eight berth.

Real Madrid currently occupy third spot thanks to a 2-0 win at home to Wolfsburg of Germany.

Maria Mendez headed the opener in the 19th minute, before her centre-back partner Maelle Lakrar picked up a second booking in first-half injury time.

Linda Caicedo scored a fine solo effort with 23 minutes remaining to earn a vital three points for the Spaniards, who finished reduced to nine after 18-year-old substitute Iris Santiago's late dismissal.

Winless Paris Saint-Germain were held to a goalless draw at the Parc des Princes by Belgians Leuven.

PSG's first point of the league phase was not enough to save them from elimination as they trail their local rivals Paris FC, in the final play-off spot, by four points.

In the day's early kick-off, Juventus jumped to second place with a 5-0 hammering of St Poelten in Austria, with captain Cristiana Girelli scoring twice from the penalty spot. – AFP

Football shorts

RB Leipzig appoint first woman CEO in German football



LEIPZIG – RB Leipzig yesterday named Tatjana Haenni as the club's new chief executive, making her the first woman club boss in German football history.

The 59-year-old Swiss will take over on January 1 and will head Leipzig's management board.

A former footballer, Haenni made 23 appearances for the Swiss national team. Since retiring, she has taken up sports administration roles at UEFA, FIFA and the Swiss Football Association (SFV).

"I can't wait to get started in January and to get to know the club on a deeper level," Haenni said in a statement released yesterday.

"Together, we want to continue on what is already a successful path, and achieve our ambitious goals."

Former CEO and current Red Bull executive Oliver Mintzlaff praised Haenni's "specialist knowledge, leadership and strategic thinking", adding she would "successfully shape the club's next stages of development".

Founded in 2009 by taking over a club in Germany's fifth tier, RB Leipzig rose through the ranks and was first promoted to the top flight in 2016.

Since then, the club have won two German

Cups and made it to the semi-finals of the Champions League in 2020.

Former Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp took over as Red Bull global head of football in January 2025, overseeing a multi-club network which includes clubs in Leipzig, New York and Bragantino. – AFP

England to face Uruguay and Japan ahead of World Cup

LONDON - England will continue their preparation for next year's World Cup with friendly internationals against Uruguay and Japan, it was announced yesterday.

Uruguay will visit Wembley on March 27, with the Japan clash taking place four days later.

The two games will be the last time Thomas Tuchel's men play at home before they bid to end England's 60-year wait for a major trophy at the World Cup finals in North America.

England waltzed through World Cup qualification with a 100 percent record.

But their March opponents should provide sterner opposition, with Uruguay 16th in the world rankings and Japan 18th. Both countries have also qualified for the World Cup.

The games will be the last chance for players to press their claims for World Cup selection before Tuchel names his squad in May.

England are then expected to play two

Spurs' Simons wants to 'build legacy' as he succeeds Son



LONDON – Xavi Simons said he wanted to "build my own legacy" after marking the return of Son Heung-min on a visit to Tottenham with another goal in the number seven shirt once worn by the former Spurs star.

The Dutch attacking midfielder followed his commanding display in last weekend's win over Brentford with another impressive showing in a 3-0 Champions League win at home to Slavia Prague on Tuesday.

Simons rounded off victory with a late penalty as Son finally bid farewell to the Spurs faithful after a decade of superb service with the north London club.

"It is really nice to score the goals, but feeling great on the pitch, that is the most important for me and I'm enjoying it," said Xavi.

The 22-year-old, a £52 million (US\$69 million) summer transfer window signing

from RB Leipzig, added: "I didn't meet Son [before] personally and now a little bit. He is a big legend for the club and it's a real pleasure for me to take this number and build my own legacy, so really happy to meet him."

Son scored 173 goals in 454 appearances for Tottenham, with his final competitive appearance their Europa League final triumph over Manchester United on May 21.

The South Korea captain left Spurs in pre-season to sign for Los Angeles FC and so was unable to say goodbye to the club's fans until Tuesday

Several hours before kick-off, a mural depicting Son was unveiled on the Tottenham High Road.

Son later addressed a crowd of 47,821 and told them "I will always be Spurs".

Speaking to Korean media afterwards, he said: "First of all, I'm happy to be back

in a place where I spent my youth and is like a home.

"I'm so grateful that so many fans welcomed me and cheered for me. It was a little hard [on Monday] because the flight time was longer than I thought, but I had a really happy day. Thank you so much."

Mathys Tel, only drafted into Spurs' Champions League squad this week as an injury replacement for Dominic Solanke, was among those delighted to catch up with Son again.

"Sonny is like my big brother," said Tel. "He is always texting me, his support is always behind me, so back in the Champions League, we won and Sonny was there... a lot of good things.

"Sonny is a big legend at Tottenham, so when a guy like Sonny comes after he did everything, you give everything for him." – AFP



Tottenham Hotspur's South Korean former player Son Heung-min, who left the club in the summer, waves goodbye to fans on the pitch ahead of the UEFA Champions League football league stage match against Slavia Prague at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London, on Tuesday. – AFP

friendlies in the United States before heading into camp.

"We are really pleased to have these two fixtures confirmed as our World Cup year takes shape," said England manager Tuchel.

"We wanted to play two teams ranked in the top 20 in the world, but also to test ourselves against opponents from outside of Europe."

The German boss added: "After Friday's draw, the excitement for next year is really building and we can't wait to see our fans again at Wembley."

England will play Croatia, Ghana and Panama in Group L at the World Cup. – AFP

Celtic boss Nancy 'won't waste time' on criticism



GLASGOW – Wilfried Nancy will not "waste time" on the negative reaction that followed his debut defeat as Celtic boss.

The Frenchman started his Parkhead reign with a 2-1 home loss to Hearts on Sunday that left the Scottish champions three points adrift of the Premiership leaders with a game in hand.

Nancy attracted much comment for using a hand-held tactics board at pitch-side to inform players of changes, while one radio broadcaster even questioned his choice of green trainers.

But the 48-year-old former Columbus Crew and Montreal boss, speaking ahead of Celtic's Europa League game at home to Roma today, said: "People deserve the right to talk.

"I'm going to dress one way, maybe they are going to say that they don't like the way I dress, so I don't waste time on that.

"If I use it (the tactics board), it's because it's good for me. Simple as that and I'm not saying that I'm going to use it all the time."

He added that since moving into coaching he has taken the decision to block out outside noise on social media.

"This is part of the job. That's why we study for that. And after that, I'm not here to comment on everything," he said.

"Me, I control what I can control, to be good with my players, with my club, with the people that I work with."

Nancy revealed his mother was concerned about the effects of the whirlwind start to his time with the Glasgow giants, which features a Scottish League Cup final against St Mirren at Hampden Park on Sunday.

"My mum told me that I have bags [under my eyes]," he explained. "I said, 'Yeah, mummy, I just came in, jet-lagged, trying to anticipate everything'."

"But again, this is part of our job. I'm really excited by that. So, I try to stay at peace with myself, at peace with you." – AFP

Sabalenka says transgender women in WTA events 'not fair'

Tennis

PARIS – World No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka said Tuesday that she considers it “not fair” that the women’s professional tennis tour allows transgender women to compete in WTA tournaments, even though they are currently absent from the elite of world tennis.

Appearing on British host Piers Morgan’s show on Tuesday evening, the Belarusian was asked if she shared the opinion of former world No. 1 Martina Navratilova, who opposes transgender women participating in WTA tournaments.

“That’s a tricky question,” said Sabalenka.

“I have nothing against them but I feel like they have still got a huge advantage over women

[who have not undergone gender transition].

“And I think it’s just not fair to a woman to face, biologically men. It’s not fair,” added Sabalenka, who will take on Nick Kyrgios in an exhibition match dubbed ‘The Battle of the Sexes’ in Dubai at the end of December.

“Like the woman has been working her whole life to reach her limit and then she has to face like a man, who is biologically much stronger. So I don’t agree with this kind of stuff in sport,” she added.

The participation of transgender women in WTA tournaments is permitted under certain conditions, one of which is that their blood testosterone concentration has remained below 2.5 nanomoles per litre for the past two years.

They must also submit to the WTA a signed declaration attesting to their female or non-binary gender identity.

In practice, no transgender woman is currently playing a leading role on the WTA tour.

American Renee Richards, born Richard Raskind in 1934, is one of the few transgender tennis players to have competed at the highest level.

After playing the US Open several times in the men’s draw in the 1950s, she embarked on a second career on the women’s tour from the late 1970s into the early part of the following decade.

After retiring from competition in 1981, Richards notably coached Martina Navratilova.

– AFP

Former Israel PT team to race in cycling’s World Tour

Cycling

PARIS – The International Cycling Union (UCI) confirmed yesterday that the Andres Iniesta-headed NSN Cycling Team – formerly Israel Premier Tech – would compete on the elite-level World Tour the next three years.

The new team largely takes over the structure of Israel PT, which was targeted by pro-Palestinian protests earlier this year, leading to the disruption of some major races.

Pro-Palestinian protesters caused several stages of the Vuelta a Espana to be either shortened or neutralised while they also caused some cyclists to crash.

Israel PT were also forced to pull out of several races in Italy over fears that they would be disrupted by protesters.

The team was previously owned by Canadian-Israeli property developer Sylvan Adams, who had dubbed himself an unofficial ambassador for Israel, which in October signed a fragile ceasefire with Palestinian armed group Hamas in Gaza after two years of war.

Former Spain and Barcelona football star Iniesta is a co-founder of sports and entertainment agency NSN which, partnered with Swiss global investment platform Stoneweg, took over the team in November.

NSN Cycling will race under a Swiss licence, but will be based in Spain, and has already signed a star name in the form of sprinter Biniam Girmay.

The Eritrean’s former team, Intermarche, was also included in the list of 18 teams to compete on the World Tour for the next three years unveiled by the UCI.

It will race under the new guise of Lotto-Intermarche – confirming the long-awaited merger between the two Belgian organisations.

“In recent months we have worked very hard behind the scenes to build a solid project, based on the foundations of Lotto Cycling Team and Intermarche-Wanty,” new team CEO Jean-Francois Bourlart said in a statement.

The Lotto-Intermarche team will be headed by 23-year-old rising Belgian star Arnaud De Lie. – AFP

NZ lose Tickner as West Indies all out for 205

Ben Strang

WELLINGTON – New Zealand fought back to claim first-day honours in the second Test against the West Indies in Wellington, but the home side suffered a blow when seam bowler Blair Tickner was taken to hospital with a nasty shoulder injury.

New Zealand were 24-0 at the close of play after bowling the West Indies out for 205 in 75 overs.

Tickner was the pick of the New Zealand bowlers, taking 4-32 from 16 overs, but his day ended prematurely when he tumbled onto his shoulder while fielding and left on a stretcher.

Medical staff from the West Indies and Black Caps camps rushed to Tickner’s aid and after some worrying moments eventually he sat up before being taken away to an ambulance.

New Zealand Cricket said he had suffered a left shoulder injury.

“It was pretty awful to see,” said wicketkeeper Mitch Hay, playing in his first Test having replaced Tom Blundell who was injured in the first Test.

“We wish him all the best because it’s never nice seeing that. Everyone is feeling for Blair.”

Captain Tom Latham was seven not out and Devon Conway on 16 after the opening pair made it safely through to stumps against nine overs from the new ball.

“I’m hoping tomorrow is a good day for batting,” said Hay who said his side would aim to post a big lead.

“I think it will be the sort of pitch where there is something on offer, but we’ll see how it plays out.”

Latham won the toss and chose

to bowl – the 18th successive time in Wellington where a captain inserted the opposition – only for the West Indies to reach 66-0 after little more than an hour.

Tickner then took two wickets in two overs to get New Zealand under way, causing headaches with his accurate line and length.

The West Indies lost opener John Campbell three balls after lunch for 44, including six fours, but consolidated to be 175-4 at tea before losing six wickets for just 30 runs in the final session.

Tickner had support from debutant Michael Rae, who snared 3-67 from 18 overs in his maiden Test.

Shai Hope was the best of the visiting batsmen, scoring 48 from 80 deliveries with eight fours, supported by Campbell and 33 from Brandon King.

“Our openers laid a very good foundation for us, a great start, but we let ourselves down with the bat in the back end,” said Hope.

“We need to put a better first innings score to set up the game for us.”

Injury-depleted New Zealand named two debutants in their side, with wicketkeeper Hay and seamer Rae replacing regular gloveman Tom Blundell and Matt Henry.

The West Indies were also forced into changes after Tagenarine Chanderpaul was injured in training the day before the match, replaced by King at the top of the order.

Kavem Hodge came in for Alick Athanaze and fast-bowler Anderson Phillip replaced Johann Layne.

The first Test in Christchurch was drawn and the third and final Test begins on December 18 in Mount Maunganui. – AFP

Marcell Jacobs looking for ‘spark’ to push to 2028 Olympics

Athletics

ROME – Marcell Jacobs, the surprise Tokyo Olympics 100 metres champion, said yesterday he could prolong his career until the 2028 Los Angeles Games if he manages to rediscover “that spark”.

“If I were ever to find that spark again – the one I’m trying at all

costs to re-light – I’d like to have a clear situation that would allow me to train at 100 percent,” Jacobs, 31, told Sky Sport Italia.

“And in that case, it wouldn’t be for just one year, but at least three. The goal would become Los Angeles 2028,” the Italian added.

Since his Olympic triumph in 2021, Jacobs has suffered a series

of injuries and slipped down the world rankings, although he did qualify for the 100m Olympic final in Paris last year, finishing fifth in a time of 9.85sec.

He also won the European 100m title in 2022 and 2024 but at the world championships in Tokyo in September, he was eliminated in the semi-finals.

– AFP

China’s Wang Chuqin, Wang Manyu start strong at WTT Finals

Table tennis

HONG KONG – China’s Wang Chuqin and Wang Manyu clinched victories in the singles round of 16 as the World Table Tennis (WTT) Finals kicked off here yesterday.

World No. 1 Wang Chuqin was pushed hard by Japan’s 18-year-old Sora Matsushima in the men’s singles. In the best-of-seven match, Matsushima led 3-1 after four games, 11-6, 11-9, 4-11, 14-12. The Chinese star then bounced back to take the next three games 12-10, 11-4, 11-9 and seal a 4-3 victory.

“I was not in good form today

and tried to adjust myself during the match. I need to be more active. After winning the fifth game, I was more motivated to pursue the victory,” said the 25-year-old Wang.

In the women’s singles, Wang Manyu defeated Japan’s Miwa Harimoto 11-6, 11-8, 11-13, 11-6, 9-11, 11-7, while China’s Chen Yi edged Zhu Yuling of Macao in a seven-game thriller 11-6, 7-11, 11-6, 10-12, 11-9, 4-11, 11-8.

“We came to Hong Kong after taking the ITTF Mixed Team World Cup title last weekend. There was only a short period of time for us to adapt to the venue

here,” said Wang Manyu. “She [Harimoto] played tough today, and I kept patient throughout the match to clinch the victory.”

In a Chinese derby, Chen Xingtong saw off Shi Xunhao 7-11, 11-3, 8-11, 12-10, 14-12, 11-8 to secure a berth in the women’s singles last eight.

In the mixed doubles, Wang Chuqin and Sun Yingsha beat Indian pair Manush Shah and Diya Chitale 11-7, 11-6, 11-8, while China’s Lin Shidong and Kuai Man cruised past Wong Chun Ting and Doo Hoi Kem of Hong Kong 11-9, 11-4, 11-4. – Xinhua

French sprinter Pamera Losange, deaf since birth and the French Elite 200m champion among able-bodied athletes, poses with her two gold medals she won at the recent Tokyo 2025 Deaflympics (the Olympic Games for deaf and hard-of-hearing athletes) at France’s National Institute of Sport, Expertise, and Performance (INSEP) in Paris, yesterday. – AFP



UK trial opens in dispute over Jimi Hendrix recordings

LONDON – A legal dispute over the rights to recordings made by the 1960s British-American rock band, the Jimi Hendrix Experience, went to trial on Tuesday at the High Court in London.

Owners of the estates of Hendrix’s British bandmates, bassist Noel Redding and drummer Mitch Mitchell, are suing Sony Music Entertainment UK arguing they were shut out of royalties for decades despite the continued commercial use of the band’s recordings.

They say they are entitled to copyright and performers’ rights on three albums recorded in the 1960s by the Jimi Hendrix Experience – “Are You Experienced”, “Axis: Bold As Love” and “Electric Ladyland”.

At issue in the liability-only trial is whether contracts written for the era of vinyl records also apply to digital uses, such as streaming, and whether new performers’ rights, created in UK law decades after the band split, mean the Redding and Mitchell estates merit a payment they say never arrived.

If the claimants succeed, a separate trial will later determine damages.

Redding and Mitchell, who died in the 2000s, formed the band with American rock legend Hendrix in 1966. The group broke up shortly

before Hendrix, the famed guitarist from Seattle, died following a drug overdose in September 1970.

“Both men died in relative poverty, having earned almost nothing from the recordings that defined their careers and their lives,” the claimants’ lawyers said in written submissions.

The pair were “marginalised” by producers, administrators of the Hendrix Estate and now, by a “major multinational which refuses to recognise or remunerate their copyright and performers’ rights”, the claimants’ submission added.

Sony Music UK rejects the claim.

It argues that ownership of the copyright to the sound recordings lay with producers, not musicians under a 1960s agreement and that releases signed in the 1970s granted consent for the recordings to be exploited “by any means and method whether then or thereafter known,” effectively settling the issue decades ago.

The claimants counter that digital exploitation, including streaming, could not have been contemplated when those releases were signed.

The trial is due to conclude on December 18 with a judgment expected in writing at a later date.

– AFP



US guitarist, singer and songwriter Jimi Hendrix (left) poses with British bassist Noel Redding (right) and British drummer Mitch Mitchell in 1968. Promotional photo of The Jimi Hendrix Experience. – Wikimedia Commons

World Weather			
CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing -5°C~4°C	Manila 24°C~31°C	New York -3°C~3°C	Lisbon 12°C~16°C
Shanghai 9°C~19°C	Bangkok 23°C~31°C	London 9°C~12°C	Rio de Janeiro 22°C~32°C
Hong Kong 18°C~25°C	Tokyo 3°C~16°C	Frankfurt 5°C~10°C	Luanda 23°C~28°C
Taipei 18°C~25°C	Singapore 24°C~31°C	Vancouver 7°C~10°C	Maputo 19°C~27°C
Guangzhou 17°C~27°C	Kuala Lumpur 23°C~32°C	Paris 9°C~11°C	Dili 23°C~29°C
Nanjing 6°C~18°C	Jakarta 23°C~32°C	Moscow 3°C~4°C	São Tomé 25°C~29°C
Guilin 16°C~25°C	Seoul -5°C~9°C	Las Vegas 9°C~23°C	Praia 20°C~27°C
Xi'an 3°C~16°C	Sydney 19°C~24°C	Monte Carlo 10°C~15°C	Bissau 17°C~33°C

Amy Winehouse’s father sues star’s friends for auctioning her clothes

LONDON – The father of late British singer Amy Winehouse on Tuesday defended his UK lawsuit against two of her friends after they sold some of her clothes at auction for around £730,000 (US\$970,000).

Mitch Winehouse told the High Court in London that Naomi Parry, the star’s former stylist, and her friend, Catriona Gourlay, did not have the right to sell dozens of items in auctions between November 2021 and May 2023.

Lawyer Henry Legge, acting for Winehouse, told the court on Monday, the first day of the trial, that the two women sold 150 objects which had belonged to Winehouse, including dresses which she wore on her last tour in June 2011.

The British singer-songwriter, who enjoyed meteoric global success, died a month later from alcohol poisoning, aged just 27.

Winehouse was a distinctive figure with her beehive hairdo, heavy black eye makeup, multiple tattoos, and smoky voice.

She shot to international fame with her Grammy Award-winning 2006 album “Back to Black” which included the track “Rehab”, charting her battle with addiction.

According to court documents, Winehouse believed that any sums collected from the sales organised by Los Angeles-based Julien’s Auctions would be due to him.

The auctioneers had also been told that a third of the proceeds would be donated to the Amy



The dress worn by Amy Winehouse in her final performance during the 2011 Summer Festival Tour for a concert in Belgrade is displayed at Julien’s Auctions in Beverly Hills, California on November 1, 2021, ahead of the “Property from the Life and Career of Amy Winehouse” auction on November 6-7, 2021. – AFP

Winehouse Foundation – a charity set up in the singer’s name working with young people to foster hope and self-reliance.

However, Winehouse’s team accused the women of failing to donate the share of proceeds to the foundation.

‘You’re wrong’

Ted Loveday, lawyer for Gourlay, said that most of the objects had been given or lent to the two women by the singer, even if there was no proof.

“If a 19-year-old gives a scarf or a pair of earrings to their friends, no one signs a contract,” he told the court on Monday, stressing the singer’s generosity.

Gourlay and Parry met Amy Winehouse in the early 2000s,

before she shot to fame. Parry went on to create some of the singer’s most iconic looks – including the green bamboo dress worn on the June 2011 tour which sold at auction for US\$243, 200.

Beth Grossman, the lawyer for Parry, said the two “women are not thieves and they are not dishonest”.

She accused Winehouse of bringing the lawsuit against the women out of “petty jealousy”, which he strongly denied on Tuesday, saying “you’re wrong”.

Grossman also highlighted the financial differences between the multi-millionaire Mitch Winehouse and the two women who are “living pretty much hand to mouth”.

The hearing is set to last until tomorrow, with a judgement due at a later date.

– AFP

Judi Dench says sight loss ‘a crusher’

LONDON – Oscar-winner and James Bond star Judi Dench has said sight loss due to macular degeneration means she can no longer see faces clearly, calling the condition a “crusher” as she marked her 91st birthday on Tuesday.

The veteran star of stage and screen, whose role as “M” in eight Bond films shot her to global fame, has suffered from the degenerative eye condition for over a decade.

Last year she disclosed it had reached the point where she had effectively been forced to retire.

Since then, a further deterioration means she can now only see faces – even at close quarters – “in a fog”.

She still puts the television on but just to listen to, she added in the interview with the Radio Times listings magazine to mark her birthday.

Dench, nominated seven times for an Academy Award, won for best supporting actress in 1998 for her eight-minute turn as Queen Elizabeth I in the romantic period piece “Shakespeare in Love”.

Also an acclaimed stage actress, she said she can still remember reams of Shakespeare but “can’t remember what I’m



British actor Judi Dench poses on the red carpet on arrival to attend the European premiere of the film ‘Belfast’, during the 2021 BFI London Film Festival in London on October 12, 2021. – AFP

doing tomorrow” and admits to worrying about cognitive decline.

Asked about Hollywood star Kevin Spacey, a longstanding friend with whom she acted in the 2001 film “The Shipping News”, Dench was quick to give him her backing.

Spacey is currently facing a civil battle in the UK over sexual assault allegations after being acquitted of similar accusations in criminal proceedings in 2023.

“Kevin has been exonerated, and

I hear from Kevin, we text,” she said.

She was more reticent about disgraced movie mogul Harvey Weinstein, whose predatory sexual behaviour she has in the past condemned.

Weinstein was the producer of “Shakespeare in Love” and became a friend.

“I imagine he’s done his time,” she said.

“I don’t know, to me it’s personal – forgiveness. I just think...” she said, her voice trailing off.

– AFP



Kang Su, (from left to right) Gu Haiyan, Zou Xufeng and Xiao Rong of team Shanghai-Jiangsu react before the women's foil team gold medal match of wheelchair fencing at the 12th National Games for Persons with Disabilities and the 9th National Special Olympic Games in Hong Kong, yesterday. — Xinhua



Yang Fan of Chongqing competes during the women's singles WH1 group match of para badminton against Yin Menglu of Hebei at the 12th National Games for Persons with Disabilities and the 9th National Special Olympic Games in Macao, yesterday. — Xinhua



Li Xinyue of Chongqing reacts during the women's singles WH2 group match of para badminton against Liu Yutong of Hebei at the 12th National Games for Persons with Disabilities and the 9th National Special Olympic Games in Macao, yesterday. — Xinhua



Geng Tianli of team Jiangsu reacts during the women's foil team bronze medal match of wheelchair fencing at the 12th National Games for Persons with Disabilities and the 9th National Special Olympic Games in Hong Kong, yesterday. — Xinhua



Participants blow out candles during a birthday celebration held for athletes at the 12th National Games for Persons with Disabilities and the 9th National Special Olympic Games in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, yesterday. — Xinhua



Xu Haijiao of Zhejiang waves to the spectators after the men's 100m breaststroke SB8 final of para swimming at the 12th National Games for Persons with Disabilities and the 9th National Special Olympic Games in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, yesterday. — Xinhua