

# Elderly woman startled by robot walking along the street: police

**Khalel Vallo**

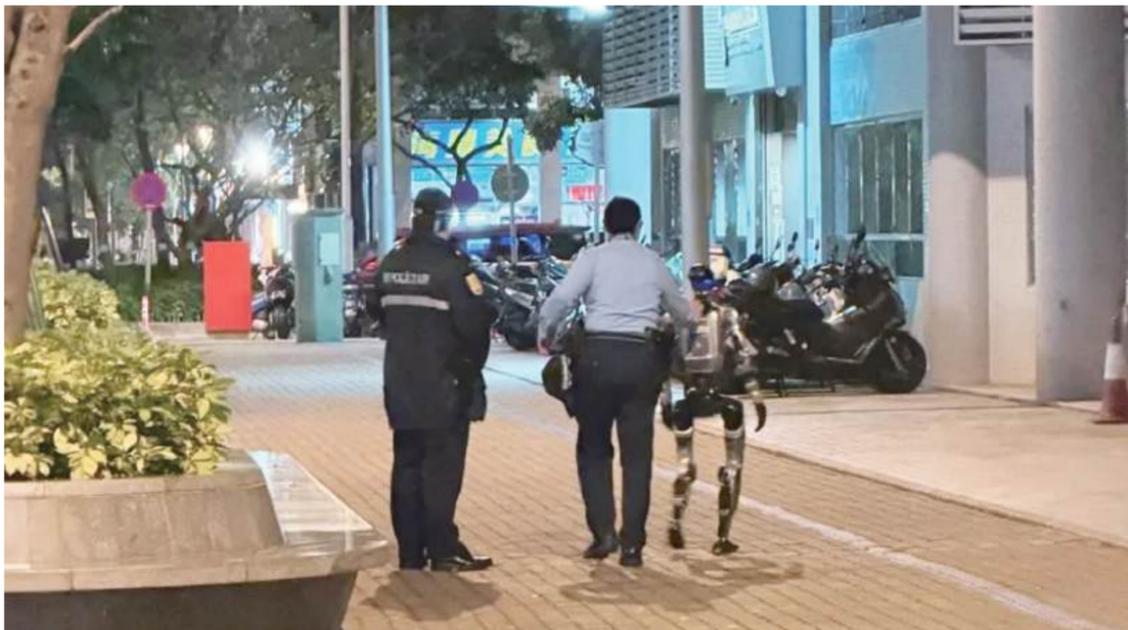
A 70-year-old woman was taken to hospital for examination and treatment after being startled by a robot walking along the street in Patane district, operated by a tutorial centre for promotion purposes, last Thursday, the Public Security Police (PSP) said yesterday.

The police said that it was the first incident of its kind recorded in Macau involving a human and a robot.

The Public Security Police told public broadcaster TDM yesterday that the incident occurred on the pavement in Rua Sul do Patane (沙梨頭南街) at around 9 p.m. that day. When the elderly woman had stopped walking and was using her smartphone, she suddenly realised that “something” was closely behind her, causing her to be startled.

According to the TDM report, the police said that “there was no physical contact” between the woman and the robot, and she did not sustain any injuries in the incident. However, she told the police that she felt unwell after being startled by the robot, and asked to be taken to hospital for examination and treatment.

The TDM report said that



This photo downloaded from Facebook last night shows the Study Hard Education Centre's robot being escorted by police officers away from the site of the incident in the peninsula's Patane district last Thursday.

the woman was discharged after examination and treatment, adding that she decided not to file a complaint against those responsible for the incident.

According to the TDM report, the police confirmed that the robot is owned by a tutorial centre in the neighbourhood where the incident

occurred, and was being operated by a local man in his fifties.

The man, according to the report, told the police that he was testing the robot, with the objective of further improving its operation, to use it for his centre's commercial promotion activities in the future.

Video clips showing “an

argument between the woman and the robot” are being circulated on social media. The video clips also show several police officers “escorting” the robot after the incident.

The report said that the police have reminded the man operating the robot to be more careful when operating robots in public spaces

so as to avoid endangering or frightening pedestrians.

According to the clips, the woman shouted in Cantonese at the robot: “You’re making my heart race! You’ve got plenty to do, so what’s the point of messing around with this? Are you freaking crazy?”

The head of the Study Hard Education Centre, Mak Kin Choi (麥健才), told TDM yesterday that the centre had scheduled three promotional activities using robots last week, including the one in Patane district on Thursday. Mak said that similar promotional activities with robots had been carried out over the past six months in areas including the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Ruins of St. Paul's, and Cotai Strip, generally receiving positive feedback.

Mak also told TDM that he accompanied the elderly woman to the hospital that night. After she was discharged from the hospital, he accompanied her home in the early hours of the next day.

A robot appearing to be similar to the one involved in last week's incident, Unitree G1, retails for 85,000 yuan (99,680 patacas), according to the Unitree company shop on Taobao last night. ■

## UN warns Hormuz standstill set to hit world's most vulnerable

**Robin Millard**

GENEVA – The standstill in the Strait of Hormuz caused by the Middle East war could hammer some of the world's most vulnerable people, the United Nations warned yesterday.

The strait is the only sea passage from the Gulf towards the Indian Ocean, through which nearly a quarter of the world's seaborne oil supplies pass, as well as a significant amount of cargo.

Iran has all but blocked the waterway following the launch of the February 28 US-Israeli airstrikes on the country that triggered the war.

“The current shock comes at a time when many developing economies struggle to service their debt, face a tightening of fiscal space and limited capacity to absorb new price shocks,” the UN trade and

development agency UNCTAD said.

“Higher energy, fertiliser and transport costs – including freight rates, bunker fuel prices and insurance premiums – may increase food costs and intensify cost-of-living pressures, particularly for the most vulnerable,” it said.

UNCTAD added that, in terms of seaborne trade volume, in the week before the conflict 38 percent of crude oil, 29 percent of liquified petroleum gas, 19 percent of liquified natural gas and 19 percent refined oil products went through the strait.

But while an average of 129 ships transited daily through the passage between February 1 and 27, that number dropped to just three on March 3.

UNCTAD said the disruptions underscored the vulnerability of critical maritime chokepoints and their potential

for disruption to them to send shocks across supply chains and commodity markets.

“Rising energy, transport and food costs could strain public finances and increase pressure on household budgets, potentially heightening economic and social pressures... particularly in economies heavily dependent on imported energy, fertilisers and staple foods,” it said.

UN rights chief Volker Türk echoed the alarm for the effect the plunge in commercial shipping activity could have, “particularly for the world's most vulnerable”.

“The impact of an oil price surge will have a knock-on effect for macro-economic and social stability in many countries, particularly those already experiencing debt distress,” he said. (More about Iran war on pages 7, 8, 9, 10 & 13) –AFP



Thick smoke rises from buildings following airstrikes in the Iranian capital Tehran yesterday. – Xinhua

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### Over 70 stranded Taiwan compatriots return home from Middle East via Chinese mainland transit

More than 70 Taiwan compatriots who were stranded in the Middle East returned to Taiwan yesterday after transiting through Shanghai.

– Story on p. 7

### Citing 'strategic mistake' EU pivots back to nuclear energy

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen yesterday said that Europe's turn away from nuclear power had been a “strategic mistake”, as soaring oil prices rekindled concerns about the bloc's energy vulnerability.

– Story on p. 11

### Viral drone video fuels debate about Rio favela tourism

A line of tourists touch up their makeup before strutting across a rooftop in Rio de Janeiro's largest favela (slum), posing for a drone as it zooms out to show dramatic aerial views of the hillside community.

– Story on p. 12

# IAS to launch rehabilitation equipment subsidy scheme

Ida Cheong

Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) President Wilson Hon Wai said in speech during yesterday's Spring Festival luncheon for social workers that the "Subsidy Scheme for Rehabilitation Technology Equipment" for local social service organisations will be launched to continuously improve services for the elderly and persons with disabilities this year, aiming to encourage organisations to procure and integrate technological devices.

The annual luncheon for social workers was held at Macau Fisherman's Wharf in Nape, with over 700 representatives from various social service organisations in attendance.

At the same time, the current subsidy system will be reviewed to support the organisations in enhancing their service efficiency and innovative capabilities, Hon said.

## Dual challenges

According to Hon, as Macau faces the dual challenges of a low birth rate and an ageing population, his bureau continues to focus its efforts on policies for the elderly and young.

Regarding the young demographic, Hon noted that the Macau Special Administrative Region (SAR) government has, for the first time, launched a "Childcare Subsidy" to encourage childbirth and provide financial support to families with infants and young children. Efforts



Social Welfare Bureau (IAS) President Wilson Hon Wai addresses yesterday's annual social services workers' Spring Festival luncheon at Macau Fisherman's Wharf in Nape. — Photo: Ida Cheong

are also being made to add emotional education for young children to daycare services, with training programmes being offered to daycare staff, Han said.

Concurrently, the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS), in conjunction with other entities, is jointly implementing its "Full-Cycle Health Protection Programme for Pregnant Women" and "Parent Academy" initiative, striving to build a comprehensive welfare and security system that covers all stages of life and integrates into all areas of daily living.

Hon noted that concerning the government's policies for senior citizens, based on the active cooperation of over 70 social service organisations across the city, the

bureau's census and registration for the elderly living alone and in dual-elderly households is nearing completion of its data collection phase. By establishing a comprehensive database, the project will lay the foundation for more precise policymaking regarding elderly services in the future, Hon said, adding that the census will also play a crucial role in the government's efforts to build a "15-minute Community Elderly Service Circle".

Meanwhile, Hon also said that his bureau has increased the payouts for its "Community Inclusion and Harmony Programme" "Special Assistance for Three Categories of Disadvantaged Families" and "Caregiver Allowance", and also exempted young children from vulnerable families from their monthly childcare centre fees and waived the monthly fixed-line "Macau Peng On Tung\* Tele-Assistance" service fee for elderly individuals living alone or in dual-elderly households.

"The Cantonese name of the service means "Macau Safe Link". ■

# Bib collection for Sands China Macao Int'l 10K begins today

Khalel Vallo

The number bib and timing chip collection for the 2026 Sands China Macao International 10K begins today at the Olympic Sports Centre's Indoor Pavilion in Taipa, according to a statement by the Sports Bureau (ID) yesterday.

The race, organised by the bureau, integrated resort operator Sands China Ltd and the General Association of Athletics of Macau (AGAM), will take place this Sunday.

The 10K race will start at 7 a.m., followed by the Fun Run at 7:40 a.m. from Sai Van Lake Square. Both races will finish inside the Macau Olympic Sports Centre Stadium.

According to the statement, participants can collect their number bib, timing chip and race notes between 12 p.m. and 9 p.m. from today to Friday, as well as between 12 p.m. and 10 p.m. on Saturday, by presenting their registration receipt and identification document.

The statement pointed out that those unable to collect their materials in person may authorise another person to do so on their behalf, noting that the authorised individual must present their

own identification document, the participant's registration receipt bearing the authorised individual's signature and a copy of the participant's identification document.

Meanwhile, the "Sands 10K Presents: The FUNkiest Costume Award" will be open to runners in both the 10K and Fun Run categories under the theme "East Meets West Run", encouraging participants to incorporate Chinese and Western cultural elements into their costumes, such as traditional Chinese and Portuguese attire or other European-inspired styles reflecting Sands China's integrated resort properties.

The statement noted that participants wishing to compete for the award must submit their details through the event's mobile app and upload a photo wearing their themed costume together with their race bib between 9 a.m. on Saturday and 9 a.m. on race day, adding that runners must complete the race in the registered costume to qualify.

Ten winners will be selected after the race, with each given various prizes including food and beverage coupons. ■



This poster provided by the Sports Bureau (ID) yesterday promotes its "2026 Sands China Macao International 10K" race slated for this Sunday.

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# US-made 'Tazverik Tablets 200mg' recalled: pharma bureau

Ida Cheong

The Pharmaceutical Supervision and Administration Bureau (ISAF) announced in a statement on Monday that a prescription medication from the United States used to treat blood cancer, "Tazverik Tablets 200mg" is being recalled, according to a notification from the local pharmaceutical importer.

The statement pointed out that the medicine manufactured by US-based "Patheon Pharmaceuticals Inc.", is being voluntarily recalled by its producer.

The recall is based on ongoing clinical trial data which has indicated a potential increased risk of secondary haematological malignancies\*, the statement said, adding that as this potential risk may outweigh the therapeutic benefits of the treatment, the manufacturer has initiated a voluntary recall of the product as a precautionary measure.

According to information provided by the importer, the affected medication was supplied to a number of private hospitals and polyclinics in Macau.

The bureau has instructed the importer to follow up on the recall. Medical institutions and clinics are directed to immediately stop using this medication, the statement added.

The bureau urged residents who have obtained the problematic medication from medical institutions or clinics to consult their attending physician or pharmacist for advice on how to proceed. For any enquiries, the public may contact the ISAF Monitoring Department on 8598 3233 during office hours. ■

\* Haematological malignancies are a group of cancers that originate in the blood-forming tissues, such as the bone marrow, or in the cells of the immune system (lymphatic system). — DeepSeek



This undated handout photo provided by the Pharmaceutical Supervision and Administration Bureau (ISAF) on Monday shows the problematic "Tazverik Tablets 200mg", produced by US-based "Patheon Pharmaceuticals Inc".

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# Comuna de Pedra aims to break stereotypes through inclusive art at **TODOS Fest!**

Interview by William Chan

For years, Comuna de Pedra (“Stone Commune”) has been deeply rooted in the local community, creating inclusive theatre for people with disabilities and the elderly.

The sixth edition of its “TODOS Fest! Inclusive Arts Festival”, being held from March 20 to 22, once again puts its core belief into practice: “Inclusive art is essential for building an inclusive society.” This year, the festival introduces two unique overseas projects – “Noon Disco” and “ARCADE” – hoping to sow the seeds of inclusion in different corners of the city in a more interactive and intimate way.

Recently, the *Post* had an in-depth conversation with the festival’s driving force, artistic director and curator Jenny Mok Sin Teng, to discuss how she transforms abstract ideas into tangible artistic experiences for the audience, and the realities and aspirations of promoting inclusive arts in Macau.

As a long-term reporter and audience member of Comuna de Pedra, I have observed that the association has always emphasised that art can change the public’s aesthetic perspective. When asked how this year’s festival aims to achieve this, Mok said she believes that performing arts are inherently a transformative experience. “Whether you are a participant or a spectator, you change after going through the process of artistic creation,” she noted. “It’s not a consumer product; it’s an experience that gives you a new understanding of yourself, the world, and your relationships with others.”

This year’s “Noon Disco” and “ARCADE” are manifestations of this philosophy. Both works strongly emphasise audience participation, actively reaching out to the public and inviting them to be involved in the performance, transforming them from distant observers into an integral part of the artistic experience.

## ‘Noon Disco’

Speaking of “Noon Disco,” a project designed for the elderly, Mok admits that as people age, their social circles inevitably shrink, and a sense of loneliness grows. “Our society, on many levels, is not designed for the elderly or people with disabilities,” she said

By recreating the Disco culture of the 70s and 80s, “Noon Disco” not only evokes collective memories for the “silver-haired generation” but, more importantly, encourages them to be active and relive their “glory days” through familiar music. “We hope that through the simple act of dancing, they can feel vibrant again and reconnect with their younger selves,” Jenny emphasised. The project also welcomes younger generations and family members to join in, fostering mutual understanding and connection in a cross-generational dance party atmosphere.

## ‘ARCADE’

Another highlight, “ARCADE,” is a mobile street dance game that forgoes traditional venues, choosing instead to appear in bustling community spaces like the Kun Iam Ecumenical Centre waterfront, Camões Garden, and A-Ma Temple Square. “We choose to actively go to the audience, to where the people are,” Mok underlined.

Created by a British dance company and co-produced with a Hong Kong group, the project consists of a series of dance games that invite passers-by to join in at any time. “The audience can just watch, or they can be invited to participate.” This strategy of integrating art into daily life aims to reach a broader public, allowing art to happen in a relaxed and playful way.

## 4 docs: raising questions, broadening perspectives

In addition to performances, this year’s festival includes the screening of four documentaries, several of which focus on individuals with disabilities. As a documentary filmmaker herself, Mok shares her motivation: “I love documentaries because they offer in-depth and diverse perspectives to understand an issue.”

She admits that her creative process often starts with questions. “When I encounter social situations I don’t understand, I create with questions in mind,” she said. “I may not have the answers, but I hope that through this action, I can find something that might answer my questions.” Mok said she hopes these works can open up different viewpoints for the audience, allowing them to build a more multi-dimensional understanding of events through varied interpretations.

When talking about the challenges of organising an arts festival in Macau, Mok candidly said, “We take it one festival at a time” – a pragmatic outlook shaped by real resource constraints.

Asked what she would do with full support, Mok replied that she envisions two parallel paths: bringing in mature inclusive arts productions from abroad to challenge local perspectives, while continuing to cultivate homegrown work. “Creating local productions is essential because this soil needs to be nurtured,” she said, noting that collaborating with communities with intellectual disabilities demands considerable time, manpower, and funding.

Noon Disco, film screening, and an inclusive market will be held at M8, the mall near the city’s main square, Largo do Senado. Tickets for Noon Disco are priced at 80 patacas, while ARCADE is free to attend, whereas the documentary screenings operate on a pay-what-you-want basis. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit <https://form.jotform.com/260541673790461>.



Scene from the documentary “Nothing More to Say”



Undated file photo of “ARCADE,” the mobile street dance game hosted in other cities



Undated file photo of Jenny Mok posing – Photos provided by Comuna de Pedra

### 3 locals fall victim to 'Taobao customer service' scam, lose 1.39 million patacas

Armando Neves

Three local residents have fallen victim to a "Taobao customer service" scam, losing 1.39 million patacas in total, PJ spokesman Chao Teng Hin said during a regular press conference yesterday.

Chao said that the victims comprise two young women and an elderly man, adding that they were separately defrauded by the swindlers using the same method.

According to Chao, between Saturday and Monday, the victims received phone calls or messages claiming to be from Taobao's payment service. They were subsequently transferred to individuals purporting to be Taobao customer service representatives, Chao said, adding that the scammers claimed that the victims had enrolled in an Alipay account plan, which was free for the first month but would incur a monthly automatic deduction of 950 patacas starting from the second month.

Chao said that the scammers then asked if the victims wished to cancel the plan. All three victims indicated they wanted to cancel it and, following instructions, provided personal information including their names, bank account numbers, and identification document numbers, Chao said.

According to Chao, the scammers subsequently requested



Judiciary Police (PJ) spokesman Chao Teng Hin looks on during yesterday's regular press conference at PJ headquarters in Zape.

- Photo: Armando Neves

that the victims perform a series of tasks under the pretext of verifying their information such as screen sharing, logging into their online banking accounts, and carrying out fund transfers.

Afterwards, the three victims grew suspicious and checked their bank accounts, discovering that multiple sums of money had been transferred out, Chao said, adding that the total loss of the victims was 1,387,493.40 patacas.

The victims separately reported their respective cases to the Judiciary Police on Monday and requested legal action to be taken. ■

### MGTO opens applications for Quality Tourism Services Accreditation Scheme

Rui Pastorin

The Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) is welcoming applications from Macau's F&B businesses and travel agencies for its Quality Tourism Services Accreditation Scheme (QTAS), open from today till the end of the month.

According to a statement from the bureau yesterday, there is again no limit on quota for applicants from both sectors, with more information available on MGTO's themed page on [www.dst.gov.mo](http://www.dst.gov.mo).

The statement noted that "QTAS 2026 Quality Tourism Services Silver Award" and "Quality Tourism Services Bronze Award" will be presented as new awards this year for both sectors, in addition to existing awards. Moreover, the "Courtesy Merchant Award" introduced in the travel agencies category last year is now extended to the F&B sector, according to the statement.

Meanwhile, the statement added that for participating catering businesses, they are now simplified into the subcategories of "Restaurant", "Simple Dining Establishment" and "Food and Beverage Establishment".



This photo taken and provided by the Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO) yesterday shows a crowd of participants during a presentation seminar yesterday on the details of this year's Quality Tourism Services Accreditation Scheme (QTAS).

The statement added that "Mystery Customer Service Assessment" and "Service Management System Audit" will be conducted on participating businesses, with MGTO to hold assessment seminars to brief participants on assessment criteria.

Details of the scheme such as assessments and new awards were given during a presentation seminar yesterday, the statement said. During her speech at the event, the statement summarised,

MGTO Deputy Director Jennifer Si Tou said that since the scheme's inception in 2014, it has reached timely progress through incessant optimisation and innovation, providing important benchmarks for businesses' service review and upgrade, recognition for accredited businesspeople and impetus for the sectors at large.

More details, including applications and the detailed list of prizes, can be found by visiting the themed page on [www.dst.gov.mo](http://www.dst.gov.mo). ■

### Police nab man for illegal currency exchange

Armando Neves

The Judiciary Police (PJ) nabbed a man from the Chinese mainland for illegal currency exchange, PJ spokesman Chao Teng Hin said during a regular press conference yesterday.

Chao identified the suspect as a 29-year-old man surnamed Liang who claimed to be jobless.

According to Chao, on Monday, PJ officers during a routine operation against illegal currency exchange

activities noticed two men behaving suspiciously.

Chao said that PJ officers noticed that Liang showed his mobile phone to a gambler, after which both apparently engaged in the transfer of funds, before both entered a casino together to exchange cash into gaming chips.

Liang handed the gaming chips to the gambler, who immediately used them to gamble, Chao said, adding that PJ officers then intervened and stopped them for questioning.

The investigation confirmed that the suspect exchanged 4,570 yuan for HK\$5,000 in chips for the gambler, Chao said, adding that Liang proceeded with the transaction despite being fully aware that the exchanged funds would be used for gambling.

According to Chao, Liang had been regularly entering Macau since mid-January to engage in illegal currency exchange activities, earning around 5,000 yuan. During Monday's operation, PJ officers seized HK\$21,400 in gambling chips and a smartphone from Liang, and HK\$2,000 in chips from the gambler.

Liang has been transferred to the Public Prosecutions Office (MP), facing an illegal currency exchange charge. ■



This undated handout photo provided by the Judiciary Police yesterday shows evidence seized by police during Monday's routine operation against illegal currency exchange activities.



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## NOTICE

### COMPANHIA DE ELECTRICIDADE DE MACAU - CEM, S.A. ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

#### CONVENING NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that, in accordance with the law and the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the Ordinary Meeting of the General Assembly of Companhia de Electricidade de Macau - CEM, S.A. registered at "Conservatória dos Registos Comercial e de Bens Móveis de Macau" under reference no. 590 (SO), will be held on 27 March 2026 (Friday) at 3:45 pm, at the Company, CEM Building, 14<sup>th</sup> floor, Estrada D. Maria II, in Macau, with the following Agenda:

1. Discussion and decision on the Annual Report and the Financial Statements of the Board of Directors, as well as the Supervisory Board's opinion for the year 2025;
2. Discussion and decision on the profit appropriation proposal from the Board of Directors;
3. Election of members of the following corporate bodies of the Company: Board of Directors, Executive Committee, Supervisory Board and Committee mentioned on article 34 of the Articles of Association;
4. Transfer registered shares to third parties;
5. Other business relevant to the Company.

The documents related with points 1, 2 and 4 of the Agenda and all connected documents are available for Shareholders' consultation, during office hours, at the Company.

Macau, 24 February 2026

The President of the Board of the General Meeting  
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# Hengqin MNN middle school project completed

Tony Wong

Construction of the secondary school in the Macau New Neighbourhood (MNN) residential estate on Zhuhai's Hengqin island has been completed, and it will start operating in the upcoming 2026/27 academic year, Macau Urban Renewal Limited (MUR) announced yesterday.

The current school campus at the MNN neighbourhood is used for kindergarten and primary school education. The current school, run by Macau's Hou Kong Middle School, started operating in September 2024.

Located next to the current campus for kindergarten and primary school education, the newly completed secondary school will also be operated by Hou Kong Middle School.

The secondary school is connected with the current school



This photo taken from an office building in Hengqin in January shows the Macau New Neighbourhood (MNN) residential estate, the current campus for kindergarten and primary school education (centre), and the new secondary school (left).

– Photo: Tony Wong

campus via a footbridge.

The school in the MNN neighbourhood run by Hou Kong Middle School is officially known as Hengqin School Affiliated to Hou Kong Middle School.

According to an MUR statement yesterday, the MNN secondary school project, which got off the ground in May 2024, was completed early this year, after which the project's final



This handout photo released by Macau Urban Renewal Limited (MUR) yesterday shows the new secondary school in the MNN neighbourhood.

inspection and formal acceptance was completed last month.

The site where the newly completed secondary school is located covers about 20,000 square metres. The school has five

storeys with a gross floor area of about 29,000 square metres. The school will run up to 36 secondary school classes, with a capacity to accommodate about 1,200 students, according to the statement. ■

## Govt launches dedicated webpage on public admin reform updates

Tony Wong

The Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau (SAFP) has launched a dedicated page on its website where members of the public can check updated information on the government's latest measures and achievements in its public administrative reform campaign.

On the bureau's website (<https://www.safp.gov.mo>), the new dedicated webpage is available in Chinese and Portuguese, Macau's two official languages.

The new webpage (<https://www.safp.gov.mo/zh-hant/adminReformNews>) is officially known as "Together in Reform".

The bureau is tasked with carrying out duties such as managing the employment of public servants and advancing the government's public administrative reform.

A SAFP statement on Monday said that with the objective of further enhancing the transparency of the government's ongoing public administrative reform and civil society's participation in the matter, the bureau has launched a new page known as "Together in Reform" on its website so as to promptly provide members of the public and public servants with the latest information on the government's public administrative reform, with the aim of working together with civil society to advance the modernisation of Macau's governance system and capability.

The current-term Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) government headed by Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai took office on December 20, 2024.

The statement also said that deepening public administrative reform is a core mission of the current MSAR government in implementing the governance philosophy of "upholding



This undated handout photo released by the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau (SAFP) on Monday shows residents using the bureau's counter services.



This file photo taken last year shows passengers waiting for public buses outside the Public Administration Building on Rua do Campo. – Photo: Tony Wong

fundamental principles while breaking new ground". Supported by its current leadership and coordination mechanisms for public administrative reform, the statement said, the local government will "systematically and comprehensively" advance its various reform measures in three key areas, namely streamlining government structure, enhancing public servants' governance capabilities, and deepening innovation in public administration services provided to the public.

Through persistent efforts, the statement underlined, the government will constantly enhance governance efficiency and

the quality of its services provided to the public.

The statement underlined that the bureau will regularly release information on the latest progress and policy information of the government's ongoing public administrative reform campaign onto the new "Together in Reform" webpage, with the aim of foster understanding, support, and participation in the public administrative reform across all sectors of civil society, and establishing a modernised public administration system characterised by efficiency, transparency, and the provision of people-orientated services. ■

## COD unveils new brand chapter 'Be A Dreamer'

Rui Pastorin

City of Dreams (COD) celebrated the launch of its new brand chapter themed "Be A Dreamer" last night at the Cotai integrated resort, with the event featuring the unveiling of a new outdoor art installation and the introduction of representatives who also star in a new visual campaign.

COD, which opened on June 1, 2009, was described in yesterday's event as being a "dream engine" that continuously interprets imagination and nurtures creative possibilities in its experiences and offerings, adding that the new chapter will take its brand promise of "Dream Beyond" further.

Delivering a speech at yesterday's ceremony, City of Dreams Macau President Tim Kelly said that the new brand chapter's launch marked another significant milestone, showcasing "the evolution of City of Dreams to the world". He added: "This chapter not only expresses our brand vision, but also reflects our commitment to the cultural tourism development of Macau", adding that COD is devoted to "redefining luxury".

Moreover, mainland Chinese actor Jing Boran was introduced as the "City of Dreams Global Brand Ambassador", while Tan Yuan Yuan,

a well-known ballerina who is also from the Chinese mainland, was noted as being the "City of Dreams Friend of the Brand". Both are featured in COD's new visual campaign.

The new installation titled "Dream Entrance", meanwhile, is located at COD's entrance, commissioned by the company for its new brand chapter from New York-based artist Daniel Arsham. Featuring two hollow sculptural heads facing each other, the artist noted during his speech that the piece follows a series of works that he has been creating about labyrinths and investigating one's dream states. It also integrates local culture with the Year of the Horse elements, he said, highlighting that in all, it is a "gateway" that allows one to enter a new place, a "place to dream".

Following the launch event, a panel talk titled "Be A Dreamer: A Journey Beyond Imagination" was held and featured Jing, Tan and Arsham, as well as Peparini Studios Artistic Director Giuliano Peparini, who reimagined and recreated COD's aquatic show "House of Dancing Water", and Zaha Hadid Architects Director Viviana Muscettola. The latter firm designed Morpheus Hotel in COD. The event was then concluded with a gala dinner. ■



Representatives and officiating guests pose in front of the newly unveiled installation "Dream Entrance" last night at City of Dreams (COD) in Cotai. – Photo: Rui Pastorin

# Foreign trade records strong start to 2026 with double-digit growth

BEIJING – China’s foreign trade has posted a robust start to the year, with the total value of trade in goods recording double-digit growth, surging 18.3 percent year on year in the January-February period, latest official data show.

Data released yesterday by the General Administration of Customs (GAC) revealed that total goods trade value had reached 7.73 trillion yuan during this period.

Exports rose 19.2 percent from the same period last year to total 4.62 trillion yuan, while imports went up 17.1 percent to reach 3.11 trillion yuan, according to the data.

In the first two months of 2026, China’s exports of high-tech and high value-added mechanical and electrical products posted a year-on-year increase of 24.3 percent.

Meanwhile, strong consumer spending spurred by the extended Spring Festival holiday boosted

import demand. During the first two months, China’s imports of mechanical and electrical products, iron ore and crude oil all posted double-digit growth.

## RESILIENT TRADE GROWTH

China’s foreign trade has continued to demonstrate resilience and vigor in 2026, after the nation’s foreign trade had expanded by 3.8 percent year on year in 2025.

Analysts observed that since the start of this year, different Chinese regions and departments have made proactive efforts in seeking to bolster foreign trade, while a large number of foreign trade companies have endeavored to secure orders and explore markets.

Huang Qunhui, a researcher at the Institute of Economics of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said that this strong start has laid a solid

foundation for China’s 2026 foreign trade prospects.

Huang noted that the transformation and upgrading of China’s manufacturing industry and the expansion of domestic demand to strengthen imports, have combined to deliver added fresh impetus to the high-quality development of foreign trade.

At a press conference held last week on the sidelines of the fourth session of the 14<sup>th</sup> National People’s Congress, Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao said China’s foreign trade has largely maintained the momentum and characteristics seen in 2025.

However, he said that the external environment facing foreign trade remains “complex and severe” and that there was pressure to ensure stable trade growth. “Recent escalating geopolitical conflicts have impacted the international economic order and global industrial

and supply chains, making the situation even more volatile and uncertain,” Wang explained.

## DIVERSIFIED TRADING PARTNERS

Broken down by region and country, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) remained China’s largest trading partner, with China-ASEAN trade value hitting more than 1.24 trillion yuan in the first two months of 2026, up 20.3 percent year on year.

This was followed by the European Union’s 998.94 billion yuan in goods trade with China during the same period, an increase of 19.9 percent year on year. Meanwhile, China’s trade with Latin America and Africa grew 19.7 percent and 34.2 percent year on year, respectively, the data showed.

China’s trade with the United States stood at 609.71 billion yuan

during this period, down 16.9 percent year on year, the data revealed.

The GAC data also showed that trade with countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) had reached 4.02 trillion yuan during the first two months of 2026, with year-on-year growth of 20 percent.

During the same press conference, the commerce minister said China will promote balanced trade growth this year by stabilizing exports while sharing more opportunities in its domestic market. He pledged increased imports of agricultural products, premium consumer goods, advanced equipment and key components.

He also said that China will accelerate the development of digital trade and green trade, and promote the export of artificial intelligence (AI) products, green power equipment and other products, as it seeks to foster new drivers of foreign trade. – Xinhua

## Over 70 stranded Taiwan compatriots return home from Middle East via Chinese mainland transit

SHANGHAI – More than 70 Taiwan compatriots who were stranded in the Middle East returned to Taiwan yesterday after transiting through Shanghai.

The group’s homeward journey concluded in the afternoon as the final batch of

passengers touched down at Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport aboard China Eastern Airlines flight MU5007.

Earlier that day, the group arrived at Shanghai Pudong International Airport from Istanbul, Türkiye, aboard flight MU704

at around 4 a.m. This marks the largest group of Taiwan passengers to return home via a mainland transit since the escalation of regional tensions in the Middle East in late February.

According to the exit-entry administration department of

the Shanghai municipal public security bureau, the passengers were originally scheduled to transit through Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates. However, they were left stranded due to flight cancellations resulting from airspace closures and airport

shutdowns amid the volatile regional situation.

With coordination and assistance from relevant mainland authorities, they were able to reroute their journey and fly to Shanghai from Istanbul.

– Xinhua



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- Simple Dining Establishment
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Travel Agency sector :



★ **Awards Information**

- For the Food & Beverage sector, awards will be conferred according to the evaluation results which include “Quality Tourism Services Merchant Award”, “Quality Tourism Services Gold Award”, “Quality Tourism Services Silver Award”, “Quality Tourism Services Bronze Award”, “Quality Tourism Services Excellence Award” and “Special Theme Awards” (“Sustainable Dining Award”, “Community Care Services Award”, “Local Feature Award”, “Operational Innovation Award”, “Courtesy Merchant Award” and “Integrity Business Award”)
- For Travel Agency sector, awards will be conferred according to the evaluation results which include “Quality Tourism Services Merchant Award”, “Quality Tourism Services Gold Award”, “Quality Tourism Services Silver Award”, “Quality Tourism Services Bronze Award”, “Quality Tourism Services Excellence Award” and “Special Theme Awards” (“Quality Training Award”, “Courtesy Merchant Award” and “Integrity Business Award”)

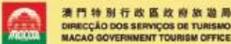
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## Search called off after Indonesian landfill collapse kills 7

JAKARTA – Indonesian rescuers have called off the search for victims of a landslide at the country's largest open landfill after pulling seven bodies out from under debris, an official said yesterday.

Rescuers recovered three bodies on Sunday and four more on Monday, Jakarta search and rescue agency head Desiana Kartika Bahari said in a statement.

Six people were also rescued alive after the collapse Sunday afternoon at Bantargebang, a landfill just 25 kilometres outside the capital, that buried trucks and food stalls.

Rescuers used backhoes, tracking dogs and thermal drones to search for victims, she said. Everyone has

now been accounted for.

The collapse happened after hours of heavy rain in the area, local media reported.

To reduce rain intensity, the National Disaster Mitigation Agency (BNPB) announced it would conduct a "weather modification operation," which typically involves using helicopters to "seed" clouds with sodium chloride to encourage premature rainfall over the sea rather than over the capital.

Jakarta and its satellite cities, collectively known as Jabodetabek, are home to about 42 million people and generate an estimated 14,000 tonnes of waste daily.

Bantargebang, one of the

world's largest open landfills, spans more than 110 hectares and contains approximately 55 million tonnes of trash, according to a local environment agency official.

President Prabowo Subianto said last month that most of Indonesia's landfills, which are being gradually phased out, would exceed their capacity by 2028.

The government will invest US\$3.5 billion in a project to build 34 waste-to-energy sites within two years that would incinerate garbage to produce electricity, he said.

A landfill landslide killed 143 people in West Java in 2005, triggered by a methane gas explosion and heavy rain in the area. –AFP



Marine debris and plastic waste washed ashore during the monsoon season covers the beach at Kedonganan near Denpasar on Indonesia's resort island of Bali yesterday. Up to 60 tonnes of rubbish, mostly plastic and domestic waste, polluted several tourist beaches after extreme weather and a high tide hit the coastal area of Bali due to tropical cyclone seeds on the Indian Ocean south of Indonesia recently. –AFP

## Philippines confirms missing Filipino seafarer near Strait of Hormuz

MANILA – The Philippines confirmed yesterday that a Filipino seafarer remains missing after a tugboat assisting a distressed vessel was attacked in waters near the Strait of Hormuz.

The Philippines' Department of

Migrant Workers (DMW) Secretary Hans Leo Cacdac assured full support to the family of the missing seafarer.

Cacdac said the seafarer's fellow colleagues were all reported safe, but the lone seafarer remains unaccounted for.

Around 6,400 Filipino seafarers on vessels in the Middle East have been monitored and marked as safe, said the DMW, adding that it continues to monitor ships carrying Filipino crew near the Strait of Hormuz. –Xinhua

## Thailand, Vietnam push remote work to save energy

BANGKOK – Thailand and Vietnam encouraged public employees yesterday to work from home and take up other energy-saving measures as the Middle East war disrupted oil supplies and sent fuel prices swinging.

Thai authorities said government workers should shift to remote work where possible and asked that government offices set their air conditioners to 26C to conserve energy.

"The government wants all sectors to use resources wisely and effectively," it said in a statement.

It also urged officials to avoid overseas trips.

Thailand said last week it had secured two months' worth of oil supplies but was suspending exports

to conserve its holdings.

It also capped the price of diesel at just under 30 baht (US\$0.94) per litre for a 15-day period.

In neighbouring Vietnam, the government scrapped duties on Monday on many imported petroleum products in an effort to prevent fuel shortages and stabilise the domestic market.

It also encouraged companies to allow employees to work from home "whenever feasible" to alleviate demand for fuel, the government said on its website.

Hanoi also recommended the public limit the use of personal vehicles, and instead opt for public transit, cycling or carpooling.

But thousands of motorbike riders

queued for petrol yesterday at stations across the Southeast Asian nation, where prices for unleaded petrol have surged more than 20 percent since the start of the US-Israel war against Iran more than one week ago.

A 57-year-old who gave his name as Tuan told AFP at a Hanoi petrol station that he was furious after waiting for almost an hour to fill up.

"I still have enough to run my motorbike today, but definitely I have to fill it tonight. Then I have to queue again tonight?" he said.

Vietnam has so far avoided mass shortages, but state media reported that dozens of smaller petrol stations have either temporarily closed or shortened their operating hours due to dwindling supplies. –AFP

## 18 pilot whales die after mass stranding in Indonesia

JAKARTA – At least 18 of 55 pilot whales stranded off Indonesia's Rote Ndao coast in East Nusa Tenggara province have died, a local official said yesterday.

Paulus Henuk, head of Rote Ndao regency, told local media that the whales were found on Monday night at Mbadokai Beach in southwestern Rote Ndao. Some were rescued and guided back to deeper waters, but many died after becoming too weak, he said.

He added that local authorities, police, navy personnel, and residents were carrying out evacuation and mass burial operations, with excavators digging burial sites to prevent environmental contamination.

Rescue teams from the Kupang National Marine Conservation Center are working to move the remaining whales to safer waters.

The cause of the stranding remains unclear, and veterinarians are conducting necropsies as part of the investigation. –Xinhua

## Japanese manga publisher rocked by sexual abuse scandal

TOKYO – A Japanese manga publisher has issued an apology following a furore after it rehired an author who has been ordered to pay US\$70,000 damages for sexually abusing a teenager.

Publishing giant Shogakukan admitted on Monday it had rehired manga artist Shoichi Yamamoto two years after his arrest in 2020.

Yamamoto, who was also a high school teacher in northern Hokkaido region, was arrested in 2020 for sexually abusing a student and fined, according to Jiji Press and other media.

The publisher halted Yamamoto's series following his arrest.

The woman filed a civil suit in 2022 and the local district court ordered Yamamoto to pay 11 million yen (US\$70,000) in damages last month, according to the *Asahi Shimbun* daily.

Both filed an appeal.

Shogakukan also offered an apology directly to the woman – who was reportedly 16 years old at the time of abuse – it said in a statement Monday.

"The woman developed PTSD following the incident and continues to suffer to this day. Consideration for the victim's

state of mind should have been the foremost priority but was entirely neglected," the publisher said.

"The decision to re-employ Yamamoto ... under a different pen name constitutes an act that disregarded the woman's human rights," it added.

The publisher will launch a third-party committee to investigate the issue.

The scandal has prompted other manga artists to suspend publication of their works on Shogakukan's Manga One app that carried Yamamoto's works, with one saying on X his action "is absolutely unforgivable".

Shogakukan's authors include Rumiko Takahashi, one of Japan's best-known manga authors and creator of the popular "Ranma 1/2" and "InuYasha" series.

The Japan Manga Artist Association issued a statement late last month, calling the scandal "a matter of critical importance to the industry's credibility".

While there has been no major #MeToo movement like those in the United States and South Korea, rallies against sexual violence sprang up across Japan after several alleged rapists were acquitted in 2019.

–AFP

## Thai police arrest Myanmar man accused of fuel smuggling

BANGKOK – Thai police said yesterday they had arrested a Myanmar national accused of trying to smuggle 120 litres of diesel out of Thailand, days after the country banned fuel exports due to the Middle East war.

Police in Kanchanaburi province stopped the 25-year-old man late Monday about 30 metres from the border with Myanmar, while he was hauling four 30-litre containers filled with diesel in the sidecar of a motorbike, a police statement said.

He was charged with exporting goods without going through customs procedures and illegally entering Thailand.

Officers ordered the man to stop his vehicle at around 11 p.m.

[local time], finding him without identification and the large containers filled with fuel.

"Upon questioning, the individual stated that the diesel fuel was intended to be transported to Myanmar," police said.

The amount of fuel is equivalent to about one tank of a full-size pick-up truck.

The war in the Middle East, triggered by US-Israel strikes on Iran on February 28, has caused disruptions to oil and gas supplies and price fluctuations that have rocked Asian countries heavily reliant on Gulf exports.

Thailand announced last week it was suspending fuel exports to conserve its holdings.

–AFP

## Concrete barrier blamed for fatal S Korea jet crash built to save money: audit

SEOUL – A concrete barrier blamed for a deadly South Korean jet crash that killed 179 people in December 2024 had been built to cut costs, the state auditor said yesterday.

Jeju Air Flight 2216 was coming in to land at Muan International Airport from Thailand when it struck a flock of birds and was forced to make a belly landing.

While the pilots managed to put the aircraft down and slide it along the runway, it burst into a fireball after colliding with a concrete structure buried inside a mound at the end of the runway, killing 179 people on board.

Only two flight attendants seated in the tail section survived.

A government-commissioned simulation released earlier this year found that all passengers would have survived had the concrete structure supporting the localisers – a navigation antenna system that helps aircraft during landing – not been present.

The Board of Audit and Inspection said in a report that the concrete structure had been built by the transport ministry as it “sought to reduce costs”.

The report said the terrain where Muan airport’s runway and runway end safety area were constructed was sloping.

Instead of flattening the area – which would have required significant earthworks and higher expenditure – officials chose to install the localiser on a concrete structure elevated above the runway, the audit report said.

“This reduced the required volume of earthwork. The resulting height difference with the runway’s highest point was then addressed by building an embankment,” it said.

International aviation safety guidelines state that such navigation facilities must be made of frangible, or breakable, materials.

The simulation report said that if the localisers had been supported by a frangible structure, “the resulting impact would not have been severe enough to cause serious injuries”.

The aircraft “would have slid for approximately 770 metres before coming to a stop” had the runway been free of obstacles, the study found. –AFP

## Troops guard Bangladesh depots as fuel crunch hits Asia

Sheikh Sabiha Alam with AFP bureaus in Asia

DHAKA – The oil price spike caused by the war in the Middle East has sparked unrest in Bangladesh and exasperation at petrol pumps around Asia, where many economies are heavily dependent on fossil fuel imports.

Even as governments move to limit the impact on fuel prices, queues have formed at petrol stations in countries including Vietnam, Pakistan and the Philippines, although the situation remains stable elsewhere.

In Bangladesh – which imports 95 percent of its oil and gas needs – the military has been deployed at major oil depots, as police patrol in and around filling stations.

“We haven’t received supply from the depot, but the bike riders weren’t convinced and vandalised the station,” said petrol station worker Ashrafuzzaman Dulal told AFP, describing violence on Sunday.

Yesterday his station Shahjahan Traders, one of the oldest in the capital Dhaka, had hung a banner apologising because its stock had run out.

The South Asian nation of 170 million people has started fuel rationing, sent students home and scrapped celebratory light displays over the energy crunch.

One man was killed on Saturday night in the southern Bangladeshi district of Jhenaidah after an altercation over refuelling with staff.

Following the 25-year-old’s death, angry crowds torched three buses and vandalised a filling station, police said.

### ‘So, so angry’

Yesterday, queues stretched for 1.5 kilometres through Dhaka’s city centre.

“My boss left the car here and took a rickshaw to reach his destination,” Kamrul Hasan, who was waiting in a vehicle almost at the end of the queue, told AFP.

Filling station worker Akhtar Hossain said he had not stopped for hours.

“Even during the Gulf War, we didn’t experience this sort of rush,” Hossain told AFP.

Oil prices fell yesterday after US President Donald Trump said



People queue to refuel their motorbikes at a petrol station in Dhaka, Bangladesh yesterday. – AFP

the US-Israel war on Iran could end “very soon”.

The previous day, the price of benchmark crude had rocketed past US\$100 a barrel – its highest level since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The market instability came as Iran targeted the crude-rich Gulf with missile and drone barrages.

Maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz – a key Gulf waterway through which a fifth of global crude passes – has also all but halted since the war broke out.

Thousands of motorbike riders queued for fuel yesterday in Vietnam, where prices for unleaded petrol have surged more than 20 percent.

Vietnam has so far avoided mass shortages, with the government scraping duties on many imported petroleum products.

A 57-year-old who gave his name as Tuan told AFP at a Hanoi petrol station that he was “so, so angry”.

“I have been waiting in line for almost one hour. Then my turn came, and they said their system is down,” he said as dozens of drivers waited but others gave up.

### Myanmar price spike

Vehicles also lined up in scorching heat at Philippine petrol stations this week, as officials warned against hoarding fuel, with similar scenes unfolding in Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Enrico Guda, a petrol station attendant in Metro Manila, said the station had double its usual daily workload as people rushed to fuel up before prices jumped.

In Myanmar, which imports 90 percent of its fuel oil and has long suffered from a fragile energy supply chain owing to the civil war consuming the country, traffic curbs are in place.

From Saturday, half of private vehicles have been ordered off the roads each day to preserve oil stocks.

“Some drivers depend on their vehicles for work and survival... the new system has made it harder for them to run their businesses,” said Hla Htay, 56, a car rental business owner.

In the Myanmar frontier town of Tachileik, an AFP reporter saw signs cross-border supplies from Thailand had been cut – with some petrol stations shut last week after an up-to threefold price spike the day before.

In several other Asian countries, from Japan to Indonesia, as well as China, India and Afghanistan, panic appears not yet to have hit, apart from a few sporadic queues for petrol.

“I used to fill up regularly once a week, but now I try to fill up whenever I find a cheaper gas station,” South Korean businessman Lee In-tae, 42, told AFP in Seoul.

– AFP



Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) election candidate Balendra Shah (centre) makes a victory sign after collecting a certificate following his win in parliamentary elections at the counting centre in Damak in Nepal’s Jhapa district on Saturday.

Nepal’s rapper-turned-mayor Shah grinned and flashed a V for victory sign on Saturday as Election Commission officials confirmed he had defeated veteran leader KP Sharma Oli in their parliamentary constituency.

India’s prime minister on Monday congratulated Nepal’s centrist RSP party leaders for their election win.

The March 5 parliamentary vote was the first since deadly September 2025 youth anti-corruption protests toppled the government in Kathmandu.

Counting continues, but the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) is set for a landslide win, according to declared results and election commission trends. – AFP

## Kim’s sister warns Seoul-Washington drills bring ‘terrible consequences’

SEOUL – The powerful sister of North Korea’s leader warned of “terrible consequences” yesterday over annual South Korea-US military drills, weeks after Pyongyang dashed hopes of a diplomatic thaw with Seoul.

Seoul and Washington kicked off their springtime military drills “Freedom Shield” on Monday, which will involve about 18,000 Korean troops and run until March 19. It is unclear how many US

troops will be involved at this time.

The nuclear-armed North, which attacked its neighbour in 1950 triggering the Korean War, has long described the exercises as rehearsals for invasion.

Kim Yo Jong, a powerful confidante of her brother Kim Jong Un, said the joint drills “may cause unimaginably terrible consequences,” Pyongyang’s Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported.

She was recently promoted

to head the North Korean ruling party’s general affairs department – a role analysts describe as akin to a party secretary-general.

Her comments came after her brother recently described Seoul’s latest peace efforts as a “clumsy deceptive farce” and that North Korea has “absolutely no business dealing with South Korea”.

Kim Yo Jong went on to say the drills are taking place at “a critical time when global security structure

is collapsing rapidly and wars break out in different parts of the world”.

She said the situation is caused by “the reckless acts of the outrageous international rogues”.

Pyongyang has condemned the ongoing Washington and Israeli attack on Iran as an “illegal act of aggression”, claiming it shows the “rogue” nature of the United States.

North Korea and the United States are longtime adversaries but Washington has been pushing

to revive high-level talks with the North in recent months.

Reports and analysts have suggested the United States is eyeing a potential summit between President Donald Trump and North Korea’s Kim Jong Un this year.

After largely ignoring those overtures for months, Kim Jong Un said last month that the two nations could “get along” if Washington accepted Pyongyang’s nuclear status.

– AFP

## Iran bets on long war to wear down US

**Fabien Zamora**

PARIS – Outgunned by the United States, Iran's rulers have been lashing out on multiple fronts – but experts say what looks like a chaotic reaction is actually a time-tested strategy to outlast a stronger enemy in a fight to survive.

To some, Iran's response since US and Israeli strikes killed supreme leader Ali Khamenei on the war's first day look like those of a decapitated and directionless power.

Why is Iran targeting Gulf countries, Turkey and Azerbaijan with air strikes? Why not seek those countries' support, or at least keep them neutral?

But various analysts see a well-honed strategy of asymmetric warfare in Iran's retaliatory offensive: resist the onslaught, and make the enemy pay a price so heavy they have to give up.

"Iran's strategy is to create pressure on Washington, DC by angering the Gulf and by creating upward trends in the price of oil, gas and other commodities," said Burcu Ozcelik, a Middle East security expert at Britain's Royal United Services Institute.

Although Iran's leadership was badly shaken by the strikes that killed Khamenei – now replaced by his son Mojtaba as supreme leader – and other top figures, the system is holding so far.

And the Islamic Republic is digging in for an all-or-nothing fight, against a United States that has less at stake.

### 'Exit ramp'

Tehran has little chance of defeating the US military.

But it can hope to outlast the current campaign, which is limited to air strikes. US President Donald Trump will meanwhile have to think hard about the potential political costs before sending in ground troops.

"Tehran is trying to raise the cost of escalation until Washington starts looking for an exit ramp," said Ali Vaez, an Iran expert at the International Crisis Group.



Smoke plumes billow from the site of airstrikes near Azadi Tower in western Tehran yesterday. – AFP

It is a page straight out of the textbook on asymmetric warfare.

In a classic 1975 paper, "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars", the late professor Andrew Mack unpacked the reasons for outcomes such as the US defeat in Vietnam.

He underlined how weaker powers can exploit the gradual diminishing of a stronger adversary's political capacity to wage war.

Since the Iranians "don't have unlimited supplies of missiles and drones, we see them trying to use their firepower carefully, to make the conflict last long enough that Trump eventually says, 'That's enough'", said Agnes Levallois, head of the Middle East-focused think tank iReMMo.

"The longer the conflict lasts, the more Tehran believes the strategic balance – psychologically and politically – begins to shift" in its favour, said Danny Citrinowicz, of Israel's Institute for National Security Studies.

And the Iranian toolkit goes deeper.

"Tehran, cognisant of its inability to win a conventional war against the US, relies on irregular tactics to drag out the war, primarily through economic coercion and cost asymmetry," said a briefing by the US research centre Soufan.

That includes sowing chaos in the Middle East, bombing

neighbouring countries and sending global oil and gas prices skywards by effectively shutting the crucial Strait of Hormuz.

### War of attrition

If Trump comes under enough pressure from Gulf allies and energy inflation, he may have to fold.

"Market impacts, Hormuz disruptions and oil prices are all variables that will weigh heavily on Washington's thinking," said analyst Emily Stromquist of US advisory firm Teneo.

The strategy relies on the assumption that Gulf countries will have more pull on Trump than key US ally Israel, which is gunning for regime change in Iran.

If the Islamic Republic survives, it may pay a heavy price.

"The regime in Iran will have to make some deep concessions" in any end-game, said Ozcelik.

The Gulf states "will want to have some influence" in any ceasefire agreement, and Iran's relations with the rest of the region will be badly damaged, she said.

But none of that likely matters to Tehran, said Citrinowicz.

"From Iran's perspective, the goal of this war is to maximise its gains and 'imprint' in the minds of its adversaries the costs of fighting Iran in the future," he said. – AFP

## Egyptians feel Iran war shockwaves as fuel prices jump

CAIRO – Egyptians watched their everyday costs surge yesterday after the government raised fuel prices, blaming spiralling global energy markets due to the US-Israeli war on Iran.

Hours after price hikes of up to 30 percent were announced in the middle of the night, a Cairo market bustled with buyers and vendors fretting over vegetable prices and transport fares.

"The cost of everything is going up and up. It's been a week now that prices have already been rising," said Om Mohamed, a mother of six whose daily commute cost went up nearly 30 percent yesterday.

"We were barely getting by as it is. I don't know how people will manage," she told AFP.

The hikes – applied to gasoline, diesel and natural gas – come after oil prices briefly spiked above US\$119 a barrel on Monday, as oil and gas tankers remain blocked in the Strait of Hormuz.

Although thousands of kilometres away from the war, the region's most populous nation has already been affected, its currency dropping to a record low against the US dollar this week.

Meanwhile, shipping firms have begun rerouting away from the Suez Canal, depriving Cairo of a vital source of foreign currency.

### 'No war'

"There is no war in Egypt," said Ahmed Hassan, a 33-year-old taxi driver.

"But we feel its impact every day. This morning I was shocked

when I filled my tank", Hassan said yesterday.

Rising numbers at the fuel pump is a familiar anxiety-inducing sight in Egypt, which has cut fuel subsidies four times over the past two years.

With each hike came a wave of inflation, decimating savings in a country where salaries rarely keep pace with growing costs.

Inflation rang in at 13.4 percent last month, far lower than the record 40 percent recorded in August 2024, when a punishing economic crisis peaked.

It has since eased, but left traumatised Egyptians getting by with a fraction of their savings.

Outside the market, 72-year-old truck driver El-Sayed Mohamed ran the numbers.

"If it cost 400 pounds [nearly US\$8] to deliver produce before, now it's 800," he said. "This will raise the price of every product here."

The government has warned price gougers could be tried in military courts and sought to reassure the public.

Yesterday, the cabinet said it was reprioritising public spending, including by limiting non-essential government travel and rationing street lighting.

Public sector salaries will be raised, Prime Minister Moustafa Madbouli said, and indicated the measures could be revisited if the conflict subsides.

But many remain sceptical.

"Nothing that goes up in price in Egypt comes back down, ever," said Walid Ibrahim, another cab driver, shaking his head at a petrol station. – AFP

## Iran deploys Lego-style animation in propaganda war with US, Israel

TEHRAN – While Iran hits back against US and Israeli attacks with missiles and drones, it is also fighting a propaganda war with a Lego-style animation video complete with toy renditions of Donald Trump, bombs and warplanes.

Iran's state-run Revayat-e Fath institute released its video on state television following the February 28 US-Israeli attacks that killed supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and triggered the Middle East war.

The two-minute video has since been shared on Meta-owned platforms and on X, garnering tens of thousands of likes and shares.

With no dialogue, it appears designed to have international reach in a war that has rattled energy and stock markets, and divided world public opinion.

The video kicks off with Lego-type depictions of US President Trump flanked by Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu and the devil himself, looking at an album titled the "Epstein file" (sic).

Enraged, Trump hits a red button to kick off the war, and sends a missile through the clouds that hits what looks like a

classroom, with toys representing girls wearing pink headscarves as they listen to their smiling teacher.

After the teacher writes on the board the words "My homeland is my life", the screen goes dark. The next scene shows a pink backpack and a pair of pink shoes in the rubble of a strike.

An Iranian officer, also in Lego-inspired form, picks up the bag and weeps, before his sadness turns to rage.

Iran has accused the United States and Israel of conducting a deadly strike on a school in Minab in the south on the first day of the war.

AFP has neither been able to access the site in order to verify the incident nor obtain independent confirmation of the toll.

With a nationalist score playing, the video later shows Iranian Revolutionary Guards retaliating by attacking US interests and Israel across the region.

The video ends with a message saying it was made in remembrance of students killed in the strike, "who were martyred at the hands of Zionist and American terrorists". – AFP

## Gunfire at US consulate in Toronto a 'national security incident': police

TORONTO – Two men fired multiple shots at the US consulate in Toronto early yesterday (local time) in what police described as a "national security incident," prompting beefed-up protection for US and Israeli diplomatic buildings in the city.

The individuals approached the consulate in downtown Toronto at around 4:30 a.m. (local time), exited a white SUV and fired several rounds from a handgun at the consulate, Toronto police deputy chief Frank Barredo told reporters.

There were people inside at the time, but "this building is highly secure, highly fortified, and there were no injuries," Barredo said.

Chief Superintendent Chris Leather from Canada's federal police said the shooting was

"definitely a national security incident because we had the US consulate...struck by gunfire."

"Whether it's a terrorist [incident], that will be subject to the investigation," said Leather, of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

Leather also told reporters that security protocols are being enhanced at US and Israeli diplomatic buildings in Toronto and in the Canadian capital Ottawa.

"I think it's fairly obvious based on the incidents in Toronto and elsewhere that these consulates deserve a heightened amount of vigilance and security at this time," Leather said.

There were protests outside the consulate last weekend to denounce the Middle East war triggered by US and Israeli strikes on Iran.

Three Toronto-area synagogues have also been hit by gunfire in recent days, but no injuries have been reported.

Asked about a possible link between the synagogue shootings and gunfire at the US consulate, Barredo said it was "too early" to establish a link.

But, he added, "we do not look at [the incidents] in isolation. We look at them collectively."

Leather said the RCMP was working with the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) on the consulate shooting, as well as Canada's foreign intelligence agency, CSIS.

The US consulate is located on Toronto's University Avenue, a major north-south road that includes several hospitals and leads toward the provincial legislature. – AFP

## Major UAE refinery shut as Saudi Aramco warns war spells catastrophe for oil

David Stout

RIYADH – One of the world's largest refineries in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was shut as a "precaution" after a drone attack nearby, a source said, while Saudi giant Aramco warned of the war's devastating consequences on oil.

Aramco CEO and president Amin H. Nasser warned the war could have "catastrophic consequences" on oil markets, and called for reopening the Strait of Hormuz – which normally carries about 20 percent of global oil supplies but has been closed by the conflict.

Tehran appears to be attempting to knock major Gulf refineries offline as it tightens its chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz in a quest to inflict maximum pain on the global economy.

"The Ruwais refinery has halted operations out of precaution," the source said, requesting anonymity to discuss sensitive matters.

Earlier, the Abu Dhabi Media Office said a drone attack caused a fire in Ruwais Industrial City in the emirate of Abu Dhabi.

Neither the source nor the authorities said whether the refinery had been hit.

State-owned oil company Adnoc describes its Ruwais facility as "the world's fourth-largest single-site refinery".

The Middle East war has now severely destabilised supplies. Iran has fired at energy installations across the Gulf, including Aramco's sprawling Ras Tanura facility, which halted some operations.

The massive complex on the Gulf coast is home to one of the Middle East's largest refineries and is a cornerstone of the Saudi energy sector.

Saudi oil fields have also been targeted.

A driver working at the Ruwais industrial complex told AFP he was picking up staff who were ordered to evacuate.

"Just as we were about to leave, we saw two more bursts of fire rising from the complex, with loud sounds like explosions," he said, requesting not to be named.

### 'Chain reaction'

"The disruption has caused a severe chain reaction in not only shipping and insurance but there's also a drastic domino effect on aviation, agriculture, automotive and other industries," Nasser told a media call to announce Aramco's 2025 earnings.

"There would be catastrophic consequences for the world's oil markets the longer the disruption goes on, and the more drastic the consequences for the global economy.

The oil-rich Gulf has borne the brunt of Iran's attacks in response to US-Israeli strikes that sparked the Middle East war, with Tehran targeting US assets but also civilian infrastructure, including energy facilities and airports.

"While we have faced disruptions in the past, this one by far is the biggest crisis the region's oil and gas industry has faced."

"It's absolutely critical that shipping resumes in the Strait of Hormuz," Nasser said.

Oil prices have swung wildly over supply disruptions, rocketing 30 percent on Monday before plunging again on comments from US President Donald Trump that the war may soon end.

"The Gulf energy sector is getting whacked from multiple angles," said Robert Mogielnicki, a non-resident scholar at the Arab Gulf States Institute.

"Energy facilities being targeted, export capability though the strait is hampered, and storage capacity filling up," he added.

### 'Dangerous precedent'

Iranian attacks have already forced state-owned QatarEnergy, one of the world's largest producers of liquefied natural gas, to halt production last week and declare force majeure.

Energy producers in Kuwait made similar declarations, which are a warning that events beyond their control may lead them to miss export targets.

Nasser was speaking as Aramco reported a 12.1 percent decline in net income in 2025 after higher supply, US tariffs and other economic headwinds weighed on revenues.

The Saudi giant, which launched a record initial public offering in 2019, also announced a first-ever share buyback programme of up to US\$3 billion over 18 months.

Also yesterday, Qatar's foreign ministry spokesman Majed al-Ansari warned that attacks on energy facilities "on both sides, are a dangerous precedent... it will cause repercussions throughout the world".

Throughout last year, the oil alliance OPEC+ – of which Saudi Arabia is a key member – oversaw an increase in production, eroding prices.

– AFP

## Citing 'strategic mistake' EU pivots back to nuclear energy



(From left to right) French President Emmanuel Macron, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi pose during the Nuclear Energy Summit at the La Seine Musicale venue in Boulogne-Billancourt, outside Paris, yesterday. – AFP

Adrien de Calan

BRUSSELS – EU chief Ursula von der Leyen yesterday said that Europe's turn away from nuclear power had been a "strategic mistake", as soaring oil prices rekindled concerns about the bloc's energy vulnerability.

Speaking at a nuclear summit in Paris, the European Commission president endorsed a return to atomic energy, saying the European Union would back investments in "innovative nuclear technologies".

"It was a strategic mistake for Europe to turn its back on a reliable, affordable source of low-emission power," she said.

The US-Israeli strikes on Iran and Tehran's retaliatory attacks across the Gulf region have upended the world's energy and transport sectors, virtually halting activity in the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz.

EU officials have said the situation is yet to reach the crisis levels hit after Russia launched its military operation in Ukraine in 2022.

But the conflict has rekindled a debate on the bloc's external dependencies and high energy costs, which European industry has long said hamper competitiveness vis-a-vis Asia and North America.

"For fossil fuels, we are completely dependent on expensive and volatile imports. They are putting us at a structural disadvantage to other regions," von der Leyen said at the Paris summit, which aims to boost the

use of civilian nuclear energy.

"The current Middle East crisis gives a stark reminder of the vulnerability it creates," she added.

Her comments came as the EU is set to unveil new energy plans that von der Leyen said will include "a 200-million-euro (US\$230-million) guarantee to support investment in innovative nuclear technologies".

Brussels is focusing in particular on small modular reactors (SMRs), which the commission would like to see in operation by the early 2030s.

SMRs have about a third of the generating capacity of a traditional nuclear power reactor – but are relatively simple to build and thus more affordable.

Their designs promise enhanced safety features and more efficient operations than traditional plants, but have yet to be deployed at scale.

### Breaking 'taboos'

The EU money, while modest, is supposed to help Europe play catch up with the United States and China in the sector.

It will come from the bloc's Emissions Trading System (ETS) – which obliges heavy polluters to pay for permits, said von der Leyen.

Brussels will also work with member states to align regulatory frameworks and speed up the granting of permits, she added.

Nuclear energy on the continent fell into crisis after the 2011 Fukushima disaster in Japan, which

reinforced fears highlighted by the 1986 Chernobyl catastrophe.

Putting EU money behind nuclear projects was long a no-no, with the 27-nation bloc focusing on renewables in the race to cut planet warming emissions.

The Ukraine war sparked a re-think – but atomic power remains divisive.

Yesterday's summit host, France, is a strong backer. The Netherlands and Sweden are planning to build new plants, while Belgium has ditched its nuclear phase out and Italy is also re-considering its stance.

Germany's chancellor Friedrich Merz has also labelled the shuttering of nuclear plants a "serious strategic mistake".

On the other hand, Austria has historically opposed atomic power and Spain remains a strong advocate of renewables as the first port of call for greener power supplies.

EU industry chief Stéphane Séjourné celebrated the EU nuclear pivot yesterday saying Brussels dared "to break certain taboos".

"The commission is now fully integrating nuclear power into its industrial strategy and financing instruments. This is a first!", he said.

Yet wind and solar are set to dominate the European energy mix for years to come, as building new nuclear capacity will inevitably take time, experts caution.

In 2024, renewable energy sources accounted for 47 percent of electricity production in the EU, compared to 23 percent for nuclear power, according to Eurostat, the union's data agency. – AFP

## US investigators search Epstein's former New Mexico ranch

WASHINGTON – Investigators in New Mexico began searching on Monday the former ranch of convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, as part of a probe into allegations women and girls were abused there, authorities said.

The search is the latest fallout from the publication in January by the US Justice Department of millions of files related to the late financier, which mention the "Zorro ranch" thousands of times.

"Zorro" is Spanish for "fox".

"This search is part of the criminal investigation announced by the New

Mexico Department of Justice on February 19<sup>th</sup> into allegations of illegal activity at Epstein's ranch prior to Epstein's 2019 death," the New Mexico Department of Justice said in a statement.

New Mexico Congresswoman Melanie Stansbury said the state's justice department was leaving "no stone unturned" in the search.

"Epstein survivors have waited for far too long for justice and New Mexico is leading the way in the pursuit of truth and accountability," she posted on X.

Epstein was convicted in 2008 of soliciting sex from girls as young as 14, but died in a New York jail cell in 2019 before he could be tried on sex trafficking charges.

After Epstein's death, an unidentified woman using the name Jane Doe 15 said Epstein raped her at the ranch when she was 15.

Another woman, Annie Farmer, said that Epstein's jailed accomplice Ghislaine Maxwell fondled her breasts at the ranch when she was a teenager.

– AFP

# Viral drone video fuels debate about Rio favela tourism

Fran Blandy

RIO DE JANEIRO – A line of tourists touch up their makeup before strutting across a rooftop in Rio de Janeiro’s largest favela (slum), posing for a drone as it zooms out to show dramatic aerial views of the hillside community.

Set to an infectious beat, the video of the Rocinha (“Little Farm”) favela has exploded on social media at a time when the city is drawing record tourist numbers.

It has also created a sense of unease, with dozens of comments accusing visitors of glamorising poverty and crime in a low-income community dominated by drug traffickers.

However, Renan Monteiro, 42, founder of the tourism company Na Favela Turismo (“In the Slum Tourism”), told AFP that the drone footage was the fruit of efforts to show tourists “the positive side of the favela.”

“We are not romanticising poverty. We want to change the prejudice that exists in people’s minds.”

He insisted that tourists cannot just go to the Porta do Céu (“Gate of Heaven”) rooftop, where there has at times been a wait of up to two hours for the drone selfie, which costs at least 150 reais (US\$30).

They can only get there via a tour, navigating a maze of narrow alleyways as residents go about their daily lives while stopping to visit local artists or see a capoeira show.

Rocinha “has this image that it’s kind of bad, kind of dangerous...I found it really lovely to see the atmosphere,” said Gabriel Pai, 38,



Brazilian drone pilot Pedro Lucas picks up his drone after filming a tourist for social media at the famous “Porta do Céu” tourist viewpoint in the Rocinha favela in Rio de Janeiro last Thursday. – AFP

a delivery worker from Costa Rica, after posing for his drone shot.

The success of the drone video has drawn influencers, local officials, and even a marriage proposal.

Ingrid Ohara, a Brazilian influencer with 12 million followers on Instagram and 20 million on TikTok, walks across the rooftop in a shower cap and towel, which she casts aside to reveal a skimpy dress, twirling as the drone zooms away.

“These videos I make always get a lot of views, and so I wanted to make one here in Rocinha because it’s going viral all over the world,” she told AFP.

She said the videos were “showing our country, showing our Rio de Janeiro, this is part of our culture.”

## ‘Safari-like tourism’

Monteiro, who grew up in Rocinha, recalls the early days of “safari-like” tourism in the favela,

when visitors guided by outsiders would show up in open-air jeeps, much to the chagrin of locals.

In 2017, a female Spanish tourist was shot dead during a firefight between police and drug traffickers, and all tourism stopped.

When it resumed years later, visitors were once again “wandering around on the wrong paths” with no oversight.

Monteiro was inspired to find a safe way to show visitors the sprawling favela, which is home to over 70,000 people.

Working with community leaders, he mapped out set tourist routes, monitored by locals. He also created an app to track guides’ locations and manage the flow of tourists.

If there is a police operation against drug traffickers, guides communicate through the app to cancel ongoing tours.



A tourist is filmed by a drone for a social media video at the “Porta do Céu” in the Rocinha favela in Rio de Janeiro last Thursday. – AFP

The company has trained 300 local guides and 10 drone pilots. The owners of 26 rooftops and terraces in Rocinha and Vidigal earn money for allowing tourist visits.

Drone pilot Pedro Lucas, 19, said he had few prospects before the job, which “changed my life a lot.”

“I earn a good amount of money and it would be good if more people from the favela had the same opportunity.”

## ‘An exotic contrast’

With world-famous beaches, Carnival, and sights like the Christ the Redeemer statue, tourism in Rio has surged.

Government tourism agency Embratur told AFP there were almost 290,000 foreign visitors in January alone, a record.

In February, Na Favela Turismo recorded 41,000 visitors to Rocinha and nearby Vidigal.

Claudiane Pereira dos Santos, 50, a cleaner, welcomes the tourist “frenzy.”

“People immediately associate [Rocinha] with crime, the bad side. And it’s not like that. There are many hardworking people, wonderful people.”

If people want to criticise something, she added, they could focus on the lack of basic services and electricity that residents struggle with.

“I recognise that some residents see this as a legitimate source of income,” said Cecilia Olliveira, Executive Director of the Fogo Cruzado (“Cross-Fire”) Institute, which tracks armed violence in low-income communities.

“The problem arises when the favela ceases to be a vibrant, complex neighbourhood traversed by structural inequalities and becomes merely an exotic contrast or a backdrop for impactful content.” – AFP

## Lula warns Ramaphosa of invasion risk if defences lag

BRASÍLIA – Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva on Monday urged his South African counterpart Cyril Ramaphosa to boost defence co-operation, warning that both countries were vulnerable to foreign invasion.

Both Lula and Ramaphosa have been critical of the war against Iran waged by the United States and Israel.

“I don’t know if comrade Ramaphosa realises that if we don’t prepare ourselves in terms of defence, one day someone will invade us,” said Lula in Brasília.

“We need to combine our potential and see what we can produce together, build together. We don’t need to keep buying from foreign arms suppliers.”

Ramaphosa, who was on a state visit, noted that Brazil was “much more advanced” than South Africa in defence and aviation.

“We have a lot to learn from each other and we also have a lot to show you as well.”

The two countries’ defence ministers met on Monday to work on a cooperation agreement.

“In South America, we present ourselves as a region of peace. No one has a nuclear bomb, no one has an atomic bomb. So we think of defence as deterrence,” said Lula.

South Africa and Brazil are members of the BRICS group of emerging nations, which US President Donald Trump has labelled “anti-American.”



Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (right) and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa give the thumbs up as they pose during a press conference at the Planalto Palace in Brasília on Monday, during the latter’s state visit to Brazil. – AFP

The bloc also includes China, Russia, and Iran, among others.

Lula has been critical of Washington’s actions in Latin America, saying the US attack on Venezuela to oust president Nicolás Maduro crossed “an unacceptable line.”

Prior to Maduro’s ouster, the US military carried out several air strikes on alleged drug trafficking boats in the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean.

Trump on Saturday offered to help Latin American leaders combat drug cartels with US missile strikes targeting narco kingpins.

Brazilian media on Monday

reported that Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio had spoken by phone about Washington’s possible designation of Brazil’s two largest criminal factions as terrorist organisations.

Contacted by AFP, the ministry did not confirm the conversation had taken place.

In 2025, Brazil’s right-wing opposition unsuccessfully tried to pass a law classifying the country’s two major criminal organizations, Comando Vermelho (“Red Command”) and Primeiro Comando da Capital (“Capital’s First Command”/PCC), as terrorist groups. – AFP

## Colombia complains over exclusion from US anti-cartel alliance

BOGOTÁ – Colombian President Gustavo Petro on Monday complained about the exclusion of his country – the world’s biggest cocaine producer – from a new US-led military alliance to combat drug cartels.

US President Donald Trump on Saturday used a summit with Latin American leaders to launch a 17-nation coalition that he said would “eradicate the criminal cartels plaguing our region.”

The summit, held at Trump’s Florida golf club, included right-wing allies from the region.

The left-wing presidents of Colombia, Mexico and Brazil – countries that play a key role in the global drug trade – were not invited.

Petro criticised his country’s exclusion from the alliance, which includes Presidents Javier Milei of Argentina, Nayib Bukele of El Salvador and Daniel Noboa of Ecuador.

“In the case of cocaine, Colombia is essential because of its experience,” Petro, who has regularly crossed swords with Trump, said at an event in Austria’s capital Vienna. – AFP

“With 17 small, weak, and inexperienced countries, you can’t create a shield” against drug violence, Petro added, referring to Saturday’s “Shield of the Americas” summit in Miami.

Trump has made combatting drug trafficking a cornerstone of his Americas policy.

Petro has criticised Washington’s campaign of deadly missile attacks on suspected drug boats in the Caribbean and Pacific, saying the United States has not provided evidence they were involved in drug trafficking.

He was also fiercely critical of Trump’s overthrow of Venezuela’s socialist leader Nicolás Maduro.

During months of estrangement, Trump imposed financial sanctions on Petro for allegedly failing to curb his country’s cocaine production.

But the two smoothed things over last month during a meeting at the White House, where they agreed to coordinate their efforts against Colombian drug cartels and guerrilla groups. – AFP

## Leverkusen coach questions legality of Arsenal's set-piece tactics

**LEVERKUSEN** – Bayer Leverkusen coach Kasper Hjulmand questioned whether Champions League opponent Arsenal's set-piece tactics are legal ahead of today's last-16 first-leg tie in Germany.

Speaking at a press conference yesterday, Hjulmand asked whether blocking opponents should be permitted, particularly with the influence of set pieces in the game growing.

"It's a big challenge but I have to say, I'm a bit confused by these offensive blocks. I don't know if it's allowed under the rules when the ball is very far away," Hjulmand told reporters.

Mikel Arteta's side sit on top of the Premier League thanks in large part to their success from set-pieces.

They equalled the Premier League single-season record for goals from corners with two in their 2-1 win over Chelsea to reach 16 for the campaign.

In the Champions League, Arsenal won eight from eight to finish atop the 36-team table.

"We also do it, so it's not just something others do. But it's getting more and more common in football," Hjulmand said of the practice.

"There are very many blocks and they [Arsenal] create a lot of chances as a result of it.

"They do it very well and spend

a lot of time on these situations. They're one of the best teams in these situations and they work with it a lot."

The Dane said he thought blocks were only permitted close to the ball.

"As I understand football, when you do body checks the ball has to be inside a playing situation.

"So I'm just wondering - is it inside the rules to actually block without the ball being close to you. Creating space, pushing players, pushing the goalkeeper?"

Hjulmand was the latest to join the chorus critical of Arsenal's tactics.

Earlier in March, Brighton coach Fabian Huerzeler hit out at Arsenal's time wasting, saying "only one team wanted to play football" in their 1-0 defeat to the league leaders.

Former Chelsea striker Chris Sutton questioned whether Arsenal could be the "ugliest" Premier League winners in history after their victory over Chelsea.

But the Premier League leaders have embraced the criticism, with fans chanting "set-piece again, ole, ole".

Before the Brighton clash, Arteta told reporters he is "upset that we don't score more" from dead-ball situations.

The game will be played at 1:45 a.m. tomorrow morning Macau time.

–AFP/MPD

## Japan thrash Vietnam to ease into Women's Asian Cup quarters



Japan's Mina Tanaka (centre) and her teammates celebrate her representing the team in 100 international games after the AFC Women's Asian Cup Australia 2026 match against Vietnam at Perth Rectangular Stadium in Perth, Australia yesterday. - AFP

**PERTH** – Japan eased into the quarter-finals of the Women's Asian Cup yesterday with an emphatic 4-0 win over Vietnam, while Chinese Taipei beat India 3-1 to set up a last-eight clash with defending champions China.

West Ham striker Riko Ueki headed home in the 21<sup>st</sup> minute before Japan ran riot in the second half in Perth.

Tottenham forward Maika Hamano finished off a slick passing move before Aoba Fujino and substitute Kiko Seike put Japan four up with more than 20 minutes still to go.

The two-time former champions will face the Philippines in

their quarter-final in Sydney after topping Group C with three wins and 17 goals without reply.

Led by their first foreign-born women's coach, Greenlander Nils Nielsen, Japan are hoping to add to their back-to-back triumphs in 2014 and 2018.

"I'm sure at some point in this tournament we're going to have to defend," said Nielsen, with Japan limiting Vietnam to one shot on goal while enjoying 81 percent of possession.

"We felt good in the game but there were things that we weren't 100 percent."

In the other Group C match, Chinese Taipei beat India 3-1 in

Sydney to claim second place.

Chen Yu-chin sealed the win in the 77<sup>th</sup> minute to condemn India to three defeats from three, underlined by a chastening 11-0 reverse against Japan on Saturday.

Su Yu-hsuan had put Chinese Taipei ahead early in the first half, but Manisha Kalyan equalised for India before an own goal by goalkeeper Panthoi Chanu Elangbam gave Chinese Taipei the lead on the stroke of half-time.

The result means Chinese Taipei will play China in the quarter-finals.

South Korea will play Uzbekistan and hosts Australia will face North Korea in the other last-eight matches. –AFP/MPD



An undated and unplaced photo released by Australia's Department of Home Affairs shows Home Affairs minister Tony Burke (third right) posing with Fatemeh Pasandideh (from left to right), Mona Hamoudi, Atefeh Ramezanizadeh, Zahra Ghanbari and Zahra Sarbali, the five Iranian women football players who applied for asylum after competing in the Women's Asia Cup tournament being played in Australia.

Australia has granted asylum to some of Iran's visiting women's football team over fears they faced persecution at home for not singing the national anthem before a match, Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke said yesterday.

–AFP

## 10 players denied visas to US for CONCACAF club tournament

**KINGSTON** – Ten players with Jamaican side Mount Pleasant have failed to obtain US entry visas for the club's CONCACAF Champions Cup clash against Los Angeles Galaxy today, club officials have confirmed.

Mount Pleasant travelled to Los Angeles on Sunday with an 18-man squad which included five academy players after the team's roster was decimated by visa problems.

Seven members of the Mount Pleasant squad are Haitian nationals, and the issue brings into sharp focus one of the concerns surrounding this year's World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Haiti is one of 19 countries targeted by US President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown, with Haitian nationals' entry to the US suspended under a presidential order issued last June.

Although athletes taking part in major sporting events such as the World Cup and Olympics are exempt from the ban, it was not clear if CONCACAF's regional club tournament was included amongst those exceptions.

Mount Pleasant's sporting director Paul Christie said the visa stumbling block would leave Mount Pleasant at a competitive disadvantage as they prepare to face the 2024 MLS Cup champions this week.

"We don't want to just show up for the game, we want to be

able to compete, but we are not being given the opportunity to be at our best," Christie told the *Jamaica Observer*.

Christie said Mount Pleasant "had not been given the opportunity to field our best starting 11."

US media reports have said CONCACAF, the regional body for football in North America, Central America and the Caribbean, had been attempting to resolve the issues.

A CONCACAF spokesman did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

It means Mount Pleasant head coach Theodore Whitmore will need to field a makeshift line-up today drawn from a team that includes five members of Jamaica's under-20 team. –AFP

## Machida, Buriram advance in Asian Champions League

**TOKYO** – Japan's Machida Zelvia booked their place in the Asian Champions League quarter-finals in their competition debut after beating South Korea's Gangwon 1-0 in yesterday's last 16 second leg.

Thailand's Buriram United joined them in the last eight after squeezing past Australia's Melbourne City 4-2 on penalties after a 0-0 draw.

Machida, who were playing non-league football less than 15 years ago, went through 1-0 on aggregate after Hotaka Nakamura's first-half header made the difference.

"We were determined to make history for Machida," said Nakamura.

"It was a tough game but we have written a new page for the club. Now we move on to the next stage and we want to show everyone something great."

The Asian Champions League

becomes a single-leg knock-out competition from the quarter-finals onwards, with all games set to be played in Saudi Arabia next month.

The Asian Football Confederation last week postponed last-16 matches played by clubs in the Middle East after the US and Israeli strikes on Iran.

Machida and Gangwon kicked off for the second leg of their tie at the Japanese club's homely stadium in the suburbs of Tokyo after a 0-0

draw in South Korea last week.

Machida suffered an early blow when Japan international winger Yuki Soma was forced off with an injury in the 12<sup>th</sup> minute.

His replacement Na Sang-ho supplied the cross for the winning goal in the 25<sup>th</sup> minute as Nakamura ran in at the back post to head home.

Machida, who had never played in the Japanese first division until 2024, won last season's domestic Emperor's Cup.

Buriram came through a tense tie with Melbourne despite losing midfielder Robert Zulj to a red card after just 20 minutes.

Goalkeeper Neil Etheridge was the hero in the shoot-out, saving twice before Australian Kenny Dougall slammed home the winning spot kick.

The win meant Buriram qualified for the quarter-finals for the second successive season.

–AFP

# Andreeva crashes out in angry end to Indian Wells title defence

## Tennis

INDIAN WELLS – Mirra Andreeva's Indian Wells title defence met a bad-tempered end on Monday in round three as Katerina Siniakova stunned the talented Russian teenager 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-3.

The 18-year-old Andreeva opened her bid to retain her crown with an imperious 6-0, 6-0 demolition of Solana Sierra.

But she was in trouble early and often against 44th ranked Siniakova in a rollercoaster contest that ended with a shot from the Czech that hit the net cord and dribbled over in one last frustrating moment.

Andreeva slung her racquet as she approached the net before departing the court with a defiant gesture at the crowd.

"I'm not really proud of how I managed it," said Andreeva, but added her profanities picked up by court-side microphones weren't directed at the fans.

"It was just anger coming out, just a lot of emotions," she said. "Not really towards anyone."

Siniakova, a former doubles number one, admitted it was an awkward way to seal the win in a match that featured seven service breaks for each player and 43 break chances between them.

"Of course I'm happy [the ball] went on the other side," she said. "I was, like, should I cheer? It's a really tricky finish. But definitely I will not say I'm not happy."

Siniakova said the swirling winds on Stadium Court were troubling both players.

Andreeva's emotions had already boiled over when she sailed a swinging volley long to surrender the second set, during which each player had remarks

for the chair umpire about her opponent.

She regrouped to break Siniakova for a 3-2 lead in the third, but Siniakova won the next four games, saving two break points in the final game before gaining the win on her first match point.

Siniakova will face Elina Svitolina for a place in the quarter-finals after the ninth-seeded Ukrainian beat American Ashlyn Krueger 6-4, 6-2.

There was no drama for world number two Iga Swiatek, who defeated Greece's Maria Sakkari 6-3, 6-2.

## Learning experience

Poland's Swiatek beat Sakkari in the final to claim both of her Indian Wells titles, in 2022, and 2024, but Sakkari had won their most recent encounter in the quarter-finals of the Qatar Open last month.

Swiatek said she had learnt from "obvious mistakes" she made in Doha.

"I knew what to focus on today and I did that from the beginning till the end," she said. "So I'm really happy with my focus and the way I was prepared."

Swiatek next faces Doha champion Karolina Muchova, who blew past Antonia Ruzic 6-0, 6-3.

Australian Open champion Elena Rybakina kept her bid for a second Indian Wells title on track with a 6-4, 6-4 victory over Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk.

Rybakina, seeded third, trailed 1-3 in the second set but surged home in chilly late night conditions to book a fourth-round clash with Britain's Sonay Kartal, a 2-6, 6-2, 6-3 winner over Madison Keys.

"I'm just happy that I managed to win in two sets," said Kazakhstan's Rybakina, who lifted the trophy in the California desert in 2023.

Fifth-seeded American Jessica

Pegula shook off a slow start to beat Latvia's Jelena Ostapenko 4-6, 6-3, 6-2.

Pegula, coming off her fourth career WTA 1000 title at Dubai last month, fired 11 aces with just one double fault as she rallied for the win.

"I think today I had to kind of snap myself back and kind of lock in to not let that get away from me," said Pegula, who said she was in danger of letting negativity and frustration get the better of her.

Pegula next plays Switzerland's Belinda Bencic, who beat Elise Mertens 6-2, 6-3. – AFP



Mirra Andreeva reacts to the crowd who booed her as she walked off court after her three set defeat by Katerina Siniakova of Czechia in their match at the BNP Paribas Open at Indian Wells Tennis Garden on Monday in Indian Wells, California. – AFP

		Medal Table			
Order	NOC	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1	China	9	6	8	23
2	Austria	4	1	3	8
3	USA	3	5	2	10
4	Italy	3	5	1	9
5	Ukraine	3	2	5	10
6	France	2	4	2	8
7	Netherlands	2	1	1	4
8	Spain	2	1	0	3
8	Norway	2	1	0	3
10	Russian Federation	2	0	2	4
10	Sweden	2	0	2	4
12	Switzerland	2	0	1	3
13	Germany	1	4	5	10
14	Canada	1	3	4	8
15	Republic of Korea	1	1	1	3
16	Belarus	1	0	0	1
17	Czechia	0	2	0	2
18	Australia	0	1	0	1
18	Brazil	0	1	0	1
18	Great Britain	0	1	0	1
18	Japan	0	1	0	1
22	Slovakia	0	0	2	2
23	Kazakhstan	0	0	1	1

## Chinese para biathlon skier Zhao eyes gold coming 2<sup>nd</sup> at Milan-Cortina

TESERO – Zhao Zhiqing won silver in the para biathlon women's individual standing event at the Milan-Cortina Paralympic Winter Games on Sunday and was warmly cheered by spectators as she approached the finish line.

"I finished second in the event at Beijing 2022, as well as Milan-Cortina, I hope I can reach the highest position of the podium next time," the 28-year-old told Xinhua.

Born in 1997, Zhao lost her hands in an accident. She said the setback did not stop her.

"I have a twin sister. When I saw her practice riding a bike, I tried to study how to control it without hands," Zhao said.

"We are twins. I have a firm belief that I can do anything like her," Zhao added.

In 2017, Zhao began training in para biathlon and para cross-country skiing in Hebei Province.

At the beginning, she said she often had blisters on her feet but tried not to miss training sessions.

She recalled falling during training as a junior skier and refusing help from her coach as she got up and continued toward the finish line.

"I am a person who never gives up, although I am disabled," Zhao said.

Para biathlon presents particular challenges for Zhao, as she cannot use ski poles and must adapt to shoot without fingers.

"I can't handle any stick in the resort, so I have to make my legs stronger, in order to make them take the role of the skiing sticks," Zhao said.

"In Chinese national team of para biathlon, my teammates practice their arms in the morning and enhance the strength of legs in the afternoon, but maybe it will take me longer time to train my legs," Zhao said.

In the para biathlon women's sprint standing on Saturday, Zhao missed two shots and finished eighth. She said she focused on shooting in warmups before Sunday's race.

"In biathlon, if you can avoid suffering any shooting penalty, you will get a good result," Zhao said.

In the women's individual standing event, Zhao had a shooting penalty and lost about 20 seconds when her rifle jammed.

Zhao said her mindset has changed since Beijing 2022, but her determination has remained the same.

"If I can recover from the injuries in my waist and ankle, maybe I will continue my skiing career," Zhao said.

"If you wish to achieve something, it depends solely on your own efforts; if not now, then when?" reads a motto of the Chinese para biathlon national team.

Zhao said she knows the motto by heart and hopes to fulfill her dream in the future.

– Xinhua (Photos on page 16)

## Borthwick makes one change as England seek to avoid worst Six Nations



LONDON – England have made just one change for their Six Nations meeting with defending champions France, bringing in Ollie Chessum at blindside flanker as they seek to avoid their worst-ever finish.

Coach Steve Borthwick has remained loyal to the overhauled backline that misfired in the 23-18 defeat by Italy in Rome, with Fin Smith continuing at fly-half for Saturday's game in Paris.

Instead, Borthwick yesterday tinkered with his back row by installing Chessum at six and moving Guy Pepper to openside at the expense of Sam Underhill, who drops to the bench for the climax to the Championship.

Underhill was promoted to the starting XV at the Stadio Olimpico when Tom Curry suffered a calf injury during the warm-up, but against France he will act as a replacement as part of a six-two split between forwards and backs.

By starting Chessum, Borthwick is strengthening England's line-out and giving his pack greater ballast to take on France's giant forwards.

The 25-year-old Leicester captain has played the bulk of his rugby for club and country in the second row and his most recent international appearance at blindside was in the 2024 Six Nations.

Underhill and Marcus Smith will win their 50<sup>th</sup> caps for England if they appear off the bench.

Nine changes in personnel and a further three positional switches were made against Italy, but England still crashed to defeat by the Azzurri for the first time in their history.

Borthwick's men started the Six Nations as one of the favourites but their campaign has been disastrous after an opening win against Wales.

If they lose to France, England will have completed the tournament with only one victory, in what would be their worst Six Nations performance.

If results go as expected they are likely to finish fifth in the table, just ahead of bottom side Wales.

"It's a huge challenge under the lights in Paris against a very strong France side," said Borthwick, who has been given a vote of confidence from the Rugby Football Union.

"England versus France is one of the great rivalries in international rugby and we're looking forward to the occasion."

France are level with Scotland on 16 points at the top of the Six Nations table heading into the final round and will know what they need to do when they kick off at 4:10 a.m. Sunday morning Macau time at the Stade de France.

Gregor Townsend's Scotland take on Ireland, who are two points off the leading two, in the first match of the day at 11:10 p.m. Saturday night Macau time. In between, Wales host Italy. – AFP

# AI offers hope for young filmmakers dreaming of an Oscar

Romain Fonsegrives

LOS ANGELES – Studying at the film school where Oscar-nominated “Sinners” director Ryan Coogler honed his craft, Zheng Sijia dreams of winning an Academy Award.

Now with the recent developments in artificial intelligence (AI), he can see a shortcut to achieving his ambition.

“That’s a chance for beginners like me who can use AI to just make a film and to announce to the world that I have the ability to be a director,” he told AFP.

Zheng, 29, who hails from China, is one of a burgeoning class of students at USC’s School of Cinematic Arts, studying animation in a place that has long been a training ground for future Pixar and DreamWorks talent.

He has used his time at the Los Angeles university to learn about the emerging field of AI animation.

That has included producing his seven-minute short film “Torment” about a masked killer terrorising a high school.

The film, which was recognised at the LA Shorts festival, was generated entirely by AI – in just one week.

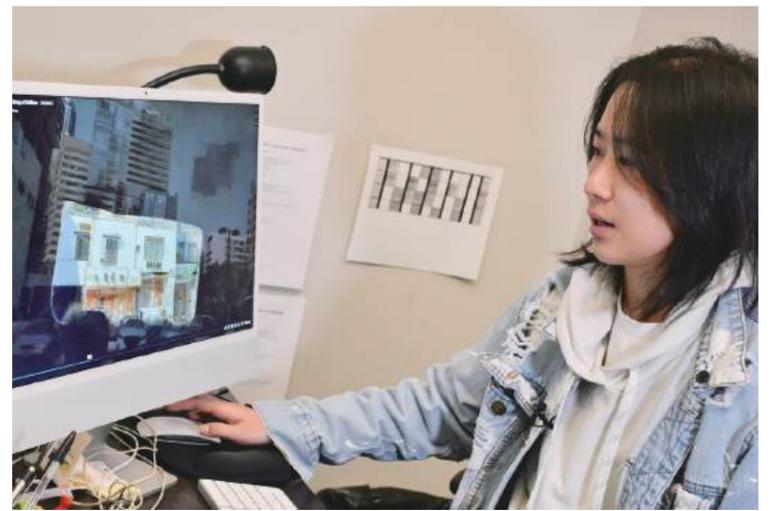
Zheng recorded himself in front of a green screen and then asked the software to modify his face to make him into all the different characters in the movie.

The technology also allowed him to set his story in an Asian school and have scenes in a swimming pool – two things that would have cost a fortune if he had filmed them traditionally.

“As a student, it’s impossible to have that much money” to produce a film, he said.



Chinese USC student Zheng Sijia speaks about how he used AI to modify his face and make him into all the different characters of his film at the University of Southern California (USC) in Los Angeles on Friday. – AFP



Zhang Xindi, a recent graduate of USC and winner of a Student Academy Award for her short film “The Song of Drifters”, shows images of her hometown which she has incorporated into her work, at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles on Friday. – AFP

## ‘Tool’

Not everyone in Hollywood feels so positively about AI.

The technology was one of the key sticking points in the writers’ and actors’ strikes that paralysed Hollywood in 2023.

Guillermo del Toro, the director of “Frankenstein,” which will compete for the best picture Oscar on Sunday, is notoriously anti-AI, insisting he would “rather die” than use it.

Zheng said he had been impressed by the Mexican director’s “amazing” film, particularly the opening scene where the monster attacks a 19th-century three-masted ship, which del Toro’s prop department constructed specially for the movie.

But “when I watched the film...I was just thinking: ‘Oh, using AI to do that would be much cheaper and... make something pretty similar.’”

He insists, however, that it doesn’t replace the filmmaking spark.

“AI is just a tool, and people can use it to become even better.”

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the body that will hand out the Oscars in Hollywood on Sunday, seems to agree – last year the body updated its rules to say it was neutral on the technology.

“Generative Artificial Intelligence and other digital tools...neither help nor harm the chances of achieving a nomination,” it said last April.

## ‘Ethical’ use

At the University of Southern California (USC), teachers like Debra Isaac are trying to navigate the ethics around the emerging technology of AI.

The animation professor said she was shocked by an AI video

that rocketed around the internet in recent weeks.

The short sequence, created by Seedance – the AI generation model developed by TikTok’s parent company, Bytedance – shows an ersatz fight between Brad Pitt and Tom Cruise. Neither star was compensated.

But, used properly, AI does not need to be exploitative, and is not a lazy way to make films, Isaac said.

“It’s not just about, ‘Hey, I have a prompt, and I’m just gonna type a few words and I’ll get my image, and I’ll get my animation, and I’m done,’” she said.

“Some of these tools are not ethically dubious at all. They’re trained by people that are using their own work,” she added.

That’s precisely what Zhang Xindi, a recent graduate of the programme and winner of a Student

Academy Award for her short film “The Song of Drifters,” did.

For the mini-documentary about the difficulty of feeling at home anywhere, the 29-year-old artist fed the AI dozens of her drawings.

The database then served as graphic inspiration, allowing the computer to stylize the shots of the cities where the film takes place, accelerating production that would otherwise have taken years.

Even with the help of AI, she spent nearly a month perfecting certain shots.

It’s “a craft that nobody really appreciates right now,” she says.

But anyone who looks at the use of AI will soon find it’s not a compromise-free shortcut to perfection.

“Good, cheap and fast will never happen, no matter what tool you use,” Zhang said. – AFP

## NBA axes Hawks’ tribute to Atlanta strip club

NEW YORK – The NBA said on Monday it had cancelled a promotional night planned by the Atlanta Hawks which was aimed at paying tribute to a famous strip club in the city.

NBA commissioner Adam Silver said in a statement the proposed March 16 promotion – “Magic City Monday” – had been scrapped following feedback from league stakeholders.

“When we became aware of the Atlanta Hawks’ scheduled promotion, we reached out to Hawks leadership to better understand their plans and rationale,” Silver said.

“While we appreciate the team’s perspective and their desire to move forward, we have heard significant concerns from a broad array of league stakeholders, including fans, partners and employees. I believe cancelling this promotion is the right decision for the broader NBA community.”

Magic City is a prominent adult entertainment club in Atlanta with strong ties to the rap

and hip hop music industry.

However, the decision by the Hawks to honour the club with a promotional evening for next week’s home game with the Orlando Magic drew criticism from some players in the league.

San Antonio Spurs ace Luke Kornet had called for the Hawks to cancel the promotion, arguing it risked the NBA “being complicit in the potential objectification and mistreatment of women in our society.”

Kornet said the NBA sought to “provide an environment where fans of all ages can safely come and enjoy the game of basketball and where we can celebrate the history and culture of communities in good conscience.”

“The celebration of a strip club is not conduct aligned with that vision,” Kornet wrote. Kornet’s position drew support from Golden State Warriors veteran Al Horford, who reposted the Spurs’ player’s statement with the message: “Well said Luke.”

– AFP

## Woman held over shots fired at Rihanna’s LA mansion

LOS ANGELES – A woman alleged to have fired an assault rifle at the luxury Los Angeles home of Rihanna – while the Barbadian pop superstar was inside – was taken into police custody on Monday.

Officers in the city said shots were fired towards the mansion in the middle of day on Sunday by a suspect driving a white Tesla, which had stopped across the street.

Aerial footage after the attack showed bullet holes in a gate at the sprawling property, which Rihanna shares with rapper A\$AP Rocky and their three children.

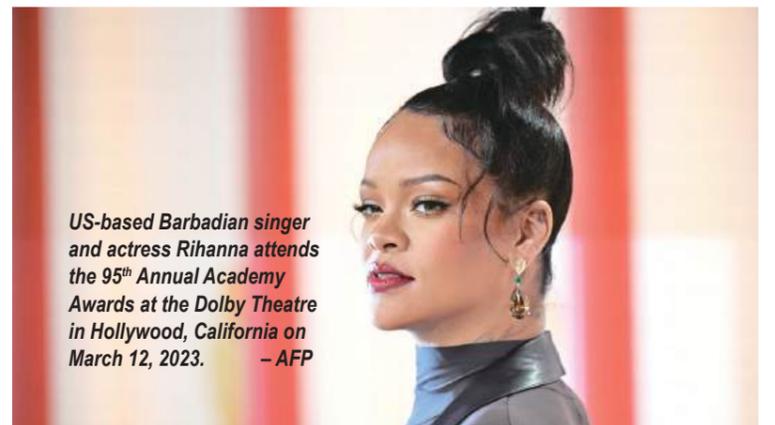
The Los Angeles Police Department said Ivanna Lisette Ortiz was arrested at a shopping complex half an hour after the incident.

Captain Mike Bland told reporters the weapon used was an AR-15-style rifle.

Ortiz was booked on suspicion of attempted murder with bail set at US\$10.225 million.

As of yesterday, Rihanna, 38, one of the world’s most popular pop stars, had not publicly commented on the shooting.

– AFP, MPD



US-based Barbadian singer and actress Rihanna attends the 95th Annual Academy Awards at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California on March 12, 2023. – AFP

### World Weather

CHINA	ASIA-PACIFIC	WORLD	LUSOPHONE
Beijing 0°C~16°C	Manila 20°C~31°C	New York 15°C~19°C	Lisbon 9°C~19°C
Shanghai 6°C~16°C	Bangkok 25°C~36°C	London 5°C~13°C	Rio de Janeiro 22°C~25°C
Hong Kong 13°C~20°C	Tokyo 3°C~11°C	Frankfurt 5°C~14°C	Luanda 24°C~29°C
Taipei 13°C~20°C	Singapore 23°C~34°C	Vancouver 5°C~6°C	Maputo 21°C~28°C
Guangzhou 11°C~23°C	Kuala Lumpur 24°C~37°C	Paris 2°C~13°C	Dili 24°C~29°C
Nanjing 3°C~14°C	Jakarta 22°C~32°C	Moscow 2°C~8°C	São Tomé 27°C~32°C
Guilin 9°C~23°C	Seoul 1°C~12°C	Las Vegas 13°C~26°C	Praia 19°C~27°C
Xi’an 7°C~20°C	Sydney 20°C~29°C	Monte Carlo 11°C~15°C	Bissau 21°C~39°C



USA's Brett Bolton (centre) fights for the puck against Germany's Marcel Nicolas Malchin and Germany's Ingo Kuhl-Lauenstein (right) during the ice hockey match between USA and Germany at the Milano Cortina 2026 Paralympic Winter Games in Milan on Monday. – AFP

Mexican athlete Pena Velasquez competes in the ski Super G during the Milano Cortina 2026 Paralympic Winter Games on Monday in Cortina d'Ampezzo. – AFP



This photograph shows the USA's ice hockey equipment prior to the ice hockey match between USA and Germany at the Milano Cortina 2026 Paralympic Winter Games in Milan on Monday. – AFP



Jon Thurston (centre) of Canada competes during the wheelchair curling mixed team round robin session 7 match against China at the Milan-Cortina 2026 Paralympic Winter Games in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy, yesterday. – Xinhua



Liu Zixu of China competes during the final of the Para Cross-Country Skiing Men's Sprint Sitting event at the Milan-Cortina 2026 Paralympic Winter Games in Tesero, Italy, yesterday. – Xinhua

Zhao Zhiqing of China competes during the women's sprint standing final of para biathlon at the Milan-Cortina 2026 Paralympic Winter Games in Tesero, Italy, on Saturday. – Xinhua

