

# Macau's CNY visitors exceed 1.2 million in 7 days

Tony Wong

Macau recorded some 1.21 million visitor arrivals during the first seven days of the Chinese mainland's nine-day Chinese New Year (CNY) "Golden Week" holiday period this year, representing a daily average of 173,212, according to data released by the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) yesterday.

This year, the Chinese mainland's Spring Festival holiday period lasts nine days for the first time, beginning on February 15, the day before the eve of the Chinese New Year of the Horse.

The Year of the Horse began on Tuesday last week.

Today, the seventh day of the Year of the Horse, is the last day of the Chinese mainland's CNY holiday period this year.

Last year, the Chinese mainland's Spring Festival holiday period lasted eight days, beginning on the eve of the Chinese New Year of the Snake.

According to the latest MGTO data released yesterday, Macau recorded 131,960 visitor arrivals on the first day of this year's Spring Festival holiday, 85,894 on the second day, 147,031 on the third day, 186,537 on the fourth day, 227,905 on the fifth day (the third day of the Year of the Horse), 218,968 on the sixth day, and 214,187 on the seventh day (last Saturday).

The visitor-arrival data released by MGTO were slightly adjusted from the visitor-arrival data released by the Public Security Police (PSP), which run Macau's immigration service.

Consequently, Macau recorded 1,212,482 visitor arrivals during the first seven days of the Chinese mainland's nine-day Spring



Tourists crowd Rua de S. Paulo yesterday, a narrow pedestrian-only street near the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Ruins of St. Paul's landmark. – Photo: Tony Wong

Festival holiday this year, i.e., between Sunday and Saturday last week, representing a daily average of 173,212 during the period.

## Macau sets single-day record of visitors during this year's CNY

The 227,905 visitor arrivals recorded on the third day of the Year of the Horse set a new record of single-day number of visitor arrivals, breaking the previous record set on the third day of the Year of the Pig in pre-pandemic 2019, at 226,326.

The number of visitor arrivals recorded during the first seven days of this year's Spring

Festival holiday period is not comparable with the number recorded during the first seven days of last year's Spring Festival holiday period, because last year's holiday period began on the eve of the CNY while this year's holiday period began on the day before the eve of the CNY.

According to the data released on the MGTO website, the number of visitor arrivals recorded on the third day of the Year of the Horse (2026) represented a 4.0 percent increase from the number recorded on the third day of the Year of the Snake (2025).

The number of visitor arrivals recorded on the fifth day of the Year of the Horse represented a 13.3 percent increase from the number recorded on the fifth day of the Year of the Snake, according to the MGTO data.

During the first seven days of this year's nine-day Spring Festival holiday in the mainland, according to the MGTO data, Macau recorded 932,752 visitor arrivals from the Chinese mainland, accounting for 76.9 percent of the total.

Customarily, Macau's CNY public holiday lasts three days. This year, it was between Tuesday and Thursday last week. ■

## 'Devouring hydra': French cinema stars warn AI is 'plundering' industry

PARIS – Just days before France's version of the Oscars, thousands of French actors and filmmakers have warned that AI tools are "plundering" talent across the industry.

"We are facing a profound upheaval in our profession with the arrival of artificial intelligence," said the op-ed in *Le Parisien*, which was signed by some 4,000 artists.

Signatories included many of French cinema's brightest and best, such as actors

Swann Arlaud, Franck Dubosc and Elodie Bouchez.

While AI was "extraordinarily valuable in certain fields", they said it was a "devouring hydra for artists like us".

The op-ed, released ahead of the 51st edition of the French film industry's César Awards, warned of the rise of "unauthorised voice cloning" which has taken the industry by storm.

"Not a week goes by without an artist sounding the alarm over the brutal

competition AI is inflicting on their work," it said.

It also pointed to the hundreds of lesser-known artists who "can't afford to refuse a contract" and sign away their voices to AI "despite the risks to their image and their future".

"This organised plundering is not hypothetical – it's happening here and now. It's intolerable and it's taking place before our very eyes."

The artists called for a clear "legal

framework" so that AI can "coexist with artistic work, with the protection of copyright and related rights".

In recent months, the industry has introduced various initiatives to tackle the threat posed by AI and the flood of content replicating artists and their voices almost perfectly.

In January, eight French voice actors sent formal notices to two US companies that had cloned their voices without consent. – AFP

Macau's most popular English-language newspaper – Your trustworthy source of news & views

The Macau Post Daily

### US Secret Service kills man trying to access Trump Florida estate

US Secret Service agents and a sheriff's deputy fatally shot a man armed with a shotgun who breached the security perimeter of President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida yesterday. – Story on p.14

### Andrew's arrest hands King Charles fresh royal crisis

King Charles III has been left wrestling with a new test after the arrest of his brother Andrew, the latest in a series of painful personal shocks to mar his reign. – Story on p.15

### Lula urges Trump to treat all countries equally

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva urged his US counterpart Donald Trump yesterday to treat all countries equally after the US leader imposed a 15 percent tariff on imports following an adverse Supreme Court ruling. – Story on p.16

# CNY holidays lead to mixed reactions: vox pop

**Khalel Vallo**

Yesterday, the sixth day of the Year of the Horse, the *Post* interviewed three locals and a foreign tourist to gauge whether their expectations of the holiday period matched reality.

While visitor numbers appeared to be very strong across major tourist areas, spending patterns and crowd distribution told a more nuanced story.

The Chinese New Year (CNY) began last Tuesday. The Chinese mainland's nine-day CNY public holiday ends tonight. Macau's three-day CNY public holiday lasted between Tuesday and Thursday last week.

Marjorie, 32, who works in a café near Rua do Campo, described business during the holiday period as "steady" but below last year's turnover. "Actually, it's not really that bad. It's still okay. It reached more than our daily quota, but it's much less compared to last year during the Chinese New Year," she said.

For the first time, Marjorie's café opened on the third day of the



Tourists sample free of beef jerky at a shop on Rua de S. Paulo close to the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Ruins of St. Paul's and Na Tcha Temple last night.

— Photo: Khalel Vallo

Spring Festival, a departure from its usual three-day closure. However, she noted that the additional opening did not translate into stronger-than-expected gains. "Even the aunties [regular female customers] they would normally give out lai see [but this time they didn't], she said, adding that she also observed a subtle cultural shift, suggesting that

holidaymakers' customary spending felt more restrained this year.

Meanwhile, 20-year-old Stephanie spent much of the holiday with her family at Galaxy Macau in Cotai. She described heavy crowds at restaurants, cinemas and on buses. However, Stephanie was surprised by what she perceived as lighter casino traffic than normal during

the Spring Festival, as the Chinese New Year is also known. "I went to the casino, only to find it wasn't crowded at all, as if no one wants to gamble" she remarked.

Stephanie also attended a stand-up comedy show that, she said, was watched by an audience of 10,000, adding that crowd control even in Cotai was well managed. However, regarding the Tap Siac CNY market, she visited it on an afternoon and found the atmosphere lacking compared to the evenings. "It looks kind of strange without illuminations," she said, reiterating her earlier criticism that many stalls were selling "Taobao content". Even for original goods, Stephanie said, she felt "the quality was not as good as those in the biannual Craft Market event last year".

Adam, 21, took a quiet approach to the CNY holiday period. "The first three days, I basically just stayed at home," he said, avoiding large crowds. However, he observed through social media that tourist

numbers were high. He recalled seeing packed border checkpoints while passing through them a day before the holiday, with travellers heading to Macau and Hong Kong. Compared with last year, Adam said, he was less inclined to join festivities. "Last year, I was more informed and more willing to go outside, but this year, due to work, I focused more on my part-time duties," he said, adding that previous crowd experiences made him reluctant to venture out.

Meanwhile, 23-year-old Jean described his experience as satisfying. He watched the fireworks with his girlfriend and introduced her to the origins of CNY traditions. "It was worth it despite the crowded area," he said. While noting that this year felt even more crowded than during his previous visit, he stressed that the overall experience remained positive.

Marjorie and Stephanie were interviewed by the *Post* in an article published on January 30 — <https://www.macaupostdaily.com/news/27297>. ■

## Police apprehend mainland woman for exchanging fake banknotes

**Armindo Neves**

The Judiciary Police (PJ) apprehended a woman from the Chinese mainland for exchanging fake banknotes on the first day of the Year of Horse, PJ spokesman Cheong Siu Keong said during a special press conference on Wednesday.

Cheong identified the suspect as a 30-year-old woman surnamed Yan who claimed to be jobless.

Around midnight on Tuesday, a gambler at a casino in Cotai wanted to exchange 29 HK\$1,000 banknotes into gaming chips at a gaming table. Cheong said that the table's dealer noticed that the colour of the banknotes appeared unusual, later confirming that the 29 banknotes were counterfeits. Casino security then reported the case to the police. Cheong said that the gambler told the police that she had obtained the banknotes earlier that day in a casino toilet after being approached by an individual identified as Yan, who offered to exchange them for 25,955 yuan.

PJ officers arrested Yan at the casino, according to Cheong, and seized 51 counterfeit banknotes at her hotel guestroom in Cotai.

Upon examination, Cheong said, all 80 notes were confirmed to be fakes, lacking watermarks



Evidence displayed at the PJ headquarters in Zape on Wednesday shows 80 counterfeit HK\$1,000 notes and a smartphone. — Photo: Armindo Neves

and security threads, adding that the printing quality was crude, with all authentic features missing.

Cheong said that PJ officers seized the counterfeit notes as well as a mobile phone as part of the investigation.

Cheong also said that regarding whether Yan is involved in other cases and the source of the counterfeits, the Judiciary Police are continuing their investigation.

Yan has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing charges of fraud and exchanging counterfeit currency. ■

## Police bust mainlander for stealing, gambling away girlfriend's money

**Armindo Neves**

The Judiciary Police (PJ) arrested a man from the Chinese mainland for stealing and gambling away his girlfriend's money on Chinese New Year's Eve, PJ spokesman Cheong Siu Keong said during a special press conference on Wednesday.

Cheong identified the suspect as a 44-year-old man surnamed Wu who claimed to be jobless.

Cheong said that on Valentine's Day, February 14, a mainland woman and her boyfriend, Wu, checked into a hotel guestroom in Cotai and put HK\$500,000 in cash into the in-room safe.

On Monday, Chinese New Year's Eve, Cheong said that when the victim woke up she discovered that the money had vanished and Wu was uncontactable, prompting her to report the case to the police. Upon investigation, Cheong said, PJ officers intercepted Wu in the evening, adding that Wu admitted to stealing the money and gambling it all away in a casino in the city centre.

Wu was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) on Wednesday, facing a theft charge.

## Police nab mainlander for stealing gaming chips involving HK\$700,000 from friend

Meanwhile, the Judiciary Police (PJ) nabbed a man from the Chinese mainland for stealing gaming chips worth HK\$700,000 from a male friend, PJ spokesman Cheong Siu Keong said during a special press conference on Wednesday.

Cheong identified the suspect as a 36-year-old business man surnamed Zhang.

According to Cheong, the victim arrived in Macau on February 10 for gambling and stayed in a Cotai hotel guestroom booked by Zhang. In the early morning of Chinese New Year's Eve, last Monday, Cheong said that the victim placed a bag containing HK\$700,000 in gaming chips on a chair in the room before going to bed. Upon waking up on Tuesday morning, the victim found that Cheong had returned to



Judiciary Police (PJ) officers escort the hooded theft suspect surnamed Wu to a PJ van outside the PJ headquarters in Zape on Wednesday.

— Photo: Armindo Neves

the room, confessing that he had gambling away all the HK\$700,000 worth of chips, according to Cheong, adding that the victim reported the matter to the police right away.

Zhang confessed that he had returned to the room around 7 a.m. on that day, stolen the chips and then gambled them away in the casino.

Zhang was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) on Wednesday, facing a theft charge. ■

## Police bust mainland man for drug-trafficking & drug-taking

**Armindo Neves**

The Judiciary Police (PJ) arrested a man from the Chinese mainland for drug-trafficking and drug-taking last Monday, Chinese New Year's Eve, PJ spokesman Cheong Siu Keong said during a special press conference on Wednesday.

Cheong identified the suspect as 39-year-old man surnamed Wu who claimed to be jobless.

On February 16, Cheong said that PJ officers received a report from a hotel in Cotai that a hotel employee had discovered suspected

drug paraphernalia while cleaning a guestroom. Upon arriving at the scene, PJ officers arrested Wu, and seized 127.2 grams of crystal meth, 38.2 grams of ketamine, 35 ecstasy pills, what appeared to be a kind of "red drug powder", drug taking paraphernalia, packaging tools and HK\$20,000 — suspected proceeds from selling drugs.

Cheong said that the total value of the confirmed drugs was around 426,000 patacas.

According to Cheong, the investigation revealed that Wu

entered Macau through the local airport on February 11. Due to strong indications that Wu was involved in drug use and trafficking, Cheong said that at the time of Wednesday's press conference PJ officers were still tracing the source of the narcotics and looking for other individuals possibly connected to the case.

Wu was transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP) on Wednesday, facing charges of drug-trafficking, drug-taking, and possession of drug taking paraphernalia. ■

### Published since Aug 2004

- Director & Chief Editor — Harald Brüning
- Office Manager — Sally Cheong
- Marketing Manager — Kevin Cheung King Lok
- Managing Editor — Maria Cheung Ut Meng
- Editors — Lesley Wells, Johnny Un
- Senior Reporters — Tony Wong, Rui Pastorin
- Reporters — Ada Lei, Khalel Vallo, William Chan, Ida Cheong, Armindo Neves
- Chief Graphic Designer — Simon Wang
- Graphic Designer — Colin Zhong
- Administrative Assistants — Ester Mak, Carl Leong
- Printed by Tipografia Welfare Lda., 82-86 Rua dos Pescadores
- Wire services — AFP, Xinhua
- Chatbots: Poe, DeepSeek

### Macau Weather

**CLOUDY APART FROM SUNNY INTERVALS. MIST AT FIRST. LIGHT WINDS, BECOMING FORCE 3 TO 5 EASTERLY WINDS. RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 60% AND 98%.**



19°C~24°C

Source: SMG



*Wynn.*

Wishing you a  
joyous and prosperous  
Chinese New Year



Wynn is delighted to welcome a magnificent Year of the Horse with the vibrant art piece "Ni Shang Tian Ma," created by Master of Dunhuang Culture Chang Shana with inspiration from the Mogao Cave chariot horse.



## ‘Flowing Memory’ exhibition at Creative Macau presents 40 oils

Interview by Rui Pastorin

Christopher Lei Weng Kuong is continuing to showcase a raft of oil paintings in his exhibition “Flowing Memory: The Artistic DNA of Macau in the Eyes of a Painter”, which is now entering its final six days at Creative Macau in Nape.

With 40 paintings on show, each piece was created over a period of around four years until 2025, most presenting layers for observers to peel back and take a closer look.

Having opened earlier this month, Lei told the *Post* during the recent launch ceremony that the exhibited works can be summed up into four concepts: “DNA”, which refers to a chapter in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that he highlighted as serving as an important base of Macau oil painting; the dialogue between the past and the present, along with time and space; Macau’s recent stories that features pieces with the city’s events and happenings; and lastly, the “stable scenery” that observes the world.

Introducing the artworks, Lei said that the exhibition starts with pieces presenting “DNA” that shows a junction between East and West, with an example depicted in the piece displayed at the forefront titled “Studio of 19<sup>th</sup> Century” that shows interaction between British artist George Chinnery (1774-1852) with Chinese artists and students. Lei said that works in this section also presents exchanges of or introductions to techniques, among others, along with those that show how Chinnery brought with him ideas from Britain and how it affected oil painting in Macau and elsewhere in southern China. It also presents how techniques and themes have evolved, showing a crossover or “transcendence” of culture.

Following this is a dialogue between time and space, where one will continue to find a dialogue between the past and present, along with works featuring other historic figures, the city’s landmarks in their past and present state, as well as pieces like “Carousel Crossing” and “Tunnel Crossing” that allows one to reflect on the ideas. Highlighting the importance for dialogue between the past and present, Lei said: “Something that happened in the past can also happen nowadays. So, every time, we do not need to just have a very clear-cut line between these two things”, asking the question: “Why not put these two things together?”, with Lei doing his best to present this idea in his ongoing exhibition.

Another area sees pieces depicting recent Macau events and performances such as those during the Lusofonia Festival, but Lei also takes the scope outside of Macau with a set of works depicting moments from around the world. These include pieces that depict moments from the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2021 painting titled “Refugees”, where Russian photographer Sergey Ponomarev’s Pulitzer Prize winning image is turned into a large oil painting, with the artist receiving the photographer’s permission to do so, being “very generous to let me use this”, he said.

The last of the paintings sees Lei present oils using Macau’s still and “relatively stable things” that don’t move, with scenery and nature as subjects. “These are drawings from life. The idea is that we have relatively stable things that don’t move. The scenery always stands here looking at the world”, according to Lei.

Lei concluded his remarks to the *Post* with a reflection on time. Time flies, he said, but even if it does, its moments will always exist, whether in our minds, imagination or “any invisible space” where something might have happened or existed. “Some people will probably think about the past very much, but don’t be sad. It exists in your mind, right?”, Lei concluded.

More information on the exhibition and its opening in a previous Post article on <https://www.macaupostdaily.com/news/27368>. ■



Local artist Christopher Lei Weng Kuong poses next to his painting “Studio of 19<sup>th</sup> Century” during the recent opening ceremony for his exhibition at Creative Macau, which ends on Friday.  
– Photos: Rui Pastorin



SANDS CHINA LTD. WISHES YOU  
A HAPPY CHINESE NEW YEAR  
FILLED WITH HOPE, JOY AND GOOD HEALTH



The Four Seasons, St Regis and Conrad logos are registered trademarks of their respective owners and are used under license.

# Sam visits shops, public facilities during CNY

Tony Wong

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai paid fact-finding visits to a raft of businesses and public facilities across the city on Friday, i.e., the fourth day of the Year of the Horse, according to a statement released by the Government Information Bureau (GCS) on that day, which quoted Sam as saying that the local government is committed to maintaining public order and safeguarding the lives and property of residents and visitors.

The statement also quoted Sam's commitment to supporting local small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in upgrading and modernising their operations, and to working closely with the private sector to promote steady growth in Macau's community economy.

On Friday morning, the statement said, Sam, visited the area around the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Ruins of St. Paul's, Rua da Palha, Rua de S. Domingos, and the city's main square, Largo do Senado, accompanied by Secretary for Economy and Finance Anton Tai Kin Ip, Secretary for Security Chan Tsz King, and other top officials, where Sam was briefed by senior police officers about the police forces' crowd control measures implemented around the Ruins of St. Paul's, the city's most popular tourist attraction, during the CNY holiday period.

Sam extended Spring Festival greetings and talked with owners



Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai (right) shakes hands with a woman in Largo do Senado, the city's main square, on Friday.

— Photos: GCS

and staff of a number of shops and businesses in the areas.

The Chinese New Year is also known as the Spring Festival.

Sam also visited the police station run by the Public Security Police (PSP) on the ground floor of the building located next to S. Domingos Church.

According to the statement, Sam also visited the commercial part of the building displaying and selling "Made in Macau" products on other floors, which once housed the Macau Government Information Bureau (GCS) and the local bureau of Portugal's wire service Lusa, next to the church.

Afterwards, the statement said, Sam went to Taipa where he visited

the revamped Taipa wet market building, accompanied by Secretary for Administration and Justice Wong Sio Chak. Sam talked with stallholders in the market's newly-established "Gastronomy + Culture and Creativity Zone" with the aim of gaining a better understanding of their business operations, where he was also briefed by officials about the government's initiative to upgrade traditional wet markets and promote their long-term sustainability.

Subsequently, the statement said, Sam, accompanied by Tai, visited shops and businesses in Taipa Village with the aim of gaining a better understanding of their business operations.



Accompanied by Secretary for Administration and Justice Wong Sio Chak (right), the chief executive (second from right) talks with operators of a stall in Taipa Market's newly-established "Gastronomy + Culture and Creativity Zone" on Friday.

Afterwards, the statement said, Sam paid a fact-finding visit to the open-air public carpark located on the plot of the former Flying Eagle Training Base in Coloane Village which opened late last year, where Sam was briefed by Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raymond Tam Vai Man about the operation of the newly-opened open-air public carpark.

Subsequently, Sam walked to the nearby Coloane Pier, extending Chinese New Year greetings to residents along the way and talking to shop owners, the statement said.

Finally, the statement said, Sam visited the nearby Lai Chi Vun shipyards area where a Spring Festival market was being held,

with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the government's initiative to revitalise the area.

Sam also inspected the ongoing public project to build flood prevention facilities off the coast of Coloane Village.

Meanwhile, Sam also inspected various public facilities on Tuesday last week, the first day of the Chinese New Year, including the public Conde de São Januário Hospital, a CEM substation in the Outer Harbour district, the headquarters of public bus operator Transmac, the Areia Preta fire station, the Judiciary Police (PJ) headquarters in Zape, and the Hengqin joint border checkpoint, according to a GCS statement that day. ■

## Macau Tower's CNY Charity Walk draws over 2,000 people



This photo provided by Macau Tower on Thursday shows Skypark Macau Tower Sales Director Elsa Law (2<sup>nd</sup> row, third from left), Macau Tower Executive Manager Francis Lam (2<sup>nd</sup> row, fourth from left), and Macau Red Cross Management Council Vice President Lei Ka Man (2<sup>nd</sup> row, fifth from left) posing with the top three winners of each "Strike it Rich" category of the Chinese New Year (CNY) Charity Tower Walk held earlier that day.

Rui Pastorin

The Macau Tower Convention & Entertainment Centre's 15<sup>th</sup> edition of its CNY (Chinese New Year) Charity Tower Walk took place on Thursday, with the event this year gathering over 2,000 participants.

According to a Macau Tower statement released on that day, the event, which raised funds for the Macau Red Cross, kicked off with the full-course 1,298 step "Strike it Rich", which started from the ground floor all the way up to the 61<sup>st</sup> floor, in the morning. First-timer Timothy

Ho Chun Ting, who travelled from Hong Kong, emerged as champion of the Men's category with a time of 7 minutes and 59 seconds. The Women's category, meanwhile, was won by Ruby Mak at 11 minutes and eight seconds, joining the event with her mother and daughter this year, the statement said.

Taking home the top prize for the Junior category, meanwhile, was Danny Leong at 11 minutes and 30 seconds. In all, the full course event saw around 600 participants across the three divisions. The full-course event

was then followed by the half-course "Shortcut to Riches" in the afternoon and started from the 38<sup>th</sup> floor and ended at the observation deck, according to the statement.

The event has drawn over 20,000 participants since its inception in 2009. The statement quoted Macau Tower Executive Manager Francis Lam (林柱光) as saying: "Marking the 15<sup>th</sup> edition of the Charity Tower Walk, the event has grown into one of Macau's most cherished festive traditions, thanks to the tremendous support and enthusiastic participation of all sectors over the years." ■

## Sam delivers CNY message for Year of the Horse

Full text released last Monday by the Office of the Chief Executive on Chinese New Year's Eve

Dear fellow Macao residents and friends,

As we bid farewell to the Year of the Snake and welcome the Year of the Horse, all families are ready to ring out the old and ring in the new together. On behalf of the Government of the Macao Special Administrative Region (SAR), I would like to extend my heartfelt Chinese New Year greetings to all fellow residents and friends at home and abroad who support and attach great importance to the development of Macao.

May the Year of the Horse bring us health, happiness and prosperity!

According to Chinese culture, the horse symbolises loyalty, bravery, the pioneering spirit, and enterprising and unrestrained boldness. These are the spirits we need to advocate in face of future challenges.

Looking to the Year of the Horse, we must gallop at the forefront with indomitable spirit to strive for advancements in all areas for Macao. We must persevere unremittently to address livelihood issues practically and improve people's well-being.

Dear fellow residents, dear friends:

The universe operates with ceaseless vitality; a noble person should constantly strive to strengthen himself. The implementation of the "One Country, Two Systems" principle is a successful story composed by generations of Macao people. I firmly believe that with the strong leadership of President Xi Jinping and the central authorities, as well as the strong backing of the great motherland, so long as we have the courage to pursue reform and break new ground, leverage the institutional advantages of the "One Country, Two Systems" principle, we will open up new horizons and achieve new heights.

The new year chimes for the Year of the Horse are about to ring. At this moment, spring is in the air. Macao, a shining pearl on the palm of our great motherland, is glowing with brilliance. I wish our motherland auspiciousness and harmony; I wish Macao prosperity and stability; I wish all fellow Macao residents peace and happiness. To all civil servants and everyone who remain dedicated to serving the community during the festival and their families, please accept my heartfelt respect and gratitude!

I wish everyone good health and vitality. May all your wishes come true!

# CNY car parade features nearly 60 classic cars

Ida Cheong

The annual Chinese New Year (CNY) motorcycle and classic car parade took place yesterday, featuring 24 motorcycles and 32 classic cars, starting from the Macau Grand Prix (MPG) Building, travelling through the Macau peninsula and Cotai, and returning to the peninsula, ending in front of the Macau Science Centre in Nape for public display.

The one-day event was co-organised by the Sports Bureau (ID) and Automobile General Association of Macao-China (AAMC).

Macau Vintage Vehicle Culture Association (MVV) Chairman Lam Chung In told reporters on the sidelines of yesterday's parade that his group has documented around 1,700 classic vehicles in Macau that are at least 25 years old, dating back to before 2000, adding that around 80 percent of the classic cars are still roadworthy. His association also regularly organises activities such as classic car parades, aiming to share the joy of driving classic cars with residents and tourists, promoting Macau's unique classic car culture, Lam said.

Lam showcased one of his prized collection during yesterday's event: a 1978 Chevrolet Camaro from US, the only one of its kind in Macau, Lam said, adding that he acquired the vehicle in 2010 and has overseen



Macau Vintage Vehicle Culture Association (MVV) Chairman Lam Chung In poses with his classic car on the sidelines of Chinese New Year (CNY) motorcycle and classic car parade outside the Macau Science Centre (MSC) in Nape yesterday.

- Photos: Ida Cheong

its meticulous restoration over several years. He pointed out that his car is a second-generation prototype of the legendary "Bumblebee". Lam said that

the car's vibrant colour and its appearance in the eponymous film has made it a significant attraction for tourists and residents alike.

While sourcing parts for



Sports Bureau (ID) Development Department Chief Chao Kuok Wai speaks to reporters outside the Macau Science Centre (MSC) in Nape about yesterday's motorcycle and classic car parade.

maintaining his Bumblebee is not particularly difficult, the restoration process proved highly challenging, such as lacking modern computer components and relying heavily on

manual mechanics skills, Lam added.

Sports Bureau (ID) Development Department Chief Chao Kuok Wai told reporters during yesterday's parade that although the classic cars displayed yesterday look old, they perform "excellently", holding strong appeal for both locals and visitors, adding that the annual CNY recreational event, held for several years now, has established itself as a distinctive attraction and signature activity in Macau.

All CNY events in the series attract active participation from many residents and sports enthusiasts, Chao said, adding that the Sports Bureau will continue organising similar festive sport and recreational activities throughout the remaining days of the 15-day CNY period, aiming to celebrate the holiday with the community and further promote the concept of universal sport participation. ■



Participating cars and motorbikes set off from the Macau Grand Prix (MPG) Building yesterday.



## 2026 SJM Macao Int'l Dragon Boat Races set for June at Nam Van

Khalel Vallo

The 2026 SJM Macao International Dragon Boat Races will be held on June 13, 14 and 19 at Nam Van Lake Nautical Centre, according to a statement by the Sports Bureau (ID) on Friday.

The traditional annual event is jointly organised by the bureau, SJM Resorts, S.A. (SJM) and the Dragon Boat Association of Macao-China (DBAMC), the statement said.

The races, a longstanding highlight of Macau's sporting calendar, will once again coincide with the Duanwu\* Festival, the statement added.

The festival is also known as the Dragon Boat Festival.

According to the statement, the competition will begin with local small dragon boat races on June 13, followed by local standard dragon boat races on June 14.

The "Macao International Invitation Standard Dragon Boat Race" and the "Macao University Student Invitation Standard Dragon Boat Race" will take place on June 19, the day of the Dragon Boat Festival.

The statement noted that associations and organisations may submit team entries online

at [www.cmdragonboat.org.mo](http://www.cmdragonboat.org.mo) from 10 a.m. today until 10 p.m. on March 7 using an online team account, adding that teams with existing accounts are not required to create new ones.

Teams that have successfully obtained an account may register for specific race categories from 10 a.m. on March 9 through 10 p.m. on March 15, the statement said, adding that registration for each category will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis.

In order to help teams prepare for the competition, official training sessions will commence in mid-March.

Further details, including race regulations, will be announced in due course. More information is available on the official website at [www.macaodragonboat.com](http://www.macaodragonboat.com) or via the "Macao Major Sporting Events" Facebook page and the bureau's WeChat platforms. ■

\* "Duanwu" can be translated as "the beginning of the fifth month," indicating both a specific time in the lunar calendar and the onset of summer. The festival is celebrated on the fifth day of the fifth month and is associated with various customs, including dragon boat racing and eating sticky rice dumplings. - Poe



This undated handout photo provided by the Sports Bureau (ID) on Friday shows racers competing at a Dragon Boat Race in Nam Van.

CTM wishes you

Good Health & Wealth in the Year of the Horse

Enjoy & Sharing the New Year Bliss with Great Movies

The first 3 months **\$38 / Month**

choose any 2 services

All Shops will be closed between 17 - 20 / 2 during Chinese New Year & resume business on 21 / 2

Customers may apply services & settle payment with our 7 X 24 all-round CTM Buddy App & ctm.net

www.ctm.net  
No.1 Hotline: 1000

Note: Customers are bound by the respective service agreement.

# IAM offers decorative flowers today

Ida Cheong

Aiming to make good use of green resources, the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) will distribute post-Chinese New Year (CNY) decorative flowers to the public free of charge at two locations today, the bureau said in a statement yesterday.

The statement noted that that distribution will start at 11 a.m. in the peninsula's Iao Hon Market Garden and at 3 p.m. in Flower

City Garden in Taipa, with the objective to extend the plants' life and promote awareness of a green living environment. All plants will be available on a first-come, first-served basis while stocks last.

The plants to be distributed are *Ixora chinensis* (Chinese Ixora)\*, the statement added.

Customarily, the bureau displays various types of festive flora alongside streets and alleys during public holidays and significant

occasions to beautify the city and enhance residents' quality of life, the statement said, adding that after the festivities, some of the decorative plants are recovered and replanted. Withered or non-replantable plants are sent to local composting facilities for processing, returning to nature, the bureau said.

Additionally, depending on their condition, some plants are given to the public free of charge, the statement added.

The bureau reminded the public in the statement that all distributed flowers and plants are intended for ornamental purposes only and should not be consumed. For enquiries, please contact the IAM service hotline on 2833 7676. ■

\* *Chinese Ixora*, scientifically known as *Ixora chinensis*, is a flowering shrub native to tropical Asia. – Poe



This undated handout photo provided by the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) yesterday shows the *Ixora chinensis* (Chinese Ixora) to be distributed in Iao Hon Market Garden in the peninsula's northern district and Flower City Garden in Taipa today.

## China's robot revolution in motion

Commentary by Xu Ying\*

When Unitree's G1 humanoid robot executed a flawless 720-degree backflip on the stage of the Spring Festival Gala, it was easy to read the moment as spectacle. The somersault was crisp, the landing controlled, the applause immediate. Yet the performance signified something far more consequential than acrobatic novelty. It crystallized a broader transformation: China's deliberate evolution from the world's factory floor into a central architect of next-generation robotics.

Western headlines described the event as a "robotic revolution". But revolutions are, by nature, often chaotic. What is unfolding in China is neither spontaneous nor accidental. It is the cumulative result of strategic planning, vertically integrated supply chains, state-backed research ecosystems, and a cultural preference for applied experimentation over isolated theorizing.

### Machines that think on their feet

The most visible expression of this shift is technological. In 2025, humanoid robots on public stages moved stiffly, executing pre-programmed folk dances with mechanical caution. By 2026, the G1 demonstrated fluid martial arts sequences – precise spins, controlled landings, and dynamic recoveries from imbalance. The difference was not merely aesthetic; it reflected a structural leap in embodied intelligence.

On paper, the hardware is formidable. The G1's joints deliver peak torques approaching 500 newton-meters, enabling explosive movement and stable recovery. Its carbon-fiber frame keeps total weight under 50 kilograms without sacrificing structural integrity. High-density batteries nearing 400 watt-hours per kilogram extend operational endurance while maintaining agility. These figures matter because they narrow the gap between mechanical output and human biomechanics.

But raw power alone does not produce grace. The decisive breakthrough lies in sensor fusion and adaptive control. Inertial measurement units, force sensors embedded in the feet and joints, and visual SLAM systems\*\* continuously update the robot's understanding of its posture and surroundings. During the televised backflip, observers noted a subtle knee adjustment on landing – a micro-correction executed in milliseconds. That tiny movement symbolized something larger: the ability of machines to respond autonomously to unpredictable physical conditions.

Even more telling was the synchronized choreography of more than fifty robots, operating with latency measured in mere milliseconds. Coordinating multi-agent systems at such speed requires distributed AI architectures capable of balancing centralized planning with decentralized execution. This is not simply about one robot performing well; it is about coordinated fleets acting in



Humanoid robots dance at a Chinese New Year gala at the UN headquarters in New York City on February 12.

– Xinhua

concert – an ability with implications that extend far beyond a gala stage.

### From laboratory prototype to industrial ecosystem

Technological sophistication means little without industrial scalability. Here, China's advantage becomes structural.

The robotics sector benefits from an integrated supply chain that compresses development cycles and lowers costs. Domestic AI chipmakers, sensor manufacturers, and precision component suppliers operate in dense geographic clusters, particularly in provinces like Zhejiang and Guangdong. This proximity reduces procurement delays, accelerates iteration, and allows rapid refinement from prototype to production.

Cost competitiveness is equally critical. By leveraging mature manufacturing infrastructure and economies of scale, Chinese humanoid robots are often produced at significantly lower costs than their Western counterparts. This price differential does more than expand export potential; it accelerates domestic adoption across sectors.

China's robotics industry, now measured in the tens of billions of dollars, uses public demonstrations as high-intensity testing environments. Events such as the Spring Festival Gala function as real-world stress tests. Robots must navigate dynamic lighting, complex choreography, crowded backstage logistics, and live broadcasting pressures. Failures are visible; performance must be robust. This approach—testing systems in demanding, unscripted conditions—compresses the gap between research and deployment.

The results are visible in expanding applications. Humanoid and semi-humanoid systems are moving into eldercare facilities, logistics centers, and electric vehicle assembly lines. The same dynamic balance algorithms that enable a backflip also allow

robots to traverse uneven terrain in disaster response or maintain stability while carrying loads on factory floors.

International expansion underscores this transition. Chinese robotics firms are increasingly active in European and Asian markets, supplying both hardware platforms and integrated solutions. As export shares rise, China is no longer merely assembling machines; it is shaping usage norms and technical expectations.

### Competing models of innovation

The divergence between China and the West is not reducible to technical capability alone; it reflects contrasting innovation cultures.

Silicon Valley and European research institutions often prioritize incremental validation, extensive peer review, and controlled laboratory testing. This model excels in foundational breakthroughs and rigorous standardization. China, by contrast, has embraced scenario-driven innovation: deploy early, test under pressure, iterate rapidly. High-stakes public applications become catalysts rather than endpoints.

This difference has practical consequences. Dynamic balance, multi-agent coordination, and real-world adaptability are strengthened when systems confront messy environments rather than idealized lab conditions. Over time, such exposure compounds into durable capability advantages.

There is also a standards dimension. As Chinese robots proliferate in global markets, their communication protocols, operating architectures, and component interfaces may become de facto norms. Standards are not merely technical agreements; they embed influence. Control over ecosystems – software platforms, update pipelines and hardware compatibility – shapes long-term dependency structures.

In this sense, robotics becomes a contest of ecosystems. The question is no longer simply who builds better machines, but whose technological frameworks ultimately define the parameters of industrial automation and intelligent systems worldwide.

### Beyond the stage: A technological civilization

The backflip was theater, but its longer arc points toward daily life. Aging demographics, labor shortages, and the demands of disaster resilience create structural incentives for humanoid deployment. Robots capable of navigating human environments – stairs, cluttered rooms, unpredictable surfaces – can complement existing automation beyond controlled settings.

China frames this expansion in terms of "human-machine harmony", envisioning robots not as replacements but as collaborators. There is also a philosophical undertone to this vision. Integrating advanced AI with cultural concepts of balance and systemic interdependence suggests an ambition to embed robotics within a broader social narrative, rather than treat it as purely another instrumental technology.

Whether that vision materializes remains uncertain. Ethical governance, labor displacement, and international trust will shape the trajectory. But the direction is unmistakable: robotics is no longer peripheral to China's development strategy. It sits at the intersection of industrial upgrading, demographic management, and global technological positioning.

### The opening move

The 720-degree backflip was not an endpoint. It was a signal – a demonstration that China's robotics ecosystem has reached a threshold where power, intelligence and manufacturability converge. The performance condensed years of research, supply-chain coordination, and policy alignment into a few seconds of controlled rotation in midair.

If the past decades defined China as the workshop of the world, the coming era will test its capacity to become one of its principal engineers. In that unfolding contest, the choreography of machines on a holiday stage may prove to have been less a moment of entertainment than a quiet prologue.

\*Xu Ying is a Beijing-based commentator. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

– Courtesy of China Daily  
\*\*Visual SLAM (Simultaneous Localization and Mapping) refers to a technique used in robotics and computer vision to enable a device (like a robot or drone) to create a map of an unknown environment while simultaneously keeping track of its own location within that environment using visual input from cameras. – Poe

## Top nuclear power obliged to cut its arsenal

### China Daily Editorial

The specter of nuclear weapons remains one of the most daunting challenges to global peace and security, with recent developments casting a glaring spotlight on the United States. The country's irresponsible actions, including its refusal to extend the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty after its expiration early this month, threaten to dismantle decades of progress in nuclear nonproliferation.

Yet in order to justify its renegeing on nuclear nonproliferation commitments, the US has made unfounded accusations against China regarding nuclear testing to pave the way for its own resumption of nuclear tests. "Because of other countries' testing programs, I have instructed the Department of War to start testing our Nuclear Weapons on an equal basis," the US leader said last October in a post on his Truth Social site. "That process will begin immediately."

US Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Thomas DiNanno, too, made unwarranted remarks at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva recently, accusing China of having conducted a nuclear explosive test in June 2020. This prompted Robert Floyd, executive secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, to clarify in a statement that the International Monitoring System of the organization did not detect any event consistent with the characteristics of a nuclear weapon test explosion at that time.

The remarks made by the US in regard to nuclear testing are nothing but lies told to serve the country's own dangerous agenda at the cost of other nations' security and global stability.

The baseless claims that China is conducting "covert" nuclear tests serve as a pretext for the US to abandon a moratorium on nuclear testing it has upheld since 1992.

As Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian pointed out, the US' distortion and slander of China's nuclear policy are essentially "political manipulation", through which it aims to evade its own nuclear disarmament responsibilities. In fact, it is the US that is "the biggest source of disruption to both the international nuclear order and global strategic stability".

Indeed, the US has consistently undermined international efforts to promote nuclear disarmament. Its reluctance to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, as well as its recent threats to resume testing, stands in stark contrast to the global consensus on the need to prevent nuclear proliferation.

By refusing to adhere to the nonproliferation framework, the US is effectively dismantling the very architecture that has constrained the nuclear threat for decades.

The series of US maneuvers, which portend a significant shift in its nuclear policy, threaten to reignite a nuclear arms race that the world can ill afford. The narrative that the US propagates – of needing to resume testing to match the capabilities of other nations – is not only false and misleading but also dangerous.

The implications of this are profound, as it paves the way for an unrestrained arms buildup, not only by the US, but also by other nuclear powers, thereby increasing the risk of nuclear conflict.

Independent estimates clearly show that the US and Russia possess the largest nuclear arsenals, each having an inventory of around 5,500 nuclear warheads, with China maintaining a significantly smaller stockpile.

Meanwhile, the US has spent trillions of dollars upgrading its nuclear triad and maintains a first-use policy. The country also applies double standard when it comes to nuclear nonproliferation, seriously disrupting global strategic balance and stability. The rhetoric of "nuclear parity" is only a smokescreen designed to obscure the US' true intention of achieving unchallenged nuclear dominance.

The international community must recognize the US' actions for what they are: a strategic ploy to destabilize global security and maintain its hegemony through an arms race it hopes will be debilitating for other countries. This ambition poses a direct threat to the delicate balance of power and undermines the collective efforts of nations committed to peace and security.

It is thus imperative that countries join hands in opposition to the US' actions. Diplomatic efforts should be intensified to hold the US accountable and to reinforce the importance of existing treaties and agreements that promote nuclear disarmament. The international community should also work together to establish new frameworks that address the evolving challenges of nuclear proliferation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

With the US prioritizing national supremacy over global stability, the shadow of nuclear conflict once again threatens to loom over the world. For the world to be free from the fear of nuclear apocalypse, it is crucial for the international community to stand firm in opposing the US' nuclear agenda.

– Courtesy of China Daily



Artists perform Yingge dance in Puning, Guangdong Province, yesterday. The Yingge dance, or "dance to the hero's song," is a traditional folk dance of Guangdong Province which has enjoyed growing popularity nationwide in recent years. As many shops in Puning chose to open their doors to start the new year's business yesterday, the sixth day of the Chinese New Year, Yingge dance teams staged performances across the city to convey their best wishes for a prosperous start of the new year. – Xinhua

## Group of Friends of Global Governance calls for safeguarding UN Charter, int'l rule of law

UNITED NATIONS – At a time when the world is filled with uncertainty and instability, coupled with mistrust and rising polarization, the international community must safeguard the UN Charter and uphold the international rule of law, the Group of Friends of Global Governance said on Wednesday.

At the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization, the group said in a joint statement that faced with major choices between peace and conflict, progress and regression, order and chaos, the world once again stands at a new crossroads.

Against this backdrop, the full implementation of the mandate of the special committee – to strengthen the role of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security, the development of cooperation and the promotion of the norms of international law – "is more urgent than ever," said the statement, delivered by China on behalf of the 49 members of the Group of Friends of Global Governance.

"The Charter is the fundamental guideline for conducting international relations and the cornerstone of the international order. The basic norms of international law, including sovereign equality, non-interference in internal affairs, and the prohibition of the use of force, as enshrined in the Charter, must be respected and implemented," the group said.

"All States, regardless of size, strength or wealth, are equal. Mutual respect and peaceful coexistence should prevail," it said, calling upon all parties to uphold the international order underpinned by international law, ensure an equal and consistent application

of international norms, and reject double standards and selective application.

The group called for practicing genuine multilateralism and taking an action-oriented approach, emphasizing that multilateralism remains the core concept of the existing international system and order, and the United Nations serves as the central platform for global governance.

It also called for upholding the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with Chapter-VI of the UN Charter and opposing unilateral sanctions. Article 33 of the Charter sets out multiple means of dispute settlement, and the right to freely choose means of dispute settlement should be respected, the group pointed out.

"Any attempt to impose one's will upon others by coercion, threat or use of force in international relations must be rejected," the group said.

In the statement, the group noted the establishment of the International Organization for Mediation in October 2025 in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China, which provides additional options for the peaceful settlement of international disputes, and the adoption of the Security Council's Resolution 2788 on the peaceful settlement of disputes.

"The Group of Friends of Global Governance stands ready to work with all parties to jointly safeguard the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, support the central role and preserve the intergovernmental character of the United Nations, and promote a more just, inclusive and equitable global governance system," the statement said. – Xinhua

澳電 cem

馬年吉祥

HAPPY CHINESE NEW YEAR  
FELIZ ANO NOVO CHINÊS

Companhia de Electricidade de Macau - CEM, S.A. www.cem-macau.com

澳電 CEM

# When the global helm shifts

Commentary by Marcus Vinicius de Freitas

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's speech at this year's World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland, offered an honest portrayal of the anxiety now gripping advanced economies amid a historical transition that can no longer be managed through slogans. Heard from the perspective of the Global South, it is useful not because it "discovers" anything new, but because it exposes, with the involuntary frankness typical of liminal moments, what has become the true conflict of our time: not a dispute over rules, but over who has the right to name reality.

One should begin with the obvious. Canada may have a vocation for nuance, but it has no vocation for geopolitical divorce. Borders, trade flows, production chains and the inescapable gravitational pull of Washington function as a civilizational fact. What is "interesting" about Canadian autonomy is precisely its condition as a rhetorical exception: it may exist, provided it does not alter the underlying structure. Reality, as always, enters through the kitchen door. This is why the Global South listens to Davos with respect, but without enchantment: it has seen this film before – and has paid far too high a price for the ticket.

The decisive point, however, does not lie in Carney himself. It lies in the reaction to what he symbolizes. The transition of the international order has become, in Western vocabulary, a kind of "administrative apocalypse". Everything is framed as "rupture", "collapse", and "disorder". Curiously, while the West was steering the process, the same phenomenon was called "transition", "adjustment" and "modernization". When the hand that holds the helm changes, language changes with it. What was "evolution" yesterday has become "threat" today; what was "reform" has become "risk"; what was "leadership" has become "decline". It is not the world that has panicked: it is the narrative monopoly that has been broken.

There is in this a component of strategic psychology – and of historical irony. The post-1945 order did, indeed, fulfil important functions: it rebuilt economies, institutionalized mechanisms and organized much of global trade. But it also served, with remarkable efficiency, to universalize language while

particularizing practice; to proclaim rules and administer them selectively; to speak of law while operating through exception; to invoke values while practising coercion. The Global South knows this mechanism not through theory, but through history: sanctions, conditionalities, tutelage, interventions, and the perpetual invitation to "integrate", provided it never becomes a protagonist.

What the West has often called "order" was, in practice, uniformity under coercion. Multipolarity, by contrast, may represent a historical opportunity for institutional harmony: multiple voices, real rules, less arbitrary application, and a system in which "universal" is no longer synonymous with "Western".

For this reason, alarmism is, to a large extent, a reflection of a sense of lost control. When the center sets the rhythm, change looks civilized; when the center loses centrality, change is described as barbarism. It is an aesthetic of decline: the same water that yesterday was the "current of progress" is today labeled "turbulence". The problem is not the water; it is who has lost the vessel.

That said, the Global South cannot fall into the easy comfort of criticism. Transition is not a moral prize; it is a test of capacity. And capacity requires a project. A Global South that merely celebrates Western weakening without constructing alternatives reproduces old forms of dependency by other means. The task, therefore, is a deliberate shift from rule-taker to rule-maker – an exercise in political engineering.

This project must begin by overcoming fragmentation, the most sophisticated form of domestication. As long as Africa, Latin America and parts of Asia negotiate separately, they will be treated as markets rather than as poles of power. Coordination among regional mechanisms, common positions on structural issues, and sustained bloc diplomacy are the minimum conditions for genuine influence. It further demands the conquest of technological sovereignty, for the 21st century has transformed data into territory. Control over infrastructure, cloud systems, and algorithms now enables power to be exercised without a single shot being fired. Digital dependence is the new frontier of colonization – invisible extraction, externally captured value, and externally defined rules. The Global

South must build its own infrastructure, regulatory capacity, and the capability to engage tech giants without kneeling.

Concurrently, financial emancipation is non-negotiable. The prolonged centrality of the dollar and of the Bretton Woods institutions has turned the monetary system into an instrument of coercion and exported instability.

Diversifying currencies, strengthening regional banks and expanding local-currency settlement mechanisms are not ideological gestures against the West, but foundational acts of sovereign prudence. So too must transnational justice be redefined: climate, public health and food security cannot remain objects of charity. They must be translated into operational obligations, with predictable financing, so that solidarity becomes structural rather than poetic. Finally, institutional and symbolic reform is essential. Legitimacy has its own geography. Institutions that claim universality while remaining anchored in the hierarchies of 1945 carry that hierarchy in their DNA. Reforming representativeness and decision-making mechanisms – and openly debating the very geography of power – is therefore part of the necessary reconstruction.

The central point is this: there is no reason for despair. History is not an eternal building; it is a cycle of architecture. International orders have beginnings, middles, and ends – and maturity lies in accepting this temporality without hysteria. What must end is not cooperation, but the pretence that it exists only under the command of a center.

The message from Carney in Davos has been heard. The Global South, however, listens with one fundamental difference: it does not seek to replace one command with another. It seeks to transform command into governance. And herein lies the inevitable irony: what most unsettles is not the changing world, but the prospect of one that becomes genuinely plural – without asking permission.

*\*The author is a visiting professor at the China Foreign Affairs University, and senior fellow at the Policy Center for the New South.*

*The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

*– Courtesy of China Daily*

# Ride with films: Year of the Horse sees movie-inspired tourism surge in China

Analysis

BEIJING/SHANGHAI – Blockbusters are doing more than leading the holiday box office at the beginning of the Year of the Horse in China – they are reshaping holiday travel patterns, fueling a nationwide boom in movie-inspired tourism.

According to online ticketing platforms, the total Spring Festival box office revenue (including pre-sales) had surpassed 4 billion yuan by Saturday, with the racing-comedy "Pegasus 3" topping the charts.

Notably, the momentum of "Pegasus 3" extends well beyond cinemas. Data from travel platform Qunar showed that hotel bookings in Garze, Sichuan Province – one of the film's primary shooting locations – surged 40 percent compared to last year's Spring Festival holiday, while bookings in another shooting site, Delingha, Qinghai Province, jumped 71 percent.

"As soon as I finished watching 'Pegasus 3,' I rushed to plan a family spring trip to Garze to check in the racetrack featured in the film," said Shanghai car enthusiast Xia Lin. She has been a devoted fan since the "Pegasus" franchise was launched in 2019.

The film has also sparked a new wave of themed city tours in Shanghai, where the metro line, bridge, park and city landmarks appearing in the film have become fan-favorite check-in (photo opportunity) spots.

"During this year's Spring Festival season, the driving effect of films on culture and tourism has come earlier than usual," said Yang Han, a researcher at Qunar's Big Data Research Institute.

Thanks to the popularity of the previous two installments, fans of the "Pegasus" franchise have held high expectations for its storyline and visuals. A considerable number of them planned their trips before the release of the latest installment, he said.

The comic-adapted film "Blades of the Guardians," directed by renowned action choreographer Yuen Woo-ping and featuring martial arts stars Jet Li and Wu Jing, has also sparked strong interest in the dramatic but less-traveled desert landscapes of northwest China's Xinjiang. Data from Qunar showed that searches for desert sightseeing and desert highway tours climbed 60 percent ahead of the film's release.

Beyond the appeal of creativity in the film industry, the convergence of film and tourism during this Spring Festival holiday appears more systematic and policy-driven.

The China Film Administration has launched a series of initiatives in 2026, including campaigns such as "Travel with Films," "Taste Cuisine with Films," and "Shopping with Films." Local governments also responded with consumption vouchers, themed routes and cross-sector promotions.

In Guangdong Province, the release of prominent director Zhang Yimou's spy thriller "Scare Out" has catalyzed a province-wide travel-with-films campaign. The province unveiled 60 film-themed travel routes spanning 21 cities, integrating screenings with dining, retail and cultural promotions.

In Shanghai's Hongkou District, 11 cinemas partnered with dozens of commercial and cultural venues to create immersive "New Year in the Movies" experiences, offering ticket-stub discounts and interactive installations. In Sichuan, movie consumption vouchers worth more than 4 million yuan were distributed from Feb. 8 to 19, combining film discounts with dining and tourism subsidies.

Experts noted that this "film+" model reflects a maturation of China's holiday consumption structure. Spring Festival moviegoing -- once primarily entertainment -- has evolved into a ritualized cultural activity intertwined with family reunions and experiential travel.

"A film's value lies not only in its box office performance, but also in the ripple effects it generates across tourism, catering and other sectors," said Hou Keming, a professor at the Beijing Film Academy. "The economic and cultural impact now extends far beyond the screen."

*– Xinhua, MPD*



Tourists enjoy themselves at the indoor ice-and-snow theme park within the Harbin Ice and Snow World theme park in Harbin, the capital of Heilongjiang Province, yesterday. The indoor ice-and-snow theme park opened on Sunday, following the closure of the outdoor Harbin Ice and Snow World, which officially ended its 27th edition on Saturday. – Xinhua

## Spring Festival travel rush passes halfway mark with 5.08 billion trips

BEIJING – The nation's 2026 Spring Festival travel rush had passed its halfway point as of Saturday, with inter-regional passenger trips reaching 5.08 billion in the first 20 days, the Ministry of Transport said yesterday.

Of this total, road trips accounted for 4.76 billion, while railways handled 258 million trips. Waterways and civil aviation recorded 19.99 million and 47.52 million passenger trips, respectively.

The annual travel surge, known as chunyun ("spring transport") and often described as the world's largest human migration, is expected to generate a record 9.5 billion inter-regional passenger trips during the 40-day period running from Feb. 2 to March 13 this year, according to previous estimates.

The Spring Festival is also known as the Chinese New Year (CNY). – Xinhua



Passengers check in at the waiting hall of Huaibei Railway Station in Huaibei, Anhui Province, yesterday. – Xinhua

## AI-powered virtual technologies elevate Chinese filmmaking via grand realism, efficiency

### Analysis

HANGZHOU – Inside a studio featuring the world's largest single-structure LED at an AI virtual film base in Deqing, Zhejiang Province, a Hong Kong football-themed film was being made.

A 50-meter-diameter curved screen rendered the main stadium of Hong Kong's Kai Tak Sports Park in real-time, with tens of thousands of digital spectators cheering as goals were scored, creating an immersive experience akin to being in the real stadium.

Using advanced artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual production technologies, this film base enables crews to retrieve different scenes on screen and blend virtual and physical elements to recreate such iconic landscapes digitally, according to the facility owner Versatile Media, a virtual production company based in Hangzhou, capital of Zhejiang Province.

"Shooting on location is difficult and expensive, especially for long periods," noted Niu Cong, a project coordinator with Versatile Media. "The virtual studio, with its ample space and systemic advantages, fulfills creative needs. That's why we bring a whole stadium indoors."

More filmmakers are now turning to AI virtual production, according to Niu.

The Deqing facility, notably, reflects a broader push to integrate AI into filmmaking. Across China, studios are adopting AI and other digital tools.

"For a period drama, we used to spend three months building sets, only to later tear down 80 percent of them," Niu said. "Now, virtual assets stay in digital libraries and can be reused. Lighting and coordination are also easier."

Since its official opening in July 2025, the Deqing film facility has hosted over 30 film projects. Its advanced virtual filming system has quickly made this new base a sought-

after industry hub. In 2026 alone, nearly 10 companies have signed contracts to settle there.

The base is also moving into AI-generated short dramas. It has 89 such projects planned for this year, using its own AI platform for these endeavors.

In Yangzhou, Jiangsu Province, meanwhile, the local film and television base has built a large constant-temperature water scene filming studio. Utilizing digital intelligence technologies, it creates realistic giant waves for films, offering a one-stop solution for the shooting of water scenes.

The studio can simulate more than 200 wave types via computer, with a width of 35 meters and wave height up to 3 meters. Underwater shooting depth reaches 11 meters. Water can also be heated to 32 degrees Celsius in 24 hours, while all water conditions can be remotely adjusted by operators.

This studio has served multiple film productions, providing realistic water scenes without the need for post-production visual effects. It also deploys underwater robots to assist with filming.

In Chongqing Municipality, a digital set workshop uses an automated platform to swap scenes via a mouse click. Switching takes less than a second, boosting shooting efficiency by 55 percent and cutting large-scale set costs by 90 percent.

These technological shifts are fundamentally changing how films are made in China.

"The application of AI technology is not just an innovation at the tool level. It also brings a revolution to the filmmaking workflow," said Wang Shu with the China Science Writers Association.

"AI-powered film and TV creation will further propel the industry toward greater efficiency and intelligence," Wang added.

– Xinhua

## GGI affirms voice of Global South: think tank executive director

Interview by Xinhua writers Shi Song, Wang Qibing and Ma Ruxuan

GENEVA – The China-proposed Global Governance Initiative (GGI) shows that countries in the Global South are capable of making proposals for building an orderly global governance system, and that their voices should be genuinely heard, said Carlos Correa, executive director of the South Centre.

Headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, the South Centre serves as the intergovernmental think tank of the Global South, committed to advancing shared interests among Southern nations.

Serving as the executive director of the South Centre since July 2018, Correa has consistently highlighted the importance of the multilateral trading system at international forums. He also said that China's economic development has injected momentum into global economic recovery.

In a recent interview with Xinhua, Correa noted that the majority of the world's population lives in Global South countries, which account for an important share of global GDP. However, in many cases, the influence of Global South countries is not fully reflected in the outcomes of international negotiations.

Although developing countries have called for reforms for many years, little progress has been made, and their interests have yet to be safeguarded, said Correa.

The China-proposed GGI is very important as it demonstrates that countries in the Global South are capable of making

proposals for building an orderly global governance system, said Correa, noting that supporting the initiative and working around the principles it proposes is relevant for developing countries.

The current crisis in the international system is largely caused by some countries' unilateral measures, Correa told Xinhua, pointing to recent violations by the United States of the principle of sovereign equality enshrined in the UN Charter.

Correa noted that the United States has arbitrarily imposed tariffs based on its own interests and political considerations, severely undermining trust in the multilateral system.

Efforts are needed to address the current lack of trust in order to strengthen the international system and ensure that the principles on which it is based are preserved, acted and enforced, said Correa, calling on countries affected by unilateral actions to respond in a "more organized" manner and act in solidarity with other nations in confronting these measures.

Correa told Xinhua that the South Centre supports the establishment of a multilateral system that reflects the interests of all countries, and that such a system not only benefits the Global South but is also crucial for the world as a whole.

To make global governance fairer, members of the international community must first of all respect the rules, he said, noting it is also necessary to adjust certain rules to ensure that the voices of Global South countries are genuinely heard. – Xinhua



# Fans flock to Japan zoo to see viral baby monkey Punch

ICHIKAWA – Dozens of fans flocked to a Japanese zoo on Friday to catch a glimpse of a baby macaque who shot to social media stardom months after being abandoned by his mother.

Six-month-old Punch became an internet sensation after footage of him clinging forlornly to zookeepers and dragging around a stuffed orangutan toy was widely shared on X.

Punch's mother, perhaps due to it being her first litter or reduced stamina from the summer heat, showed no interest in caring for her young, the Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper reported.

Japanese baby macaques cling to their mothers to feel safe and to build up their muscles.

The zoo looked for an alternative, such as a towel or different soft toy, but Punch chose the long-legged orangutan.

"It was easy for him to grab," a zookeeper told Fuji TV.

"Maybe he also liked [that] it looked like a monkey."

Punch's predicament sparked sympathy online, spawning a devoted fanbase who began posting updates on the monkey under the hashtag #HangInTherePunch.

The baby monkey was raised in an artificial environment after being born in July, and began training to rejoin his troop last month.

His situation began looking up this month when zookeepers at Ichikawa City Zoo, near Tokyo, posted that he was gradually integrating, including "playfully poking others and getting scolded".

On Friday, more than 100 visitors gathered around the zoo's monkey enclosure, straining to take photos and shouting "hang in there!" as Punch tried to approach others in the troop.

"We're here since this morning. We rarely come to a zoo but we wanted to see cute Punch," said 32-year-old Sayaka Takimoto,

who drove two hours with her husband to see the monkey.

The couple said they found social media posts of Punch carrying around the soft toy "adorable".

Another visitor, who gave her name as Yoko, said: "He's so cute, so I had to come see him."

"I studied his pictures in advance so that I could recognise him," the 50-year-old told AFP.

"It makes me a little sad he's growing so fast, but I'm relieved to see he's making friends."

Some fans, however, were worried by a widely shared video showing Punch being dragged by an adult monkey.

The zoo issued a statement on Friday asking them to "support Punch's efforts" to socialise as his troop has not shown any serious aggression.

"While Punch is scolded [by other monkeys], he shows mental strength and resilience," it said. – AFP



This photo taken on February 19 shows a 7-month-old male macaque monkey named Punch, who was abandoned by his mother shortly after birth, spending time with a stuffed orangutan toy at Ichikawa City Zoo and Botanical Gardens in Chiba Prefecture. – AFP



This picture taken on February 19 and released by North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on Friday shows the Ninth Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea in Pyongyang, North Korea. – AFP

## Indonesian crew member dies in cruise ship fire off Singapore

SINGAPORE – A fire on a Singapore-bound cruise ship killed one crew member and prompted the evacuation of hundreds of passengers, the city-state's maritime and port authority said Friday.

The blaze on the World Legacy has been extinguished, and there were no other reports of injuries among the crew or 271 passengers on board, authorities said in a statement.

Four passengers, however, have been taken to hospital for "further medical assessment."

"The deceased crew member, an Indonesian national, has been transferred ashore," the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore said.

"All 271 passengers from the... vessel World Legacy have been safely evacuated," it added.

A preliminary investigation showed the blaze broke out in a lounge area on the ship's

ninth deck, early Friday.

"Investigations into the cause of the fire are ongoing," the port authority said.

Singapore-based World Cruises, which operates World Legacy, could not immediately be reached for comment.

Anchored off Singapore and Malaysia, the Liberia-registered vessel bills itself as a "floating lifestyle destination". Passengers take short ferry rides from both countries to board it and enjoy amenities inside.

Passengers can stay a few hours or take packages of up to three days.

The ship typically docks in Singapore every Friday before returning to its anchorage.

"The vessel is in a stable condition, and is currently anchored at Raffles Reserved Anchorage [in Singapore]," the port authority said. – AFP

## Virus kills dozens of tigers in Thailand park

BANGKOK – A deadly virus and bacterial infection have killed at least 72 tigers at a private animal park in Thailand's north in recent weeks, authorities said.

The provincial livestock office in Chiang Mai said in a statement on Friday that testing detected the highly infectious canine distemper virus as well as bacteria affecting the respiratory system.

"When tigers fall ill, it is more difficult to detect than in animals like cats or dogs. By the time we realised they were sick, it was already too late," Somchuan Ratanamungklanon, director of

the national livestock department, told local media.

The park where the deaths occurred, Tiger Kingdom, could not be reached for comment on Saturday.

Its website advertises a chance for visitors to touch and take photos with the big cats.

"These tigers died the way they lived - in misery, confinement and fear," animal rights organisation PETA Asia told AFP.

"If tourists stayed away, these places would quickly become unprofitable, and tragedies like this would be far less likely to happen," the group added. – AFP

## Ex-president Duterte faces pre-trial ICC hearing

Femke Colborne

THE HAGUE – Former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte faces a pre-trial hearing at the International Criminal Court from today over crimes against humanity allegedly committed as part of a brutal crackdown on drugs.

The "confirmation of charges" hearing, taking place over four days, will determine whether there is enough evidence against Duterte to proceed to a trial.

The 80-year-old will not be present at the hearing in The Hague after the court granted a request from his defence to waive his right to appear, despite judges ruling that he was fit to take part.

Following the hearing, the judges will have 60 days to issue a written decision.

ICC prosecutors have charged Duterte with three counts of crimes against humanity, alleging his involvement in at least 76 murders between 2013 and 2018.

The true number of killings is thought to be in the thousands, and lawyers for the victims have argued that if the case goes to trial it could encourage many more families to come forward.

Duterte, who was president from 2016 to 2022, was arrested in Manila in March last year, flown directly to the Netherlands and has since been held at the ICC's detention unit at Scheveningen Prison.

He followed his initial hearing three days later by video link, appearing dazed and frail and barely speaking.

### 'War on drugs'

The first of three counts against Duterte concerns his alleged involvement as a co-perpetrator in 19 murders carried out between 2013 and 2016 while he was mayor of Davao City.

The second relates to 14 murders of so-called "High Value Targets" in 2016 and 2017 when he was president.

The third charge covers 43 murders committed during "clearance" operations of lower-level alleged drug users or pushers across the Philippines between 2016 and 2018.

Duterte denies the charges, his lawyer Nicholas Kaufman told journalists ahead of the hearing.

"Mr Duterte... grieves and regrets the death of people as a result of drug-related crime, but he denies any connection to this," Kaufman said.

"He denies that there was a policy to murder alleged suspects or criminal suspects or alleged drug users, as the prosecution states. He denies that there was a conspiracy to do so with other alleged co-perpetrators in his administration."

When Duterte became president in June 2016, he launched an aggressive nationwide anti-drug campaign aimed at eradicating drug use and trafficking.

Critics have condemned the "war on drugs" over widespread extrajudicial killings and human rights abuses.

Previously, during his long tenure as mayor of Davao City, Duterte was already known for extremely harsh anti-crime and anti-drug policies.

In 2016, he boasted that he had personally killed suspected criminals.

"In Davao I used to do it personally. Just to show to the guys [police officers] that if I can do it, why can't you," he said.

### 'Critical step'

When Duterte was arrested, he said he took full responsibility for the "war on drugs".

"I am the one who led our law enforcement and military. I said that I will protect you and I will be responsible for all of this," Duterte said in a video posted on Facebook.

Human Rights Watch said the hearing beginning today was "a critical step in ensuring justice for victims of the Philippines' 'war on drugs'".

"The ICC case reflects the determination of victims and their families to advance justice against all odds and dangers," said Maria Elena Vignoli, senior international justice counsel at the NGO.

The case comes with the ICC facing intense political pressure, including two rounds of US sanctions imposed since June 2025.

The Philippines left the ICC in 2019, on Duterte's instructions, but the court has ruled that it still has jurisdiction over alleged crimes committed there between 2011 and 2019.

The defence has appealed the ruling, with a decision still pending.

Duterte, the first Asian former head of state to appear before the ICC, remains hugely popular in the Philippines, where many were in favour of his tough approach to crime. – AFP

# Afghans mourn villagers killed in Pakistani strikes

AFGHANISTAN – Afghans gathered around a mass grave yesterday to bury villagers who died in overnight air strikes by Pakistan, which said its military operation killed more than 80 militants.

The overnight attacks left at least 18 people dead, Afghanistan said, and were the most extensive since border clashes in October that killed more than 70 on both sides and wounded hundreds.

“The house was completely destroyed. My children and family members were there. My father and my sons were there. All of them were killed,” said Nezakat, a 35-year-old farmer in Bihsud district, who only gave one name.

Islamabad said it hit seven sites along the border region targeting Afghanistan-based militant groups, in response to suicide bombings in Pakistan.

A Pakistani security source told AFP yesterday that the airstrikes killed “more than 80” militants, adding the death toll was expected to rise.

Islamabad’s military targeted the Pakistani Taliban and its associates, as well as an affiliate of the Islamic State group, a statement by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting said.

The Afghan government has previously denied harbouring militants.

Taliban government spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid said “people’s homes have been destroyed, they have targeted civilians, they have committed this criminal act” with the bombardment of eastern Nangarhar and Paktika provinces.

Residents from around the remote Bihsud district in Nangarhar joined searchers to look



Afghan men search for victims after an overnight Pakistani air strike hit a residential area in the Girdi Kas village of Bihsud district, Nangarhar province yesterday. – AFP

for bodies under the rubble using shovels and a digger, an AFP journalist said.

“People here are ordinary people. The residents of this village are our relatives. When the bombing happened, one person who survived was shouting for help,” said neighbour Amin Gul Amin, 37.

Nangarhar police told AFP the bombardment started at around midnight and hit three districts, with those killed all in a civilian’s house.

“Twenty-three members of his family were buried under the rubble, of whom 18 were killed and five wounded,” said police spokesperson Sayed Tayeeb Hammad.

Strikes elsewhere in Nangarhar wounded two others, while in Paktika an AFP journalist saw a destroyed guesthouse but there were no immediate reports of casualties.

## ‘Calculated response’

Afghanistan’s defence ministry said it

will “deliver an appropriate and calculated response” to the Pakistani strikes.

The two countries have been locked in an increasingly bitter dispute since the Taliban authorities retook control of Afghanistan in 2021 as foreign forces withdrew.

Pakistani military action killed 70 Afghan civilians between October and December, according to the UN mission in Afghanistan.

Several rounds of negotiations followed an initial ceasefire brokered by Qatar and Turkey, but the efforts have failed to produce a lasting agreement.

Saudi Arabia intervened this month, mediating the release of three Pakistani soldiers captured by Afghanistan in October.

The deteriorating relationship has impacted people in both countries, with land border crossings - crucial gateways for trade - largely shut for months.

Pakistan said yesterday that despite repeated urging by Islamabad, Taliban authorities have failed to act against militant groups using Afghan territory to carry out attacks in Pakistan, which Kabul denies.

Islamabad launched the strikes after a suicide blast at a Shi’ite mosque in Islamabad two weeks ago and other attacks more recently in northwestern Pakistan.

The Islamic State group had claimed responsibility for the mosque bombing, which killed at least 40 people and wounded more than 160 in the deadliest attack in Islamabad since 2008.

The militant group’s regional chapter, Islamic State-Khorasan, also claimed a deadly suicide bombing at a restaurant in Kabul last month. – AFP

## Pakistan strikes militant camps in Afghan border region: govt

ISLAMABAD – Islamabad said yesterday it had carried out strikes on seven sites along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region targeting Afghan-based militant groups it blames for recent suicide attacks.

Citing three attacks since the start of Ramadan last week, Pakistan “has carried out intelligence-based selective targeting of seven Terrorist camps and hideouts belonging to Pakistani Taliban” and its affiliates in the border region, a statement by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting said.

The statement posted on X by Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said Pakistan had also targeted an affiliate of the Islamic State group.

It did not indicate where the strikes were carried out or give further details on them.

But Afghan government spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid posted on X yesterday that Pakistan “bombed our civilian compatriots in Nangarhar and Paktika provinces, martyring and wounding dozens of people, including women and children”.

The ministry said they were carried out in response to a suicide blast at a Shi’ite mosque in Islamabad two weeks ago and other more recent suicide bombings in northwest Pakistan, including one on Saturday.

The Islamic State group had claimed responsibility for the mosque bombing which killed at least 40 people and wounded more than 160 in the deadliest attack on

Islamabad since the 2008 Marriott hotel bombing.

Pakistan said Sunday that despite repeated urging by Islamabad, Kabul’s Taliban authorities had failed to act against militant groups using Afghan territory to carry out attacks in Pakistan.

“Pakistan has always strived for maintaining peace and stability in the region, but at the same time the safety and security of our citizens remains our top priority,” it said.

Islamabad also called on the international community to urge Kabul to fulfil its commitments under the Doha agreement reached last year not to support hostile actions against other countries.

Afghanistan and Pakistan have been locked in an increasingly bitter dispute since the Taliban authorities retook control in Kabul in 2021.

The relationship between the two countries has deteriorated sharply with deadly border clashes in recent months.

More than 70 people were killed and hundreds wounded in October clashes, which ended with a ceasefire brokered by Qatar and Turkey.

But several subsequent rounds of talks in Doha and Istanbul have failed to produce a lasting deal.

Security issues are at the heart of the conflict, with Islamabad accusing Kabul of harbouring militant groups, particularly the Pakistani Taliban, that launch attacks on its soil.

The Taliban government in Kabul denies the allegations. – AFP



# US Secret Service kills man trying to access Trump Florida estate

Gerard Martinez and Maria Danilova

WASHINGTON – US Secret Service agents and a sheriff's deputy fatally shot a man armed with a shotgun who breached the security perimeter of President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida in the early hours of yesterday morning (local time).

Trump was in Washington at the time of the incident, which officials said happened around 1:30 a.m. (local time).

The suspect, a man in his early 20s, was spotted by the north gate of the Mar-a-Lago property, carrying a shotgun and a fuel can, the Secret Service said.

Agents confronted the man and told him to disarm but he raised his gun.

"The only words that we said to him was 'drop the items,'" Palm Beach County sheriff Ric Bradshaw told reporters.

"At which time he put down the gas can, raised the shotgun to a shooting position," Bradshaw said.

A deputy and two Secret Service agents then shot him. The man was pronounced deceased and no US officers were injured.

The Secret Service said no one under its protection was present in Mar-a-Lago at the time.

There was no immediate reaction from the White House.

Trump, who often spends his weekends in Mar-a-Lago, has been the target of several assassination plots or attempts.

Earlier this month, Ryan Routh, 59, who plotted to assassinate the president at a Florida golf course in September 2024, two months before the last US election, was sentenced to life in prison.

Routh's planned attack on Trump came two months after an assassination attempt on the Republican leader in Pennsylvania, where 20-year-old Matthew Crooks fired several shots during a rally, one of them grazing Trump's right ear.

That attack, in which a rallygoer

was killed, proved to be a turning point in Trump's return to power. Crooks was immediately shot and killed by security forces and his motive remains unknown.

Political violence has escalated in a deeply polarised country where the political discourse has become increasingly aggressive and inflammatory.

In September last year, right-wing influencer and staunch Trump ally Charlie Kirk was shot dead during an event at a university in Utah.

Before that, in June, a masked shooter killed Minnesota lawmaker Melissa Hortman, a Democrat, and

her husband at their home. Another elected official and his wife were also targeted and seriously injured.

And Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro – touted last year as a presidential hopeful – had his home set alight in April in an alleged assassination attempt.

The name of the suspect in yesterday's incident has not been released while officials attempt to contact his relatives.

The US Secret Service is responsible for the safety of the president, vice president and former presidents, and their families, as well as major election candidates and visiting foreign heads of state. – AFP



A vendor serves freshly-squeezed orange juice at a market in Libya's eastern city of Benghazi yesterday, during the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan.

– AFP

## Hamas official says group in final stage of choosing new chief

CAIRO – A senior Hamas official told AFP yesterday that the Palestinian Islamist movement was in the final phase of selecting a new leader, with two prominent figures competing for the position.

Hamas recently completed the formation of a new Shura Council of more than 80 members, a consultative body largely composed of religious scholars, as well as a new 18-member political bureau, the official said.

Since the war in Gaza began after Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack on Israel, Israeli forces have killed several of the movement's leaders, including two former chiefs.

"The movement has completed its internal elections in the three regions and has reached the final stage of selecting the head of the political bureau," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity as he was not authorised to speak publicly.

He added that the race for the group's leadership was now between Khaled Meshaal and Khalil al-Hayya.

A second Hamas source confirmed the development.

Despite a US-brokered ceasefire that entered its second phase last month, violence has continued in Gaza, with Israel and Hamas blaming each other for violating the agreement.

Members of the council are elected every four years by representatives from Hamas's three branches: the Gaza Strip, the occupied West Bank and the movement's external leadership.

Hamas prisoners in Israeli jails are also eligible to vote.

The council subsequently elects the political bureau, which in turn selects the head of the movement.

'Renew internal legitimacy'

A third Hamas source said the new leader will serve for only "one year... a transitional period".

Thousands of Hamas members voted to choose the council and the political bureau, the source added, without specifying how the vote was conducted.

"The primary goal of the process was to renew internal legitimacy and fill leadership vacancies," the source added.

The new leader will need to navigate between international calls, led by the United States and Israel, for the group to disarm, and resistance to that demand from its armed wing, which fought Israeli forces in Gaza.

Hamas, however, said it would surrender its weapons to a Palestinian authority in Gaza under certain conditions.

Both Meshaal and Hayya have years of experience within the movement.

Hayya, 65, a Gaza native and Hamas's chief negotiator in ceasefire talks, has held senior roles since at least 2006, according to the US-based NGO the Counter Extremism Project (CEP).

Meshaal, who led the political bureau from 2004 to 2017, has never lived in Gaza. He was born in the West Bank in 1956.

He joined Hamas in Kuwait and later lived in Jordan, Syria and Qatar. The CEP says he oversaw Hamas's evolution into a political-military hybrid.

He currently heads the movement's diaspora office.

Last month, a Hamas source told AFP that Hayya enjoyed backing from the group's armed wing, the Ezzedine Al-Qassam Brigades.

After Israel killed former Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran in July 2024, the group chose its then-Gaza chief Yahya Sinwar as his successor.

Israel accused Sinwar of masterminding the October 7 attack.

He too was killed by Israeli forces in the southern Gaza city of Rafah, three months after Haniyeh's assassination.

Hamas then opted for an interim five-member leadership committee based in Qatar, postponing the appointment of a single leader until elections, given the risk of the new chief being targeted by Israel. – AFP

## EU 'expects' US to honour trade deal as Trump hikes tariffs

BRUSSELS – The European Commission called yesterday for Washington to abide by the terms of the trade deal struck last year with the EU, as President Donald Trump announced new global tariff hikes a day after an adverse Supreme Court ruling.

"A deal is a deal. As the United States' largest trading partner, the EU expects the US to honour its commitments set out in the Joint Statement – just as the EU stands by its commitments," said a commission statement.

"The European Commission requests full clarity on the steps the United States intends to take following the recent Supreme Court ruling on the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA)," it said.

Trump temporarily raised the global duty on imports into the United States to 15 percent on Saturday, delivering a fresh jolt

of uncertainty just a day after the Supreme Court ruled much of his international tariffs campaign illegal.

The EU and United States last year struck an agreement setting US tariffs at a maximum 15 percent on most European goods.

"EU products must continue to benefit from the most competitive treatment, with no increases in tariffs beyond the clear and all-inclusive ceiling previously agreed," the commission said.

It warned that "when applied unpredictably, tariffs are inherently disruptive, undermining confidence and stability across global markets and creating further uncertainty across international supply chains".

The EU executive said it remained "in close and continuous contact" with Trump's administration and that EU Trade commissioner Maros Sefcovic

had spoken with US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick on Saturday.

The European Parliament's trade committee is due to approve the EU-US deal tomorrow – but the Supreme Court judgment casts doubt on that now happening.

The committee's head, Bernd Lange, said he would call during a meeting of parliament's political groups today for putting "legislative work on hold until we have a proper legal assessment and clear commitments from the US side".

"Pure tariff chaos from the US administration. No one can make sense of it anymore – only open questions and growing uncertainty for the EU and other US trading partners," Lange wrote.

"Clarity and legal certainty are needed before any further steps are taken," he added. – AFP

# Andrew's arrest hands King Charles fresh royal crisis

*Analysis by Caroline Taix*

LONDON – King Charles III has been left wrestling with a new test after the arrest of his brother Andrew, the latest in a series of painful personal shocks to mar his reign.

“Charles has, since coming to the throne in September 2022, been battered by a succession of difficulties and crises, whether it’s in relation to his second son, Harry ... his health, the health of Catherine, or the very disruptive figure of Andrew,” royal commentator Ed Owens told AFP.

After decades waiting in the wings, Charles became king in September 2022 on the death of his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, who had reigned for 70 years and commanded deep public affection and respect.

His coronation on May 6, 2023 was rich in pageantry, projecting continuity and tradition.

Yet trouble stirred even before the crown was placed on his head.

In January 2023, his youngest son Harry released his explosive memoir “Spare”, launching

repeated attacks on the royal family and airing private disputes lapped up by a global audience.

Living in California with his wife Meghan since 2020 and estranged from his family, Harry has been accused by critics of damaging, for personal and commercial gain, an institution long seen as unshakeable.

Though Harry has since sought reconciliation, the rift remains.

Then in February 2024, Charles, now 77, revealed he was undergoing treatment for cancer, without disclosing the type, forcing him to scale back public duties.

Weeks later came another blow: Catherine, Princess of Wales and wife of heir apparent William, announced she too was being treated for cancer.

While Catherine has since said she is in remission and Charles indicated in December that his treatment was being eased, illness has cast a long shadow over the royal household.

The king has won admiration for his dignified, touching fight against cancer, talking about his shock at

learning his diagnosis, and making a point of publicly visiting patients, urging prevention and early detection.

But arguably the gravest threat to his reign has come from his younger brother Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor, as he is now known, who remains eighth in line to the throne.

Royal historian Andrew Lownie told AFP that it was “a crunch point” for the monarchy.

If it is found that “they have been abetting him, enabling him, protecting him, then I think Charles will have to stand aside,” he said.

The long-standing ties between the deeply unpopular Mountbatten-Windsor to late convicted American sex offender Jeffrey Epstein have caused years of embarrassment.

A photograph published in 2011 showing the former prince with his arm around the waist of Virginia Giuffre, Epstein’s main accuser, proved especially damaging.

## ‘Monarchy unstable’

Scrutiny has intensified in recent months.

In October, Charles sought to draw a line under the affair by stripping his brother of all his titles.

But new documents released by the US Department of Justice last month reignited public outrage.

On Thursday, Andrew was arrested and held for hours in police custody, suspected of having passed confidential information to Epstein during his 2001-2011 role as a UK trade envoy.

It was the first time a senior British royal has been arrested in modern history.

In a rare personally signed statement, Charles vowed on Thursday the “law must take its course” and expressed his “deepest concern”.

Some commentators have likened the moment to other crises that have shaken the monarchy, such as the 1936 abdication of Edward VIII and the 1997 death of Princess Diana, Charles’s ex-wife.

In both cases, it took more than a decade to restore stability and public confidence, Owens said.

For Pauline Maclaran, an academic and royal family expert, Charles is in part a victim of timing.

“The monarchy seems quite unstable now and that was always going to happen after the queen passed away because she had been there for so long and had given this great sense of continuity,” she said.

The late queen “certainly protected Andrew”, Maclaran added.

Owens was more direct. “Andrew was an unexploded bomb that the queen passed on to Charles,” he said.

“This episode, I think, could potentially be hugely damaging to the institution,” he added. “Already, I think its moral authority has suffered. That includes the moral authority of the king.”

Restoring that authority will require visible change, Maclaran argued.

“William has indicated that he will change things, but they’ve got to really emphasise that more now,” she said. – AFP

## Greenland does not need US hospital ship: Danish minister

COPENHAGEN – Denmark yesterday rejected a US claim that Greenland needs healthcare help, on the same day its forces evacuated a US sailor from a submarine off the coast of the Arctic island for medical treatment.

A day earlier, US President Donald Trump said he was sending a hospital ship to the autonomous Danish territory that he covets.

But Danish Defence Minister Troels Lund Poulsen told Danish broadcaster DR: “The Greenlandic population receives the healthcare it needs. They receive it either in Greenland, or, if they require specialised treatment, they receive it in Denmark.”

He added: “It’s not as if there’s a need for a special healthcare initiative in Greenland.”

In Greenland, as in Denmark, access to healthcare is free.

Without explicitly mentioning the US proposal, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said she was “happy to live in a country where access to healthcare is free and equal for all. Where insurance or wealth does not determine whether one receives dignified treatment.”

Separately, early on Saturday Denmark’s Arctic Command announced that it had evacuated a crew member of a US submarine off the coast of Nuuk after the sailor requested urgent medical attention.

AI-generated hospital ship

Trump, in his Truth Social message on Saturday proposing a hospital ship, posted an AI-generated image of a US Navy medical vessel, USNS Mercy.

It was not immediately clear if that meant he was deploying that ship to Greenland.

“We are going to send a great hospital boat to Greenland to take care of the many people who are sick, and not being taken care of there,” Trump wrote.

“It’s on the way!!!” he added.

The US president indicated the deployment was being carried out in coordination with Jeff Landry, appointed in December as the US Special Envoy to the Arctic island.

Greenland has five regional hospitals, with the one in the capital Nuuk serving the whole territory, whose population is 57,000.

Aaja Chemnitz, who represents Greenland in the Danish Parliament, wrote on Facebook that while Greenland’s health system had its share of problems, they were best resolved through cooperation with Denmark – “which is one of the wealthiest and most educated countries, for example in the field of healthcare. Not with the United States, which has its own healthcare system problems.”

Trump has repeatedly said he believes the United States must control Greenland to ensure US national security.

Earlier threats he made to seize the territory, by force if necessary, have ebbed since he struck a “framework” deal with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte to ensure greater US influence.

The defence minister, Lund Poulsen, told DR he was not aware of a possible arrival of the suggested US hospital ship.

“Trump is constantly tweeting about Greenland. So this is undoubtedly an expression of the new normal that has taken hold in international politics,” he said.

– AFP

## France to summon US ambassador over comments on slain far-right activist



Protesters in Lyon, central-eastern France, hold a banner on Saturday demanding “Justice for Quentin” during a march in tribute to far-right activist Quentin Deranque, who died after being attacked on the sidelines of a protest against a politician of the far-left France Unbowed (LFI) party in the city on February 12. – AFP

PARIS – The French foreign ministry will summon the US ambassador to Paris over comments made by the Trump administration about the killing of a French far-right activist blamed on the hard left, France’s top diplomat said yesterday.

The death of Quentin Deranque has put France on edge, igniting tensions between the left and right ahead of a 2027 presidential vote.

It has also provoked international reactions, with US President Donald Trump’s right-wing administration on Friday denouncing what it called “terrorism” in France.

“We are going to summon the United States ambassador to France, since the US embassy in France commented on this tragedy ... which concerns the national community,” Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot told French media outlets *Le Monde*, France Inter and France Info.

“We reject any attempt to

use this tragedy ... for political purposes,” he added.

The foreign ministry did not say when ambassador Charles Kushner – the father of Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner – would be summoned.

Deranque, 23, died from head injuries following clashes between radical-left and far-right supporters on the sidelines of a February 12 demonstration against a politician from the left-wing France Unbowed (LFI) party in Lyon.

More than 3,000 people marched in Lyon on Saturday in tribute to Deranque, with authorities deploying heavy security fearing further clashes.

On Friday, Sarah Rogers, the US State Department under secretary for public diplomacy, said Deranque’s killing showed “why we treat political violence – terrorism – so harshly”.

“Once you decide to kill people for their opinions instead of

persuade [sic] them, you’ve opted out of civilisation,” she wrote on X.

The State Department’s bureau of counter-terrorism separately posted: “Violent radical leftism is on the rise and its role in Quentin Deranque’s death demonstrates the threat it poses to public safety” – a post shared in French by the US embassy account.

Deranque’s killing has also caused a diplomatic feud between France and Italy, whose right-wing prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, has warm ties with Trump.

She called the killing of Deranque “a wound for all of Europe,” prompting French President Emmanuel Macron to criticise her for speaking out on French domestic affairs.

Six men suspected of involvement in the fatal assault have been charged over the killing, while a parliamentary assistant to a radical left-wing MP has also been charged with complicity. – AFP

# Lula urges Trump to treat all countries equally

**Bhuvan Bagga with Abhaya Srivastava**

NEW DELHI – Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva urged his US counterpart Donald Trump yesterday to treat all countries equally after the US leader imposed a 15 percent tariff on imports following an adverse Supreme Court ruling.

“I want to tell US President Donald Trump that we don’t want a new Cold War. We don’t want interference in any other country, we want all countries to be treated equally,” Lula told reporters in New Delhi.

The conservative-majority US Supreme Court ruled six to three on Friday that a 1977 law that Trump has relied on to slap sudden levies on individual countries, upending global trade, “does not authorise the President to impose tariffs”.

Lula said he would not like to react to the Supreme Court decisions of another country, but hoped that Brazil’s relations with



**Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva gestures during a press conference in New Delhi yesterday.** – AFP

the United States “will go back to normalcy” soon.

The veteran leftist leader is expected to travel to Washington next month for a meeting with Trump.

“I am convinced that Brazil-US

relation will go back to normalcy after our conversation,” Lula, 80, said, adding that Brazil only wanted to “live in peace, generate jobs, and improve the lives of our people”.

Lula and Trump, 79, stand on polar opposite sides when it comes

to issues such as multilateralism, international trade and the fight against climate change.

However, ties between Brazil and the United States appear to be on the mend after months of animosity between Washington and Brasilia.

As a result, Trump’s administration has exempted key Brazilian exports from 40 percent tariffs that had been imposed on the South American country last year.

## ‘Affinity’

“The world doesn’t need more turbulence, it needs peace,” said Lula, who arrived in India on Wednesday for a summit on AI and a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Ties between Washington and Brasilia soured in recent months, with Trump angered over the trial and conviction of his ally, Brazil’s far-right former president Jair Bolsonaro.

Trump imposed sanctions against several top officials, including a Supreme Court judge, to punish Brazil for what he termed a “witch hunt” against Bolsonaro.

Bolsonaro was sentenced to 27 years in prison for his alleged role in a botched coup bid after his 2022 election loss to Lula.

Lula said that he looked forward to a positive relationship with the United States.

“We are two men of 80 years of age, so we cannot play around with democracy,” he said.

“We have to take this very seriously. We have to shake hands eye-to-eye, person-to-person, and to discuss what is best for the US and Brazil.”

Lula also praised Modi after India and Brazil agreed to boost cooperation on critical minerals and rare earths and signed a raft of other deals on Saturday.

“I have a lot of affinity with Prime Minister Modi,” he said.

– AFP

## Indigenous protesters occupy Cargill port terminal in Brazil

RIO DE JANEIRO – Indigenous protesters in Brazil occupied a shipping terminal operated by US agricultural giant Cargill on Saturday, demanding a ban on dredging Amazon waterways.

The South American nation is the world’s top exporter of soy and maize, and ongoing efforts to upgrade river ports aim to ease transportation.

Demonstrators had been gathering outside the terminal in Santarém, in northern Brazil’s Pará State, for a month before taking over company offices this past weekend.

In a statement to AFP the company said operations were suspended, blaming an “ongoing

dispute between government authorities and indigenous communities.”

Protesters are calling for the repeal of an order signed by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in August that designated Amazonian rivers as priority areas for shipping and port development.

The indigenous protesters are against an expansion of the ports and the dredging of the Amazon’s rivers, which they consider vital to their way of life.

Alessandra Korap, a community leader from the Mundurucu indigenous group, said protesters “will only leave if Lula and the government overturn and revoke the decree.”

Activists protested in front of

Cargill’s offices in São Paulo on Friday.

“When they start dredging the river and causing pollution, the river will cease to be a common good for all humanity and will become the property of a single individual,” demonstrator Thiago Guarani told AFP.

Two weeks ago the government announced the suspension of dredging in the Tapajós River, a key Amazon River tributary, after indigenous-led protests.

Cargill called on the government and demonstrators to engage in a “constructive dialogue.”

The US-based multinational food corporation is a major shipper of soy and corn in Brazil.

– AFP

## Artist creates ‘Latin American Mona Lisa’ with plastic bottle caps

**San Salvador, El Salvador**

SAN SALVADOR – A massive mural made of plastic bottle caps depicts Latin America’s version of the famed Mona Lisa, adorning a modest apartment building in a working class neighborhood outside the capital of El Salvador instead of the walls of the Louvre.

Using a rainbow of colours and various sizes of caps, Venezuelan artist Oscar Olivares’s latest installation is 13 metres tall and takes inspiration from Renaissance master Leonardo da Vinci as well as the pointillist paintings of French artist Paul Signac.

“I wanted to portray a Latin American Mona Lisa,” Olivares told AFP.

The mural is in Zacamil, in the Mejicanos suburb of San Salvador – an area that was once controlled by violent gangs, whose activity has been curbed by President Nayib Bukele’s controversial security crackdown.

“The Mona Lisa is an ordinary woman, and she’s an icon of the Italian Renaissance” – and now “we are living

through a new Renaissance, both in El Salvador and the world,” Olivares said.

Completed in three weeks, the composition is made of more than 100,000 recycled bottle caps, after they were gathered by local residents over several months, washed and sorted.

Instead of the muted palette of the Italian countryside, Olivares replaced da Vinci’s pastoral background with bright depictions of homes, a bold blue mountain and a colourful checkerboard sky.

And it wouldn’t be the Mona Lisa without her penetrating gaze and that ever-elusive smile, this time seen on a sun-kissed face rendered with red, orange and yellow caps. Her jewellery, hairstyle and colourful dress evoke a modern Latina woman’s graces.

Olivares has created murals using plastic caps in Venezuela, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, France and Italy, finding use for over two million caps in more than two dozen murals.

He hopes his work will give viewers “a completely different view of plastic waste.”

– AFP

## Spanish court rejects father’s bid to stop daughter’s euthanasia

MADRID – Spain’s Constitutional Court has rejected the appeal of a father against his paraplegic daughter’s euthanasia bid, setting up a final decision at European level for the unprecedented legal saga.

Spain is one of few countries to legalise euthanasia following a 2021 law that comes with strict requirements.

It stipulates that anyone of sound mind who is suffering from a “serious and incurable illness” or a “chronic and disabling” condition can request assistance to die.

The woman, in her 20s, was due to undergo the procedure in August 2024 after the euthanasia board in the northeastern Catalonia region supported her request.

But the process was suspended at the last minute after her father

filed a legal objection backed by the conservative campaign group Abogados Cristianos (“Christian Lawyers”), with a court applying precautionary measures halting the euthanasia.

The father said his daughter suffered from mental disorders that “could affect her ability to make a free and conscious decision” as required by law.

He also said there were indications she had changed her mind and that her ailment did not entail “unbearable physical or psychological suffering”.

The Constitutional Court announced on Friday it had unanimously rejected the father’s appeal against rulings by the Supreme Court and lower legal bodies to halt the euthanasia.

The father had appealed citing

“the violation of the right to effective legal oversight” and the right to life, but the Constitutional Court said there was a “clear absence of any violation of a fundamental right”.

Abogados Cristianos said it would take the case to the Strasbourg-based European Court of Human Rights, insisting that “fundamental rights are being violated, especially the right to life and effective legal oversight”.

The woman, who became paraplegic after throwing herself from the fifth floor of a building in a 2022 suicide attempt, asked a court in April 2024 to allow her to exercise her right to die.

Her case was the first to reach a Spanish court for a judge’s consideration since the 2021 euthanasia law was passed. – AFP



**Aerial view of a mural made with plastic bottle caps by Venezuelan artist Oscar Olivares (right) on an apartment building in the Zacamil neighbourhood in Mejicanos, El Salvador, on Friday.** – AFP

## Barcelona back top of La Liga with Levante win

**BARCELONA** – Barcelona cruised to a 3-0 victory over Levante to reclaim pole position in La Liga yesterday.

After Real Madrid fell to a 2-1 defeat at Osasuna on Saturday, Hansi Flick's side moved a point clear of their bitter rivals with a comfortable victory at Camp Nou against the team in 19<sup>th</sup>.

Marc Bernal and Frenkie de Jong gave Barca a commanding first-half lead and Fermin Lopez wrapped up the win with a sensational drive late on.

Barcelona were glad to get back to winning ways after a 4-0 thrashing by Atletico Madrid in the Copa del Rey semi-final first leg last week and then a 2-1 defeat by Girona last Monday in La Liga.

"I'm very happy with the three points and to help the team with a goal," Bernal told Movistar.

"It's true they had a chance in



Barcelona's Spanish defender Gerard Martin (top) heads the ball during the Spanish league football match against Levante UD at Camp Nou Stadium in Barcelona yesterday.

– AFP

the first minute, with my goal we were able to stay calm and build confidence."

It was Bernal's second goal since returning from a long-term

knee injury, which kept the 18-year-old out of action for over a year.

"I thought of my father [in my celebration] and my physio - he told me I would score and he has helped

me a lot in this process," added Bernal.

Despite Flick's calls for improvement in defence, Barca were as open as ever, although Levante's poor finishing meant they could not capitalise.

Bernal sent Barca ahead after good work by Joao Cancelo, who impressed on a rare start after his arrival on loan in January, and Eric Garcia.

Veteran Polish forward Robert Lewandowski could have doubled Barca's advantage but fired into the ground and over the bar when well placed.

Cancelo hit the post with a cross aimed at Lewandowski, before the Portuguese defender carved out the second for De Jong with a similar ball in from the left.

De Jong delivered the finishing touch to give Barca a two-goal lead at the break.

Garcia should have expanded Barcelona's advantage early in the

second half but nodded wide from Jules Kounde's tempting cross.

Eventually substitute Lopez got a spectacular third, rattling home a long-range effort in off the post.

The midfielder might have added a fourth late on but Levante goalkeeper Mathew Ryan denied him with a fine reflex save.

Flick was able to bring back midfielder Pedri as a substitute after a month out with a hamstring injury, with the Spaniard likely to be key in the testing weeks ahead.

Defeat leaves Levante seven points from safety.

"In the first half we had some chances that, if we put them away, could have got them to doubt themselves," said Levante midfielder Carlos Alvarez.

"If we'd have gone in front, who knows what could have happened."

Earlier Sevilla earned a 1-0 win at Getafe, while third-placed Villarreal hosted Valencia later on.

– AFP

## Liverpool late show floors Nottingham Forest



**NOTTINGHAM**

– Alexis Mac Allister's 97<sup>th</sup>-minute goal rescued Liverpool from a lacklustre performance to beat struggling Nottingham Forest 1-0 yesterday in a huge boost to their chances of Champions League football next season.

Forest's fourth manager of the season, Vitor Pereira, was taking charge for the first time in the league and his side looked set to earn a deserved point until a dramatic finale.

Mac Allister had a goal ruled out when he charged down Ola Aina's clearance in the closing stages.

The ball was deemed to have struck the Argentine midfielder on the arm.

However, to Pereira's fury, Forest did not heed the warning as they slipped to within two points of the Premier League relegation zone.

Mac Allister swept home a rebound after Virgil van Dijk's header was saved.

After another lengthy VAR review, this time the call went in Liverpool's favour despite Hugo Ekitike standing in an offside position.

Liverpool remain in sixth but climb level on points with Chelsea and Manchester United and within six points of Aston Villa.

Thanks to the strong performance of English sides in European competition this season, a place in the top five will almost certainly secure Champions League qualification.

Liverpool were dealt a blow before kick-off when Florian Wirtz picked up an injury in the warm-up.

The German's ingenuity was badly missed in a performance badly lacking in attacking impetus until a late rally saved their blushes.

Arsenal midfielder Eberechi Eze tormented Tottenham again as his double revived the Premier League leaders' title bid in a 4-1 rout of their north London rivals yesterday.

Mikel Arteta's side ended a damaging two-match winless run and moved five points clear of second-placed Manchester City thanks to Eze's starring role and a brace from Viktor Gyokeres. Fulham climbed above Sunderland into the top half of the table after becoming just the second visiting side to win at the Stadium of Light this season.

Raul Jimenez's double secured a 3-1 victory for Marco Silva's men.

The Mexican striker headed in Alex Iwobi's corner before maintaining his perfect penalty record in the Premier League from 13 spot-kicks.

Enzo Le Fee's penalty pulled a goal back for the Black Cats before Iwobi rounded off the scoring.

Crystal Palace eased the rising discontent at Selhurst Park with just a second win in 16 games.

Evann Guessand's first Palace goal in the 90th minute beat 10-man Wolves 1-0.

Tolu Arokodare's first-half penalty was saved by Palace goalkeeper Dean Henderson.

Ladislav Krejci was then sent off for kicking the ball away on the hour mark as bottom-of-the-table Wolves missed the chance to move above Derby's unwanted record low of 11 points in a Premier League season. – AFP

## Freiburg sink out-of-sorts Gladbach in Bundesliga



**BERLIN** – Goals from

Matthias Ginter and Igor Matanovic took Freiburg to a 2-1 home win over struggling Borussia Mönchengladbach in the Bundesliga yesterday.

Former Gladbach defender Ginter scored from a corner before

half-time and Matanovic tapped in a rebound midway through the second period, with Haris Tabakovic grabbing a late consolation for the visitors.

The victory takes Freiburg past Eintracht Frankfurt into seventh but the Black Forest club, through to the

last 16 of the Europa League, remain six points behind the guaranteed European places.

With just one win in their past 10 games, free-falling Gladbach sit just three points above the relegation play-off spot.

– AFP

## Napoli rage at officials after loss at Atalanta



**MILAN** – Napoli

hit out at "shameful" refereeing after slipping to a 2-1 loss at top-four rivals Atalanta in Serie A yesterday, as Lazar Samardzic scored a late winner for the hosts.

Raffaele Palladino's side extended their unbeaten run in the league to nine matches with an impressive second-half fightback.

Atalanta remain seventh in the table, but only two points behind fourth-placed Roma, who hosted Cremonese later yesterday, in the race for next season's Champions League.

Injury-hit reigning champions Napoli sit third, but only five points above Atalanta and now 14 adrift of runaway league leaders Inter Milan.

Napoli were incensed after having a penalty award overturned and then a goal disallowed in the first half.

"Where is the foul? The VAR called him on the penalty, why not on this? It's embarrassing," Napoli sporting director Giovanni Manna told DAZN.

"There has to be a review of this because every week a club ends up here protesting about decisions.

"All we want is what is right, what is ours, but this is not right, and it is not football. It's shameful, I have no more words."

Atalanta will turn their attentions



Atalanta's Serbian midfielder Lazar Samardzic (centre) heads the ball to score his team's second goal during the Italian Serie A football match against Napoli at New Balance Arena in Bergamo, Italy yesterday.

– AFP

to next week's Champions League knockout play-off second leg against Borussia Dortmund, when they will attempt to overturn a 2-0 deficit in Bergamo.

The visitors grabbed an early lead when Sam Beukema, one of three Napoli players left completely unmarked, headed in Miguel Gutierrez's free-kick.

Conte's men were awarded a penalty shortly before half-time when Rasmus Hojlund went down in the box, but the decision was overturned following a VAR review.

Hojlund was in the thick of the

action again in the first minute after the restart when his cut-back was turned in by Gutierrez, only for the goal to be ruled out for a foul by the Danish striker in the build-up.

Atalanta levelled just after the hour mark when Mario Pasalic flicked a header into the corner from Nicola Zalewski's corner.

The home team completed the turnaround with nine minutes remaining as Samardzic sent a looping header into the far corner from Lorenzo Bernasconi's cross.

– AFP

# 6 stand-out moments from the 2026 Winter Olympics



## Luke Phillips

BORMIO – Whether it be Alysa Liu's sparkling figure skating gold, the Swiss men's alpine skiing domination or Lindsey Vonn's horrific crash, the Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics have provided a host of unforgettable moments.

AFP Sport looks at six from the two weeks of action:

### Franjo Von Allmen (SUI)

The 24-year-old Swiss matched alpine ski legends Toni Sailer of Austria and France's Jean-Claude Killy as just the third man to win three golds in the sport at the same Winter Games.

Von Allmen won the downhill and super-G races, also pairing up with Tanguy Nef to claim victory in the team combined in Bormio.

The Swiss men's team were the stand-out outfit in northern Italy, winning four of the five golds on offer and eight of the 15 total medals up for grabs.

### Lindsey Vonn (USA)

Vonn made the headlines for all the wrong reasons after crashing badly just seconds into the downhill and breaking her leg.

That she was even racing at all was incredible given that she sustained a ruptured anterior cruciate ligament just a

week before the Games.

One of the most recognisable female faces in global sport, Vonn underwent four operations in Italy before heading back to the United States, where she had her left leg pinned back together.

Another comeback looks unlikely for the 41-year-old.

### Johannes Klaebo (NOR)

Six races. Six golds. Norwegian cross-country skier Johannes Klaebo achieved a historic Grand Slam.

His six golds in Tesero took his Olympic tally to 11 and the 29-year-old became the first athlete in history to win all six cross-country skiing races at one Games.

Klaebo joined two other athletes to have won all of their events at a single Winter Olympics - US speed skater Eric Heiden, who took five golds at the 1980 Lake Placid Games, and Norwegian biathlete Ole Einar Bjoerndalen, who won four in Salt Lake City in 2002.

The only athlete in Winter or Summer Games history with more Olympic titles than Klaebo is American swimmer Michael Phelps, who won 23 golds.

### Ilya Malinin (USA)

Malinin was hot favourite to take gold in the men's individual event after guiding the United States to a second consecutive team gold.

Everything was on track after the "Quad God" took a five-point lead into the men's free skate following the short programme, but disaster struck and he tumbled to a humiliating eighth spot.

The 21-year-old, who has revolutionised and dominated the sport, said his failure was "definitely mental" after he fell twice in a surprisingly awkward effort.

"On the world's biggest stage, those who appear the strongest may still be fighting invisible battles on the inside," said the two-time world champion, who had been unbeaten for more than two years.

### Alysa Liu (USA)

Liu ended America's 24-year wait for a women's individual skating gold with a dynamic free skate featuring seven triples.

After finishing sixth at the Beijing Games four years ago as a 16-year-old, Liu took a two-year break from the sport before returning to claim the world title last year.

Liu, like Malinin, also won the team title.

### Vladyslav Heraskevych (UKR)

Skeleton racer Heraskevych refused to ditch a helmet depicting pictures of Ukrainian sportsmen and women killed since Russian forces invaded Ukraine in 2022.

He was disqualified, bringing the International Olympic Committee into conflict with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

Gestures of a political nature during competition are forbidden under the Olympic charter, the IOC arguing that Heraskevych had failed "to adhere to the IOC athlete expression guidelines".

Zelensky said the IOC's decision, made after president Kirsty Coventry travelled to a face-to-face discussion with the racer, played "into the hands of aggressors".

– AFP  
Games photos on page 20



South Africa's Corbin Bosch (left) collides with teammate Keshav Maharaj after taking a catch to dismiss India's Abhishek Sharma during the 2026 ICC Men's T20 Cricket World Cup Super Eights match between India and South Africa at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, India yesterday. South Africa won the match by 76 runs. – AFP

## What's behind England's Six Nations slump?



### Julian Guyer

LONDON – England entered the Six Nations Championship with genuine hope of dethroning title-holders France and they launched their bid to be crowned rugby champions of Europe for the first time since 2020 with a 48-7 rout of Wales.

But hopes of championship glory effectively disappeared after Saturday's record 42-21 Twickenham defeat by Ireland which came just a week after an almost as emphatic 31-20 loss away to Scotland.

AFP Sport looks at three key aspects of England's striking collapse:

### Approach

Before the championship even started, England coach Steve Borthwick set his sights on a title-decider away to France in the final round of matches, saying: "On March 14 in Paris, we want to be in a position entering that game where we can achieve what we're all aiming to achieve."

A team with England's rugby resources, both playing and financial, ought to be ambitious and there is nothing fundamentally wrong with aiming high.

But the issue was more that for a coach who had made such a mantra out of a 'one game at a time' approach, such a bullish public statement jarred.

To borrow an old Irish expression, it was maybe just a sign that Borthwick had, ever so slightly, "lost the run of himself" and with it the team as well.

In that respect, hammering one of the weakest Wales teams in living memory, which gave his side a 12<sup>th</sup> successive win against all opponents, may have worked against Borthwick's men, with Red Rose prop Ellis Genge telling the BBC after Saturday's loss to Ireland: "We probably believed the hype from the first week too much. We can't let the noise in now."

### 'Awful' defence

For two games in a row, England's defence has been

ruthlessly exposed, with both Scotland and Ireland scoring a flurry of early tries.

The Scots led 17-0 after just 16 minutes at Murrayfield and the Irish were 22-0 up on the half-hour mark as they powered away to a win that would surpass their previous largest Twickenham triumph – a 32-15 success in 2022.

Both games were eminently losable – Ireland have now won six of their last seven Tests against England and Scotland five of the past six – but a particular concern for Borthwick's men during the past two matches has been an inability to cope with disruption, be it yellow cards or injuries.

"The spacing is all wrong," wrote former England centre Will Greenwood in his *Telegraph Sport* column, with the 2003 World Cup-winner adding: "The defence was abject, awful. Quick ball kills England because they are too slow to react."

### Lack of composure

Following this thumping loss, it was easy to forget that England did manage sustained spells of possession early on at Twickenham but they lacked the wit to unlock a committed Ireland defence that refused to buckle in the face of repeated forward drives.

And as Ireland continued to make their tackles, England undid much of their good work with self-inflicted wounds such as when an 18-phase move ended with Genge dropping a pass from George Ford.

It was a tough day for veteran fly-half Ford as he failed to find touch with one early penalty and sent another dead before drawing ironic cheers from the Twickenham faithful when he finally located the sideline.

"George has done so much good for England for such a long period of time," Borthwick told a post-match press conference. But he must now decide if Ford keeps the No 10 shirt when England resume their Six Nations campaign against Italy in Rome on March 7.

– AFP

MILANO CORTINA 2026		Medal Table			
Order	NOC	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1	Norway	18	12	11	41
2	USA	11	12	9	32
3	Netherlands	10	7	3	20
4	Italy	10	6	14	30
5	Germany	8	10	8	26
6	France	8	9	6	23
7	Sweden	8	6	4	18
8	Switzerland	6	9	8	23
9	Austria	5	8	5	18
10	Japan	5	7	12	24
11	Canada	5	6	9	20
12	China	5	4	6	15
13	Republic of Korea	3	4	3	10
14	Australia	3	2	1	6
15	Great Britain	3	1	1	5
16	Czechia	2	2	1	5
17	Slovenia	2	1	1	4
18	Spain	1	0	2	3
19	Brazil	1	0	0	1
19	Kazakhstan	1	0	0	1

## US salsa legend Willie Colon dead at 75

NEW YORK – Salsa music icon Willie Colon died on Saturday, his family and longtime manager said, leaving fans mourning the loss of “an architect of the New York sound.”

Colon, known best as a trombonist but who was also a bandleader and producer, was born in the Bronx and known for blending the Puerto Rican music of his parents and grandparents with his home city’s jazz.

He was 75. A cause of death was not given.

Born William Anthony Colon Roman in 1950, the music star “passed away peacefully this morning,” his family said in a statement on Saturday.

“We’ve lost an architect of the New York sound,” said manager Pietro Carolos.

“Willie didn’t just change salsa; he expanded it, politicized it, clothed it in urban chronicles and took it to stages where it

hadn’t been heard before.”

Colon was playing in his own band by 15 and released an album at 17. He went on to record hit records with Puerto Rican singer Hector Lavoe in the 1960s and 1970s.

“Siembra,” released in 1978 with vocalist Ruben Blades, addressed social issues faced by the growing Latino community in the United States.

“I came from a really tough neighbourhood,” he once told music publication Billboard.

“My father spent time in jail. Almost everybody went to jail... there was a lot of interaction between us and the police.”

He only studied music in junior high school but continued playing and touring through 2025.

In a mark of his continued influence, he is name-checked in Grammy-winning singer Bad Bunny’s 2025 hit “Nueva Yol.”

– AFP



Puerto Rican musician Willie Colon performs during the “Voices of America United for Juarez” in the framework of International Festival of Chihuahua, in Ciudad Juárez, on September 17, 2010. Colon died on Saturday, leaving fans mourning the loss of “an architect of the New York sound.”

– AFP

## ‘Boldly headbang’: Star Trek’s Shatner, 94, unveils metal album

NEW YORK – “Star Trek” legend William Shatner is boldly going where few 94-year-olds have gone before, as the Canadian actor announced plans to release a heavy metal album.

“I have explored space. I have explored time. Now... I explore distortion,” Shatner wrote on social media on Thursday alongside a picture of himself cradling an electric guitar in front of a red, smoky backdrop.

“Thirty-five metal virtuosos. Thunderous guitars. Chaos with purpose,” he said.

The cult star promised covers of metal staples like Black Sabbath, Iron Maiden and Judas Priest, as well as “a few originals forged in the same cosmic fire.”

Shatner played the daring Captain James T. Kirk in 1960s sci-fi adventure franchise “Star Trek,”

which follows the crew of a spaceship as it spreads liberal humanitarian ideals through the galaxy.

He also portrayed the titular character in cop show “TJ Hooker,” and won both a Golden Globe and a Primetime Emmy for his role on “Boston Legal.”

In 2021, he became the then oldest person ever to go to space when he travelled aboard a Blue Origin craft at age 90.

Revealing his new album, Shatner showed no intentions of taking it easy.

“Honest intensity. Unapologetic exploration. At 94, one does not slow down. One turns the volume up,” he said.

“So prepare yourselves. We are about to boldly headbang where no one has headbanged before. Stay tuned. The metal voyage begins this year.”

– AFP

## Political drama ‘Yellow Letters’ wins Berlin’s Golden Bear

BERLIN – “Yellow Letters”, directed by German filmmaker Ilker Catak, won the Berlin Film Festival’s Golden Bear for best film on Saturday, at a ceremony reflecting the controversy over Gaza that has dogged this year’s edition.

Some award winners spoke out in favour of the Palestinian cause, pushing back after jury president Wim Wenders had sparked outrage earlier by trying to steer the festival away from the issue.

Festival director Tricia Tuttle acknowledged on Saturday that this year’s edition had been “emotionally charged” after days of sometimes acrimonious debate on how far filmmaking should intervene in politics.

Catak’s film tells the story of a Turkish director and his actor wife, suddenly barred from working because of their political opinions.

Wenders called the film “a terrifying premonition, a look into the near future that could possibly happen in our countries as well”.

While set in Turkey, the film was shot in Germany, an artistic choice to make the point that threats to liberty are universal.

The runner-up Silver Bear Grand Jury Prize went to “Salvation” by Emin Alper, who in his speech expressed solidarity with several high-profile opposition figures in prison in Turkey, including jailed Istanbul mayor Ekrem Imamoglu.

Alper’s film, inspired by a true story, shows the consequences of a feud over land between two clans in a remote mountain village.

He took the opportunity to speak up for “the people of Iran suffering under tyranny” and “Kurds in Rojava and the Middle East struggling for their rights for almost a century – you are not alone”.

Alper also spoke of “the Palestinians in Gaza living and dying under the most terrible conditions”.

### Impassioned speech

Alper was not the only award-winner to express support for the Palestinians.

Syrian-Palestinian director Abdullah Al-Khatib won Best First Feature Award for “Chronicles From the Siege”.

He accepted the award with a keffiyeh draped over his shoulder and gave an impassioned speech in which addressed the German government by saying: “You are partners in the genocide in Gaza by Israel.”

He received cheers for his words but also prompted some heckling, reflecting the tension over Gaza which has often overshadowed this year’s event.

Speaking at a press conference at the beginning of the festival early this month, Wenders answered a question about the German government’s support for Israel by saying: “We cannot really enter the field of politics.”



German director Ilker Catak poses during a photocall after winning the Golden Bear for Best Film for “Gelbe Briefe” (“Yellow Letters”) at the 76th Berlinale, Europe’s first major film festival of the year, in Berlin on Saturday. The 76th Berlin Film Festival concluded on Saturday after 10 days, with 22 films in competition.

– AFP

At the same press conference, he had said that films had the power to “change the world” but in a different way from politics.

But his comments in response to the question on Israel prompted a storm of outrage.

Award-winning Indian novelist Arundhati Roy, who had been due to present a restored version of a 1989 film she wrote, pulled out of the event, branding Wenders’ words “unconscionable” and “jaw-dropping”.

On Tuesday, an open letter signed by dozens of film industry figures, including actors Javier Bardem and Tilda Swinton and director Adam McKay, condemned the Berlin festival’s “silence on the genocide of Palestinians” and accused it of being involved in “censoring” artists who oppose Israel’s actions.

Tuttle has firmly rejected the accusations.

Wenders addressed the controversy on Saturday.

“The language of cinema is empathetic. The language of social media is effective,” he said.

Addressing political activists, he said: “All of us applaud you. You do necessary and courageous work.”

“But does it need to be in competition with us? Do our

languages need to clash?” he asked.

### ‘Queen at Sea’

Other award winners on Saturday included German actress Sandra Hüller, who received the Silver Bear for Best Performance for her title role in Markus Schleinzer’s “Rose”.

The black-and-white drama tells the story of a woman passing herself off as a man in rural 17th-century Germany to escape the constraints of patriarchy.

“Queen at Sea” by American director Lance Hammer, which stars Juliette Binoche as a woman caring for her mother with dementia, picked up two awards.

The film portrays the devastation Alzheimer’s disease inflicts on a patient’s loved ones.

Tom Courtenay, 88, and 79-year-old Anna Calder-Marshall, who plays the ailing mother in the film, shared the Silver Bear for Best Supporting Performance.

The film also picked up the Silver Bear Jury Prize, considered the third most prestigious award.

Grant Gee picked up the Best Director award for “Everybody Digs Bill Evans” his black-and-white biopic of the legendary jazz pianist.

– AFP

### World Weather

CHINA		ASIA-PACIFIC		WORLD		LUSOPHONE	
☀️ Beijing -4°C~8°C	☀️ Manila 22°C~32°C	☁️ New York -2°C~5°C	☀️ Lisbon 10°C~19°C				
☀️ Shanghai 10°C~15°C	☀️ Bangkok 25°C~35°C	☁️ London 10°C~13°C	☁️ Rio de Janeiro 23°C~29°C				
☀️ Hong Kong 19°C~23°C	☀️ Tokyo 9°C~21°C	☁️ Frankfurt 8°C~13°C	☀️ Luanda 23°C~29°C				
☀️ Taipei 18°C~27°C	☁️ Singapore 23°C~33°C	☁️ Vancouver 3°C~9°C	☁️ Maputo 21°C~32°C				
☀️ Guangzhou 19°C~28°C	☁️ Kuala Lumpur 24°C~34°C	☀️ Paris 10°C~15°C	☁️ Dili 24°C~28°C				
☁️ Nanjing 7°C~16°C	☁️ Jakarta 24°C~29°C	☁️ Moscow -5°C~1°C	☁️ São Tomé 26°C~32°C				
☁️ Guilin 16°C~22°C	☀️ Seoul 1°C~6°C	☀️ Las Vegas 9°C~21°C	☀️ Praia 18°C~29°C				
☁️ Xi’an 1°C~8°C	☁️ Sydney 21°C~29°C	☀️ Monte Carlo 10°C~16°C	☀️ Bissau 18°C~38°C				



Two children kiss Dorothea Wierer of Italy after the biathlon women's 12.5km mass start event at the 2026 Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics in Anterselva, Italy, on Saturday. - Xinhua



Laura Nolte (front left)/Deborah Levi (front right) of Germany celebrate after winning the Bobsleigh 2-woman at the 2026 Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics in Cortina, Italy, on Saturday. - Xinhua



Cory Thiesse of the United States competes during the curling women's bronze medal game against Canada at the 2026 Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics in Cortina, Italy, on Saturday. - Xinhua



USA's Dylan Larkin (left) fights for the puck with Canada's Thomas Wilson during the men's gold medal ice hockey match between Canada and USA at the Milano Santagiulia Ice Hockey Arena during the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic Games in Milan, yesterday. - AFP



Edson Luques Bindilatti/Davidson Henrique de Souza/Rafael Souza da Silva/Luis Bacca Goncalves of Brazil compete during the Bobsleigh 4-man heat 3 at the 2026 Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics in Cortina D'Ampezzo, Italy, yesterday. - Xinhua



Athletes compete during the speed skating men's mass start semifinal at the Milan-Cortina 2026 Olympic Winter Games in Milan, Italy, on Saturday. - Xinhua