



Govt to set up 11-billion-pataca 'guidance fund' to boost diversified industries

Tony Wong

The local government has announced that it will set up a so-called "guidance fund" aiming to draw investments from high-quality enterprises to Macau's emerging industries, as part of the government's ongoing campaign to appropriately diversify the city's economy.

Announcing details of the fund on Friday, the government said that it was planning to allocate 11 billion patacas from the returns that it has earned from investing its financial reserves over the years, adding that the government expects the size of the fund to amount to 20 billion patacas after including the first tranche of private capital. The government said that it was aiming to complete the setting-up of the guidance fund within this year.

The government also said that while it will play a leading role in guiding private sector's investments to be made in Macau's emerging industries, it is aiming for the guidance fund's operation to be mainly driven by market forces.

The government announced the guidance fund during a press conference at the Macau Science Centre (MSC) in Nape on Friday.

During Friday's press conference, Secretary for Economy and Finance Anton Tai Kin Ip underlined the local government's commitment to aligning with the nation's 15th Five-Year Plan, accelerating the development of high-tech industries in Macau, and fostering new quality productive forces, with the aim of creating a new engine to drive the city's appropriate economic diversification, building an innovation-orientated industrial system, and accelerating the pace of the city's



Secretary for Economy and Finance Anton Tai Kin Ip (left) and Tam Chi Neng, an advisor to Tai's office, address Friday's press conference at the Macau Science Centre. — Photos: Tai's office



transformation and upgrading.

Tai said that in compliance with the local government's plan to establish a government industrial fund and a government guidance fund, his office, in close coordination with the Macau Monetary Authority (AMCM), the Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED), and the Commerce and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM), set up a preparatory working group on the matter.

After assessing Macau's current economic situation and the conclusions of a feasibility report prepared by a team of experts hired by the government, Tai said, the working group has now drawn up a plan for the government's guidance fund.

Govt's leading role, market operation

Tai said that the guidance fund aims, through the government's financial participation, to channel different types of private capital towards investments made in Macau's key emerging industries and future industries, thereby achieving the government's policy objectives of enhancing the leveraging effect, pooling market capital, cultivating technological innovation enterprises, and optimising the city's industrial structure.

These policy objectives, Tai said, aim to solidly advance Macau's appropriate economic diversification and its industrial upgrading, support the transformation

of technological achievements and their industrialisation, create more quality jobs for local residents, and promote the diversification of employment opportunities in the city.

Tai said that the government will play a leading role in guiding the fund, but with its operation to be mainly driven by market forces, while clearly defining the key industries and their development directions. With the establishment of mechanisms and rules for the selection of qualified fund managers, Tai said, the fund will create favourable conditions for promoting the strong participation of the market, fully leveraging the professionalism, flexibility, and high efficiency of market operation.

Continued on p.6



A smoke plume rises following a missile strike on a building in Tehran yesterday. — AFP

3 US soldiers killed, 5 seriously injured as part of Iran operation



WASHINGTON — Three US soldiers were killed in action and five others seriously injured as part of the military operation against Iran, the US Central Command said yesterday. Several others sustained minor

shrapnel injuries and concussions, said the command in a statement on social media, adding that they are "in the process of being returned to duty." (More on pages 5, 10, 11).

— Xinhua

This US Navy photo released by US Central Command public affairs shows the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Thomas Hudner (DDG 116) firing a Tomahawk land attack missile in support of Operation Epic Fury, from an undisclosed location yesterday. The United States and Israel launched a wave of strikes against targets in Iran on Saturday, sparking swift retaliation by the Islamic republic which responded with missile attacks across the region. — Xinhua



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China firmly opposes, strongly condemns attack, killing of Iran's supreme leader

China firmly opposes and strongly condemns the attack and killing of Iran's supreme leader, a foreign ministry spokesperson said yesterday.

— Story on p. 7

Austin shooting that left three dead may be 'terrorism': FBI

Three people were killed and 14 wounded in a shooting overnight in downtown Austin, the capital of the US state of Texas, which the FBI said yesterday may have been an "act of terrorism."

— Story on p. 11

Coup role revelations revive calls for return of Spain's ex king

Calls for Spain's former King Juan Carlos I to return from exile have resurfaced after declassified files confirmed his role in stopping a 1981 coup and defending the country's fledgling democracy.

— Story on p. 12

Xi, Merz hit the reset button for amicably pragmatic Sino-German ties



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz paid a highly instructive two-day official visit to China last week, his first as the head of government of Europe's strongest economy. President Xi Jinping and Merz, who appear to have established a good rapport, have hit the reset button for amicably pragmatic ties between the world's second and third largest economies.

In Beijing, the nation's political nerve centre, Merz met with Xi, Premier Li Qiang, and Vice-Premier He Lifeng, and – visibly astonished – visited a host of high-tech enterprises in Hangzhou, the nation's AI hub. It is also astonishing that Germany is the world's third-largest economy, considering that among the world's top five economies, it has the smallest population and area.

However, Germany is in trouble, as Merz acknowledged, just one day after concluding his China trip, stating in a speech at a regional election rally in the small Hessian town of Volkmar on Friday that Germans “are simply no longer capable enough” to create prosperity. He pointed out, quite rightly, that upon returning from China, “ladies and gentlemen, you get an even clearer feeling that [growing demands for] ‘life balance’ [he used the English word] and a four-day work week can no longer sustain prosperity in our century; we really need to do a bit more now.”

Merz hit the nail on the head. Ultimately, I am convinced, prosperity can only be achieved through hard work – both manual and intellectual.

The crux of the problem is that an increasing segment of Germany's ageing 84-million population (about the number of people living in Sichuan Province) seems to regard full-time work as a kind of unpleasant phenomenon that interferes with their aim of achieving “life balance.” In economics, the most fundamental question remains: who pays the bill?

Eco-fundamentalism, combined with anti-industry activism and

extreme wokism, are factors that are harmful to Germany's future economic prosperity. While “life balance” is a nice ideal, I consider regular work as an integral part of achieving “balance” in life. Moreover, I believe that working at least five days a week for eight hours a day is a realistic way of generating prosperity not only for oneself but for civil society.

It is obvious that Merz, a former judge and lawyer, was deeply impressed by the Chinese people's strong work ethic and the country's extraordinary economic progress, which is, to a certain degree, similar to Germany's post-WWII “economic miracle.”

Winding up his intensive two-city visit, Merz praised China for its impressive economic performance capability and described China-Germany relations as a “success story.” He also stated that cooperation between the two countries “is good.” However, he acknowledged “difficult issues” between the two economic giants that needed to be addressed openly. “Above all, there are issues relating to competition. China has high capacities, some of which are now also posing a problem for Europe because they far exceed market demand,” he told the media covering his visit.

Beijing has repeatedly dismissed EU accusations about overcapacity, calling them “entirely unfounded” and stating that China's strengths in areas like renewable energy support common global goals, including the green transition.

In his meeting with Merz, Xi made three propositions on further developing bilateral ties. Firstly, both countries should be reliable partners that support each other. Secondly, both countries should be innovative partners that champion openness and win-win results. Thirdly, both countries should be partners that understand each other and share close bonds through cultural and people-to-people exchanges.

Li also made three proposals in his meeting with Merz. Firstly, Li called for the basic foundations of traditional cooperation to be strengthened. Secondly, regarding new opportunities for future development, the two countries should support enterprises and scientific research institutions to promote the two-way flow of

innovative resources and explore third-party markets together. Thirdly, Li urged the creation of a favourable environment for investment and business.

China was, once again, Germany's number-one trade partner last year, supplanting – unsurprisingly – the US. In 2025, trade in goods between China and Germany totalled nearly US\$218 billion, which was a 5.2 percent year-on-year increase, with a growth rate 1.4 percentage points higher than China's overall foreign trade expansion for the year, according to the General Administration of Customs in Beijing. However, German exports to China fell by 9.7 percent to US\$96 billion last year, according to German media reports.

China-based German business-people have told me for years that the trade imbalance between the two countries is also caused by the “unhealthy” predicament that German enterprises face one of the highest corporate tax burdens among major industrial nations, with an effective rate of around 29 to over 30 percent, nearly 10 percentage points above the EU average. The unsavoury fact is that Germany has become a high-tax country. For an export-dependent economy, that's poisonous.

Much ado about China's trade surplus and ‘overcapacity’

Before and during his visit, Merz repeatedly raised the issue of Germany's yawning trade deficit vis-à-vis China and China's perceived overcapacity. Last year, the BBC pointed out, Germany shifted from being accused of creating trade imbalances to being a victim of them, now facing a massive trade deficit with China rather than a surplus, according to data from 2025-2026.

While Germany was historically criticised by its trade rivals for its high export-led trade surplus, which was viewed as a “problem” that supposedly suppressed domestic demand and hurt trade partners, the so-called “China shock” has reversed this dynamic. Historically, Japan has also faced accusations from its trade rivals regarding its perceived overcapacity, as did the US in the 1980s and again in 2024-2025. Obviously, if a country is particularly successful in its exports, like China has been for quite a while, it can expect to be accused of overcapacity by its competitors. India and Brazil will likely face similar accusations soon. It's a deplorable home truth.

I have recently read some well-argued Chinese analyst reports about China's 2025 trade surplus and the growth of its overseas assets, which I am summarising below.

In 2025, China achieved a record-breaking trade surplus of about US\$1.2 trillion, a nearly 20 percent year-on-year increase driven by

strong exports to the EU, Southeast Asia, and Africa – despite US tariffs. This surplus fuelled, alongside a 40 percent rise in overseas M&A deals to US\$43.6 billion, the growth of China's foreign assets.

Chinese analysts point out that their country's trade surplus results from the evolution of the global industrial division of labour. They also insist that China never intentionally pursues a trade surplus. They highlight that the remarkable growth in China's trade surplus last year was mainly driven by short-term factors, such as the United States' threat of additional tariffs triggering an export rush. Moreover, China's imports were hindered last year by rising protective measures, including export curbs imposed by some countries citing national security “concerns.”

The analysts also emphasise that in 2025, the export volume and trade surplus generated by foreign enterprises based in China accounted for 27.1 percent and 16 percent respectively of China's total. They stress that China's exports facilitate trade partners' manufacturing development and energy transition, exemplified by a 13 percent growth in exports to the 11 ASEAN members.

Moreover, according to their research, China provides over 80 percent of photovoltaic modules and 70 percent of the world's wind power equipment, significantly contributing to the global green transition.

Regrettably, there is something that is not widely known – China has large service trade and investment income deficits. Yes, it does! According to the analysts, in the first three quarters of last year, China's service trade and investment income deficits together corresponded to over 30 percent of the country's merchandise trade surplus.

China's service trade deficit stood at US\$200 billion last year, the world's highest, according to the analysts. China's investment income deficit amounted to US\$143 billion in 2024 (the latest available figure), one of the highest in the world.

Last year, China's merchandise imports reached US\$2.38 trillion, a record high, making China the world's second-largest importer for 17 consecutive years, the research shows.

I would like to add that China is the only country hosting national-level import fairs, and the China International Import Expo (CIIE) has been successfully held in Shanghai for eight consecutive years.

The analysts also emphasise that China's external direct investment has strongly supported the economic development of destination countries. Among China's non-reserve external assets, its direct investment assets stood at US\$3.4 billion last year, accounting for 44 percent across 190 countries and regions worldwide.

The analyst research shows that Chinese overseas enterprises generated revenue of US\$3.6 trillion last year, during which they paid US\$82.1 billion in taxes at their investment locations and created over five million jobs, two-thirds of which benefited foreign employees.

According to the analysts, the scale of China's external assets is reasonable, and their structure is robust, resulting in a more limited impact on global financial markets compared to major advanced economies. They also point out that China continues to strongly support global economic development and financial stability, based on China's exchange rate policy remaining stable.

The analysts point out that China's manufacturing sector enjoys strong global competitiveness, indicating that there is neither the necessity nor intention to gain a competitive advantage in international trade through currency depreciation. They also say that China's merchandise trade surplus has achieved a “virtuous cycle” globally through its financial account, in line with the basic principle of a balanced budget and by strongly supporting global economic development and financial stability.

Vice-Premier He Lifeng said in Beijing last week during a meeting with Germany's business delegation that accompanied Merz on his trip that “China is advancing its high-level opening up continuously to promote high-quality economic development, providing broad space and opportunities for China-Germany economic and trade cooperation.”

As an overseas German in China, I sincerely hope that commercial, economic and cultural ties between the two countries will continue to prosper and not be affected by attempts to interfere in China's internal affairs, such as Taiwan and the South China Sea, or by efforts to impose “normative” European values on countries in the Global South. How would Europeans react to attempts to force Asian values on them? Surely, they wouldn't appreciate it.

China and Germany, like the Far East and Europe anyhow, have very different cultural, religious, political, and societal backgrounds that should never be an impediment to developing friendly, pragmatic, and mutually beneficial relations. We can all learn from each other, as we are all so different. What matters is mutual respect. That's how win-win outcomes can be achieved.

Furthermore, amicably pragmatic ties between China, Asia's powerhouse, and Germany, Europe's economic locomotive, can be expected to benefit relations between Brussels and Beijing as well.

I am pleased that the Xi-Merz meeting has finally hit the reset button for relations between their countries.

– Harald Brüning

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Macau Weather

HUMID. CLOUDY. MIST. OCCASIONAL SHOWERS. POSSIBLE THUNDERSTORMS LATER. FORCE 2 TO 4 SOUTHERLY WINDS. RELATIVE HUMIDITY WILL RANGE BETWEEN 85% AND 99%.



21°C~24°C

Source: SMG

MMAS Lantern Festival lights up at 10 Fantasia

Khalel Vallo, Ida Cheong

The one-day “MMAS Lantern Festival” was held at the 10 Fantasia gallery on Calçada da Igreja de S. Lázaro (瘋堂斜巷) yesterday afternoon, bringing together performances, creative brands and festive workshops to celebrate traditional culture.

MMAS stands for Macau Music Art Space.

Organised by local violinist and Macau Cultural Ambassador Cheong Wai Leong, the festival is part of a series of festive events MMAS has held since 2021, alongside a Christmas celebration each year. Speaking to the *Post* on the sidelines of the event, Cheong said the aim was to promote festive culture, particularly Chinese festivals, while creating more performance platforms for youngsters in Macau. “We hope to promote different festivals through festive culture, especially Chinese festivals,” Cheong said, adding that the event also seeks to provide exhibition and performance opportunities for local youngsters, whether they are learning or working in music.

Performers ranged widely in age, from children as young as nine to adults, aiming to reflect the organiser’s intention to foster inclusivity.

The event featured three main components: live performances, booths showcasing local cultural and creative brands, and interactive elements including on-site sketch-drawing by artists and festive-themed workshops for participants.

The music programme included performances by young singers and youth groups from the Macao Educational Centre of Culture and Arts and the Blue Wind Song Yun Guzhen Association, presenting traditional Chinese instrumental pieces.

Cheong said that the initiative also aims to collaborate with local businesses and cultural groups, while echoing the government’s push to promote cultural tourism.

Among the performers was Victor Tang Wai Hong. Tang told the *Post* he hopes that such events can help promote traditional culture while giving young performers more exposure. “In fact, Macau has a lot of talents,” Tang said. “But maybe we need more promotion, more small stages, so residents and tourists can participate more”.

He suggested that scenic spots and underutilised spaces in Macau could be revitalised as small performance venues for young singers and artistes. “A lot of things start from small projects,” he said, adding that nurturing interest from a young age could lead to further artistic development.

Tang also noted that although Macau has a small population compared to neighbouring cities, there is no shortage of talent among local youth. What is needed, he said, are more platforms and opportunities to showcase their work. ■



Cheong Wai Tong speaks to the media prior to the opening ceremony of the “MMAS Lantern Festival” cultural event held at the 10 Fantasia gallery on Calçada da Igreja de S. Lázaro (瘋堂斜巷) yesterday afternoon.

– Photo: Ida Cheong

Central govt presents medal of Anti-Japanese War to MSAR



This handout photo provided by the Cultural Bureau (IC) shows IC President Leong Wai Man (right) and Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council (HKMAO) 5th Department Vice-Director Li Li pose during the “Commemorative Medal for the 80th Anniversary of the Victory of the Chinese People’s War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression” presentation ceremony at the Macau Museum in Nape on Friday.

Ida Cheong

In order to promote the great spirit of the War of Resistance against Japan Aggression and deepen patriotic education, the Central People’s Government has presented the “Commemorative Medal for the 80th Anniversary of the Victory of the Chinese People’s War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression” to the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) Government, according to a statement released by the Cultural Bureau (IC) on Friday.

The presentation ceremony was held on Friday at the Macau Museum, with the commemorative medal having gone on display immediately afterwards in the museum’s first-floor lobby.

IC President Leong Wai Man said in a speech that while the medal symbolises the remembrance of history, commemoration

of martyrs, and appreciation of peace, it also reflects the Central People’s Government’s sincere care and profound friendship towards the MSAR and its compatriots, the statement said.

Leong noted that the exhibition aims to allow the public, especially Macau’s youth, to further strengthen their sense of national identity, belonging, and national pride, the statement added.

The medal’s design features the sculpture “Marching to Victory” as its core visual element, incorporating symbols such as Yan’an’s Pagoda Hill*, the Yellow River, the five-stars on the national flag, rays of light, olive branches, and doves of peace, the statement said.

The statement underscored that the medal pays tribute to the Chinese people who, 80 years ago, endured 14 years of



This undated handout photo shows the “Commemorative Medal for the 80th Anniversary of the Victory of the Chinese People’s War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression” on display in Macau Museum.

arduous resistance and paid the heavy price of 35 million casualties to ultimately achieve great victory in the Anti-Japanese War as well as their historic contribution to the victory in the World Anti-Fascist War.

While Macau’s Portuguese administration at that time remained neutral during the war, the great majority of the city’s population supported the nation’s fight against the Japanese invaders, historians point out. ■

* Yan’an Pagoda Hill (延安宝塔山) is a historic hill located in Yan’an, Shaanxi Province, a nine-story brick pagoda originally built during the Tang Dynasty. During the Yan’an Period (1935–1948), it served as a geographic and spiritual landmark for the Communist Party of China (CPC) headquarters and became an iconic representation of the “Yan’an Spirit” in Chinese political culture. – DeepSeek

Govt urges residents to get measles jab before travel

Armando Neves

The Health Bureau (SSM) issued a warning yesterday stating that considering the significant increase in measles cases in neighbouring regions, residents planning to travel abroad are urged to ensure that they have completed their measles vaccination before departure.

According to the statement, individuals without immunity should receive the vaccine at least two weeks in advance. Unvaccinated children and pregnant women without immunity are advised to avoid travelling to areas where measles is circulating, the statement said.

The bureau noted in the statement that measles is highly contagious, adding that the World Health Organisation (WHO) indicates that each infected person can lead to up to 18 secondary infections. It also said that the incubation period typically ranges from seven to 18 days but can last up to 21 days.

Infected individuals are contagious from four days before to four days after the rash appears. Symptoms include fever –above 38°C, Koplik’s spots* inside the mouth, a generalised maculopapular rash**, conjunctivitis, cough, and runny nose.

The bureau emphasised that vaccination is the most effective way to prevent measles.

Individuals born in 1970 or later who lack immunity should ensure they

have completed their vaccination before travelling, according to the statement, while individuals under the age of 18 need to have received at least two doses of a measles-containing vaccine – routinely administered at 12 and 18 months of age.

Individuals aged 18 or older should receive at least one dose, with high-risk groups such as healthcare workers, domestic helpers, and childcare facility staff being recommended to receive two doses, the statement said.

The statement also said that residents and non-residents staying in Macau for a long time in need of vaccination can make an appointment at any local health centre or enquire directly with private healthcare providers.

The bureau reminded the public that if symptoms such as fever or rash develop during travel or after returning to Macau, they should seek medical attention promptly and inform the healthcare provider of their travel history. ■

* Koplik’s spots are tiny, irregular-shaped spots that appear inside the mouth and are considered an early, diagnostic sign of measles (rubeola). – DeepSeek

**A maculopapular rash appears as a mix of flat, red patches and small, raised bumps. Because the two types often blend together, the rash frequently looks like pinkish-red spots that are slightly raised and may merge into each other. – DeepSeek

BE READY FOR MEASLES

Consider measles in patients presenting with febrile rash illness and clinically compatible symptoms (cough, coryza, and conjunctivitis).



Ask patients about recent travel internationally or to areas with an ongoing measles outbreak, as well as their recent contacts.



-Photo courtesy by Unsplash

More IRs announce extended maternity and paternity leave

Rui Pastorin

More integrated resort (IR) operators have announced extended paid maternity and paternity leave in respective statements between Friday and Saturday.

The extended leave took effect from yesterday onwards, each noting that, for eligible staff, paid maternity leave has increased from 70 days to 90 days and paid paternity leave from five to seven days.

GEG

GEG's statement on Saturday noted that under the new policy, female staff who have completed at least one year of continuous service before childbirth are entitled to 90 days of paid maternity leave, while male staff's paid paternity leave is extended from five days to seven days, adding that the company recognises staff as valuable assets.

"These enhancements aim to provide

team members with more time to rest and bond with their families while welcoming their newborns during this important stage of life", according to the statement.

MGM

Integrated resort operator MGM said in their statement that the company believes that staff's "family happiness is a vital foundation for individual well-being, workplace engagement, and sustainable development."

MGM Human Resources Executive Vice President Wendy Yu (余婉瑩) was quoted by the statement as saying: "MGM continues to cultivate a supportive, caring, and family-friendly workplace for our team members, while actively responding to and supporting the SAR Government's fertility-related policies through practical initiatives. The enhancement of paid maternity and paternity leave fully demonstrates the

company's dedication and commitment to employee well-being and its further contribution to building a fertility-friendly environment in Macau"

Melco

Melco Resorts & Entertainment said in their statement that through the extended maternity and paternity leave, the company aims to "further strengthen its family-friendly workplace policies".

Melco Chairman and CEO Lawrence Ho Yau-lung was quoted by the statement as saying: "At Melco, our colleagues are our most important asset. We are deeply committed to providing an exceptional working environment, and we are pleased to offer these enhanced maternity and paternity benefits as part of our core family-friendly policies. We will continue striving to be an employer of choice by supporting

our colleagues in achieving a healthy balance between work, family, and personal wellbeing."

Wynn Macau Limited

Multiple media outlets noted that while Wynn Macau Limited will be extending their paid maternity leave from 70 to 90 days, their paid paternity leave had previously been increased for male staff to seven days back in 2018.

According to an article by Macau Business on Friday, the company said that strengthening maternity and paternity benefits is intended to foster a family-friendly culture and help staff balance work and family life.

Sands China announced their extended leaves in a statement on Thursday, which the *Post* wrote about on <https://www.macaupostdaily.com/news/27530>

Melco ranks in 96th percentile, included in S&P Global Sustainability Yearbook 2026

This undated handout photo provided by integrated resort operator Melco Resorts & Entertainment on Thursday shows solar panels at City of Dreams (COD) resort in Cotai.

Khalel Vallo

Melco Resorts & Entertainment has been included in the S&P Global Sustainability Yearbook 2026, ranking in the 96th percentile within the Casinos and Gaming industry in the 2025 Corporate Sustainability Assessment (CSA), according to a statement by integrated resort operator last week.

The statement said that Melco improved from the 92nd percentile recorded in the previous year's assessment, noting that the yearbook published by US rating agency Standards & Poors is regarded as a key benchmark for corporate sustainability performance.

The statement added that yearbook members are selected based on their scores by CSA. In order to qualify, companies must rank within the top 15 percent of their industry and achieve a CSA score within 30 percent of the industry's top-performing company, the statement noted.

According to the statement, more than 9,200 companies were assessed in the 2025

CSA for consideration in the 2026 Yearbook. About 800 enterprises across 59 industries were selected for inclusion, the statement noted, adding that Melco also reported continued recognition from other environmental, social and governance (ESG) rating bodies.

Melco achieved a B score for CDP (Carbon Disclosure Project) Climate 2025 and improved its CDP Water score from B to A-, the statement said, adding that it also holds an A rating from MSCI (Morgan Stanley Capital International).

Melco Chairman and CEO Lawrence Ho Yau-lung was quoted in the statement as saying that the company remains committed to enhancing its sustainability performance annually. He noted that the CSA assessment provides an important benchmark for evaluating progress in key focus areas and added that the company is honoured to be recognised by global ESG rating agencies for its efforts under the "RISE" (Response-Inducing Sustainability Evaluation) strategy.

Jimmy O. Yang's 2-night CNY show draws huge crowds

Rui Pastorin

Integrated resort operator Galaxy Macau said in a statement on Thursday that Hong Kong-American stand-up comedian Jimmy O. Yang's Chinese New Year (CNY) shows on February 21 and 22 brought the festive event to over 18,000 audience members at the Galaxy Arena in Cotai.

"Galaxy Macau Presents: The Jimmy O. Yang Chinese New Year Show" saw Yang, 38, returning to Macau. The statement said that the event featured a star-studded lineup of guests joining the comedian on stage, including Hong Kong-born international pop star Jackson Wang (王嘉爾), Cantopop legend Wan Kwong and Hong Kong R&B singer Tyson Yoshi (程浚彦). Cantonese stand-up comedian Kong Chiho was the opening act for the two-night show.

The statement added that both nights were also interactive, adding that "interactions between the guests and Jimmy's continual dialogue of humour-meets-talk show style sparked waves of laughter from the audience"

Yang, born Au Yeung Man Sing to Shanghainese parents, first performed in Macau in July 2025 at the 2,500 seat Broadway Theatre at Broadway Macau in Cotai. As an actor, Yang has played various roles in TV shows and films, while his YouTube channel boasts a large following of over two million subscribers.



This photo provided by Galaxy Macau shows stand-up comedian and actor Jimmy O. Yang during his recent performance at Galaxy Arena.

MGTO raises travel alert to highest level for Iran, Israel

Armando Neves

The Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) issued two travel alerts for Iran and Israel on Saturday and yesterday, raising both warnings to maximum Level 3.

The Travel Alert System issues warnings at three levels. According to the MGTO statement, Level 3 advises residents to "avoid travel" due to an extreme threat to safety. Level 2 advises to "reconsider non-essential travel" due to an elevated threat. Level 1 advises travellers to "exercise caution" due to an imminent threat.

MGTO urged Macau residents not to travel to Iran or Israel, and advised those currently in either country to heighten their security precautions and evacuate as soon as possible.

According to the statement, residents who are currently in Middle Eastern countries or regions should strengthen their safety vigilance and closely follow the latest announcements from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

According to the statement, MGTO has also arranged for Macau's three telecom operators to send SMS reminders to Macau smartphone users in the area, urging them to stay safe and, if necessary, contact the nearest Chinese embassy, the global consular assistance hotline, or the local tourism hotline.

Israel attacks Iran with United States

At 2:15 p.m. (Macau time)

on Saturday, Israel announced its attack on Iran in cooperation with the United States. The attack involved the office of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Tehran's Pasteur Street. The ayatollah and several family members, including his granddaughter, were killed in the attack. Iran then launched missiles at Israel and fired missiles and drones at several Persian Gulf states hosting US military bases.

The Gulf states hosting US military bases comprising Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia.

According to a Reuters's story on Saturday evening, vessels have been receiving VHF transmissions from Iran's Revolutionary Guards saying that "no ship is allowed to pass the Strait of Hormuz".

The strait is the world's most vital oil export route, which connects the biggest Gulf oil producers, such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq and the United Arab Emirates, with the Persian Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.

At 4:23 p.m. yesterday, Iran confirmed that several of its senior commanders were killed in attacks launched by the United States and Israel against Iran. The deceased include the Minister of Defense, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, and the Commander-in-Chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. ■ (More on p.10)

Police arrest couple for illegal currency deal

Armando Neves

The Judiciary Police (PJ) arrested a couple from the Chinese mainland for illegal currency exchange on Thursday, PJ spokesman Cheong Kim Fong said during a special press conference on Friday.

Cheong identified the couple as a 57-year-old female dishwasher surnamed Liu and a 59-year-old male surnamed Xie. Cheong also said that the witness is a middle-aged male mainlander surnamed Zhao.

According to Cheong, on Thursday, PJ officers noticed that Liu, Xie and Zhao were behaving suspiciously in a casino in Zape, adding that Xie was displaying a QR code to Zhao.

After Zhao activated an app on his smartphone, Cheong said that Liu handed HK\$4,000 (4,100 patacas) in cash to Zhao, he then entered the casino and exchanged the cash for gambling chips. PJ officers intervened and intercepted the trio, Cheong said.

The investigation revealed that Liu and Xie had approached Zhao, offering to exchange 3,680 yuan for HK\$4,000, Cheong said, adding that the couple earned HK\$100 from illegal transaction.

Cheong also said that PJ officers seized HK\$90,000 and two smartphones from the couple.

The couple were transferred to the Public Prosecution Officer (MP) on Friday, each facing a charge of illegal currency exchange. ■



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

Northern district festival market features live performances, games & 40 booths

Ida Cheong

The "Northern District Lantern Festival (Lantern Festival Market)" is being held over two consecutive weekends from Friday to Sunday (February 27 to March 1 and March 6 to 8), featuring live performances, interactive games, photo-ready installations, and around 40 booths covering a variety of goods, such as hot dishes, light snacks, souvenirs, and stationery.

The opening ceremony for the festival took place in Lotus Square in Ilha Verde district on Saturday. The 2-weekend event aims to create an influential festival market brand, attract crowds, further revitalising the community's commercial atmosphere, and encourage more participants to splash out in surrounding shops and restaurants though distributing consumer coupons, according to a statement by the Industry and Commerce Association of Macau Northern District (AICZNM) released during the event on Saturday.

AICZNM Chairman Raymond Wong Kin Chong told reporters on the sidelines of the opening ceremony on Saturday that the previous event was held at the same venue successfully, adding that on the first day of the event, turnover approached nearly 10,000 patacas.

Although Macau welcomed around 40 million tourists overall last year, the northern district, as an older part of the city, sees very few visitors despite its proximity to the Barrier Gate checkpoint, Wong said, adding that the northern



Industry and Commerce Association of Macau Northern District (AICZNM) Chairman Raymond Wong Kin Chong poses during the opening ceremony for the "Northern District Lantern Festival (Lantern Festival Market)" in the Lotus Square in Ilha Verde district on Saturday. — Photo: Ida Cheong

district lacks sufficient appeal to attract tourists. Wong noted he hopes that the government will include the northern district in community revitalisation plans to create distinctive local features, improve infrastructure, and enhance the district's overall attractiveness.

Wong suggested that the government leverage the northern district's geographical advantage near the checkpoint. The goal is to draw tourists from the checkpoint area to spend in the district, thereby boosting the Barrier Gate's neighbourhood economy and addressing the economic imbalance between Macau's popular tourist



This poster provided by the Industry and Commerce Association of Macau Northern District (AICZNM) on Friday shows details of the two-weekend "Northern District Lantern Festival (Lantern Festival Market)", which is being held in Lotus Square, Ilha Verde.

areas and older districts, Wong added.

Wong noted that businesspeople are increasingly receptive to the Northern District Consumer Carnival. During the most recent carnival, the number of participating businesses rose from around 300 in the past to a record high of 1,200.

Moreover, Wong said in a speech that a special "coupon redemption" mechanism has also been launched for the event. In addition to being used at market booths, coupons can also be used at participating businesses in the northern district, aiming to extend the benefits of the event to all parts of the district. ■

Casino receipts rise 4.5 pct to 20.6 billion patacas in February

Staff Reporter

Macau's casinos generated gross gaming revenue (GGR) of 20.627 billion patacas (US\$2.56 billion) last month, marking a year-on-year increase of 4.5 percent, the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) announced yesterday. Month-on-month, GGR fell by 8.8 percent, from January's 22.63 billion patacas.

January had three more days than February. Last month included the Chinese mainland's nine-day Chinese New Year (CNY) holiday, from February 15 to February 23. Last year, the Chinese mainland's CNY holiday ran for eight days, from January 28 to February 4. Customarily, mainland Chinese make up around three quarters of Macau's CNY visitor arrivals.

In the first two months of this year, the gaming industry's GGR rose year-on-year by 13.9 percent to 43.26 billion patacas.

Macau's government-concessed gaming industry is operated by six competing integrated resort (IR) operators: Sands, Galaxy, SJM, Melco Crown, Wynn, and MGM.

Under their concession agreements with the government, these operators are required to enhance their non-gaming attractions and support the promotion of Macau's cultural heritage and old-quarter renewal projects. The operators pay 35 percent of their GGR as a direct gaming tax to the government, along with an additional 5.0 percent in levies to fund various public causes.

As of the end of 2025, the six operators ran a total of 20 casinos, a 52.4 percent decrease from the peak of 42 casinos in 2021. This decline is primarily due to a government-ordered consolidation of the gaming industry, which included an official ban on "satellite casinos" operated by third-party enterprises in collaboration with gaming concessionaires.

During the gaming industry's three-year consolidation process, which officially ended on December 31, 2025, the gaming tables and slot machines from shuttered satellite casinos, along with their local employees, were transferred to casinos directly run by the gaming concessionaires.

Currently, SJM and Sands each own five casinos, Galaxy and Melco operate three each, while Wynn and MGM run two each.

According to DICJ statistics, last year, baccarat accounted for 85.1 percent of local casinos' GGR across their 16 games of chance. In comparison, roulette, Europe's classic game of chance, generated a mere 0.49 percent of GGR.

At the end of last year, Macau's casinos operated 6,000 gaming tables and 12,000 gaming machines, according to the bureau.

Macau's officially concessioned casino industry began in 1849, during a period when the local Portuguese administration faced financial difficulties due to various factors, including a sharp decline in anchorage fees following Hong Kong's occupation by the UK.

Macau has established itself as the world's leading gaming hub. As of the end of the second quarter last year, the gaming sector employed 52,898 full-time workers, representing nearly 11 percent of Macau's total workforce of 487,000 at that time. ■

'To Set Sail on a Ship with No Destination' celebrates Camilo Pessanha's centenary



A discussion takes place during yesterday's "To Set Sail on a Ship with No Destination: Honouring Camilo Pessanha on the Centenary of His Death" at Casa Garden. — Photo: Rui Pastorin

Interview by Rui Pastorin

Yesterday marked the centenary of celebrated Portuguese symbolist poet Camilo Pessanha (1867-1926), with an event honouring him held yesterday at Casa Garden.

Gathering writers and poets from Macau and Portugal as speakers, the event titled "To Set Sail on a Ship with No Destination: Honouring Camilo Pessanha on the Centenary of His Death" was held mainly in Portuguese and drew a considerable crowd of listeners. It was a part of, and is a precursor to "Macau Literary Festival: The Script Road" that will kick off with its 15th edition this Thursday.

Highlighting Pessanha's continued significance to the *Post* on the sidelines of yesterday's event, the Macau Literary Festival Organiser Ricardo Pinto pointed out: "Camilo Pessanha is one of the most important poets of Portuguese literature and his connection with Macau and with the Chinese culture makes him a

very, very unique person in our literary universe".

Pinto highlighted that the literary figure continues to have an important place in the literary world, adding that Pessanha "is considered one of the best, if not the best, symbolic poets of Europe" who should be "celebrated more and more".

Aside from the author's significance, yesterday's presentation saw speakers talk about other topics including the calls for a museum and statue of Pessanha to be created in Macau, as noted by Pinto. It was also discussed that Pessanha's work and significance should be talked about, studied and integrated to allow students to learn more about him, with Pinto highlighting that "his poetry should still be taught to our children".

Details of an historical walking tour this coming weekend were also announced at yesterday's event. Led by Christopher Chu and Maggie Hoi Pui Man, co-authors of the book "Camilo Pessanha's

Macau Stories", the upcoming event will present a walking route and its relationship to Camilo Pessanha's time in Macau.

Meanwhile, with the 15th edition of the literary festival opening soon, Pinto also underlined to the *Post* that an extensive programme is in store for the annual event with talks by a line-up of Chinese and Portuguese authors, as well as those coming from other parts of the world. From science fiction and poems to politics and the opium war, Pinto noted that there is "a diverse kind of writing" to be found from the invited variety of authors.

Beyond books, the event, which is slated to run until March 15, will also include an exhibition and documentary screenings, as well as concerts at the Macau Cultural Centre (CCM), altogether presenting a lot of sessions for festivalgoers to choose from.

One can find more details on the upcoming festival by visiting <https://macauliteraryfestival.org/>. ■

Govt to set up 11-billion-pataca 'guidance fund' to boost diversified industries

Continued from p.1

'Patient capital'

Tai also pointed out that the nation, over recent years, has been advocating the use of "patient capital", a synonym for long-term capital, as an instrument for sustained support for the development of key industries. Tai underlined that the operation of the guidance fund to be set up by the local government will also stick to the principle of patient capital, without prioritising short-term financial returns as its main objective, and instead favouring a long-term and systematic strategy to vigorously promote the development and upgrading of key industries.

According to DeepSeek, patient capital is a long-term investment approach that prioritises sustainable growth and significant future impact over immediate, short-term financial gains. It involves providing funding with the expectation of returns over an extended period, allowing investments in areas like infrastructure or pioneering technologies to mature and deliver substantial long-term economic or social benefits.

Moreover, Tai said, the guidance fund will also be an important tool for deepening the Macau-Hengqin integrated development and the coordinated development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA). Tai said that the guidance fund will help attract quality enterprises, highly qualified scientific researchers, and highly qualified professionals in the financial sector to Macau, Hengqin, and the GBA.

Tai said that the local government is planning to allocate 11 billion patacas to the guidance fund from the returns that it has earned from investing its financial reserves over the years. Together with the first tranche of private capital, Tai said, the government expects the size of the fund to amount finally to 20 billion patacas.

Tai underlined that the guidance fund aims to encourage, pool, and guide the mobilisation of private capital, attracting quality enterprises and qualified fund managers to participate in investments in the key industries guided by the government.

Fund's governance system

Also addressing Friday's press conference, Tam Chi Neng, an advisor to Tai's office, said that the operation of the guidance fund will comprise three layers. The first layer is the guidance fund per se, while the second layer refers to a fund under the guidance fund to be primarily tasked with supporting the transformation of technological achievements. The third layer refers to the establishment of different ad-hoc funds aiming to specifically support different emerging industries.

Tam said that the guidance fund's operation will be overseen by the chief executive, while the government will set up a public enterprise tasked with the fund's day-to-day operation and management.

Tam said that the public enterprise will select and hire qualified fund managers from the market to be tasked with managing the fund in the second layer. The fund managers will also be tasked with attracting additional private capital to the guidance fund.

In addition, Tam said, the government will also set up a consultative committee tasked with providing opinions for the guidance fund's policy directions, strategic planning, and other important matters.

The consultative committee, Tam said, will consist of government officials, professionals, academics, and other individuals from the respective fields.

Tam said that the government is aiming to complete the setting-up of the guidance fund within this year, adding that the upcoming tasks will include the setting-up of the public enterprise and drawing up an administrative regulation governing the fund's operation. ■

Temperature in spring to be normal to high, rainfall to be low: observatory

Tony Wong

The Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) says that Macau's average temperature this spring, which means during the months of March to May, is forecast to be normal to above-normal, while this spring's accumulated precipitation is expected to be below-normal.

An SMG statement on Friday noted that the normal level of Macau's average temperature in the spring ranges between 21.9 and 22.6 degrees Celsius, while the normal level of accumulated precipitation in the season ranges between 380 and 640 millimetres.

The statement noted that spring in Macau is a transitional season between the winter monsoon and summer monsoon. In early spring, the statement noted, Macau's weather is primarily influenced by an easterly airstream following the



This image in Portuguese released by the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) on Friday shows its weather forecast for this spring.

departure of cold, high-pressure air out to the sea, because of which the weather will mostly be humid with occasional periods of rain.

Later on, the statement noted, the cold high-pressure system affecting the Chinese mainland will weaken, when temperatures

in Macau will gradually rise. The weather in southern China will then be influenced by a trough of low pressure. Consequently, the statement said, rainfall and the occurrence of thunderstorms in Macau will increase towards the end of spring (from May onwards). ■



Artistes perform during a Shehuo gala in Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, yesterday. The gala, which consisted of 20 performing teams, featured shows of Shehuo, a type of traditional Chinese folk art form. The Shehuo gala, a time-honored performance enjoying widespread popularity in rural areas across China, originated from ancient sacrificial activities to pray for a good harvest about 2,000 years ago.

— Xinhua

China firmly opposes, strongly condemns attack, killing of Iran's supreme leader

BEIJING – China firmly opposes and strongly condemns the attack and killing of Iran's supreme leader, a foreign ministry spokesperson said yesterday.

The spokesperson made the remarks when asked to comment on the death of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in the military strikes launched by the United States and Israel on Saturday in Tehran.

The attack and killing of Iran's supreme leader is a grave violation

of Iran's sovereignty and security, said the spokesperson, adding that it tramples on the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and basic norms in international relations.

China urges for an immediate stop to the military operations, no further escalation of the tense situation and joint effort to maintain peace and stability in the Middle East and the world at large, the spokesperson added.

– Xinhua

Use of force amplifies problems, not solving them: Editorial Flash

The missiles arrived on a Saturday, puncturing the uneasy quiet of a region already conditioned to the sound of sirens. Coordinated strikes by the United States and Israel on targets in Iran – reportedly near the offices of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei – mark a grave escalation that violates the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the basic norms governing international relations. Smoke rising over Tehran and shuttered airspace from Iraq to Israel are not merely images of conflict; they are warnings of a perilous path that risks igniting wider instability.

The objective of crippling Iran's naval forces, combined with the US incitations for "regime change", ignores international law. This follows a pattern of increasing belligerence. The unilateral military adventurism of the US and Israel do not enhance security; they breed chaos, inviting a cycle of retaliation that could engulf the entire region.

China consistently opposes the use or threat of force in international relations and advocates that disputes be resolved through political and diplomatic means. As Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning urged recently as the rhetoric of war increased, all parties should exercise restraint, cherish peace and resolve differences through dialogue.

The timing of the strikes is particularly troubling. They occurred as negotiations over Iran's nuclear program were at a critical juncture and as diplomatic efforts on other global flash points, including the Ukraine crisis, struggle toward fragile progress. Military actions at such a moment risk derailing dialogue and undermining the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. One cannot claim to defend non-proliferation while simultaneously resorting to force that erodes trust and verification mechanisms.

Domestic political calculations in Washington and Tel Aviv appear

to have cast long shadows over the decision to use force. In the US, deep partisan divisions, legal setbacks to economic policies, and looming midterm elections have intensified political pressure. An AP-NORC poll shows only about 3 in 10 Americans express strong trust in the administration's judgment on military force – a sobering figure that underscores domestic skepticism. Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces mounting domestic opposition over the Gaza conflict and a looming election that will determine his political future. History shows that external confrontation can be used to consolidate internal support, but such tactics carry dangerous broader consequences.

China calls for an immediate ceasefire and an end to hostilities. All parties, the US and Israel in particular, must exercise restraint and cease hostilities to prevent spiraling escalation. Respect for sovereignty, adherence to international law and a commitment to dialogue are essential to cooling tensions. China stands ready to play a constructive role in promoting de-escalation.

The priority must be the prevention of a broader war – a catastrophe that serves the interests of no nation. Miscalculation layered upon miscalculation, each justified as deterrence, each increasing the risk of catastrophe. Meanwhile, instability in the Middle East threatens global energy markets, trade routes, and economic recovery far beyond the region. From Dubai to Singapore, markets have already shown signs of unease.

A return to diplomacy, however painstaking, offers the only sustainable path to peace. Confrontation leads only to greater suffering; the path of dialogue is the sole route to lasting stability in the Middle East.

What is needed is sustained, serious negotiations, not more strikes.

– Courtesy of China Daily

Wang Yi holds phone talks with Russian counterpart over US-Israeli strikes on Iran

BEIJING – Foreign Minister Wang Yi yesterday held a phone conversation with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov at the latter's request.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, said that under the impetus of China and Russia, the United Nations (UN) Security Council held an emergency meeting on Saturday on the current situation in Iran.

China has consistently upheld the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and opposed the use of force in international relations, he said.

It is unacceptable for the United States and Israel to launch strikes on Iran during the Iran-US negotiations, said Wang, adding that it is also unacceptable for them to blatantly kill the leader of a sovereign state and incite government change.

Wang pointed out that these actions violate international law and basic norms of international relations.

Noting that the escalation has spread throughout the Persian Gulf, Wang said that the situation in the Middle East may be pushed into a dangerous abyss, and China is highly concerned about this.

Wang pointed out that China's position on the situation in Iran is as follows:

First, an immediate cessation of military operations. Prevent the spread and spillover of war and prevent the situation from getting out of control. China attaches great importance to the security of Gulf countries and supports them in exercising restraint.

Second, a prompt return to dialogue and negotiations. All parties should strongly encourage peace and prevent war, and urge relevant parties to return to the track

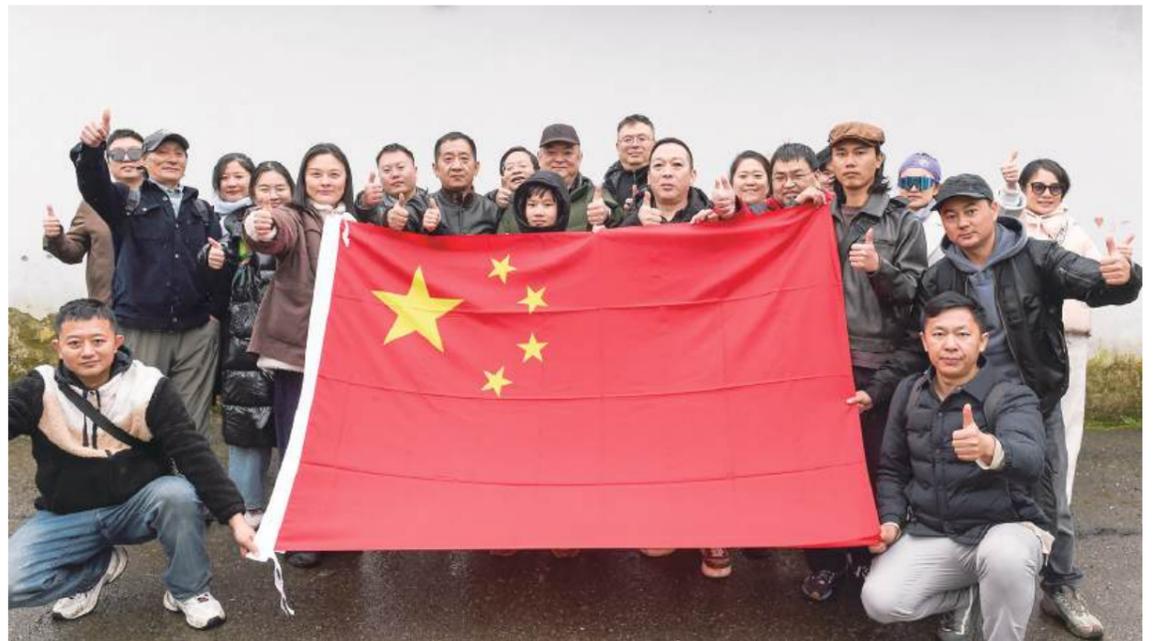
of dialogue and negotiation as soon as possible.

Thirdly, a joint opposition to unilateral actions. Striking sovereign countries without authorization of the UN Security Council undermines the foundation of peace established after World War II. The international community should send a clear message against any regression to the law of the jungle.

For his part, Lavrov said that the U.S.-Israel strikes against Iran have seriously undermined stability in the Middle East.

Russia shares the same position with China and stands ready to strengthen coordination and communication with the Chinese side to send a clear signal through platforms such as the UN and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, calling for an immediate cessation of the war and a return to diplomatic negotiations, he said. – Xinhua

18 Chinese nationals evacuated from Iran to Azerbaijan



Chinese nationals evacuated from Iran pose for a group photo at the Astara checkpoint in southern Azerbaijan yesterday. – Xinhua

BAKU – Eighteen Chinese nationals were evacuated from Iran to Azerbaijan yesterday as the conflict between Iran and the United States and Israel continues.

Xinhua reporters at the Astara checkpoint in southern Azerbaijan on the border with Iran witnessed

evacuees crossing into the country at around 2:30 p.m. (local time). At approximately 4:30 p.m., a bus arranged by the Chinese Embassy in Azerbaijan left the checkpoint carrying the first group of arrivals. According to the embassy, the evacuees will be transferred to

Azerbaijan's capital Baku.

The Chinese Embassy in Azerbaijan issued a consular alert on Saturday, saying that it would provide necessary assistance to Chinese citizens entering Azerbaijan or transiting through the country to return home. – Xinhua

Nation's top political advisory body convenes standing committee session

BEIJING – The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) National Committee, or the nation's top political advisory body, convened a session of its standing committee yesterday in Beijing to prepare for the upcoming annual session of the CPPCC National Committee.

Wang Huning, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political

Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the CPPCC National Committee, attended the meeting.

Political advisors reviewed and adopted a decision on convening the fourth session of the 14th CPPCC National Committee, set to start on March 4 in Beijing.

They heard a report on the work

of the CPPCC National Committee in 2025. They also heard explanations on the drafting of the work report of the Standing Committee of the CPPCC National Committee and on the drafting of a report on the handling of the proposals from the previous session of the CPPCC National Committee, as well as explanations on relevant issues. – Xinhua

Son of Indonesia's 'gasoline godfather' jailed in US\$17 billion corruption case

JAKARTA – An Indonesian judge sentenced the son of an Interpol-wanted oil tycoon to 15 years in prison on Friday in connection with a corruption scheme estimated to have cost the government US\$17 billion.

Muhammad Kerry Adrianto Riza is the highest-profile defendant to be convicted in the sprawling scandal involving state-owned energy firm Pertamina.

Kerry was found guilty of manipulating a lease and colluding with several Pertamina executives, according to a statement from the Attorney General's Office.

"Muhammad Kerry Adrianto Riza has been proven in a legally and convincingly valid manner to have jointly committed corruption," Judge Fajar Kusuma Aji told the court on Friday.

After a nearly 12-hour sentencing, the court handed Kerry 15 years in prison and ordered him to pay a fine of approximately US\$59,500 as well as restitution worth about US\$173 million.

Kerry's father, "gasoline godfather" Mohammad Riza Chalid,



Muhammad Kerry Adrianto Riza (right), former vice director of Product Optimization at PT Kilang Pertamina Internasional and son of businessman Riza Chalid, accompanied by his wife Aya Sardadi, waits for a sentencing hearing in the Pertamina corruption case at a courthouse in Jakarta on Friday. – AFP

is wanted for his alleged involvement in the same corruption probe, but has fled Indonesia. Interpol issued a red notice for him in January.

The Pertamina scandal involved procuring low-quality imported fuel at higher prices, among various other corrupt practices, according to the Attorney General's Office.

At the same sentencing on Friday, Riva Siahaan, a former chief

executive of a Pertamina subsidiary, was given a nine-year prison term.

Indonesia has long struggled with graft and has arrested scores of public officials in recent years.

In 2023, a former communications minister was jailed for 15 years after being found guilty of corruption in a case that investigators said cost the country more than US\$530 million. – AFP

Duterte killed thousands, ICC prosecutors say

THE HAGUE – Rodrigo Duterte killed thousands during his anti-drug campaign, an International Criminal Court prosecutor alleged Friday, as the crimes against humanity hearing against the former Philippines president wrapped up.

His defence team countered that Duterte had murdered no one and that the prosecution's argument was based on "hearsay" and "conjecture", falling far short of the bar needed to confirm the charges against him.

"He's proud of his killings. He wants to be remembered for them," said Julian Nicholls, summing up for the prosecution.

"Decades of murdering his own people, murdering the children of the Philippines, and he claims that he did it all for his country. He doesn't deny it.

"He ran a death squad in Davao [city] that he created. He ran it for over 20 years before he became president. His promise was to kill thousands and he did."

Throughout the week, a panel of three judges has heard from the prosecution, defence, and victims' representatives as they weigh whether to proceed to a full trial.

Duterte has not been in the courtroom. The defence says he is too ill to attend. Victims say he does not want to face the loved ones of those he killed.

He faces three counts of crimes against humanity over his so-called "war on drugs" when he was mayor of Davao City and then as president of the Philippines.

The prosecution has put forward 76 cases of alleged murder, which they say is an "emblematic fraction" of those killed, which rights groups say number thousands.

Duterte's defence lawyer Nicholas Kaufman, summing up his case, said that if his client could be faulted for anything, it was his "inappropriate choice of language".

"But he murdered nobody," Kaufman told the court.

He urged the judges not to confirm the charges and to free Duterte to "live out the rest of his days in peace" in the Philippines.

He said that during a visit to explain proceedings to his client, he "lost the desire to follow me within a minute."

However, he cited the former leader as asking how the prosecutors could prove that he murdered anyone, again denying the charges against him.

Gilbert Andres, a lawyer representing victims, summed up by saying that his clients experienced defence rebuttals "like their murdered loved-ones are being murdered again."

He called on the court to confirm the charges so that the victims can be "reintegrated into their communities."

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

They can confirm all of the charges and proceed to trial, throw out some of the charges, or reject the case outright, in which case Duterte would walk free. – AFP

Thai soldier loses leg in landmine blast on Cambodia border

BANGKOK – A Thai soldier lost his leg Friday in a landmine blast on the country's contested frontier with Cambodia, where a shaky truce is holding after months of cross-border clashes, Thailand's military said.

Since last summer dozens have been killed in waves of conflict along the nations' jungle-bound border, disputed for more than a century since its demarcation in the French colonial era.

More than a million civilians were displaced along the 800-kilometre frontier at the height of the fighting

in July and December, before a tentative ceasefire took effect.

"One soldier has been critically wounded and lost his right leg after stepping on a landmine," the Thai army said in a statement, adding the incident took place around dawn in the border province of Surin.

Thailand and Cambodia have repeatedly accused each other of violating successive truces with cross-border gun and mortar fire, while Bangkok has alleged Phnom Penh's soldiers have laid fresh landmines on contested soil.

However, the Thai military said a "preliminary examination" of Friday's blast "indicates that the landmine was buried deep in clay and covered with leaves, suggesting it was not newly laid".

Cambodia's border is still littered with unexploded ordnance dating back to separate conflicts decades ago.

Under the December truce, Cambodia and Thailand pledged to cease fire, freeze troop movements and cooperate on demining efforts along the frontier. – AFP

Marcos confirms first Filipino death in Israel amid Middle East conflict

MANILA – Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos yesterday confirmed that a Philippine caregiver was killed in Israel amid rising conflicts in the Middle East.

In a video message posted on social media, Marcos said he had received reports about the first Filipino fatality following the escalating conflicts in the Middle East. The caregiver was killed

while she tried to protect and take her patient to a bomb shelter.

"We join in expressing our heartfelt condolences to the family," Marcos said.

At the same time, Marcos reiterated that the government continues to closely monitor the situation of Filipinos in the Middle East, particularly in areas affected by the conflict. – Xinhua

'Unofficial' talks on plastic pollution treaty to begin in Japan

TOKYO – Delegates from around 20 countries will hold three days of "informal" talks in Japan from yesterday aimed at salvaging efforts towards a landmark global treaty on plastic pollution.

Supposedly final talks in South Korea in 2024 towards an agreement failed, and a renewed effort in Geneva last August likewise collapsed in overtime.

A Japanese environment ministry official said that the "informal" closed-door meeting among "working-level officials" until tomorrow was not expected to result in any official announcement.

"Japan is in a position of pushing for progress on the issue, and so is hosting the meeting," the official told AFP without wishing to be named.

She added that "little progress" has been made since August, other than the election in early February of Chile's chief climate negotiator Julio Cordano as chairman.

"Plastic pollution is a planetary problem that affects everyone: every country, every community and every individual," Cordano warned after being elected.

"If we don't take concerted action, it will get much worse in the coming decades. A treaty is urgently needed," he said.

More than 400 million tonnes of plastic are produced globally each year, with half for single-use items.

A large bloc of states wants bold action such as curbing plastic production, while a smaller clutch of oil-producing states wants to focus more narrowly on waste management.

Countries expected to be present in Tokyo include big oil producers like Saudi Arabia, Russia and the United States as well as islands states Antigua and Barbuda and Palau, plus China, India and the European Union.

The UN's environment chief told AFP in an interview in October that a global treaty remains "totally doable".

"No-one has walked away and said, 'this is just too hopeless, we're giving up'," United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) executive director Inger Andersen said. – AFP

Oil spill from cargo ship washes up on Thai tourist islands

BANGKOK – An oil spill from a capsized cargo ship in the Indian Ocean is washing ashore on the pristine beaches of Thailand's most famous resort island, a lawmaker told AFP Friday.

The Panama-flagged Sealloyd Arc sank off Phuket on February 7 while sailing for Chattogram in Bangladesh, Thai authorities said, spilling around 1,700 litres of oil.

The coagulated residue has begun washing up on the island's Ya Nui Beach, as well as a smattering of smaller islands in Phuket province, local lawmaker Chalermpong Saengdee told AFP.

The oil has tainted Koh Hey's Banana Beach – a popular destination for island-hopping tourists seeking turquoise clear waters – and is expected to keep spreading, he said.

"It's very worrying because the incident happened two weeks ago, but the situation is not improving and it poses a threat to marine life and coastal reefs," he said.

"We are also concerned it could affect Thailand's tourism and economy."

The ship lies at a depth of about 60 metres, making it difficult for divers to contain the leak, Chalermpong said.

Footage on public broadcaster Thai PBS showed locals combing beaches with rakes and buckets to collect globs of the oil.

While the Thai Navy has been using dispersants to treat the spillage, Chalermpong has called for government funding to salvage the wreck.

Thailand suffered 130 oil spills affecting more than 23 provinces between 2017 and 2021, according to the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources.

Environmental organisations warn oil spills cause severe and long-lasting damage to ecosystems – coating wildlife, contaminating food sources and releasing toxic chemicals. – AFP

S Korea calls for resuming dialogue with North

SEOUL – South Korean President Lee Jae Myung called yesterday for dialogue with North Korea to resume, after Pyongyang last week shunned the prospect of diplomacy with its neighbour.

Since taking office in June, a dovish Lee has sought to mend ties with the nuclear-armed North, which reaffirmed its anti-Seoul approach during a party meeting last week.

“As my administration has repeatedly made clear, we respect the North’s system and will neither engage in any type of hostile acts, nor pursue any form of unification by absorption,” Lee said in a speech marking the anniversary of a historical campaign against Japan’s colonial rule.

“We will also continue our efforts to resume dialogue with the North,” he said.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un last week dashed hopes

of a diplomatic thaw with Seoul, describing its overtures as “clumsy, deceptive farce and a poor work”.

Speaking at the party congress in Pyongyang, Kim said North Korea has “absolutely no business dealing with South Korea, its most hostile entity, and will permanently exclude South Korea from the category of compatriots”.

But he also said the North could “get along well” with the United States if Washington acknowledges its nuclear status.

Speculation has mounted over whether US President Donald Trump will seek a meeting with Kim during planned travels to China.

Last year, Trump said he was “100 percent” open to a meeting.

Previous Trump-Kim summits during the US president’s first term fell apart after the pair failed to agree over sanctions relief – and what nuclear concessions North Korea might make in return. – AFP

Blasts in Kabul as Afghan govt says responding to Pakistan attacks

KABUL – Explosions were heard in the Afghan capital Kabul yesterday, AFP journalists said, with the Taliban government saying they were responding to aerial Pakistan attacks.

A spokesman for Afghanistan’s defence ministry said that “air defence strikes were carried out against Pakistani aircraft in Kabul”.

Months of cross-border clashes have flared again since Thursday, when Afghanistan launched an offensive along the frontier, with Pakistani forces hitting back on the border and from the skies.

The renewed violence came after Afghan residents and officials said troops from both countries had been battling along the border, with the fighting coming alongside multiple strikes including the former US air base at Bagram.

Earlier, residents in multiple areas bordering Pakistan told AFP of fighting, while the Afghan government said three people were killed overnight in drone strikes and shelling.

North of the capital Kabul, air strikes “hit Bagram air base”, according to a resident who AFP is not naming for security reasons.

A second resident said “it was very strong, which shook the area. There was smoke and fire coming out north of the airport”, describing the dawn raid as “very terrifying”.

The provincial spokesman, Fazl ul Rahim Maskin Yar, said Pakistani jets “attempted to bomb” the base, but there were no casualties or damage.

Pakistan acknowledged bombing key cities Friday including Kabul and Kandahar, which is home to Afghanistan’s supreme leader, but has not commented on yesterday’s strikes.

The presence of security forces was boosted in central Kabul yesterday evening, with increased checks on cars, an AFP journalist said.

Before dawn, AFP journalists in the capital had heard an explosion followed by successive gunfire, with Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid saying anti-aircraft fire was being shot at Pakistani planes.

Drones were also heard by an AFP journalist in the border province of Khost, while in Jalalabad city – between Kabul and the border – an AFP photographer saw a jet.

The Afghan government’s deputy spokesman, Hamdullah Fitrat, said



Pakistan Markazi Muslim League (PMML) activists shout anti-Afghan slogans during a demonstration in Karachi on Saturday amid the ongoing clashes between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Afghanistan said it downed a Pakistan fighter jet and captured its pilot on Saturday, a claim denied by Islamabad a day after it declared an “open war” with its South Asian neighbour. – AFP

Pakistani fire had killed 36 civilians across multiple provinces since Thursday, which Islamabad has not commented on.

In Kunar’s provincial capital Asadabad, an 18-year-old said his brother had been killed, a few months after getting married.

“When the fighting started, we told him to come with us and leave the area, but he said: ‘I will stay and look after the house,’” said Sajid, who only gave one name.

“He was martyred near the mosque while trying to leave,” he told AFP.

Multiple residents in Afghanistan’s Khost and Nangarhar provinces told AFP the two sides were engaged in sporadic clashes yesterday afternoon.

At Torkham border crossing – a key gateway for Afghans returning from Pakistan – overnight fighting was reported by the Nangarhar province information department.

The spokesman for a military unit reported heavy fighting overnight in Paktia province.

Afghan officials said Thursday’s border offensive was a response to earlier air strikes that killed civilians, which Pakistan said targeted militants.

‘Stop the war’

On Saturday, AFP spoke to Khost residents who had fled their homes near the frontier.

“We demand from the international community and the whole world to put pressure on Pakistan to stop the war,” said 46-year-old displaced resident Javed, who only gave one name.

Diplomatic efforts have failed to secure a truce, with Saudi Arabia

and Qatar among those engaged in efforts to halt the fighting.

Islamabad accuses Afghanistan of failing to act against militant groups that carry out attacks in Pakistan, which the Taliban government rejects.

Many attacks have been claimed by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a militant group that has stepped up assaults in Pakistan since 2021, the year the Taliban authorities returned to power in Kabul.

This week’s escalation marked the first time that Pakistan has focused its air strikes on Afghan government facilities, analysts noted, a stark change from previous operations that it said targeted militants.

Pakistan’s information minister, Attaullah Tarar, said 46 locations across Afghanistan had been hit by air strikes since its operation began.

Pakistan has killed 415 Afghan soldiers, the minister said.

Islamabad said earlier 12 of its soldiers had been killed.

Fitrat, Afghanistan’s deputy spokesman, said more than 80 Pakistani soldiers were killed and 27 military posts captured.

The Afghan government earlier put the death toll among its troops at 13.

Casualty claims from both sides are difficult to verify independently.

The violence of recent days is the worst since October fighting killed more than 70 people on both sides, with land borders between the neighbours largely shut since.

Several rounds of negotiations between Pakistan and Afghanistan last year followed a ceasefire brokered by Qatar and Turkey. – AFP

N Korea unveils image of Kim’s daughter firing rifle



This picture taken on Friday and released by North Korea’s official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) via KNS on Saturday shows North Korean leader Kim Jong Un’s daughter Kim Ju Ae firing a new sniper rifle, at an undisclosed place in North Korea. – AFP

SEOUL – North Korea released a rare image on Saturday of leader Kim Jong Un’s teenage daughter firing a rifle at a shooting range, adding to speculation that she is being groomed as his successor.

Kim’s daughter Ju Ae has long been seen as the next in line to rule the secretive, nuclear-armed state, and took part in a string of recent high-profile outings, including this week’s military parade marking the closing stages of North Korea’s key party congress.

Pyongyang’s official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) released a photo of Ju Ae shooting a rifle at an outdoor shooting range, peering through a rifle scope with her finger on the trigger, smoke rising from the barrel.

She was wearing what appeared to be a leather jacket, a garment often worn by both her and her father at major political events, symbolising authority and legitimacy.

KCNA reported on Saturday that Kim presented new sniper rifles to senior party and military officials, describing the move as a gesture of

appreciation and “absolute trust,” without mentioning Ju Ae.

He then visited a shooting range with the officials, where he fired the rifle and took a group photo, it added.

South Korea’s spy agency said this month that Pyongyang appears to have started the process of designating Ju Ae as leader Kim’s successor.

By underscoring Ju Ae’s ability to handle and fire a weapon, the photos “suggest she is indeed receiving training as a successor”, Yang Moo-jin, former president of the University of North Korea Studies in Seoul, told AFP.

KCNA also said Saturday that Kim Jong Un’s powerful sister Kim Yo Jong will head the party’s general affairs department – a role analysts describe as akin to a party secretary-general.

The Kim family has ruled North Korea with an iron grip for decades, and a cult of personality surrounding their “Paektu bloodline” dominates daily life in the isolated country. – AFP

S Korea finally agrees to share data with Google Maps

SEOUL – Google Maps could soon work properly in South Korea after Seoul agreed Friday to share data with the popular app, but restrictions will stop sensitive military sites being revealed.

South Korea sits alongside the likes of China and Russia as one of the few places in the world where Google Maps does not fully function.

Seoul has repeatedly rejected requests to share precision map data with Google, arguing it could expose sensitive military sites and weaken

defences against North Korea.

South Korea’s land ministry has changed course after almost 20 years, granting permission to share map data with “strict security conditions”.

Street View and historical time-series imagery on Google Earth must mask South Korea’s military and security facilities, the ministry said.

Seoul will also make Google remove coordinate displays and impose “restrictions on the exposure” of South Korean territory on the global services of Google

Maps and Google Earth.

Google argued that Seoul’s objections unfairly restricted the company offering a full range of mapping services, such as public transit information, satellite maps and driving directions.

The homegrown Naver search engine – which only uses government-supplied maps that camouflage sensitive installations – is one of the domestic leaders in search and mapping services in South Korea. – AFP

How will Iran choose a new supreme leader?



Iranian women mourn the death of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed in joint US and Israeli strikes, at a square in Tehran yesterday. – AFP

PARIS – Iran has said it would swiftly appoint a new supreme leader after US and Israeli strikes killed Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, insisting the Islamic republic's system was fully prepared to fill its most powerful post.

Here are key points on the process:

Who decides?

The system in place since the installation of the Islamic republic after the 1979 revolution combines elements of theocracy and democracy, with the supreme leader at the top.

The leader is chosen for life by the popularly elected Assembly of Experts, and in theory is overseen by the top clerical body, but in practice has the final word on all policies domestic and international, as well as being the commander-in-chief.

The Assembly of Experts is made up of 88 jurists elected every eight years.

It has only overseen one leadership transition process to date, when Khamenei was selected in 1989 following the death of revolutionary founder Ayatollah

Ruhollah Khomeini, who died after a period of illness.

Swift choice

Authorities have said the decision would be made quickly in line with the constitution.

"According to the law, a leader must be determined as quickly as possible, and given the wartime conditions, this will happen at the earliest possible opportunity," a Guardian Council spokesman said yesterday, according to state television.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said yesterday on Al Jazeera: "You may see the selection of a supreme leader in a day or two."

He said before the strikes that the Islamic republic's system was built to handle a leadership crisis and was "not dependent on individuals".

"Whenever needed they [the Assembly] will elect a new supreme leader for the country, exactly as happened after the demise of the late Ayatollah Khomeini, in less than 24 hours, they elected a new leader," Araghchi told India Today in an interview.

Transitional leadership

Iranian authorities quickly

announced a three-person transitional leadership council to run the country after confirming Khamenei's death.

It includes jurist Alireza Araf, a member of the Guardian Council – half of whom are named by the supreme leader – along with President Masoud Pezeshkian and hardline judiciary chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei.

Pezeshkian said yesterday that the council had begun its work.

"We will continue with all our strength along the path set by Imam Khomeini," the founder of the Islamic republic, Pezeshkian said in a recorded video statement broadcast on state TV.

The last nomination

During the 1980s, Khomeini's most likely successor was seen as the senior cleric Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, but the revolution leader shifted his support shortly before his death and the Assembly of Experts chose Khamenei.

Khamenei, 86 at the time of his death, famously rejected the nomination initially, but the clerics stood in unison to seal his nomination and his grip on power never slackened. – AFP

What we know about alleged strike on Iran school

PARIS – Iran said strikes hit a school and killed more than 100 people, but neither the United States nor Israel have confirmed that any such attack has taken place.

Iranian authorities said its enemies conducted strikes on a school in the southern town of Minab on Saturday. The Iranian Red Crescent later gave a death toll of 108.

Israel said it was not aware of any US or Israeli strike on a school in Iran, and Washington said it was looking into the reports.

AFP has been unable to access the location to independently verify the toll or the circumstances surrounding the event.

Iranian authorities have to give explicit approval to foreign media organisations wishing to report outside Tehran.

Here is what we know:

Verified footage

Footage filmed from a parking lot showed black smoke billowing from a damaged building adorned with murals featuring drawings of crayons, children and an apple.

AFP has geolocated the clip to a building in Minab in Iran's southern Hormozgan province that appeared to be a school, though it has not been able to independently verify the nature of the site.

A second video, verified by outlets including The New York Times, showed a similar damaged structure from a different angle.

Colourful murals similar to those seen in the first video were visible as distressed bystanders in civilian clothing gathered nearby.

Iranian state television has identified the site as the Shajare Tayyebah girls' elementary school in Minab.

AFP could not independently verify the date the footage was filmed.

What Iran says

On Saturday, an Iranian provincial official said Israeli strikes hit a school in Hormozgan near the strategic sea route of the Strait of Hormuz.

A county governor, according to state television, identified the school as the Shajare Tayyebah elementary school in Minab.

Then the Iranian Red Crescent raised the death toll from the strike to 108, up from an initial estimate of five provided by the provincial official.

"The number of student martyrs at Minab School has reached 108, and relief and debris removal operations are still ongoing," a spokesperson for the organisation said.

Israel 'not aware'

For its part, Israel's military said Sunday it was not aware of any US or Israeli strike on a school.

"At this point not aware of an Israeli or an American strike there... We're operating in an extremely accurate manner," military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Nadav Shoshani told reporters.

US 'looking into reports'

AFP contacted the US Central Command (CENTCOM) which did not immediately respond for comment.

The Pentagon also did not immediately respond to a request for comment, but a CENTCOM spokesperson was quoted by The New York Times as saying: "We are aware of reports concerning civilian harm resulting from ongoing military operations. We take these reports seriously and are looking into them."

"The protection of civilians is of utmost importance, and we will continue to take all precautions available to minimise the risk of unintended harm."

Human rights group

Norway-based rights group Hengaw said it was investigating the identities of the students allegedly killed in the strike.

In a statement, the organisation said the Shajare Tayyebah school was holding its morning session at the time of the incident, which reportedly had about 170 students present. – AFP

Trump says 'will be talking' to Iranian leaders: report

PALM BEACH – US President Donald Trump yesterday said he would "be talking" to Iranian leaders but was vague on the timing and noted that much of the country's leadership was dead.

"They want to talk, and I have agreed to talk, so I will be talking to them. They should have done it sooner," Trump was quoted as saying by *The Atlantic*, as US and Israeli forces pressed a war against Iran for a second day.

Asked when such talks might take place, Trump said "I can't tell you."

Trump did not indicate with whom he hoped to speak.

Referring to the Iranian leadership which has been in years of on-and-off talks with US and other Western governments, Trump said "most of those people are gone."

"Some of the people we were dealing with are gone, because that was a big – that was a big hit," Trump was quoted as saying, apparently referring to the strike that killed Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and other top officials.

"They should have done it sooner," he said. "They could have made a deal. They should've done it sooner. They played too cute."

In a separate interview, Trump yesterday said that 48 Iranian leaders had already been killed in the war launched on Saturday by the United States and Israel.

"Nobody can believe the success we're having, 48 leaders are gone in one shot. And it's moving along rapidly," Trump was quoted as saying in an interview by Fox News.

– AFP

Germany tells Iran to stop 'indiscriminate attacks'

BERLIN – German Chancellor Friedrich Merz yesterday called on Iran to "immediately stop" its "indiscriminate attacks", while predicting that the country's rule by clerics was coming to an end with the death of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Germany shares Iranians' "relief" to see the "mullah regime come to an end", Merz said at a press conference in Berlin.

He cautioned, however, that the killing of Khamenei in strikes by the US and Israeli on Tehran had set Iran on a path to an

"uncertain future".

Merz confirmed he would be travelling to Washington tomorrow on a scheduled trip and would discuss Middle East developments with US President Donald Trump.

"Ultimately, we don't know if the plan will succeed," he said of the US-Israeli strikes in which Germany, like Britain and France, did not participate.

He said that Germany would not tolerate any "antisemitic or anti-American" attack on its soil.

– AFP

Cheers, music, anger: World reacts as Iran's Khamenei is killed



Iraqi Shi'ites Muslim women hold up the image of killed Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, during a symbolic funeral the day after his assassination, in the district of Sadr City, in Baghdad yesterday. — AFP

PARIS — Cheers and mourning in Iran. Euphoric celebrations against the Iranian regime and angry protests against the war. Uncertainty of what comes next.

The world greeted with jubilation, anger or trepidation the news yesterday that Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had been killed in the US-Israeli strikes on the Islamic republic one day earlier.

Music in Tehran

Iranians took to the streets cheering with joy, setting off fireworks and playing celebratory music after reports of Khamenei's death, according to witnesses and video footage verified by AFP.

The celebrations in Tehran began shortly after 11 p.m. (local time), according to multiple witnesses and audio recordings.

People were not, however, coming out en masse to celebrate, according to social media.

Many Iranians were fearful after the deadly crackdown on mass anti-government protests in January.

Mourning in Tehran

The thousands who did gather in the centre of Iran's capital were instead mourning Khamenei's death, according to AFP journalists.

The mourners, dressed mostly in black and some crying, chanted "death to America" and "death to Israel" in Enghelab ("Revolution")

Square, with many waving Iran's flags and holding photos of Khamenei.

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian yesterday branded Khamenei's killing a "declaration of war against Muslims" by Israel and the United States.

Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guards vowed earlier yesterday to punish Khamenei's "murderers".

Deadly protests

At least nine people were killed as hundreds of pro-Iranian protesters tried to storm the United States consulate in the Pakistan megacity of Karachi on Sunday.

Hundreds of Iraqis also attempted yesterday to storm Baghdad's fortified Green Zone, where the US embassy is located, an AFP journalist reported.

Protests also took place in Srinagar, in Indian-administered Kashmir.

In Istanbul, protesters carried portraits of Khamenei as they marched against the war, with some burning posters of US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

In Seoul, South Korea, protesters held "Hands off Iran" signs in front of the US embassy.

Similar protests took place in Hyderabad in India and in Athens, Greece.

'Free Iran'

Jubilant Iranians took to the streets in Europe and the United



Anti-Iranian regime protesters wave the Iranian flags before the 1979 revolution with the Lion and Sun emblems and hold portraits of son of last shah of Iran and now key opposition figure Reza Pahlavi during a march in support of the US and Israel attack on Iran and the killing of Iran's supreme leader, in Paris yesterday. Iranian state television confirmed the death of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Saturday, after US President said he had been killed. The announcement came after the United States and Israel started launching waves of strikes against targets in Iran, sparking swift retaliation by the Islamic republic. — AFP

States to cheer Khamenei's death.

In Los Angeles, home to a massive Iranian diaspora, singing and ululating marchers carried flags of shah-era Iran and posters bearing Trump's image, with some wearing "Free Iran" shirts.

There were marches in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and in Paris, with participants waving pre-Islamic revolution Iranian flags and some holding placards with photos of the late shah's son.

'Cynical violation'

Russian President Vladimir Putin, a key ally of Tehran, yesterday slammed Khamenei's killing as a "a cynical violation of all norms of human morality and international law".

In a letter to Pezeshkian published by the Kremlin, Putin also expressed his "deepest condolences for the assassination".

'Most evil'

"Khamenei, one of the most evil people in History, is dead," US President Donald Trump said, announcing the killing on his Truth Social network on Saturday.

The killing "is the single greatest chance for the Iranian people to take back their country," Trump said.

'Cruel tyrant'

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also called for Iranians to "overthrow the regime" after

Khamenei's killing.

"For more than three and a half decades, this cruel tyrant has spread terror across the world while oppressing his own people, while working tirelessly and without pause on a plan to destroy Israel," he said in a televised statement.

'Irreparable chasm'

Pope Leo XIV on Sunday called for an end to the "spiral of violence before it becomes an irreparable chasm," speaking to a crowd in St Peter's Square.

'Hope'

A nephew of Khamenei, a France-based doctor opposed to the Islamic republic, welcomed his uncle's death.

"Like most Iranians, I am happy," Mahmoud Moradkhani, the son of one of Khamenei's sisters, said by telephone from his home in northern France.

"I think it's a step forward, a hope," he said, predicting government was unlikely to survive.

'Defining moment'

EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said yesterday that the killing was a "defining moment".

"What comes next is uncertain. But there is now an open path to a different Iran, one that its people may have greater freedom to shape," Kallas wrote on X.

'Bloodthirsty dictator'

UK Defence Secretary John Healey said yesterday that "few people will mourn" Khamenei, echoing Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

French government spokeswoman Maud Bregeon likewise said that France "could only be satisfied with his demise", calling him a "bloodthirsty dictator".

'Head of the snake'

Israelis celebrated the death of Khamenei, a sworn enemy of Israel who called the nation "a malign tumour that must be eradicated".

"When you cut off the head of the snake, the snake can no longer rise again," Moti Arad, a lawyer in Tel Aviv, told AFP.

The word "hussal," meaning eliminated in Hebrew, featured on all most major media, with the killing marking a rare point of consensus in Israel's polarised political landscape.

'Heinous' attack

Iran's ally Hamas yesterday mourned Khamenei. "The US and the fascist occupation government bear full responsibility for this blatant aggression and heinous crime," the Palestinian Islamist group said.

Fellow Iran ally Hezbollah likewise vowed to "undertake our duty of confronting the aggression" of Israel and the US. — AFP

Mediator Oman's FM urges ceasefire on call with Iran's Araghchi: statement

OMAN — Oman's foreign minister, who had been mediating US-Iran talks, yesterday urged a ceasefire on a call with his Iranian counterpart, as Tehran launched a second day of strikes in response to ongoing US-Israeli air raids.

Badr Albusaidi "affirmed the Sultanate of Oman's continued call for a ceasefire and a return to dialogue... in a manner that achieves the legitimate demands of all parties," Oman's foreign ministry said in a readout of a call with Iran's foreign minister Abbas Araghchi.

Yesterday in Oman, which had been the only Gulf state spared from attack during the first day of the Iranian campaign, the port of Duqm was targeted by two Iranian drones, injuring one foreign worker, official state media reported.

According to the Oman foreign ministry statement, Araghchi said Iran was "calling for peace," and voiced "the openness of the Iranian side to any serious efforts that contribute to stopping the escalation and returning to stability".

— AFP

Austin shooting that left 3 dead may be 'terrorism': FBI

HOUSTON — Three people were killed and 14 wounded in a shooting overnight in downtown Austin, the capital of the US state of Texas, which the FBI said yesterday may have been an "act of terrorism."

The gunman, who was not identified, was among the dead, Austin police chief Lisa Davis said at a press conference.

FBI special agent Alex Doran said an exact motive was not known but "there were indicators on the subject and in his vehicle that indicate a potential nexus to terrorism."

"In terms of specifically what type of terrorism, we're just at this

point prepared to say that it was potentially an act of terrorism," Doran said.

The FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force was brought in to participate in the investigation alongside local authorities.

The shooting comes amid heightened security in many American cities following the launching of US and Israeli air strikes on Iran which killed the country's supreme leader Ali Khamenei and several other senior officials.

Davis said the assailant was shot by police who responded swiftly to the shooting, which took

place around 2:00 a.m. (local time) in Austin's entertainment district.

The officers "were faced with the individual with a gun and three of our officers returned fire, killing the suspect," the police chief said.

Davis said the gunman first opened fire with a pistol from his car on patrons of Buford's Backyard Beer Garden in downtown Austin.

He then parked his car and emerged with a rifle and began shooting at people who were walking by, Davis said.

Three of the wounded were in critical condition, officials said.

— AFP

Coup role revelations revive calls for return of Spain's ex king

Diego Urdaneta

MADRID – Calls for Spain's former King Juan Carlos I to return from exile have resurfaced after declassified files confirmed his role in stopping a 1981 coup and defending the country's fledgling democracy.

Juan Carlos, who abdicated in favour of his son Felipe IV in 2014, left Spain in 2020 to live in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) after a financial scandal tarnished his reputation.

Previously secret documents on the February 23, 1981 attempted coup, released on Wednesday, reaffirmed his role in stopping the putsch, an act that had long bolstered his popularity.

The coup came six years after the death of Generalissimo Francisco Franco and was orchestrated by military officers nostalgic for his decades-long rightwing dictatorship.

The newly declassified files include intelligence reports and transcripts of telephone conversations.

Together, they show how Juan Carlos – who had been Franco's designated successor –

worked to persuade coup plotters to stand down, dissipating lingering questions about his role.

Following their release, the leader of the main opposition conservative People's Party (PP), Alberto Núñez Feijóo, called for Juan Carlos, 88, to return to Spain.

Someone who helped sustain Spain's democracy should spend the final stage of his life "with dignity and in his country", Feijóo argued.

Lingering questions over finances

Spain's leftist government said the decision to return was his alone.

Juan Carlos already visits Spain periodically for sailing events and medical checkups, Justice Minister Félix Bolaños said on Thursday. The government "has never prevented or denied him entry", he added.

The Royal Household said Juan Carlos was free to return but stressed he had to have his tax domicile in Spain if he returned, to protect both his image and that of the monarchy.

Re-establishing fiscal residency could raise renewed questions about the former

king's sources of income, said Lucia Yeste, a journalist who covers the royals for Spain's public radio.

"He said in an interview that he's the only Spaniard without a pension. So how does he get by? What resources does he have? And that's something he doesn't want to talk about," she told Spanish public television.

When he left Spain in 2020, Spanish and Swiss prosecutors were investigating his involvement in alleged financial wrongdoings involving millions of euros in undeclared accounts.

The cases were eventually dropped because the alleged offences happened when Juan Carlos had legal immunity as king – or were time barred.

Juan Carlos paid 5.0 million euros (US\$5.9 million) to the Spanish tax authority to clear arrears as part of efforts to regularise his tax situation and address public pressure.

'Buried with honours'

Since succeeding his father, King Felipe has sought to cut a contrastingly austere figure

in a country where the monarchy does not enjoy high levels of support.

He has reduced the size of the official royal family, opened royal accounts to external auditing and imposed a code of conduct on royal staff.

The return of Juan Carlos would be a "blow" to Felipe's efforts to restore the monarchy's image, as the former king "does not have a clean record," said Paloma Roman, a politics specialist at Madrid's Complutense University.

The People's Party's call for him to come back is an attempt to embarrass the ruling Socialist government since many on the right claim it was Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez who sent Juan Carlos into exile, she added.

In his memoirs published last year, Juan Carlos spoke of "government pressure" on the royal household and attempts to "discredit" him.

"I would like to find my place in Spain again," the former king added, saying he hopes "to be buried there with honours". – AFP

Lula visits flood zone as death toll from landslides hits 70



This handout picture released by the Brazilian Presidency press office shows Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva looking at debris and damage of the recent floods and landslides caused by heavy rains in Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais State, southeastern Brazil, on Saturday. – AFP

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

RIO DE JANEIRO – Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva on Saturday hugged weeping residents and promised free houses to those who had lost their homes in landslides triggered by torrential rains that killed 70 people in the country's southeast.

Thousands were left homeless after mud swept away their houses in the cities of Juiz de Fora and Uba this week, leaving desperate residents seeking loved ones under piles of sludge and debris.

Firefighters said on Saturday that they were still searching for three missing people, while the police updated the death toll to 70, including 13 children.

Lula flew over the disaster area before landing and meeting grief-stricken residents and officials.

He promised that his government would give free houses to those whose homes had been destroyed, outside of the at-risk areas where they had been living.

"We are going to help these people recover by giving them houses," Lula said at a press conference.

"The only thing we cannot give back to the city are the lives that have been lost. We don't have the power to bring human lives back, but we will give people the right to live with decency and dignity." – AFP

According to the latest update from the fire brigade, just over 3,800 people have been made homeless by the landslides.

The tragedy is the latest in a series of extreme weather disasters in Brazil, from floods to fires and drought, many of which scientists have linked to the effects of global warming.

In 2024, more than 200 people died and two million were impacted by unprecedented flooding in southern Brazil, one of the worst natural disasters in its history.

"Science indicates that there will be more and more extreme weather events like the one that happened here in Minas Gerais, as happened last year in Rio Grande do Sul," Minister of Cities Jader Barbalho Filho told the press conference.

"There is only one alternative: investments in prevention," he said.

Brazil's meteorological agency INMET told AFP that parts of the southeast were experiencing the rainiest February in years.

Rainfall in Juiz de Fora – a hilly city of half a million inhabitants – has already exceeded 760 mm in February, more than triple its usual monthly average.

Brazilian meteorologist Carlos Nobre attributed the unusually heavy downpours to a passing cold front system over the "very warm" Atlantic Ocean. – AFP

Trump says US discussing 'friendly takeover' of Cuba

WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump on Friday suggested a "friendly takeover" of communist-led Cuba, with tensions high between Washington and Havana in the wake of the US toppling of Venezuelan strongman Nicolás Maduro.

The Trump administration has imposed a strict oil embargo on Cuba since ousting Havana's key regional backer, bringing the island nation to the brink of economic collapse.

"They have no money, they have no anything right now. But they're talking with us and maybe we'll have a friendly takeover of Cuba," Trump told reporters as he departed the White House on Friday.

"The Cuban government is talking with us, and they're in a big deal of trouble," he said.

Cuba has been under a US trade embargo since shortly after Fidel Castro's 1959 revolution. Relations thawed in recent years but have plunged again since Trump took office for his second term, with the US president seeking to tighten Washington's grip on Latin America.

On Wednesday, the Cuban Coast Guard said it had killed four people and wounded six others on board a US-registered speedboat that it said were armed and seeking to infiltrate the country.

Havana said all those on board the US boat were Cubans living in the United States, which has received several waves of emigration from the island since the 1960s.

A US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed only that one US citizen was killed and another wounded in the incident.

Cuban authorities said a coast guard vessel came under fire from the speedboat around one nautical mile from Cuba's north shore, adding that assault rifles, handguns, Molotov cocktails and military-style gear were found onboard.

The response from the United States government was muted.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who was on a Caribbean visit, said that Washington was conducting its own investigation and would "respond accordingly." – AFP

Mexico sends more aid to Cuba

HAVANA – Two Mexican navy vessels carrying almost 1,200 tonnes of humanitarian aid arrived in Cuba on Saturday in the second such shipment in a month as the island endures intense US pressure.

US President Donald Trump has vowed to starve Cuba of oil after the US military ouster of Nicolás Maduro of Venezuela, which had been the communist nation's main supplier of the commodity.

Earlier this week his administration eased what amounts to an energy blockade, allowing oil shipments to private companies in Cuba but not the government or the military.

The Mexican navy ships Papaloapan and Huasteco, which were dispatched on Tuesday by the leftist President Claudia Sheinbaum, were seen arriving in the port of Havana on Saturday.

The Mexican foreign ministry said the ships were carrying 1,193 tons of aid for the civilian population, including 23 tonnes of food donated by everyday Mexican people as part of an aid drive.

In the first Mexican aid shipment, two ships arrived on February 12 carrying 814 tonnes of fresh and powdered milk, meat, beans, rice and personal hygiene items.

Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, the Miami-born son of Cuban immigrants, have made no secret of their desire to bring about regime change in Havana.

The Republican leader has said Cuba is "ready to fall."

The island of 9.6 million inhabitants, under a US trade embargo since 1962, has for years been mired in a severe economic crisis marked by extended power cuts and shortages of fuel, medicine and food.

It has now also been cut off from critical oil supplies from Venezuela and from Mexico under the threat of US tariffs.

The resulting shortages have threatened to plunge Cuba into complete darkness, with power plants struggling to keep the lights on. – AFP



Man Utd climb to 3rd, Fulham sink sorry Spurs

LONDON — Benjamin Sesko stretched his hot streak with the winning goal as Manchester United beat Crystal Palace 2-1 to go third in the Premier League, while Tottenham failed to dispel relegation fears after defeat at Fulham yesterday.

Sesko was handed his first start in seven games since Michael Carrick took charge at Old Trafford and rewarded his boss with another vital goal to edge United closer to a return to the Champions League.

Palace had taken an early lead at Old Trafford when Maxence Lacroix outmuscled Leny Yoro to guide in a header from Brennan Johnson's corner.

But United hit back to remain unbeaten under Carrick and take their tally to 19 points from a possible 21.

The game swung on one incident as Lacroix was sent off and conceded a penalty for pulling back Matheus Cunha just before the hour mark.

Bruno Fernandes confidently

stroked the resulting spot-kick past former team-mate Dean Henderson.

Fernandes was then the creator for the second as his curling cross was powered in by Sesko.

The Slovenian has now scored seven times in his last eight appearances to quieten critics of his £74 million (US\$100 million) price tag after a slow start to his career in England.

"It feels like a big result," said Fernandes. "We were behind and had to show some character."

No Tudor turnaround for Tottenham

Tottenham remain perilously poised just four points above the relegation zone as interim boss Igor Tudor again failed to halt their alarming slide after a 2-1 defeat at Craven Cottage.

"We were not good, [we] lacked everything attacking and defending," said Tudor after two defeats in his two games in charge.



Manchester United's Slovenian striker Benjamin Sesko (left) scores his team's second goal during the English Premier League match against Crystal Palace at Old Trafford in Manchester, north west England, yesterday. — AFP

"There are problems here, big problems. We need to stay calm, believe in what we are doing in training, and get out [of trouble], staying all together."

Harry Wilson and Alex Iwobi gave Fulham a deserved half-time lead as they moved up to ninth and back into contention for European football next season.

Richarlison headed in a late consolation for Tottenham, but they remain the only Premier League side without a win in 2026.

The one crumb of comfort for Spurs was defeat for relegation rivals Nottingham Forest, 2-1 at Brighton.

All three goals arrived in the first 15 minutes as Diego Gomez and Danny Welbeck netted for the Seagulls either

side of Morgan Gibbs-White's reply.

Forest sit two points above the drop zone ahead of a daunting trip to Manchester City on Wednesday.

Arsenal won their set-piece battle with 10-man Chelsea as Jurrien Timber sealed the Premier League leaders' crucial 2-1 victory over their London rivals yesterday.

William Saliba's first goal since December 2024 put Arsenal ahead in the first half at the Emirates Stadium.

Piero Hincapie's own goal drew Chelsea level from one of Reece James' deadly corners just before the break.

But Timber won a priceless three points for Arsenal with his second-half header before Chelsea winger Pedro Neto was sent off for a second booking.

The Gunners' second successive league win reestablished their five-point lead over second-placed Manchester City, who have a game in hand and had closed the gap with a 1-0 victory at Leeds on Saturday. — AFP

Football shorts

Lewandowski out of Barca's Copa del Rey semi against Atletico

BARCELONA — Barcelona striker Robert Lewandowski will miss his team's Copa del Rey semi-final clash against Atletico Madrid with a fractured eye socket, the Catalan giants said yesterday.

"Lewandowski picked up an injury in the recent game against Villarreal. Tests have diagnosed a fracture of the left eye socket," said Barcelona in a statement.

"He will miss the game against Atletico Madrid."

Copa del Rey holders Barcelona suffered a 4-0 defeat in the first leg against Diego Simeone's side at the start of February.

Lewandowski, 37, has played a bit-part role for Barca this season, often left on the bench in favour of Ferran Torres.

On as a substitute, the former Bayern Munich striker netted La Liga leaders Barca's fourth goal in the 4-1 win over Villarreal on Saturday. — AFP

Dortmund captain Can out for season with ACL tear

BERLIN — Borussia Dortmund captain Emre Can will miss the remainder of the season after scans confirmed he tore his

ACL in Saturday's 3-2 home loss to Bayern Munich.

Dortmund confirmed the injury in a statement yesterday, saying Can "will be out for an extended period."

Can clutched his left knee after tussling with Bayern's Konrad Laimer just before half-time. The former Liverpool and Juventus midfielder played on for a few minutes but then signalled to the bench and was withdrawn.

Dortmund feared a serious knee injury after the match and sporting director Sebastian Kehl said yesterday the club's worst fears were confirmed.

"Emre's injury is extremely bitter. Not just for him, but for all of us."

"He is our captain, always puts the team first and is an important part of our club. Emre will receive all our support in the coming months so that he can make a full recovery."

Can joined Dortmund from Juventus in 2020 and was promoted to captain ahead of the 2023-24 season but his current contract at the club expires in the summer.

The injury ends the 32-year-old's hopes of making the Germany squad for the World Cup in the summer. Can has 48 Germany caps, scoring two goals, but had not played at an international level since September 2024. — AFP



Kerr on target as Australia make winning start to Women's Asian Cup

PERTH — Star striker Sam Kerr hit the target as Australia made an unconvincing start to the Women's Asian Cup yesterday with a 1-0 win over a gallant Philippines in front of a record crowd at Perth Stadium.

The Chelsea forward opened the hosts' account in the 14th minute, but that was as good as it got despite dominating possession.

It was not the clinical performance they were looking for - the last time the teams met in 2023, Australia won 8-0.

Victory nevertheless ensured three points in Group A as the Matildas began their mission to win the 12-team continental title for the first time since 2010.

"Everyone comes here to win, but we're just taking it one game at a time," said Kerr of their chances of winning the title.

"Today [yesterday] was a good start and there's lots of belief within the team. But there's a lot of quality teams in the Asian Cup, so you have to take one game at a time."

After the 44,379-strong crowd - a record for the Women's Asian Cup - was warmed up by American singer Audrey Nuna of "KPop Demon Hunters" fame, big cheers greeted the players when they emerged onto the pitch.

The Matildas took the lead in the 14th minute after a cagey start when Arsenal's Caitlin Foord got on the



Australia's Sam Kerr (centre) heads the ball as Philippines goalkeeper Olivia McDaniel attempts to block her during the AFC Women's Asian Cup Australia 2026 match at Perth Stadium in Perth yesterday. — AFP

end of Clare Wheeler's cross and found Kerr who headed home from close range.

Emily van Egmond should have made it 2-0 minutes later, but the Leicester midfielder skied a free header over the bar.

A second goal seemed imminent and it appeared to have come from Hayley Raso, but her strike was ruled offside by the video referee and Australia went into the break with only a slender lead.

The Philippines are a team on the rise under Australian coach Mark Torcaso, winning gold at the Southeast Asian Games last year, and they doggedly hung on against

a side packed with England-based players.

Goalkeeper Olivia McDaniel and their defensive unit were immense as Australia struggled to create any clear-cut chances in the second half and murmurs of discontent rippled through the crowd.

South Korea and Iran, who face each other on the Gold Coast today, are also in their group.

The top two sides from each of the three groups, along with the two best third-placed teams, progress to the quarter-finals. At stake for the top six finishers is qualification for the 2027 World Cup in Brazil. — AFP



AC Milan consolidate top-4 credentials with win at Cremonese

CREMONESE — AC Milan moved closer to Champions League football next season after two late strikes gave them a 2-0 win at Cremonese yesterday.

Strahinja Pavlovic put Milan ahead in the 90th minute with his shoulder before Rafael Leao's simple finish in stoppage time gave the away side a result which flattered a drab display in Cremona.

Milan, who have been without European football this season, have little realistic hope of winning the Serie A title as the seven-time European champions are 10 points behind league leaders Inter Milan.

Next weekend's Milan derby has little more than local pride riding on it with Inter speeding off into the distance with 11 games remaining in the league campaign.

Milan's stated aim for the season, however, was qualification for the Champions League and Massimiliano Allegri's team are on course for that objective.

"We have a huge goal to reach with teams behind us who continue collecting points," said Allegri to DAZN.

"You have Como, Atalanta still have to play, Napoli won in the end and there are also Roma and

Juventus. All we can do is take it one step at a time."

Fifth-placed Como are nine points behind Milan, while Roma, seven points behind them in fourth, face Juventus in Sunday's headline fixture.

Atalanta are five points off the Champions League spots in seventh after falling to a surprise 2-1 defeat at 10-man Sassuolo, their first in the league since the turn of the year.

Raffaele Palladino's team are the only Italian side in the last 16 of Europe's top club competition following their thrilling 4-3 aggregate triumph over Borussia Dortmund on Wednesday.

Jamie Vardy's Cremonese are sliding towards relegation to Serie B after a 13th straight match without a win, the promoted outfit sitting outside the drop zone on goal difference. — AFP

Samson's 97 puts India into T20 World Cup semis against England

Daniel Hicks

KOLKATA – Sanju Samson's sparkling unbeaten 97 kept alive India's dream of retaining the T20 World Cup at home as they knocked out the West Indies with a five-wicket win in Kolkata yesterday to set up a semi-final against England.

Samson hit 12 fours and four sixes in his superb 50-ball knock in the winner-takes-all final Super Eights match to thrill a capacity 67,000 fans at a pulsating Eden Gardens.

After the West Indies smacked 70 off the last five overs to score 195-4 after being asked to bat, India lost two early wickets but were always up with the required rate.

Samson, opening for the second match in succession, led the way.

When India slipped to 41-2 he was joined by captain Suryakumar Yadav (18) and the pair added 58 for the third wicket.

Tilak Varma was next to join Samson and scored 27 off 15 before departing in the 15th over with the score 141-4 and India still needing 55.

Samson stood firm and though Hardik Pandya fell for 17 India reached the target with four balls to spare to spark celebrations and fireworks.

Jason Holder and Rovman Powell earlier put on an unbroken stand of 76 for the fifth wicket to help the West Indies set the defending champions a target of 196 to stay alive.

The West Indies sprang a surprise at the top of the order, promoting Test captain Roston Chase to open alongside T20 skipper Shai Hope.

That enabled them to bring in an extra spinner, Akeal Hosein, with regular opener Brandon King left out.

In their defeat to South Africa last week the West Indies slumped to 83-7 but the new-look opening partnership was more assured.

Spinner Varun Chakravarthy got

the first breakthrough, bowling Hope for a sluggish 32.

Shimron Hetmyer raced to 27 off 12 balls before falling to the faintest of edges off Jasprit Bumrah to make it 102-2.

After Chase fell for 40 and Sherfane Rutherford followed, Powell and Holder launched their brutal late assault.

Powell finished on 34 not out from 19 balls with two sixes and three fours while Holder was unbeaten on 37 off 22 balls with three sixes and two fours.

It could have been better for India but they dropped three regulation catches in a sloppy fielding display, including Chase when he had made just 15.

South Africa, the only unbeaten side in the tournament, beat Zimbabwe by five wickets earlier yesterday and will face New Zealand in Kolkata in the first semi-final on Wednesday.

The final is in Ahmedabad next Sunday. –AFP



India's Sanju Samson (centre) is congratulated by West Indies' captain Shai Hope for his team's win at the end of their 2026 ICC Men's T20 Cricket World Cup Super Eights match in the Eden Gardens, Kolkata, India yesterday. –AFP

China's Sun Yingsha, Wang Chuqin win singles titles at WTT Singapore Smash



Sun Yingsha (left) and Wang Manyu hold their trophies during the awarding ceremony after the women's singles final between Sun Yingsha of China and Wang Manyu of China at the World Table Tennis (WTT) Singapore Smash 2026 in Singapore yesterday. –AFP

Table tennis

SINGAPORE – China's Sun Yingsha and Wang Chuqin captured the women's and men's singles titles respectively at the WTT Singapore Smash yesterday.

In the women's singles semifinals, Sun defeated teammate Chen Yi 4-1 in the semifinals, while Wang Manyu overcame Germany's Sabine Winter by the same scoreline to set up an all-Chinese final.

The final match featured six competitive games, with Sun prevailing 4-2 to seal the championship.

After the match, Sun described the final against Wang as closely contested, saying that both players had given their all. Sun added that she was satisfied with her overall performance and pleased with her recovery from injury.

In the men's singles, Wang Chuqin faced France's Felix Lebrun in the semifinal. After dropping the opening game, he responded by taking the next four to win 4-1.

In the final, Wang delivered a dominant performance, defeating Chinese Taipei's Lin Yun-ju 4-0 to secure the title.

Wang stated that in recent months he had made improvements physically, mentally and technically, which enabled him to maintain both the capability and motivation required to complete the tournament on a strong note. –AFP

Medvedev wins Dubai title as Griekspoor withdraws

Tennis

DUBAI – Daniil Medvedev claimed his second Dubai title on Saturday following the withdrawal of his opponent Tallon Griekspoor due to a left hamstring injury.

The Russian also said he was unsure if he would be able to play next week's ATP 1000 event in California after UAE airspace was partially closed due to Iranian strikes on the country, following the United States' and Israel's attacks on Iran.

Dutchman Griekspoor picked up the injury towards the end of his opening set of his semi-final win over Andrey Rublev on Friday and looked doubtful for the final when he limped into his post-match press conference.

The tournament announced on Saturday that Griekspoor "was deemed unfit to play in the ATP 500 men's final following a medical assessment".

"Not the way I wanted to finish the week here in Dubai," Griekspoor wrote on Instagram, saying he would be "out for a few weeks".

Griekspoor landed awkwardly after a

serve on Friday and was unable to recover in time for the final.

"Of course unfortunate, but Tallon, I could see yesterday that maybe he had an injury. You never know how these injuries develop through the night. Sometimes they get easier and you can play, like with some soreness. Sometimes they get worse, so I guess it got worse," said Medvedev in audio quotes provided by the ATP.

"I cannot do anything about it, I played a great tournament, the four matches I played. Of course I wanted to play the final, but it is what it is.

"I played an unbelievable match yesterday, so I would, either way, take it as a final for me and I'm happy to win the tournament."

Repeat success at last

This is the first time Medvedev has been able to repeat a title. The 30-year-old Russian had won 22 trophies in 22 different events before clinching a second Dubai crown on Saturday to go with the one he captured in 2023.

"Of course [I take] a lot of confidence.

But tennis is a very fast-going sport, so one week you can play not the way you want and the other week you're playing amazing. So I just hope to bring this confidence from the four matches I played into Indian Wells, for sure.

"I played unreal the whole week, so I was actually really looking forward to the final and trying to play even better than I did. But it is what it is and I'm really happy with how the week turned out in general."

The Dubai doubles final went ahead as scheduled and the singles final was set to be played despite Iran's ongoing attacks on the UAE on Saturday.

The players are meant to fly straight to California for the upcoming Indian Wells Masters but their travel plans have been disrupted due to regional airspace closures and the suspension of all flight operations at all Dubai airports until further notice.

Medvedev said he still didn't know how he was going to make it to California and will be waiting on updates regarding the reopening of the Gulf region's airspace. –AFP

Marquez says 'unlucky' to retire from MotoGP season opener

MotoGP

BURIRAM – MotoGP world champion Marc Marquez said he was "unlucky" after a damaged wheel forced him out of the season-opening Thailand grand prix late in the race yesterday.

The Spanish Ducati rider is launching his bid for a record-equalling eighth world title, but he exited the race in Buriram in dramatic fashion while in fourth place with five laps remaining.

Marquez had his sights on catching Pedro Acosta and Raul Fernandez, but he took a corner wide and punctured his tyre and buckled his wheel as he went off the course.

Marquez said he was "riding in a safe way", but he had to watch from the team garage as Aprilia's Marco Bezzecchi took the first grand prix win of the season.

"I was unlucky because that curve I jumped a hundred times in the test or

during the practice, and it never happened what happened now," Marquez told reporters.

"Normally, curves are made that you can jump out in a good way, you need to be careful when you jump in.

"So I jumped out, but when I jumped out I felt, already, that the rear tyre exploded with a big hit also on the rim."

Marquez dominated last year's championship, but he said earlier this week that he was still feeling the lingering effects of a shoulder injury that forced him to miss the final four races of the season.

He started from second on the grid, but he was picked off by a succession of riders until he managed to haul himself back into podium contention.

"The first part of the race I was trying to manage my physical condition and also the tyres, but then when there were 10 laps left, I gave everything, and then I was

closing the gap," said the 33-year-old.

Bezzecchi led from start to finish from pole position to win the race ahead of KTM's Acosta, with Trackhouse's Fernandez third.

Acosta won Saturday's sprint ahead of Marquez, after the defending world champion was forced to let him pass on the final lap because of a penalty.

Ducati finished the grand prix off the podium after Marquez's teammate Francesco Bagnaia finished ninth.

Bezzecchi won all three practice sessions in Thailand and set a new track record in qualifying before he crashed out of the sprint on the second lap.

"We understand, already, second part of the season last year Bezzecchi won many races and it looks like the others are getting closer and closer," said Marquez.

"But we are working, and let's see - let's understand the next races where we are." –AFP

Shakespeare would have shunned streaming, 'Hamnet' team says

Huw Griffith

BEVERLY HILLS – If William Shakespeare were working today in film, he would want his movies shown in cinemas instead of going straight to streaming, the Oscar-nominated producers of "Hamnet" say.

With Hollywood's traditional business model roiled by the explosive growth of companies like Netflix in recent years, filmmakers are increasingly pushing back, urging studios to preserve the moviegoing experience.

And "Hamnet" – the story of Agnes and William Shakespeare's grief over the death of their son in plague-ravaged 16th century England – is one of those films that demands communal viewing, its producers say.

"It shows the universality of storytelling... and how people are so eager to be in a shared experience that enables them to really feel part of a story," producer Nic Gonda told AFP.

"What's been so exciting over the last month or so is to see how what started as a release in America has now rippled around the world."

Fellow producer Pippa Harris, one of five people nominated in the best picture category for Chloe Zhao's elegiac tale of love and loss, lamented modern viewing habits.

"If you say to people, there's a film in the cinema this week and we can see it at home next week, then people just can't be bothered," Harris told AFP.

"They think, 'Oh, well, I'll wait at home and watch it on the streaming service.'"

Producer Liza Marshall said that idea of streaming being good enough is contrary to what the Bard stood for.

"It's totally different to see something on a big screen with a group of strangers. It's a really amazing experience," Marshall told AFP.

"It's more important than ever, as we all become so separate and just looking at our individual screens, that we all need to come together, like why Shakespeare wrote his plays – for people to be in a room together and experience it."

Grief

"Hamnet," adapted from Maggie O'Farrell's novel, puts the spotlight on Agnes (Jessie Buckley), who must care for the couple's remaining children even as William (Paul Mescal) toils far away on London's stages.

The film blends period accuracy, heavy symbolism and magical realism, with Oscar-nominated Zhao coaxing a heart-wrenching performance from Buckley, a frontrunner for the best actress award.

"Hamnet," whose producers also include Steven Spielberg and Sam Mendes, has recouped its US\$30 million budget three times over, a figure that looks set to continue rising.

Harris, of course, acknowledges that at a certain point, movies leave the cinemas and hit the streaming services.

But, she insists, preserving a decent theatrical window of 45 to 90 days is a much better way to build value.

"I think the way you create excitement for streaming services is to create excitement in cinemas first," Harris said.

"And then people want to see the film later on the streaming service."

"If you just put it straight out onto the television, there's no buzz. There's no sort of cultural moment around the film."

"Hamnet" is vying for the best picture Oscar at the March 15 ceremony in Hollywood against "Bugonia," "F1," "Frankenstein," "Marty Supreme," "One Battle After Another," "The Secret Agent," "Sentimental Value," "Sinners" and "Train Dreams."

– AFP

'One Battle After Another' wins top producer award before Oscars

LOS ANGELES – Paul Thomas Anderson's "One Battle After Another" was named best picture by Hollywood producers on Saturday, continuing its awards season streak before the Oscars.

The Producers Guild Awards (PGA) win cements the film, about the rise of extremism in the United States, as a frontrunner for the top prizes at the Academy Awards, which cap off the Hollywood awards season.

Anderson's film, which depicts the hunt for former far-left revolutionaries by a white supremacist, seems destined for the best picture Oscar, having already secured numerous awards.

Since early January, it has won top prizes from American film critics and Hollywood directors, and received the Golden Globe for best comedy.

"This is a tremendous honour, thank you very much," Anderson said in his acceptance speech.

The director then addressed executives at Warner Bros., the prestigious studio that distributed the film and is about to be acquired by Paramount Skydance.

"Long may you wave, whatever the future holds. It is one battle after another," he said.

The Producers Guild Awards are presented annually by the trade union, which has more than 8,000 members.

They are considered a reliable indicator for the Oscars, with winners going on to seal best picture at the Oscars many times.

13 Oscar nominations

"One Battle After Another"



Paul Thomas Anderson (left) and Sara Murphy accept the Darryl F. Zanuck Award for Outstanding Producer of Theatrical Motion Pictures for "One Battle After Another" onstage during the 2026 Producers Guild Awards (PGA) at Fairmont Century Plaza on Saturday in Los Angeles, California. – AFP

boasts an all-star cast.

Leonardo DiCaprio plays an explosives expert involved in a far-left movement where he falls in love with a revolutionary firebrand played by Teyana Taylor.

But years later, a white supremacist soldier (Sean Penn) who previously hunted them resurfaces, forcing the former bomb expert to return to action to rescue his child.

In his quest, he crosses paths with a Zen-like karate master (Benicio Del Toro), who is delighted to help the former revolutionary.

Adapted from Thomas Pynchon's novel "Vineland," the film depicts an irreconcilable

America, torn apart by the political legacies of the Ku Klux Klan and the Black Power movement, where everything is resolved through violence.

Acclaimed for its ability to capture the contemporary fractures in the United States, the film received 13 Oscar nominations, including one for each of its lead actors.

But that was fewer than its main Oscars rival, Ryan Coogler's "Sinners," which received 16 nominations.

The winners will be announced on March 15 at the 98th Academy Awards ceremony in Hollywood.

– AFP

New Pokémon titles on horizon as 30th anniversary approaches

Pikachu and friends are set to return to consoles in two new games next year, the Pokémon Company said on Friday, as it celebrated 30 years of the monster-collecting franchise.

Set for release on Nintendo's latest Switch 2 console, "Pokémon Winds" and "Pokémon Waves" will see the fan-favourite critters return and new beasties emerge as players explore a colourful, tropical world stretching down to the ocean floor.

The Pokémon Company – jointly owned by Nintendo, Japanese studio Game Freak and the Creatures company – controls the brand for the franchise with more than 1,000 "pocket monsters" to date.

Longtime followers of the series will also be able to play the original games released for the portable Game Boy in 1996 on Switch, Nintendo said.

The next volley of Pokémon games was revealed just before the release of a new spinoff, "Pokopia", for Switch 2 on March 5.

Pokémon rapidly grew into a global phenomenon following the

first titles' release on Game Boy.

Titles available on multiple consoles and mobile phones have sold more than 500 million copies over the franchise's 30-year history, according to figures from the Pokémon Company and Nintendo.

Originally inspired by traditional summer insect hunts in Japan, gameplay usually involves capturing and training fantastical "pocket monsters" resembling

anything from mice to dragons, before sending them into battle against one another.

Beyond consoles, Pokémon has also spawned films, an animated series and the augmented reality mobile game "Pokémon Go".

In 2024, the brand generated US\$12 billion in revenues, according to specialist data firm License Global, more than toy giant Mattel.

– AFP



Irish actress Jessie Buckley poses with the award for Best leading actress in the film "Hamnet" during the BAFTA British Academy Film Awards ceremony at the Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre, in London, on February 22, 2026. – AFP

World Weather			
CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 1°C~8°C	Manila 22°C~33°C	New York -4°C~2°C	Lisbon 10°C~14°C
Shanghai 7°C~12°C	Bangkok 25°C~37°C	London 6°C~15°C	Rio de Janeiro 20°C~27°C
Hong Kong 18°C~25°C	Tokyo 8°C~13°C	Frankfurt 2°C~15°C	Luanda 25°C~29°C
Taipei 16°C~27°C	Singapore 23°C~32°C	Vancouver 6°C~12°C	Maputo 21°C~30°C
Guangzhou 16°C~24°C	Kuala Lumpur 24°C~33°C	Paris 6°C~16°C	Dili 24°C~31°C
Nanjing 5°C~11°C	Jakarta 23°C~32°C	Moscow 1°C~4°C	São Tomé 26°C~33°C
Guilin 8°C~14°C	Seoul 4°C~7°C	Las Vegas 11°C~26°C	Praia 17°C~25°C
Xi'an 3°C~10°C	Sydney 21°C~27°C	Monte Carlo 11°C~15°C	Bissau 21°C~36°C



1. Gold standard

An artiste performs during the "Lou Queernaval", the first gay carnival in France as part of the Nice carnival, southeastern France, on Friday. The edition 2026 of the Nice Carnival, whose theme is "Long live the Queen", ended yesterday. — AFP

2. World's smallest monkey

A pygmy marmoset moves along a branch at the Warsaw Zoo in Warsaw, Poland, on Thursday. — Xinhua

3. Horses for courses

Dancers from a traditional Javanese performance arts group called the Jaranan Jagad Trenggono prepare to perform Jaranan (horse dance) for Muslims who gathered to watch the show in Bungkul Park as they wait before breaking their fast during the holy fasting month of Ramadan in Surabaya, Indonesia's East Java province on Saturday. — AFP



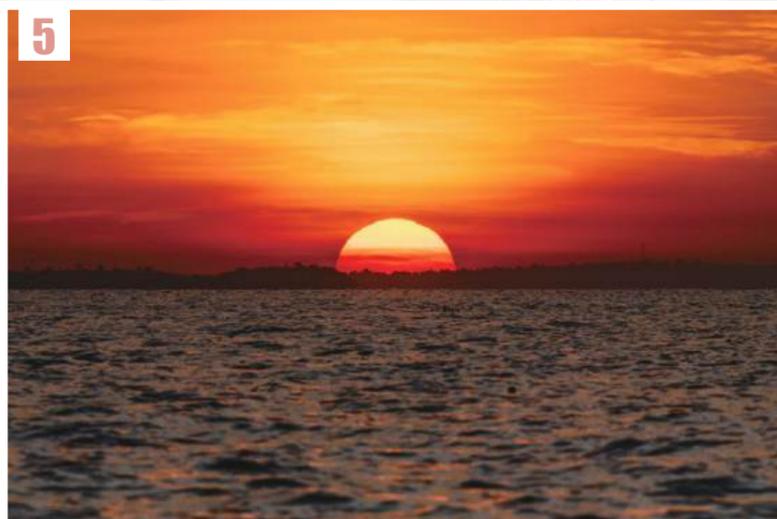
4. This is MY pile!!

Elephants are pictured at the Elephant Orphanage in Nairobi, Kenya, on Thursday. The orphanage, located on the outskirts of Nairobi, treats and rescues elephant "orphans" from various nature reserves in Kenya. Through treatment and training, it gradually restores the ability of the elephants that were affected by natural and human factors to help them regain wildness and survive independently. — Xinhua



5. Last vestiges of daylight!

Photo taken on Friday shows a sunset view in Lake Victoria in Kisumu, Kenya. — Xinhua



6. Inner tube skipping

Performers with Gandeys circus present their show 'Circus by Night' in their big top tent in Trentham, near Stoke-on-Trent, central England on Friday. — AFP

